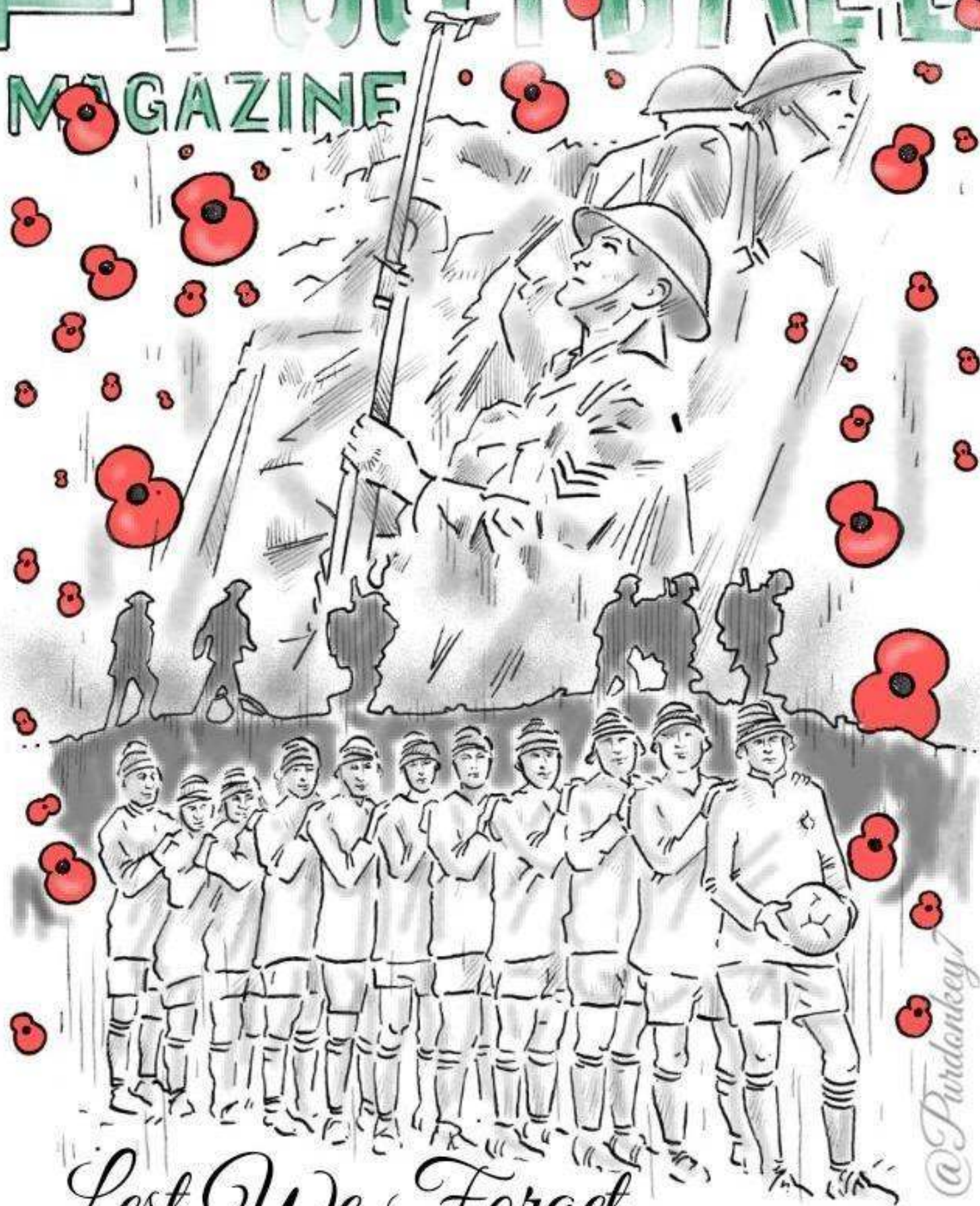


# WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE



*Lest We Forget*

*@Purdonkey*



# **THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE**



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# Welcome

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## Welcome to the issue!

It's time for Issue 18!

Welcome to our new issue.

We would like to send all our love and support to all those involved at Leicester Football Club. We were absolutely shocked and devastated watching the accident unfold and our thoughts are very much with everybody affected by the tragedy.

Coming up in the issue we look at the history of women's football, we look at both the pros and cons of Chelsea's season as Jess Pratt discusses their successes in the Champions League and Marissa Thomas gives her opinion of the problems in the league for the defending champions.

We also welcome our newest column Dave Fraser to TWFM, make sure you check out his first piece "Fraser of the Month" alongside regulars Ammo and Gill Brown.

Our 2019 calendar is out now! Make sure you get a copy. They are £6.50 and can be found on the website.

Helen Summers  
Editor-in-chief







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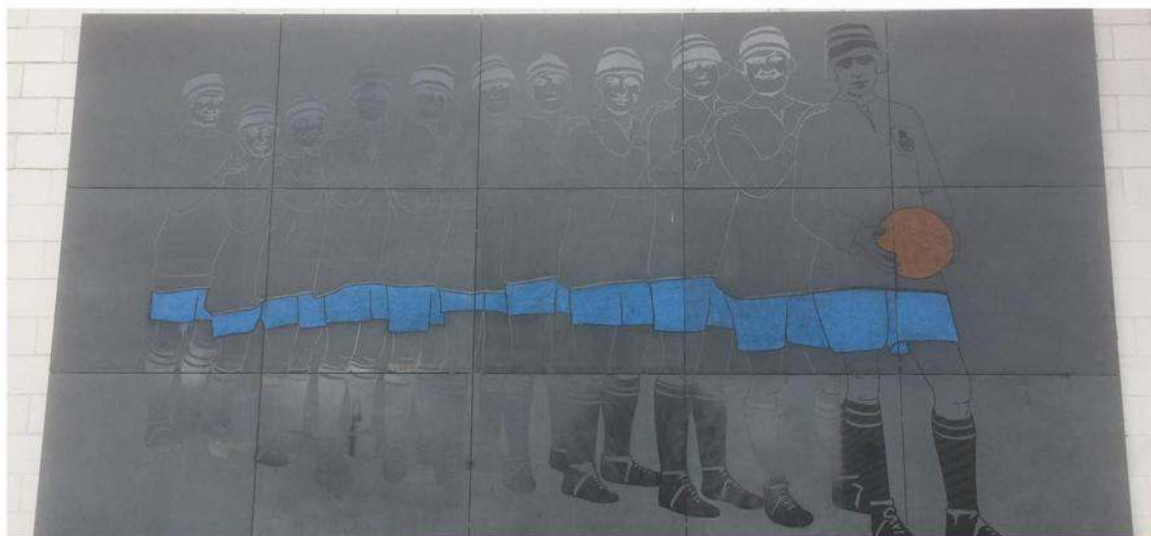




THANK YOU  
VICHAI  
THOUGHTS  
AND PRAYERS  
WITH YOUR  
FAMILY  
RIP BOSS



# A short history of women's football in the UK



Despite popular belief, women's football has been around in the UK for a lot longer than people realise.

It is impossible to pinpoint exactly when the sport began but there is evidence of women playing football dating all the way back to the 16th century. Initially women's football was more popular in Scotland and in 1881 an English team travelled to Edinburgh to play a number of games against their rivals. Despite good intentions and crowds of over 5000, the games actually led to women's football being banned in the UK due to riots between fans.

Women's football has faced controversy all through its history but it really began to grow in popularity during the First World War. With women working in the munitions factories, many started to join having a kick about with their male colleagues on lunch breaks. Originally set up to play charity matches, Dick, Kerr's Ladies FC from Preston was soon attracting crowds of over 15,000 to each of their games – with around 10,000 travelling to away matches to watch them. This seemed to be the break that players who had been playing to empty stadiums or in the park with friends had been looking for – it ended up being the opposite.

On Boxing Day, 1920 a match involving Dick, Kerr's Ladies saw over 53,000 packed into the stadium with another 10,000 turned away. Women's football was cool – if you wanted to watch passion, skill and entertainment, the only place to be was watching the Dick, Kerr Ladies. After the war finished, the side's organiser, Alfred

Frankland, arranged a number of international games for the unofficial England side which saw them travel to France on tour.

The sport was becoming rapidly more popular but then the unthinkable happened. On December 5, 1921 the Football Association announced its decision to ban women's football at its member's grounds. The popularity of the sport was named as a reason – it was often common for women's matches to have bigger crowds than their male counterparts and the official reason was stated that there were concerns women were not physically able to play football.

This ban stayed in place for fifty years and slowly those fans who had once gone to women's football games found new male teams to support and the love and passion which was once there dwindled into insignificance.

It took a long time for women's football to start rising from the ashes again in the UK and seeing England lift the World Cup in 1966 had a lot to do with the introduction of the Women's Football Association in 1966. The WFA stayed in charge of women's football in the UK, campaigning for the ban to be lifted in 1971, introducing the FA Women's Cup and helping women who wanted to play football find their voice again.

24 years after the formation of the WFA, the FA finally took the step and brought women's football back under its control. Since then the sport has started to grow, but it is still nowhere near the level it used to be a 100 years ago.



# Some of the original Dick, Kerr Ladies

**Florrie Redford:** Centre forward and played in the first match at Deepdale in 1917.

**Alice Kell:** The first ever captain of the Dick, Kerr Ladies and also played in the first game at Deepdale.

**Lily Parr:** Lily Parr scored over 100 goals for the club and became the first female footballer to be inducted into the National Football Museum Hall of Fame (posthumously).

**Alice Mills:** Alice was part of the squad who toured USA in 1922.

**Jessie Walmsley:** Jessie moved to Preston to join the Dick, Kerr Ladies from Lancaster Ladies.

**Jennie Harris:** Jennie was part of a partnership with Florrie Redford. The pair gained the nickname "box of tricks"

**Alice Woods:** Alice was also a sprinter and moved to Preston to join the club from St. Helens.

**Alice Norris:** Alice was only 14 when she joined the Dick, Kerr Ladies.

**Molly Walker:** Molly joined the Dick, Kerr team from Lancaster Ladies in 1918 and often acknowledged as the first women's player to be transferred from one team to another.

**Alfred Frankland:** Manager of the Dick, Kerr Ladies for forty years.







## DICK, KERR LADIES FOOTBALL CLUB

1917 - 1965



Through some dreadful times in our history, they brought joy and pride to a country ravaged by war  
We will never see their like again





Chelsea secure away  
win in round of 16  
first leg



By Jessica Pratt

Attention turned to the Champions League in October as the two-legged round of 16 ties got underway. Despite a tough start to the domestic season, Chelsea are thriving in Europe as the only English side left in the competition. The Blues recently welcomed Fiorentina to Kingsmeadow for their round of 16 first leg. The two teams had never met before and it was the hosts who came out on top thanks to captain Karen Carney's early penalty. Emma Hayes' side were unlucky not to take a bigger lead to Florence as they dominated the match and saw a host of chances saved by Swedish goalkeeper Stephanie Ohrstrom.

Elsewhere, champions Lyon and

fellow big hitters Wolfsburg can rest easy as they both secured comfortable 4-0 victories in their opening ties with Ajax and Atlético respectively. Ada Hegerberg's 40th European goal assisted the holders' away win over the last-16 newcomers, with England playmaker Izzy Christiansen's late goal likely cementing the French giants' place in the quarter-finals.

In Wolfsburg, Atlético - who lost heavily to the Germans a stage earlier in last year's competition, were once again unable to contain UEFA Women's Player of the Year Pernille Harder and co. Harder notched a brace in the second half and will surely look to add to her tally in the return fixture. The only downside to the evening for the She-Wolves was losing experienced midfielder Lara Dickenmann to a





serious knee injury during the match, with the 32-year-old set to be out of action for several months.

Barcelona marked their intent to challenge for the title this season with a 5-0 home hammering of Glasgow City. Last year's quarter-finalists dominated the Scottish champions despite being without Dutch Ballon d'Or nominee Lieke Martens and look certain to progress to the next stage.

Bayern Munich and PSG are also favourites to advance to the quarter-finals, as both teams won away by 2-0 scorelines. Bayern's win came over FC Zürich whilst PSG defeated Linköping as Wang Shuang became the first Chinese player to score in the competition.

Of the eight opening matches, only one remains even – the tie between Norway's LSK Kvinner and Denmark's Brøndby, which ended 1-1 as Emilie Henriksen's strike levelled the scores in the first half after Guro Reiten had put LSK ahead. Both teams had several chances to win on the day and have history in the competition – they also played each other in last season's round of 32. The first leg of that tie also ended in a draw (0-0), but LSK went on to win the second leg 3-1 away. The upcoming return fixture in Copenhagen looks certain to be an exciting prospect.

Finally, perhaps the only upset of the first round of matches came from the final tie between Rosengård and Slavia Praha. Slavia lost 6-1 on aggregate to the Swedish outfit at this stage two years ago when Anja Mittag increased her competition-record tally of goals to 51. This time, Mittag was on the scoresheet once more for the hosts as



her second-half strike drew them on level terms after twice falling behind, but it wasn't enough as Petra Divišová struck on the hour mark to give the visitors a vital one goal aggregate lead to take back to the Czech Republic.

The second legs will be played on Wednesday 31 October and Thursday 1 November, with the quarter-final & semi-final draw to be made on Friday 9 November.







# *Be a Flamingo in a flock of pigeons*

## **Sing when you're winning!!!**

Hello from a very cold, but sunny, South Derbyshire, winter is coming, the heating is on and the football season has entered the wet and messy part! Love it!!

This month I thought it was about time I properly introduced you to the fabulous group of girls who make up our Albert Village Tigermoths and update you with what has been happening for them. This team below is one of my proudest achievements (after childbirth!):



*Back row l to r: Taylor Gemmell, Abigail Booth, Scarlet Robey, Molly Docherty, Isobel Morton, Olivia Brown  
Front Row l to r: Lily Harrison, Georgia Riley, Olivia McDermott*

This motley crew have just started playing their first season together as a team in the Leicester Girls League, some have been training with our 'Girls Academy' for nearly a year and some are brand new to us (and football). However... the way they have all bonded as a team unit is absolutely heart-warming to see. They support each other, help each other, laugh together and rush to check on each others injuries. It's brilliant but I know that most teams do all of this and more.

## **So, What makes these girls special (to me)?**

Our season started on Sunday 2nd September, we were brand new and full of anticipation for the season. How would we do in the games?, Would the other teams be better than us?, Would we win or lose? The whole team were a little giddy!

That was 6 games ago now, we have got these first few under our belt and to say it has been a learning curve is an understatement.

Its fair to say that we haven't emerged as triumphant victors, by goal difference, in any of the matches we have played, but we have walked away proud and with new experiences. Of the 6 matches, we have lost 5 and drawn 1 nil-nil and each match has been exciting end to end football. They certainly know how to keep



# Be a Flamingo in a flock of pigeons

Coach Steve and myself and their parents on the edge for the whole game!!!

Our first match we lost something like 11-nil (who's counting), but the girls are improving and the last loss was 5-4 and we had been leading for the whole match and just lost it in the last 5 minutes. I remember the nil-nil draw... by the last five minutes of the match both myself and the other coach wanted the referee to blow the whistle as it would've been awful for either team to lose as it was so close...both of us were very relieved when we shook hands at the end, congratulating each other on a really brilliant game!

Where am I going with all this? Well the thing I have noticed most from the Tigermoths is resilience and attitude. Ok, so we haven't 'won' any of our games yet this season which isn't surprising given that we were literally brand new at the start of the season, (I was assembling the team whilst on holiday at the end of August), some of the games we played we only had 7 players against a squad of 10 or 11 girls meaning they could replace tired legs easily and move players around as our team showed different strengths and most teams are into their second season so already have a year of experience and learning.

**Resilience and attitude...** Not one of my players seems disheartened that we haven't won, I think they are all genuinely enjoying playing their games. They all come off the pitch smiling and happy with themselves regardless of the result. Over the past few weeks I've seen some amazing performances, some real hard work, improvement from every player on the pitch, but most importantly of all I have seen attitude of the nicest kind.

**So... Are we winning? Yes I think so.  
Are we singing? Yes definitely!!!**

I'm so pleased with them and their progress. We can 'teach' the principles of football, we can give them drills and techniques to help their football improve and we can encourage them to make sensible decisions on the pitch, but we can't fix attitude we can only influence it and if the attitude is broken then we would struggle. Our attitude is just perfect!

Maybe we haven't technically won any games yet, but these girls are definitely winning at life!!

Please feel free to follow me on twitter @mum2coach, I don't say too much on there but I promise I'll try and say more. #shamelessplug

THE **WOMEN'S  
FOOTBALL  
MAGAZINE**



# Meet the nominees for the first women's Ballon D'Or



THE fifteen nominees for the first Women's Ballon D'Or have been announced.

Lyon and England defender Lucy Bronze has made the fifteen woman list alongside the six-time FIFA Best Woman of the Year, Marta.

## What is the new Ballon D'Or?

In September, it was announced that France Football had created an award for the top female player in the world.

It will be decided by votes from journalists who specialise in women's football all around the world.

The decision was described by France Football as a "logical evolution for a growing discipline."

Brazilian star Marta, who featured against England in their friendly on October 6, told the Ballon D'Or organisers: "It's a step forward, women's football is evolving and inequality is shrinking even though there is still room for improvement.

"I've always wanted to see a woman win this prestigious award. It is a step towards more equality to see such a reward, as important in

the world of football, to be also awarded to the players."

## Who are the nominees?

The fifteen nominees are:

### LUCY BRONZE

England and Lyon right-back Lucy Bronze has been named the "best-right back in the world" by Phil Neville in recent months. The 26-year-old, who started out at Sunderland, won three Women's Super League titles (two with Liverpool, one with Manchester City) before moving to Lyon in August 2017. Her first season at the French club saw her win the UEFA Champions League and the Division 1 Feminine.

### PENILLE HARDER

Denmark striker Harder has been playing at Wolfsburg since 2017. The 25-year-old has made over 100 appearances for her national side and accolades include two Bundesliga titles and Wolfsburg were the runners-up in last year's Champions League. At the 2017, Harder led the side the final where, despite scoring their second goal, they were beaten by hosts Netherlands 4-2. The Denmark captain



was named in the UEFA Team of the Tournament alongside teammate Theresa Nielsen.

### ADA HEGERBERG

Hegerberg is a three-time Champions League winner has been one of the top women's footballers in recent years. The 23-year-old made it into the top three for the FIFA Best Woman of the Year which was presented in September. The striker has been at Lyon since 2014 also winning three Division 1 titles and three Coupe de France trophies.



### LINDSAY HORAN

Lindsay Horan started playing football at school, representing the USA under-17 team at the age of 15. Horan was named as the "top-ranked college prospect" by ESPN in 2012 but chose to go to Paris Saint-Germain instead of going through college. The 24-year-old now plays for Portland Thorns having joined the club in 2016. Honours include two SheBelieves Cups, a Tournament of Nations trophy and the NWSL Champions title for 2017.

### SAM KERR

Kerr is an Australian footballer who plays forward for Australia and Chicago Red Stars. She is currently the all-time leading scorer in the NWSL. Her honours list includes a Tournament of Nations win with Australia in 2017, the PFA Women's Footballer of Year awards and the ESPY Award for Best International Women's Soccer Player 2018. Kerr joined the Chicago Red Stars in January after being

### AMANDINE HENRY

Henry is a French defensive midfielder who has made over 70 appearances for her national side. Since beginning her career in 2004 at the age of 15, at Henin-Beaumont, he has played for Lyon, Portland Thorns and PSG. At the end of the 2017 NWSL season, Henry rejoined Lyon. Honours include nine league titles at Lyon, four Champions League trophies and NWSL Championship title. For France, she was part of the squad which won the 2017 SheBelieves Cup and was awarded the Silver Ball at the 2015 Women's World Cup.

traded and scored 15 goals, securing the league's golden boot for the second year in a row.

### FRAN KIRBY

Chelsea star Fran Kirby is one of two Lionesses included in the shortlist. The 25-year-old forward has been hailed as one of England's best strikers in recent years. Kirby started her career at home town Reading and in 2014 became the first WSL2 player to be called up for England. In April 2018 Kirby was named the PFA Player's Player of the Year and the Football Writer's Women's Footballer of the Year.

### SAKI KUMAGI

Saki Kumagi is a Japanese footballer who plays for Lyon. The 27-year-old started her career at Urawa Reds in 2009 before moving to Frankfurt for two seasons. Kumagi moved to Lyon in 2013 and helped the side win four



Division 1 titles, four Coupe de France and two Champions League trophies. For Japan she is also has a silver medal from the 2012 London Olympics, and helped the side win the 2011 World Cup.

### **DZENIFER MAROZSAN**

Marozsan is a German midfielder who currently plays for Olympique Lyon. The midfielder made 133 appearances for Frankfurt before moving to Lyon in 2016. Having moved to Germany at the age of four, she chose to play for Germany and made her national debut in 2010. She made it to the top three in the FIFA Best Woman Footballer of the Year, getting beaten by Marta.

### **AMEL MAJRI**

Majri is one of seven Lyon players to be nominated for the new award. Majri has been at Lyon since 2010 and has won seven Division 1 titles, six Coupe de France trophies and four Champions League trophies. After playing for Tunisia at U20 level, the 25-year-old winger made her debut for France in 2014 and was part of the squad who won the SheBelieves Cup in 2017.

### **MARTA**

Marta, who was once described as "Pele in a skirt" by the Brazilian legend, is often regarded as the best female player of all time. She holds the record for the most goals scored at FIFA Women's World Cup tournaments and currently plays for Orlando

Pride. Marta was awarded the FIFA Best Woman Footballer of the Year at the ceremony in September - the sixth time she has received the award.

### **LIEKE MARTENS**

Lieke Martens was part of the 2017 squad to win the European Championships, which was also hosted by the country. They beat Denmark 4-2 in the final, with Martens scoring in the final. She was named the player of the tournament and part of the UEFA Team of the Tournament. Martens plays for Barcelona and won the 2018 Copa de la Reina de Futbol.

### **MEGAN RAPINOE**

Rapinoe is a midfielder/winger who plays for Seattle Reign. the 33-year-old has made over 140 appearances for the USA. She helped the USA win the gold medal at the London 2012 Olympics and has been at Seattle since 2013 having also played for clubs including Chicago Red Stars, Sydney FC and Lyon.

### **WENDIE RENARD**

Renard, 28, joined Lyon in 2006 and has remained at the club for all her senior career. She has made over 160 appearances for the French side winning 11 Division 1 titles and four Champions League trophies. Renard made her debut for France at the 2011 Cyprus Cup and has since represented her country at two World Cups and Olympics. She is the current captain of the national side and has





made over 100 appearances for France.

## **CHRISTINE SINCLAIR**

Sinclair is the only Canadian footballer on the list. She started her career at the Vancouver Breakers and Whitecaps. The 35-year-old is the oldest player on the list and has played in four World Cups including when Canada hosted in 2015 and three Olympics. She has been shortlisted for FIFA World Player of the Year seven times. In 2013, she was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame.

## **When will the winner be announced?**

The winner will be announced on December 3 alongside the original award and the new under 21s award.

The "Kopa Trophy" given to the best Under-21 star will be voted by a panel of footballing legends.

As well as Messi and Ronaldo, the likes of Denis Law, Michel Platini, Zinedine Zidane and Marco van Basten will also have their say.

## **MEN'S BALLON D'OR NOMINEES**

- Sergio Aguero
- Alisson
- Gareth Bale
- Karim Benzema
- Kevin de Bruyne
- Edinson Cavani
- Thibaut Courtois
- Roberto Firmino
- Diego Godin
- Antoine Griezmann
- Eden Hazard
- Isco
- Harry Kane

- N'Golo Kante
- Hugo Lloris
- Mario Mandzukic
- Sadio Mane
- Marcelo
- Kylian Mbappe
- Lionel Messi
- Luka Modric
- Neymar
- Jan Oblak
- Paul Pogba
- Cristiano Ronaldo
- Ivan Rakitic
- Sergio Ramos
- Mohammed Salah
- Luis Suarez
- Raphael Varane

## **KOPA TROPHY NOMINEES**

- Trent Alexander-Arnold
- Houssem Aouar
- Patrick Cutrone
- Ritsu Doan
- Gianluigi Donnarumma
- Amadou Haidara
- Justin Kluivert
- Kylian Mbappe
- Christian Pulisic
- Rodrygo

# Fraser of the Month

Since I've been able to walk, I've loved anything with a ball... and first and foremost, it's always been football. Premier League or non-league, men's or women's - football has been one of few things, along with friends and family, I couldn't live without.

But, in an era where excess money and theatrics have weaselled their way into the "beautiful game", above all there has been one refreshing respite: Women's football.

In recent years I've still watched, played and loved football. I'm still a fan – and anyone who knows me will know just how seriously I can take the sport! But can you really tell me Neymar's diving, Paul Pogba's social media habits, Jose Mourinho's whinging and stars' over-the-top celebrations haven't taken their toll on you?

All the money in the world and they still find a way to be miserable. Well do you know what? We've got some wonderful human beings living their dream and doing so with the utmost professionalism.

Thank goodness for the women's game!

After all, they're the true role models: Hard-working, playing for the love of the game and nothing more. The players' passion, energy and commitment is utterly contagious. How can you not watch the games and be left in awe at their desire?

Take the England Lionesses' friendly clash with Australia earlier this month. It was meant to be just that: A friendly. But what we

saw was a breathless game from start to finish. The pace was frenetic, the passion was real and the desire was unquestionable. Can we really say that about the men's team in friendlies? The game at Craven Cottage ended in a 1-1 draw, with boss Phil Neville left fuming with some refereeing howlers - but I won't get started on that!

That match came on the back of a record-breaking 1-0 win for Neville's side over Brazil in Nottingham. No, not the result, the attendance! Nearly 8,000 fans crammed themselves inside Meadow Lane to watch the game - more than any Notts County game in 2018-19. It speaks volumes for the popularity of the game, on an international and domestic level - with the Women's Super League showcasing some truly terrific talent, too.

It's not just the popularity of the women's game that's exciting, either. The ability on display at present is up there with some of the best ever. Think Marta, Lucy Bronze, Megan Rapinoe, Fran Kirby, Pernille Harder... I could go on, but you get the picture. In fact, the introduction of the Women's Ballon d'Or is as overdue as it is exciting.

Let's not forget, for 50 years - between 1921 and 1971 - women's football was banned in England by the FA. Ever since its return, it has been forced to battle against the super-rich men's game - with the latter hogging the lucrative TV deals and crowds in the process.

Yet fast-forward to the present day and the women's game is back, absolutely thriving and growing at an astronomical rate.

Long may it continue...







## Chelsea: What is going wrong for the defending champions?

Last season, Chelsea FC Women were simply unstoppable as they won the league and FA Cup double. Striker Fran Kirby won the PFA Women's Player of the Year award as the Blues went unbeaten in the league, becoming the first team to do so in an 18-game WSL 1 season. This campaign has been much tougher as the defending champions have struggled in their first six games. Here, we take a look at what is going wrong at Chelsea.

Emma Hayes' side have scored just two goals, both of which came in their only win against Brighton & Hove Albion Women at the end of September. In their six games so far, Chelsea have had a staggering 117 shots with 44 of those on target. The

Blues have plenty of attacking threats and are clearly creating a numerous amount of chances so it is a surprise that the likes of Fran Kirby, Erin Cuthbert, Ramona Bachmann, Beth England, Drew Spence and Ji So-Yun have failed to score more than two goals between them with the amount of shots that they have had.

Losing so many key players could also be part of the reason why the defending champions are finding it difficult to pick up where they left off last season. Eni Aluko, Claire Rafferty, Katie Chapman, Gemma Davison and Gilly Flaherty all left Chelsea at the end of the previous campaign and losing that level of experience, passion and commitment would be hard for





any team to cope with, especially when those players had contributed so much to Chelsea's recent success. Chelsea's next game is at home against a resurgent Liverpool before they travel to face London rivals West Ham where they will be reunited with Rafferty and Flaherty who joined the East London side in the summer.

It is too early to write Chelsea off this season but they are already eight points behind leaders Arsenal (who beat them 5-0 at home) and that is a large gap to make up. However, it is clear to see that they are nowhere near as confident in front of goal as they were last season and they are unable to break down the teams that they breezed past in the previous campaign when they stormed their way to the league title.

Chelsea haven't just become a bad side overnight and Emma Hayes is definitely the manager they need to help them get out of the rut they are in at the moment, but the Blues need to start scoring and winning soon before they become completely cut adrift.





# Ammo's Antics

Hi Ammo here,  
There are two main parts to this months Ammo's Antics.

First off, after our match against Aston Villa last month I unfortunately picked up an Achilles injury.

It started when I developed a really bad pain in my ankle while training. To be honest I'd been playing a lot of football of late, for my school, Birmingham and at home. Luckily for me Birmingham have a fantastic team of physios who have spent lots of time with me, checking my ankle and slowly getting me back playing. I'm not a great patient I know that! Mainly due to my impatience but not being able to play football has driven me (and subsequently my parents) up the wall.

To help my ankle I've been dunking my feet into ice water every night. If you've ever done this you'll know what it feels like. Freezing!!! I was really gutted to miss my first game since joining Birmingham City but the girls did brilliantly and drew 5-5 with a boys team.

After a week of reduced training I returned to league action but was only allowed to play half the match. For any footballer who has suffered an injury you'll know how eager I was to play.

This leads me to the second part of this months blog.

Today we played another boys team, we play a lot of boys teams. Most of the time the boys are friendly enough. I mean until we score or

start passing the ball around, then they can get a little upset. They always shake our hands at the end though. Win, lose or draw.

You see, we're not your average girls team. We give as good as we get, we're physical and we fight for every minute of the game. Most importantly though, at Birmingham we pride ourselves on our honesty and fair play. I've lost count of all the matches we've played boys where the opposition coach has praised us.

I won't say much more than this but the opposition coach was not like that. He clearly didn't want his team to be playing girls. His anger and frustration wasn't nice to see or hear.

We won the game 4-2 and we tried to play with a smile on our faces like we always do. I won't mention the team, but if you are the coach I'm talking about and you're reading this (which I doubt) you'll know I'm talking to you.

I play in a team of girls who all want to play for England, who have dreams of becoming professional footballers. I'm pretty sure most of us will get there too. The main reason we play football though is simple. We love it. Your actions made me love it a little bit less.

You won't care though. I know that but I care enough to write about it.

Next month I hope to have more game action to talk about.

The season continues...

Ammo







# England Lionesses boss Phil Neville opens up about 'wonderful' Steph Houghton and Stephen Darby after shock Motor Neurone disease diagnosis



**By Helen Rowe-Willcocks**

PHIL NEVILLE has spoken openly about the support Steph Houghton and husband Stephen Darby have been receiving from the England camp.

The Bolton and former Bradford and Liverpool right-back was forced to announce his retirement in September after being diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease at the age of 29.

The pair married during the summer and just days after the announcement was made, Houghton scored a late-minute equaliser against Bristol City in the Women's Super League - dedicating the goal to her husband.

Houghton, who is only one game off 100 caps for the Lionesses, has continued training with the Lionesses squad as they begin their preparations for the Women's World Cup in

France next year as well as featuring heavily in Manchester City's WSL games.

Talking about the England captain, Phil said: "Steph is good but obviously she is not.

"The professional side is good. I think she is playing some of the best football of her career.

"The last three or four games she has been unbelievable.

"She has gone up so much in my estimations in her leadership skills because she has had to deal with something horrific and she has dealt with it in a class manner. She has gone out and played.

"Her and her husband have been overwhelmed with the well wishes but it just shows how well they are thought of.

"What I have said to Steph is that she is in



charge of what she wants to do. If she wants to be on camp then she can be here, if she wants to train, she can train, if she wants to go home she can."

The Lionesses are busy preparing for the 2019 Women's World Cup after securing their place in the tournament and will find out which groups they have been drawn against in December.

However, Neville is not just looking for impressive skill, he believes that there is more to football than being brilliant players.

He said: "At the end of the day it is just a game of football.

"The most important thing for us as a team – and we have sat down and spoke about it – family is far more important than kicking a ball round on a field.

"Carly Telford's mother died a month ago and the support we gave her was really good. We gave her time off, let her mourn and gave her support from a distance. And we will do the same for Steph.

"She deserves it, she has earned it and she is a wonderful person.

"That is the most important thing.

"I want 23 people that are wonderful rather than 23 three footballers who are brilliant because if we get the characters right then we have a great chance of being successful."

### **England's final friendlies of 2018:**

November 8—Austria vs England

November 11—England vs Sweden





# **Lionesses squad for November Internationals**

## **Goalkeepers:**

Mary Earps (Wolfsburg), Ellie Roebuck (Manchester City), Carly Telford (Chelsea)

## **Defenders:**

Hannah Blundell (Chelsea), Millie Bright (Chelsea), Lucy Bronze (Lyon), Gabby George (Everton), Alex Greenwood (Manchester United), Steph Houghton (Manchester City), Abbie McManus (Manchester City), Leah Williamson (Arsenal)

## **Midfielders:**

Isobel Christiansen (Lyon), Fran Kirby (Chelsea), Jordan Nobbs (Arsenal), Jill Scott (Manchester City), Lucy Staniforth (Birmingham City), Georgia Stanway (Manchester City), Keira Walsh (Manchester City)

## **Forwards:**

Rachel Daly (Houston Dash), Toni Duggan (Barcelona), Beth Mead (Arsenal), Nikita Parris (Manchester City), Chioma Ubogagu (Brisbane Roar, on loan from Orlando Pride)





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