

THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

ISSUE 47 - March 2021

LAURA RAFFERTY

Overcoming injuries and
achieving her dreams

HEGE RIISE

Lionesses led
by new coach
as they play
for first time in
a year

LAUREN SMITH

From Wales to Spurs, all
change for the assistant
manager

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Welcome

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Hello and welcome to Issue 47!

With the news that the National League and grassroots football have a date for their comeback, it's hard not to feel a bit of excitement as I write the welcome for this issue.

It's hard to believe that I wrote "Keep safe" for the first time a year ago but hopefully we will be allowed back in stadiums soon, there even could be a small glimmer of hope for the Women's FA Cup final!

Anyway, dreaming aside, let's look at this issue. We have some fabulous interviews with Watford head coach Clinton Lancaster, Tottenham's new assistant manager Lauren Smith and Crystal Palace star Amy Goddard.

We also have all the latest from the home nations, leagues and look back on the Champions League clashes.

Keep safe and enjoy the issue!

Helen Rowe-Willcocks

Editor-in-Chief



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WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE



LAUREN SMITH

Former Wales assistant manager Lauren Smith has been back in the Women's domestic game for a short time but she is already making a name for herself. This month, the new Tottenham assistant manager spoke to Helen Rowe-Willcocks about the differences of being an A.M in the league than on an international level.

In the last few fixtures you have struggled to get the results, what has been going wrong in those games to the point where you are not coming away with points?

The Chelsea game was always going to be a tough fixture and the game plan was to give it a good go. For the first 30 minutes I thought that we were the upper team and if we had managed to get one in the back of the net, that would have made a massive difference.

We take the positives into the next games, we control parts of the game, the Villa game was a complete reverse in the challenges we faced. We had over 60% of the possession but then could not get it in the back of the net. It's a little bit every

time and I really think it is all going to come together soon.

What has it been like working with Rehanne Skinner?

It's been really enjoyable and very interesting. She was assistant manager at Wales before I took the job so she left and I took over. People think we know each other but actually we have never met until I started at Spurs.

She was one of the main reasons I decided to make the mover and go to Spurs. Her professionalism and drive is superb. She likes to work collaboratively as well and I think that's what she wanted, she wanted someone to support her and someone she could trust in different areas of her

“If the pandemic happened a couple of years ago a lot more clubs would have suffered”

vision. That is what was really exciting for me, what she is doing on a day-to-day basis. What she is doing there, I am excited to be part of it.

You mentioned the long term project, what are you striving to achieve at Spurs, what is the ultimate end goal?

In the next couple of years it's all about the culture. Getting a high performance environment and changing the culture. Not that there is a bad culture but one that strives to be in the top four, to be the best. [Skinner] does not want to settle.

Before Manchester United, there was very much a 'top three', now there is a 'top four', do you feel like the gap between those four clubs and the rest is decreasing?

That's a tough one. You could say that one week and then you go into the next and you see 7-0 scorelines. There is a lot of variety in terms of the best team, the best performance on the day, there is a very big gap.

When the best team isn't out and the best performance is not happening, there are points to be had. They are the ones. You have to be the best when you play. I think in the next few

years there will be changes in the top four for sure.

What would you say is a successful season for Tottenham?

A top half finish, I think that would be classed as successful. There has been a lot of change from players coming in and staff changes. It would be a nice way to finish off.

You were the assistant manager for Wales, what was that experience like and how does it differ from club football?

The differences between the two is mainly time. With Spurs it's week to week and you have to put things to bed straight away. When I was with Wales, there was a month to review and then another month to plan but everything had to be meticulous as you only got players for a certain amount of days a year. The planning and preparation that goes into the camp is huge.

Whilst at Wales you were also the technical director for the U9 to U19s, what was it like being able to guide the talent through the Wales system from such a young age?

It was really integral to Wales. Because they are such a small country and the playing pool is quite small, it is really important to the senior team that there are players coming through on a regular basis and it is one of my favourite parts of





of the job seeing youth players develop and it has been since I started coaching. There are players like Carrie Jones who is getting on the bench at Manchester United who have come through from our U15s and has got those senior call-ups.

It's really exciting seeing the players develop and be a little part of that. There is some much talent in the youth of Wales and across all the teams that hopefully they can be really bright in the future. It was such a great part of my job.

What have you taken from your time at Wales into your new role?

I have brought a lot of the planning with me but you have to scale it back to the really important things to give you the 1% change that will make a difference in less than a week because you have to go again and again.

Both roles have been really important, and I used to be at Bristol City before I went to Wales. I love club football and being able to bounce back straight away and get a new game plan. It's the excitement because it can change within

three games. In international football, every game, every set play, every kick of the ball counts towards qualifying or not qualifying. The pressure is quite different.

Before you were at Wales you were at Bristol City, how much of a difference have you seen in the WSL and how club football is run?

There are big changes. The professionalism has changed. I am not saying that we weren't professional at the time but the amount of money which is now available and the amount of money that clubs are now investing into women's football is a different class now.

When I was at Bristol we were lucky to have great facilities, everything was on one site and it was a really community feel which drove it. To come now into Spurs, it's just a different ball game. The landscape has changed hugely, the players are purely professional now. They don't have to juggle extra work outside of football which means they can prioritise being performance players and

everything they need to be which is huge for the game.

Even with Covid-19, even with all the funding changes such as having to pay for tests, I think it shows there is a base where we can grow from. I think if this had happened a few years ago, more clubs would have probably struggled a lot more.

What are your long-term career aspirations?

It's something that changes a lot. I get asked it a lot and I think it's because everyone thinks I would want to be a manager someday.

Actually I want to be part of a team that achieves the best. I really enjoy being an assistant manager. I like being able to work across different projects.

Whether that is working with players individually or supporting the physical side and being an analyst. I enjoy having a lot of different things going on and using different skills.

For me it's about being at the top level as long as I can be and have a positive relationship with those I work with.

James leaves Reading for North Carolina Courage

Reading have announced that Angharad James has signed for NWSL side North Carolina Courage.

The Welsh international has signed a 'multi-year' deal and will move to the NWSL club at the end of the 2020-21 Women's Super League.

James told the official website: "I want to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to everyone at Reading for making me feel so welcome during my time here.

"I can't thank Kelly and her staff enough. I only have praise and admiration for them, for giving me the opportunity to grow and express myself on the pitch, they have been instrumental in my development.

"To the girls, who I have made some unbelievable friendships with, I can't thank you enough for your support and I wish you and the club every success for the future.

"I'd also like to thank the fans for their continued support, it's a shame you've only been able to watch us twice this season. You are a loyal and lovely bunch, so thank you. I move to North Carolina in the knowledge that I gave everything to Reading and I'll continue to do so until the end of the season. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart."

Manager Kelly Chambers added: "I'm extremely disappointed to be losing Haz. She has been a key member of the team and is a player that has developed so much over the last two seasons. When speaking to Haz I completely understand her decision to jump at the opportunity she has been given."



Martin Smith / Sports Press Photo v

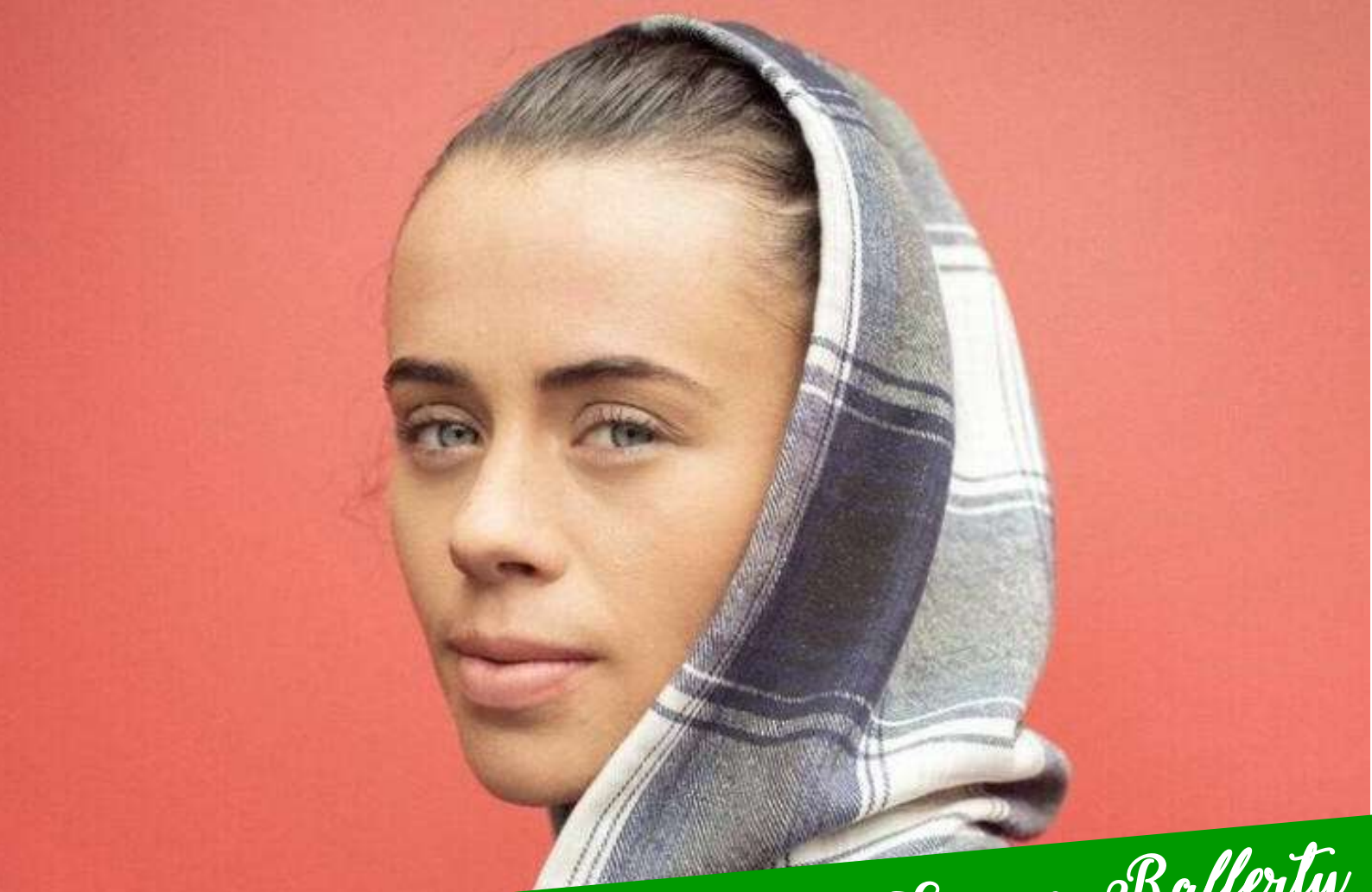
Birmingham City partners with tech-specialists

Birmingham City have announced a new partnership with tech-specialists Tevalis for the remainder of the 2020-21 Women's Super League season.

The deal sees Tevalis feature on the team's shorts for the second half of the season.

The point-of-sale technology supplier specialises in hospitality, leisure and retail sectors with more than 2,500 sites using Tevalis software, including all Birmingham City FC locations.

James Corrigan, Commercial Manager at Blues, told the official website: "We are proud to be partnering with such a forward-thinking and innovative brand such as Tevalis. The growth of women's football in the last 18 months has been brilliant and credit must go to Tevalis for recognising that. This sponsorship will only strengthen the relationship we have and highlights the ambitions of the brand to grow globally."



IN CONVERSATION WITH... *Laura Rafferty*

This month Simon O'Neill had the pleasure of speaking with Brighton and Hove Albion and Northern Ireland defender Laura Rafferty about her career and charity work.

How did you first get involved in playing football?

I first started out playing football in the back garden with my brother and my dad. They have a massive passion for football, and they used to ask me to come out and play with them. I was lucky enough to pick it up quite quickly and found my love for the game. From then I had to decide when I wanted to join a team, it was between football and Irish dancing. I think it is clear to see what I chose.

Did you start playing in a boys' team or a girls' team?

I started off training for a boys' team at the age

of 7 and we played a match against another boys' team. At the time I tried to tell my parents that the boys in the team felt uncomfortable with a girl on the side, so sadly I could not join.

But when one door closed another opened and the manager of the team, we played against came round to my house that night to ask me to join their team! So, I was delighted and that is when my journey really began.

At what age did you choose to become a defender? What attracted you to this position?

I became a defender at the age of 17 when I was at Chelsea. They saw my physical attributes fit for a centre back, and I was quite tall at that age. I have never looked back since and I enjoy playing centre back. I also learnt a lot at the club from the coaches and players I was around at the time.

Your family and friends must have been so proud of you joining a professional set up. Did they keep your feet firmly on the ground?

Yes, they were, they've supported me my whole career and never put too much pressure on me just wanted me to enjoy it. As I got older my dad could see this was the avenue I wanted to go down and pushed me even further. They would be so into the games on the side-lines and I could see how much I was doing well meant to them. Then I took it even more seriously because nothing was better to me than making my family proud.

Was there a time when you realised that with the growth of the women's game, that you could seriously consider being a professional player?

At a young age I always wanted to be a professional athlete, but it wasn't really a thing when I was growing up. I never really got a chance to watch women's football at the highest level so when I was in and around it at Chelsea it was a dream come true to watch. I used to work in a bank as a banking consultant and as much as I enjoyed the workplace, I knew the pitch is where I wanted to be.

You were young 16/17 when you made your debut for Northern Ireland tell me about that feeling of pulling on your nation's shirt?

It was a surreal experience as I wasn't expecting the opportunity to come about so quickly but when I got them few minutes on my debut, I was ecstatic. Looking back I can't really remember too much just got around the pitch with the biggest smile on my face.

During your career you have unfortunately suffered several injuries. How do you overcome not only the physical but mental toughness to get back playing?

It is so important to have good people around you - positive thoughts are a must and the thing I got in my head very early was that it's a process and a journey. Questions I asked myself a lot were what can I do to create an opportunity to share my story and help others. With support from people closest to me this was an exciting journey and chance to network with people in and around other industries.

More and more professional players are becoming involved with charitable work and I believe you are involved with several campaigns. Is this correct?

Yes, I do as much as I can with different charities, for instance, Common Goal being the newest charity that I work with. I enjoy being part of a family and enjoy using my platform in the most positive way. I feel it's very rewarding to help others achieve new opportunities.

Returning back to encouraging girls into the game. How do you think football should encourage more to become involved?

I think with the women's games being on TV a lot more and young up and coming girls able to watch role models on the pitch is a great way to encourage girls to become involved. The fans get a lot of access to the women's players and I think that's what we do well is when people watch for the first time, they usually come back and form a connection with different clubs and players.



Ward 'disappointed' after Birmingham City players lockdown party

Birmingham City manager Carla Ward said she was "very angry and disappointed" after learning two of her players had been suspended after attending a party during current lockdown restrictions.

Up to 10 Leicester City Women's players were also fined.

A statement from the Birmingham said: "The club took the decisive action to immediately suspend the players in question, pending an internal investigation.

"The players were reminded of their responsibilities and the severity of their actions.

"The club will be making no further comment and following our internal investigation, we will take the necessary steps to conclude this matter."

Ward told the BBC: "The behaviour was completely unacceptable. I was shocked because it was very out of character. They are privileged individuals so they crossed a line. The one way I felt I could discipline them and make them understand it is absolutely not what I expect was by taking away what they love, live and breathe - which is football."

Ward said the players have apologised to their team-mates, whom "they let down", including club captain Harriet Scott who has been working on Covid wards while studying for a medicine degree.

"There's no sitting here and defending it. We have dealt with it in a very good way in my opinion and in a way that hopefully educates them not to do it again.

"I've made it very clear to the group that under no circumstance will this be tolerated on my watch."

Galton suffers ankle injury

Leah Galton, who recently signed a new contract with Manchester United, has suffered ankle ligament damage.

The Women's Super League club writing the following statement:

"The club can confirm that Leah Galton has suffered ankle ligament damage and will spend the next couple of months working closely with the medical team on her rehabilitation."

Williamson equals Smith's



By Joshua Bunting

Leah Williamson made her 156th Arsenal appearance at Chelsea on Wednesday night, in doing so she equalled Arsenal legend Kelly Smith's all time record as a Gunners player.

Williamson who grew up in Milton Keynes is a life long Arsenal supporter her hero growing up in the women's game was Smith, England's all time top goal-scorer.

The 23 year old defender has had an incredible career to date and even wore the captain's armband as Joe Montemurro's side lost in Manchester to Manchester City on Sunday.

Williamson made her Arsenal debut when she came on for Rachel Yankey in Arsenal's 2-0 defeat to Birmingham City in the Champions League quarter

-final in 2014 and hasn't looked back since.

Growing up she went to the men's matches at the Emirates Stadium and was even fortunate enough to visit Highbury, while at the Women's matches she helped her mother Amanda on the gate.

Just a little girl she watched Smith score an incredible amount of goals for her beloved Arsenal before graduating through the academy with her incredible work rate and ending up playing with her hero.

Williamson and Smith were in the same FA Cup winning team in 2016 as the Gunners won 1-0 with a goal from Danielle Carter against Chelsea at Wembley Stadium.

On Smith, Williamson said "Kelly is truly the definition of my hero.

"Growing up, I aspired to be like her and that's never changed.

"She has offered me words of wisdom at times when I really needed them.

"I'm really grateful to have had the chance to play with her and watch on in awe.

"Her on-the-pitch ability made her so desirable to many. She's unlike anything else to come out of this country.

"In the dressing room, she had the power to silence the room.

"When she starts speaking, everyone listens. She comes up with what we need at the right time.

"Being a young player coming through, she knew what to say to make it all better."

Although Smith was suspended for the UEFA Women's

Arsenal appearance record



Federico Guerra Moran Sports Press Photo

Champions League final in 2007 Leah Williamson was a mascot on the day of the second leg against Umeå IK as the Gunners picked up the trophy.

Although she marked her latest milestone with a 3-0 defeat to Chelsea she could still have been proud of her performance as she was solid and her 1 v 1 defending against Chelsea striker Sam Kerr was sublime.

Williamson is a key player also in terms of creating chances for Arsenal with her passing range being one of the best in the Women's Super League and this season has already beaten her assist record from 2019-20.

In 2018/19 she finished the season as Arsenal's most active player on the ball with 1,501 touches, as well as completing the most successful passes in the opposition's half (591) and

this is a pattern that has progressed even further over the past two campaigns as she's one of the most accomplished players on the ball.

Last season she played 1,286 minutes and was the most used player in the league which shows her importance to the team, this season has been no different as she has started every game for the Gunners

What is also so good about the 23 year old is that she is versatile as she can also play in midfield if there is an injury in that area of the squad.

She can also play at the right of a back three a perfect example of this was last season against Brighton & Hove Albion where she provided two assists for Jill Roord and Danielle van de Donk.

Williamson is also the perfect role model off the pitch as she

had always spent time with fans before the Coronavirus pandemic struck and football had to be played behind closed doors.

She also went to Jakarta with the Arsenal Foundation and coached and advised young girls about football.

Williamson has already played in eight domestic cup finals despite being so young and was a valuable player in the 2018-19 Women's Super League title winning squad.

Smith is certainly held in high regard as an Arsenal legend and so will Williamson if she remains an Arsenal player but Joe Montemurro is confident that she will extend her contract at the club.

Stott forced to go back to NZ following blood cancer diagnosis

Brighton defender Rebekah Stott will miss the rest of the season for medical reasons.

The 27-year-old New Zealand centre-back has made 10 appearances for the Women's Super League since joining from Melbourne City at the start of the season.

Stott has not played since December 20 and head coach Hope Powell said: "We wish Rebekah all the best and fully support her decision to return home."

"In her relatively short time with us, Stotty has become an extremely popular member of the squad who is liked and respected by everyone and we wish her all the best."

Stott wrote on Twitter: "I would like to inform everyone that I have returned home to Australia due to medical reasons."

"Although disappointed that I will miss the remainder of the the FAWSL season, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Brighton & Hove Albion so far and wish the girls the very best of luck for the rest of the season."

Following her initial statement, Stott has released more announcing that she was diagnosed with Stage 3 Hodgkins Lymphoma.

She added: "I know the journey will be difficult, but I want to face each obstacle with a positive mindset and help inspire others who have blood cancer."

West Ham United extend Vision Consulting partnership

West Ham United have announced their partnership with Vision Consulting has been extended into a second year.

Vision Consulting is a boutique firm of chartered accountants and registered auditors and they first joined forces with the Women's Super League side in January 2020.

Managing Director Jack Sullivan told the official website: "Vision Consulting have been a great partner to the women's team over the past 12 months and we're proud to have agreed to extend the partnership into 2021."

"Their Managing Director Ghulam Alahi shares in our vision of pushing women's football forward and we're thrilled that we will continue to work together as we develop our team in the FA Women's Super League."

"I'm looking forward to working closely with Ghulam and Vision Consulting on our shared goals over the year ahead."

Mooney commits to Reading until 2023

Reading goalkeeper Grace Moloney has signed a two-year contract extension which will see her remain a Royal until June 2023.

The Royals number one has been at the club since she was nine, only leaving for a loan spell with Aston Villa Women in 2016.

Manager Kelly Chambers told the official website: "We are delighted to extend Grace's contract with Reading. Grace has always been a big part of the club and to keep her for another two years on top of how long she's been here already, shows great loyalty from both sides, which is something that is very rare in the game."

Williams discusses Nephrotic Syndrome diagnosis



Reading's Fara Williams has opened up about being diagnosed with Nephrotic Syndrome which has seen her sidelined for most of the 2020-21 Women's Super League season.

Nephrotic Syndrome is caused by an excess leak of protein from blood into urine and can lead to swelling in the legs and ankles. The steroid based medication Williams was put on to help her condition had various side-effects, including weight gain.

Writing on Instagram, Williams wrote: "In March 2020, I had an operation to reattach the muscle & tendons of my thigh to the bone. In my final stage of rehab, I noticed swelling in my legs, hands & face. My first thought was that it was some sort of allergy, however, the following Day I was admitted to A & E & underwent many tests. The result of the biopsy showed that I had a kidney condition called Nephrotic Syndrome.

"To treat this condition, I was put on the highest possible dose of steroids. This, of course, did not come without noticeable side effects. I gained an excessive amount of weight & this was noticeable in both my physical appearance and performances on the pitch.

"I was fully cleared to play football on this medication by the Anti-doping Authority, together with my having regular blood & urine tests.

"My consultant had never encountered

someone within sport with this condition, until assisting me with my treatment, so it has been difficult to know what to do for the best - both for myself and Reading WFC.

"I've been conscious of not wanting my teammates or the fans to think that I was unfit or not trying my absolute hardest in training sessions or during matches, particularly as, the reason was the condition and side effects of my medication. Upon reflection, I now feel I should have waited until I was further into recovery before I continued to play football.

"It is important to be open & honest about the challenges I have faced, with both my mental & physical well-being, over recent months and especially during lockdown, which has been challenging for us all.

"It is also important to speak out and support each other now more than ever and I would encourage anyone experiencing similar difficulties, be it health or personal matters, to seek support.

"I would like to thank my consultant and the medical and physio team at Reading, who have been instrumental in ensuring that I have received the right care, as well as my agents at New Era, my partner, family & friends for their unconditional emotional support. I now look forward to getting back on the pitch in good health."

Albion become Women in Football's first corporate member

Brighton and Hove Albion have been announced as Women in Football's first official corporate member as they commit to gender diversity.

Women in Football launch the WIF Corporate Membership programme to drive forward gender diversity and make 'change from within' across the football industry – from clubs and governing bodies to media and sponsors.

Jane Purdon, CEO of Women in Football said: "Brighton have set the benchmark and are at the forefront of their commitment to gender diversity, both within its immediate local community and beyond, and again with us at Women in Football.

"As a club they have supported our #WhatIf campaign, and in doing so increased their funding of the women's and girls' teams. They have also showcased the fantastic work done by women at the club across its communications channels."

Ingle extends Chelsea deal until 2023

Chelsea midfielder Sophie Ingle has signed a contract extension with the Women's Super League side.

After re-joining the Blues ahead of the 2018-19 season, this new deal will see her stay until June 2023.

The 29-year-old has over 100 appearances for Chelsea and told the official website: "It was nice that the club wanted to keep me on for another two years.

"I'm really excited and looking forward to the next two years."

Arsenal vs Man United rescheduled

Arsenal's home Women's Super League tie against Manchester United has been moved to Friday March 19.

The kick-off will be 18:30 GMT and will be shown live on BT Sport.

The two sides met at Leigh Sports Village earlier in the season with Ella Toone grabbing the only goal in a 1-0 win for Casey Stoney's side.

That was the first win against the north London side in our history, with the previous two clashes ending in defeat.



Chelsea announce sponsorship with Plan International

Chelsea have announced they will be sponsoring girls in India and Indonesia as part of their Football for Change campaign with Plan International.

Chelsea's latest news follow the club's support for the charity's sponsorship communities in Colombia, Ghana, India and Thailand since 2015.

Chelsea FC Women's captain Magdalena Eriksson told the official website: 'It's great to be able to support girls across Indonesia and India through Plan International's sponsorship programme.'

Bardsley joins OL Reign on loan

Manchester City goalkeeper Karen Bardsley has joined NWSL side OL Reign on loan until the end of June.

The England international, 36, has made over 100 appearances for City since joining in 2013, and has made the temporary switch to join OL Reign ahead of the start of the NWSL Challenge Cup.

Head Coach Gareth Taylor told the official website: "We're very supportive of Karen's decision to take up this opportunity over in the States for the next few months.

"We understand her desire after the past year or so to get more game time under her belt and this move is an ideal one for her."

Fishlock to leave Reading before the end of the season

Welsh international Jess Fishlock will leave Reading on April 4.

Fishlock is on loan from OL Reign and will return to her parent club in time for the NWSL Challenge Cup start.

Fishlock said: "I have to thank OL Reign as always for being so understanding regarding the loan, as the opportunity to train and play over the last few months has been super important to me. I will be giving everything for Reading until my last day with the club, as they have been brilliant with me and I am thankful for the opportunity they provided."

Earps signs new deal with United

Manchester United have announced that goalkeeper Mary Earps has signed a new contract with the Women's Super League club.

The 27-year-old, who joined the club in July 2019, has made 33 appearances in all competitions and the new deal will see her stay at the club until June 2023, with the option to extend for a further year.

Earps told the official website: "I'm delighted to extend my stay here; we've grown so much as a team in the last couple of years and that's something I'm really looking forward to continuing.

"I always want to be in an environment that will challenge me, I have a hunger to learn and improve, and the staff here are brilliant in giving me the best opportunity to do that.

"This team is capable of big things; I want to be playing Champions League football and to be competing for trophies and I know that ambition is shared. There is nowhere else I would want to be playing."

Manager Casey Stoney added: "The experience she has brought to the team has been key, but she is also someone that will always ask questions and strives to improve every day, and that mindset is great to see."

Cadbury and Aston Villa a nationwide team



This International Women's Day, Cadbury and Aston Villa Women are calling for women from across the UK to unite by sharing positive and empowering messages to each other, which will be delivered on limited edition Cadbury Dairy Milk 'Team Talk' bars.

Drawing on the empowering nature of a team talk, Cadbury and the team have come together to launch #IWDTeamTalk, a social movement which aims to unite the UK's 33 million women as one team through the power of shared words.

#IWDTeamTalk encourages women to share words that they feel are important for any and all women to hear. From motivating others to achieve their life goals to empowering women to take action against bias and inequality, the movement aims to deliver a

moment of inspiration to women across the nation.

To take part, individuals simply need to head to @CadburyUK Twitter and share a message that they believe will resonate with every woman using #IWDTeamTalk. A selection of quotes will be chosen to feature on limited edition Cadbury Dairy Milk 'Team Talk' bars and shared with women across the country; including those who shared their words, as well as a number of women focused groups from across the nation.

The players of Aston Villa Women alongside women from across all levels of the Mondelez International business kicked off the campaign by becoming the first to share their words, revealing why they feel they are important for other women to hear.

Anita Asante, Aston Villa Women: "There is beauty & Strength in diversity."

"Because I believe that women are breaking barriers all across the world, all the time in different areas of work and industry. It's a great sign of the progress we are making."

Chloe Arthur, Aston Villa Women: "Use those who want to destroy your dream as fuel to achieve it."

"That is to all the girls growing up in sport, or in any point in their life. It's relevant to me and women around the world as I feel like in sport, or any walk of life, there are life challenges and there are people who try and put you down but it's important to use this negative energy as fuel to help achieve your dream because it's your life and no one else's."

on Villa champion talk



Emily Syme, Aston Villa Women: “Keep your eyes on the stars, but your feet on the ground.”

“I have this in the changing room before game day to remind me to always follow my dreams but make sure to remember where I’ve come from.”

This campaign is a continuation of Cadbury and Aston Villa Women’s commitment to supporting the women’s game. The partnership of these two Birmingham institutes focuses on enhancing the clubs Students of the Game Programme, which puts education and careers at the centre of the football operation. Providing players with the opportunity to play elite professional football whilst developing their own viable career paths. Cadbury

are supporting the diversification of the current offering through, enhancements to the bespoke Women’s Leadership Programme, providing work experience opportunities and employability skills in a bid to support the future pathways of each of the team.

Lyndsey Homer, Brand Manager at Cadbury said: “We’re incredibly proud to extend the work we do with Aston Villa W.F.C. through the ‘Students of the Game’ programme to women across the country with our Team Talk campaign.

“Supporting women within the UK’s communities is a key priority for us, and we’re so excited to see the words women share”

Anita Asante, Aston Villa W.F.C. said: “For the squad,

the importance of spotlighting and supporting the team’s ambitions is vital to the overall progression of the game.

“Drawing on the value of team talks to spread key messages is an incredibly powerful way in which we hope to inspire and uplift the women in our wider community. Aston Villa Women are proud to pioneer our dual careers model that aims to remove the obstacles faced by female footballers and future professionals.

“Communication is key to success both on and off the pitch, and this campaign thoroughly demonstrates that.”

Ladd commits to United

Manchester United midfielder Hayley Ladd has signed a new deal to stay with the club until June 2023.

Ladd, 27, joined in July 2019 and has made just over 40 appearances for the Women's Super League side.

Ladd told the official website: "I'm so happy to be committing my future to the club. To be a part of this squad is really special and I'm really enjoying my time here.

"When I first came to United, I knew I would be part of an ambitious group of players and staff and that mindset has only grown stronger over the last couple of years.

"We have an exciting time ahead of us and I know that if we continue to put the work in, day in, day out, then we can achieve our goals.

"I also want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me on my journey so far, from my team-mates and the staff, to the fans, and of course my family, who have always been behind me."

Manager Casey Stoney added: "Her style of play brings a calmness to our midfield and the relationship she has on the pitch with the players around her is invaluable."

Telford signs new Chelsea contract

Chelsea goalkeeper Carly Telford has extended her stay at the Women's Super League club until June 2022.

The 33-year-old has made 75 appearances, with 36 of those being clean sheets.

Telford told the official website: "I'm extremely happy. I think it's important at my age to know that I've still got something to give to a club like Chelsea but also for the club to feel like they still value me.

"This club has been amazing for me personally and to be around such a quality team and group of girls is amazing."

Christiansen agrees new Everton deal

Izzy Christiansen has signed a new deal with Everton which will see her stay at the club until June 2023.

The 29-year-old midfielder joined the Blues from Lyon in January 2020 and after a couple of small injuries has made an impact at the Women's Super League side.

Everton manager Willie Kirk said: "I'm delighted to get Izzy's contract extended with the Club.

"I've loved working with her since she arrived just over a year ago. From day one she has challenged and improved our standards and shows great leadership on and off the pitch.

"She is technically fantastic, physically in great condition and, tactically, way ahead of most players.

"Izzy will be pivotal to the success that we are trying to bring to the Club."



The FA Women's Super League

Table after March 7		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Chelsea	16	13	2	1	41	41
2	Manchester City	16	12	3	1	40	39
3	Manchester United	16	11	2	3	19	35
4	Arsenal	15	9	2	4	34	29
5	Everton	15	6	4	5	4	22
6	Reading	15	4	7	4	-5	19
7	Brighton & Hove Albion	16	5	3	8	-17	18
8	Tottenham Hotspur	14	3	3	8	-13	12
9	Birmingham City	13	3	2	8	-14	11
10	Aston Villa	14	3	1	10	-26	10
11	West Ham United	14	2	2	10	-18	8
12	Bristol City	14	1	3	10	-45	6

March fixtures & results

Sunday, March 7

Manchester United 3-0 Aston Villa
Birmingham City 0-4 Arsenal
Brighton & HA 2-0 Tottenham Hotspur
Manchester City 1-0 Everton
West Ham 0-2 Chelsea

Monday, March 8

Bristol City vs Reading (20:15)

Tuesday, March 11

Birmingham City vs Everton (19:00)

Sunday, March 14

Reading vs Tottenham Hotspur (12:30)

Wednesday, March 17

Everton vs Chelsea (19:00)

Aston Villa vs Brighton & HA (19:30)
Bristol City vs Manchester City (19:30)
West Ham Utd vs Birmingham City (19:30)

Friday, March 19

Arsenal vs Manchester United (18:30)

Sunday, March 21

Tottenham Hotspur vs Bristol City (14:00)

Sunday, March 28

Manchester United vs West Ham United (12:00)
Birmingham City vs Bristol City (14:00)
Brighton & HA vs Everton (14:00)
Chelsea vs Aston Villa (14:00)
Manchester City vs Reading (14:00)
Tottenham Hotspur vs Arsenal (14:00)

CHAMPIONSHIP



AMY GODDARD

On what started as a regular Monday, Crystal Palace's Amy Goddard suddenly found her life was very different. After her face fell, she was taken to hospital with a suspected stroke but was later diagnosed with Bells Palsy. As she continues her recovery, Goddard has returned to her Championship club and is speaking out about her experience to help others in her situation.

You have been open about your recent health problems, please could you shed a bit more light on it?

On a Monday, I was on Facetime to my Grandparents and I kept smiling with just one side of my face. I just thought I was tired. I'd had a session and a full days work so that was that. Woke up on the Tuesday and all my face on the left had dropped. It was very, very scary.

I was meant to go to work and was running late so I got in the car and showed my colleagues what had happened. Whilst I was driving I could tell my left eye could not blink and I realised I had to go to hospital. My boyfriend told me to call

111, they automatically thought it was a stroke. My colleague dropped me off, I had a lot of scans and they finally diagnosed it as Bells Palsy. It was such a shock, it's not every day you wake up, look in the mirror and something has changed like that. I've had about a month off. It's been quite hard, mentally as well. It's quite unknown as to what has caused it.

It sounds so scary, are you back to full fitness and playing now?

I was back for the Leicester game on the bench. Getting back to full fitness is not completely there yet but I am getting there and getting stronger as the weeks go by.

What are your personal goals for the rest of the season now?

“ Helping others is what I love to do, that's why I am telling my story ”

For me, it's getting back to 100% fitness and making sure my welfare is 100%. In terms of mental health, it has been quite difficult and for me to get in the right mind frame and start again is definitely the highest priority on the list.

How important has the support of your teammates been whilst you have been recovering from Bells Palsy?

Massively. If anyone has any illnesses, we all know that the support from others is the biggest thing that you need. Mentally it has been difficult. From my teammates, the bunch of girls that we have got are amazing and they have been so supportive and helped me along my journey.

How have you been able to manage your condition whilst getting back to the football pitch?

I think the whole condition was to do with balance in my lifestyle with work and football. I think there is some aspects of the lifestyle you live with regards to working and playing at the same time, it's full on. Men in this position would just have to play football and not have to work on the side. Having that part-time football

and working is quite stressful.

Do you hope that by sharing your story you can help influence others into showing them that they can get back to full fitness and doing what they love?

Definitely. That's what I want to do. Helping others is one of the things I love to do so if I can help in any way possible I will do.

You were one Yeovil's star performs when they were in the WSL a few years ago, how would you describe the experience?

It was such an amazing experience to play in the WSL and that is every footballers dream so for me to play week in week out to play against teams like Arsenal, Manchester City, Tottenham was very much a high in my career. Yeovil was definitely a highlight of my career.

It was sad to see Yeovil drop down due to financial struggles, do you think more needs to be done so that more clubs don't follow suit?

Definitely. Each club has their own difficulties and at the time Yeovil had it bad on the financial sides. They have to start building back up again and build it up bit by bit.



Hepple named North East Football Writers' Association women's player of the year

Durham midfielder Beth Hepple has been named the North East Football Writers' Association women's player of the year for 2020.

Hepple has won the trophy for the second time after taking home the trophy in 2018.

The midfielder was handed the award after journalists from across the region voted for who they felt had performed best over the last twelve months.

She told the official website: "It's quite a shock really, because I think the whole squad's had a good season.

"It could have been anyone this year, so it's a huge honour and I'm delighted.

"I had a really good start in terms of goals and that's really helped me this season," continued the midfielder.

"But as a team this year, we've been so great and that's put me in higher positions up the pitch.

"The club has won it three years in a row now and that just shows what a great team we have and the talent that is in the North East."

Sheffield United partner with Pinders

Sheffield United have announced a new partnership with local print and signage experts Pinders.

The deal will be for two years and will see the company advertised on the back of the shorts.

Zoe Johnson GM for SU women's team added "We are extremely thankful of this level of support from Pinders who have been an integral part of the club for many years.

"We certainly look forward to continuing our relationship with them in the future".

Durham to support local community after fundraising drive

Durham have raised over £2400 as part of the #EndChildFoodPoverty campaign.

After being inspired by Marcus Rashford's campaign, the Championship club asked for donations from supporters.

The statement from Durham read: "Our initial target of £1,000 will be distributed to schools, community groups and families in County Durham to ensure nobody goes hungry.

"We are working alongside Mary Foy, MP for the City of Durham, to ensure this goes to those who need it most.

"And the remaining sum raised will be donated to REFUSE, a community group based in Chester-le-Street."

FA launches Coaching



The Football Association has announced the launch of the Coaching Excellence Initiative, an 18-month programme created to develop and connect high performance coaches working in the elite women's game.

14 coaches have been selected for the inaugural Coaching Excellence Initiative programme, providing them with a bespoke, high-quality coach development experience underpinned by regular one-to-one support from a dedicated team of mentors.

The coaches will receive individual and collective learning opportunities at regular workshops and interventions to support their individual and collective needs, unique to the experiences faced in women's football.

Delivered annually via group gatherings in high performance environments, peer mentoring and individual support, the

programme will advance the coaching and leadership ability of selected senior coaches working in the women's elite game, including the Barclays FA Women's Super League, FA Women's Championship and the England Women's pathway.

The programme will become a mainstay of The FA's commitment in the 2020-2024 'Inspiring Positive Change' strategy, to provide coaches personalised and high-quality experiences. 14 to 18 coaches – 75% of whom will be female – will be supported via the programme each season.

The 14 coaches for the 2020/21 programme were selected following an application process, which included individual assessment and interviews with players, General Managers and technical staff at relevant clubs and national teams.

The coaches are:

- Carla Ward, Birmingham City WFC Manager
- Charlotte Healy, Manchester United WSL Academy Manager
- Gemma Davies, Aston Villa WFC Head Coach
- Gemma Donnelly, Blackburn Rovers WFC Manager
- Gemma Grainger, England WU17 Women's National Head Coach
- Joe Sheehan, Ipswich Town WSL Academy Head Coach & First Team Manager
- Karen Hills, in between roles
- Leanne Champ, Chelsea WFC Technical Coach
- Lydia Bedford, England Women's U18s Development Phase Head Coach

g Excellence Initiative



- Melanie Reay, Sunderland AFC Ladies Head Coach
- Riteesh Mishra, Charlton Athletic WFC Head Coach
- Stephanie Libbey, Durham WFC First Team Coach
- Tanya Oxtoby, Bristol City WFC Manager
- Vicky Jepson, in between roles

The inaugural 18-month programme started in August 2020 and has so far seen the coaches receive formal learning opportunities through group events held online, as well as virtual small group meet-ups, peer to peer learning and sharing and one-to-one mentoring.

Audrey Cooper, The FA's Head of Women's Coach Development, said: "The Coaching Excellence Initiative is central to our commitment to see the top coaches in the

women's game become the very best they can, providing them with the development and learning opportunities to achieve their potential and fulfil their ambitions. Living well beyond the 18-month course, it will provide the coaches with a support network to share their experiences as they continue in their career.

"This programme will also support our broader ambition to normalise women in football coaching, shining a light each year on aspirational, relatable and credible female role models for future generations to be inspired by. Whether you are female or male, it's my belief that there's never been a more exciting time to be a coach in the women's game."

Tanya Oxtoby, Coaching Excellence Initiative participant and Manager at Bristol City WFC, added: "I applied to The FA's CEI programme to continue to

develop myself as a manager, network with likeminded people within the women's game and to challenge my way of thinking. The programme has been extremely useful as its focused on skills and qualities which do not normally feature within technical coaching courses. It's provided me with a network of support in very strange times and it's changed the way I think about my way of working and how I can reach my own potential moving forward."

The Coaching Excellence Initiative follows a record number of female coaches taking their FA Level 4 (UEFA A Licence) and the announcement of The FA's Elite Coach Placement Programme which sees Rachel Yankey, Fara Williams and Coreen Brown begin season-long coaching placements with England's Women's development teams.

Crystal Palace support amateur footballers

Players from Crystal Palace have spent their timing calling 615 players who were struggling without football in an initiative started by goalkeeper Chloe Morgan.

She told the official website: “I initially put a tweet out to say I was thinking of the fans and players and appreciated how difficult it was for people to be unable to play at the moment and unable to see teammates, get out on the pitch and have a distraction from everything that’s going on.

“There was a massive response to that and an outpouring of people who were finding it difficult.

“The girls were all so up for it – they absolutely jumped at the chance. Pretty much the entire squad signed up. I spoke with [Palace Women’s General Manager Paula Johnson] about putting a message out from Palace’s accounts and she was fantastic in setting it up.”

Osmond takes temporary charge after Burch leaves London Bees

First team coach Sian Osmond has taken temporary charge of London Bees until the end of the season.

Osmond has been with the Club for five years and will now step into the role of Caretaker Manager going forward for the remaining six matches of the 2020/21 FA Women’s Championship season.

The news comes after they released a statement on February 10 that they had parted company with manager Lee Burch.

The statement read: “Following a challenging 2020/21 campaign so far, the Club and Lee have mutually agreed to part company.

“The Club wish him nothing but our best wishes for his future endeavours.”

Burch released a statement via the League Managers Association (LMA) to say: “Firstly, I would like to say that I enjoyed my time at London Bees and I would like to thank the chairman, staff and players past and present.

“I leave the club after nearly two years, becoming one of the longest serving managers in the Championship. Finishing with a London Bees record of 5th in the division and being awarded two Manager of the Month trophies were personal highlights.

“This season has seen unprecedented challenges and to maintain and keep the club in its current position is an accomplishment which I believe the current staff and players will complete over the remaining games.”

Fenton extends Rovers contract

Blackburn Rovers vice-captain Natasha Fenton has signed a contract extension to remain at the Championship club until June 2022.

After signing her first professional contract with the club in the summer of 2020, the 22-year-old is now in her sixth season with the first team.

Fenton told the official website: “I’m really pleased to extend my contract with Rovers and I’m excited to be a part of the plan that we’ve got going forward.

“We’re looking to improve and hopefully establish ourselves and grow as a Club. I’m looking forward to being on that journey and developing as a player.

“I’ll continue to work hard as I feel like that’s something I’ve done throughout the season and I want to carry on doing.

“Hopefully we can finish strong this year, take that into next season and then look forward to the future.”

Manager Gemmy Donnelly added: “Tash is a product of our RTC, it took her a number of seasons before she really cemented down her position a couple of seasons ago and now she’s a key figure in our starting 11.”



The FA Women's Championship

Table after Jan 10		P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1	Leicester City	15	12	2	1	29	38
2	Durham	16	11	5	0	16	38
3	Sheffield United	15	8	4	3	18	28
4	Liverpool	15	8	4	3	14	28
5	London City Lionesses	17	6	4	7	2	22
6	Lewes	15	5	4	6	-5	19
7	Blackburn Rovers	15	4	5	6	-5	17
8	Crystal Palace	16	4	4	8	-4	16
9	Charlton Athletic	14	2	5	7	-8	11
10	Coventry United	15	3	1	11	-21	10
11	London Bees	17	2	2	13	-36	8

March results & fixtures

Sunday, March 7

Blackburn Rovers 0-2 Durham
Charlton Athletic 1-1 Lewes
Coventry United 1-0 London City Lionesses
Crystal Palace 0-1 Liverpool
London Bees 0-7 Leicester City

Sunday, March 14

Blackburn Rovers vs Lewes (12:00)
Durham vs Leicester City (12:00)
Liverpool vs Coventry United (14:00)
Sheffield United vs Charlton Athletic
(14:00)

Thursday, March 25

Crystal Palace vs Charlton Athletic (20:00)

Sunday, March 28

Durham vs Sheffield United (12:00)
Leicester City vs Coventry United (14:00)
Lewes vs London Bees (14:00)
Liverpool vs Blackburn Rovers (14:00)
London City Lionesses vs Charlton Athletic
(14:00)

The centenary anniversary



Lewes FC, the only semi-professional or professional club in the world to pay its men's and women's teams equally, has released a film reflecting on The FA's decision to ban women's football 100 years ago. Commissioned to coincide with International Women's Day - a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women - the film explores the long-term impact the 50-year ban had on the women's game in England.

Fronted by former England International and WSL player and Lewes FC Director, Claire Rafferty, the provocative vignette charts the rise of women's football in the early 20th century, when it grew almost as quickly as the men's game, reaching new heights in the period immediately after the First World War. As women took their places in munition factories to support the war effort, they formed

teams for fun. But unexpectedly women's football began attracting tens of thousands of fans to matches across the country even after the men's Leagues had restarted.

This popularity reached its zenith when a match between Dick Kerr's Ladies and St Helens saw 53,000 fans attend Goodison Park on Boxing Day 1920, with a further 14,000 people locked out of the ground.

Then, in 1921, The FA took the decision to ban women's football, essentially outlawing the game in England, suddenly deeming it 'quite unsuitable for females'. They ordered clubs to 'refuse the use of their grounds for women's matches' and forbade its members from acting as referees or linesmen at women's games.

Although the FA claimed that the reason for the ban was to 'protect' women, it was widely purported that the growing

popularity was seen as a threat to the men's game. The ban, which would last 50 years in total, changed the course of women's football in England forever. Finally, under pressure from UEFA, the ban was lifted in 1971, though even then, no official FA Women's Football Committee was created until 1993.

Commenting on her role in the film, Claire Rafferty said: "It's been a thought-provoking experience to dig deeper into the history of women's football in England. I think a huge majority of football fans have no idea that this ban was ever in place, why it was introduced or that it lasted so long. It's almost impossible to calculate the true cost of the damage it did to the development of the women's game but, there is no doubt, the gap in resources, revenues and opportunities would be far more equal if it had never been in place."

As Gail Newsham, a former player and women's football

y of women's football ban



historian, remarks in the film: “Generations of people have been brought up to believe that football is not a game for women and, unfortunately, there are still a lot of people who think that.” Rafferty continues: “When I was growing up I experienced first-hand the lack of opportunity and access to facilities compared to my male counterparts.

“That’s why I’m thrilled to present this film and be a part of the Lewes FC collective, to show that there is a progressive model, with equality and community at its heart, that football fans can get behind.”

“The 50-year ban held back on-pitch progress but also stoked still-present discrimination against women involved in all aspects of football, whether as players, pundits, referees or coaches. Together with Lyle & Scott we wanted to share this story with a wider audience and encourage more clubs to put

equality at the heart of their operations” said Maggie Murphy, General Manager at Lewes FC, who commissioned the film. She continued: “This year’s International Women’s Day slogan – “Choose to Challenge” is at the heart of what we as a club set out to do.

“The good news for girls and women everywhere is that positive change is happening and we are proud of our role in that. Equality and inclusion is the future of football and we hope that other clubs around the world will take inspiration from the example we are setting.”

Lewes FC is the only semi-professional or professional club in the world that provides the same investment, resource and infrastructure into its men’s and women’s teams. Its players are paid equally, play on the same pitch and train at the same facilities - the club have subsequently become known as Equality FC. Lewes FC compete in the FA Women’s

Championship, alongside the likes of Liverpool, Leicester City, Crystal Palace and Sheffield Utd but their fans and the wider community know that this is a club on a different path. This includes being a 100% fan-owned, democratic, not-for-profit football club.

Scottish clothing brand, Lyle & Scott, invested a six figure sum into Lewes FC in December 2020, the largest ever obtained by any English women’s team that is not affiliated to a men’s Premier League side.

The investment is vital at a time when many grassroots sporting institutions are facing a financial difficulty and an uncertain future. The contribution is supporting the club with resource, infrastructure and player acquisition. Lyle & Scott and Lewes FC will be creating a thread of films that explore themes of equality, diversity and community.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE



CLINTON LANCASTER

With the National League suspended, it has been hard for players and coaches to keep motivated throughout the global Covid-19 pandemic. So far no decision has been made regarding the completion of the National League with teams branded as 'grassroots', something which Watford head coach Clinton Lancaster has found frustrating.

The National League has taken a bit of a hit and you haven't been fortunate enough to carry on the league, looking forward to the first game back are you hoping to build on the good form from before lockdown?

Definitely. It's still a little up in the air as to when we will be back or even back at all. We are in a period where we do not know what will happen next. We are still waiting for an announcement from the FA. As soon as we get back, we just want to crack on. All the players have been preparing well at home and doing what they can, we just want to come back as well as we can.

How hard has it been as a coach during lockdown and how much has your

role changed not being able to see the players week in, week out?

It's been very difficult because everything we have done has been online or over the phone. It has been completely different. It is not something you learn or plan for when you are taking your coaching badges. It's been very difficult but I suppose we have had enough time to get used to it unfortunately. We can see the light now and hopefully we will be allowed back on the grass very soon.

How had has it been keeping the players motivated without knowing when you are likely to be back competing?

It's been the most difficult thing. I have been doing my best to speak to the

“It's difficult to take to be classed as grassroots for players and coaches”

players every week. They have been finding it very difficult doing their day jobs and then coming home and having to drag themselves out for a run or to do skills at home instead of coming to training. Coming to training is something the players look forward to whereas going out for a run everyday or doing programmes when they are isolated and doing them on their own is really difficult. I just have had to keep reminding them that when they get back the focus is trying to get promotion and get into the Championship so that has to be the focus.

You have had several players depart in the transfer window for the sole reason that they want to get game time in the Championship, do you have confidence in the current squad that they can perform even without those players?

Yes. Losing Ocean [Rolandsen] was a bit of a blow but at the same time, we know that players want to play higher. I cannot stop players achieving their ambitions. I think we still have a very good squad and good players and young players to pick from. We are still in a good position.

Do you have your sights set on promotion?

That has been our aim since the start of the season, it's always been to get promoted. We are not getting too carried away, it's a competitive league we are in and we don't know what the end of the season will bring but that is still the aim of every single person at the club.

With the WSL and Championship continuing, are you worried that for clubs who do get promoted, it could be an even bigger step up than it was before the pandemic?

I don't think so. From a playing point of view if I look at the players I have got, I am sure a lot of players in the National League will be able to step up and compete. We would certainly be able to attract players from Championship clubs and I think it is the way it needs to go.

The Championship is currently 11 teams. If you can grow the Championship, if you can grow the WSL, that's the way it should go. The more teams we can get at the top end, the more competitive it can be. I think competition will always be good if clubs are willing to back their teams.

How frustrating has it been that Championship and WSL teams have been able to continue playing whilst you have been at a standstill?

The problem in the National League is that there is quite a divide. Whilst we could have continued, there are others who perhaps would not have been able to continue. Even though you have to meet certain requirements to play in Tier 3, there are difference. It's frustrating to see the Championship continue but it is what it is. Unfortunately that's the hand we were dealt. We try not to worry too much about it. The frustrating thing for me is that there is an opportunity for clubs in the Championship to pick players who are not playing, there is not really a lot I can do about it. I have just had to try and keep hold of my players.

What do you think needs to be done to improve the standard of the National League?

Certainly in our league in the South and in the North there is talent there. We have come under the section as 'grassroots' and that has been the hardest thing for a lot of players and coaches as well. It's been difficult to take that it's been classed as grassroots. We have internationals that play for us like Helen Ward so to be classed as grassroots is difficult and I don't know what the FA can do about it. Do they grow the Championship? Certainly there are a lot of players and coaches in the National League who do not appreciate being classed as grassroots.





In the women's game in a lot of the leagues, you have to win the league to be promoted which seems a bit harsh for teams who finish second or third, would you welcome something like a play-off system?

I think that would be very interesting. I think you want an idea before the season starts as to which teams meet the requirements to go up. Often you see it where a team wins and they don't reach the requirements so it goes to the team which finishes second. It's something I would definitely support.

You have enjoyed a good season so far but it won't mean anything if the FA decide to declare it null and void, you must be hoping the season resumes?

I think everyone wants football to resume. Whether we end up winning the league or not, the most important thing is that there are a lot of very good, talented footballers who are not playing football at the minute. You see in our situation where we have put players out

on loan or we have lost players but they all want to be playing football. No matter the outcome of the season, they all want to be playing.

The support you are given by Watford is huge, how would you rate the support from men's side of things?

It's brilliant, it's excellent. I think that's what hurts the most when you are classed as grassroots but you same at the same ground as the men's team.

We have a great relationship with the men's side of the club. They are all really friendly. We are certainly in a fortunate place.

What are your long-term aspirations with Watford?

It's to take this team as far as I possibly can. You never know what is around the corner but I am definitely going to push them as far as I can.

In loving memory



By Charlotte Stacey

The 22nd February 2021 marked the second anniversary of the passing of Kent Football United goalkeeper, Jordan Dawes.

Long before the world heard the news of “the illness of the teenage goalkeeper”, I had heard plenty about “my friend from work, Jordan”. In fact, for an entire year before her death, Jordan’s name regularly infused conversations in my house. My close friend Emily worked with Jordan at a local Hotel Diner and often spoke of her. Knowing we had a shared interest in football, I felt a pang of fondness toward Jordan. To this day I am regretful that I was never able to meet her, I am sure we would have had plenty to talk about.

With the permission of her family - Mum, Michelle, Dad, Rob, brother, Luke and sister-in-law, Molly - Emily and I sat down together to speak about Jordan.

Emily begins slowly, stirring resting memories that are seemingly reluctant to be disturbed, the good and the bad. Yet I would like to be very clear, this was not a sombre affair. Anything but. Emily speaks about Jordan with such an affection, a warmth so genuine that with every word uttered it feels as if I am truly seeing her.

“She loved The Lion King and One Direction” is one of the first things Emily says and just like that eighteen-year-old Jordan is with us. The typical teenager with a love for music, Disney and Netflix. “She liked just normal things. We would go round and just watch films, right up until the end.”

A flash backwards and Emily quickly notes that she had not known Jordan for very long. “I think it was just over a year”, yet the impression Jordan has left upon her is striking. A memory of a recently bereaved Emily catches me, she is shakenly asking no one in

particular, “I’ve never had anything like this, what do I do?” A stark reminder that time and the people we wish to spend it with do not always go hand in hand.

As we continue, what started as a trickle soon became a downpour. We find ourselves in an intimate occasion in which a person opens themselves up without fear of repercussion as Emily begins to describe Jordan with a fluid vivacity. It becomes difficult to not consider that she has unwittingly been waiting to speak so frankly for quite some time.

What forms is a vibrant picture of a selfless individual, one that was willing to go above and beyond to make the lives easier of those around her. “She was one of those people who never wanted to let anyone down. She was always trying to do more, always offering to cover people’s shifts and things like that. I used to say to her, ‘Jordan, it’s fine, you don’t

of Jordan Dawes



have to cover the shifts if it's too much.' But that was just it, it was never too much."

Earlier than expected, we find ourselves speaking about football. "She was very good. I'll admit I don't know a lot about football, but even I know she was really good at what she did. There was this one save she made that everyone went mad about. People still talk about it now." Emily is referring to the 2018 Kent Reliance Women's Cup final. After drawing 1-1, the match that ended up going to penalties and Jordan's spectacular footed save meant Kent Football United lifted the silverware.

Jordan's football career was an illustrious one and one that undoubtably would have continued up the pyramid. The Dawes family detail Jordan's extensive career, one that began like many others. Jordan started out playing for a boys team, Titan Tigers, as well as playing for her primary and

secondary schools respectively. Jordan's Mum, Michelle, goes on to explain that she also played for Kent Schools FA, Orpington District, Charlton Athletic, Gillingham and Kent Football United.

Furthering Emily's declaration of Jordan's skill as a goalkeeper, Michelle explains that Jordan was in the application process for a scholarship in America, "it looked like she was getting a full scholarship". Upon asking Michelle what Jordan's footballing aspirations were, she sincerely replied, "she wanted to go all the way."

Jordan's former coach, Charlton Athletic and Northern Ireland midfielder Ciara Watling, graciously expresses her admiration of Jordan's dedication to her sport. "Jordan was an amazing goalkeeper, she had it all! She has been with Gillingham and Charlton, but when I met her, she was playing for a local team, Kent Football United.

Her dream was to go to America and play out there which sadly she didn't get to do, but I know she would've succeeded out there and I have no doubt she would've come back and played at a high level over here, easily in the Championship."

"She was a very shy girl at first", Ciara adds, "but she soon came out of her shell and brought a bit of sass with her, always working hard with her goalkeeper coach Neale at APD as well. I loved working with Jordan and the team, the girls were a real unique bunch and made me laugh all day every day."

Jordan was an avid Manchester United fan and was ecstatic to learn they were forming a women's team. The news was made even sweeter when it was announced goalkeeper Siobhan Chamberlain would be joining, and that former defender, Casey Stoney, would be taking the helm. Michelle reveals that

Chamberlain and Stoney were two of Jordan's footballing heroes, along with United keeper, David De Gea. After informing Michelle of Manchester United's success in the WSL, I asked how Jordan may have reacted to this. "J would love it!" A response that fetches a smile.

"She got to meet them", Emily says as I enlighten her on Stoney's Red Devils. "She met them and went on the pitch and everything." Emily is speaking about Manchester United's game against Charlton in January 2019, in which Jordan led the team out whilst wearing Chamberlain's shirt.

"She met Olly Murs, Louis Tomlinson sent her a message and she managed to see The Lion King. She had some really lovely things." Emily says, and the touching tributes that poured in, surface in our minds when the news of Jordan's diagnosis became public. Yet, I reflect upon hearing this news privately, reliving Emily's subdued days, the muted

conversations when helplessness prevailed.

"She kept coming into work saying she had headaches and that they were getting worse. She had migraines at work", Emily starts as we begin to speak about Jordan's last months. She takes me back to 22nd November 2018, the day that began just like any other. "I was at work and my manager came over to me and he asked me to read a text. It was from Jordan's Mum and it said 'We're in the hospital, J's had a stroke.'"

Emily takes a second, her eyes, for the first time, telling of the pain that is still very real. She goes on to lay out the timeline that followed. "All we could think was, why did this eighteen-year-old active girl have a stroke?" Unfortunately, the answer was nothing anyone could have imagined. Jordan had liver cancer. She was moved to a London hospital where the Dawes' then learned of the heart-breaking prognosis, the cancer had

spread and there was nothing anyone could do.

Just before Christmas, Jordan returned home where the Dawes', even in their toughest time, on their hardest days, opened their doors to friends and family to visit Jordan as and when they wished. Emily gushes over the Dawes', "they are the nicest family you'll ever meet. So lovely, so welcoming, all of them – aunts, cousins, uncles - all of them."

As she begins to describe Jordan's Mum, Michelle, an upturned smile begins to take shape. Emily speaks with an overwhelming respect, as only someone who has witnessed a person burden a living nightmare can. "Her Mum did not leave her side. Honestly, she did not leave her at all. Only once did I ever see her [Michelle] cry. She is so strong, she always put on a brave face and never let it show."

As she continues to talk, Emily begins to laugh. She jovially recalls Jordan insisting on



being able to go in the hot tub. “She was adamant she was going in”, she jokes, “Her Mum was doing everything she could to put her off because she’d have to be lifted, but she wasn’t having any of it. She was going in. So, there we all were, standing outside absolutely freezing, it was about January time, and there she was, in the tub having a great time just chilling.”

“And she wanted this pink Nike bag.” She carries on, the memories tumbling out thick and fast now. “It was to hold the medication that was being pumped into her arm. I don’t know what it was about it, but she just kept going on about this bag.”

And there she was. Jordan. The figure that retained that pitch side determination, the girl who’s sense of humour never faltered, who remained her lovable self until the very end.

As our conversation draws to a close, Emily recounts Jordan’s last days. On her final

Thursday, Jordan was moved to Ellenor Hospice where she peacefully passed on 22nd February 2019. Jordan’s funeral, or ‘celebration day’, as is the preferred term, was attended by roughly eight hundred people. “It was packed, there were so many people that they were spilling over outside.”

But further than this, Emily explains a particular incident that occurred on this day and has done on every day that represents Jordan since. “It’s so strange”, her eyes widen in disbelief, “on every ‘Jordan day’ there is a rainbow. I kid you not. Every time.” As if confirming this to herself, she shows me a photograph of a rainbow spanning the sky on the day of Jordan’s service.

Emily begins to speak of Jordan’s family once again. “They like to give back” she says, alluding to the Dawes’ eternal gratefulness for the opportunities Jordan was able to have. The Dawes family, and those close to them, continue

to organise fundraisers in order to “give back” to the charities that supported them. Their next fundraiser will be a Tough Mudder in September.

It is through these events, these friends and family members that Jordan lives on. Through them she will be forever remembered for everything she was on the pitch and everything she was off of it. For it is clear that Jordan Dawes was someone rather special, someone who brought the sun even when she felt the rain. Just like a rainbow.

With special thanks to The Dawes Family, Emily Collins and Ciara Watling.

Charities:

- Ellenor Hospice
- Clic Sargent
- Rays of Sunshine
- Emily Ash Trust
- Alexandra Sales Trust



Huddersfield decide not to apply for promotion

Huddersfield Town have announced that they will not be applying for promotion into the FA Women's Championship for the 2021/22 season.

The Yorkshire side currently sit at the top of the National League Northern Premier Division with the leagues currently suspended under Covid-19 restrictions.

The statement read: "After months of contemplation, the board decided that this is in the Club's best long-term interests and we will continue to build in order to be in a better position to meet the FA regulations needed to compete in the second tier in the future.

Club Chairman David Mallin says that the club still holds ambition to fight for promotion next season.

"We had planned to make an application for a FA Licence to gain promotion to the Championship but, given all the uncertainty the committee have decided to hold off for this year which gives us 12 months to plan and, be better prepared for the financial costs that promotion would bring."

"We only want the best for the players and understand that fans will also be disappointed by this decision, but it's for the best and we hope everyone will see that. We didn't want to make an application if we can't sustain a credible campaign in the Championship."



Chorley Women mourn death

Chorley Women took to social media to announce the death of Barbara Dawson.

Known as 'Momma D' in the club, Dawson passed away at home after a battle with lung cancer.

The statement read: "There are no words to express how much she will be missed by all, past & present."

Condolences flooded in with Jon Hume writing: "A nice lady, a real character who'll be a big miss. Condolences to family, friends and all at Chorley.

Gail Newsham added: "Oh no! I am so very sorry to hear this sad news. Spent many happy times on the touchline with Barbara watching the footie and giving treats to the dogs. Sending most sincere condolences to all her family and everyone at Chorley Women FC "

Looking forward to the return of the Women's National League



By Emily Cassidy

With the recent announcement from Boris Johnson, we hope that football is set to return for The Women's National League. I sat down with England Youth international, Jasmine McQuade to discuss the impact of COVID-19, lockdown and her footballing story.

Outdoor sports were confirmed to be allowed from the 29th March onwards, and the FA Women's National League are undertaking lots of hard work behind the scenes to get football back on within the women's 3rd tier and below from April. A decision is yet to be announced, with rumours swirling that an official announcement will be made public mid-March.

Middlesbrough and England youth international McQuade got involved with England by playing for Middlesbrough, having been scouted in many games and then contacted to attend a training camp at St. George's Park. She spent three years playing for Sunderland RTC, then moved to Teesside RTC in her final year of being within a RTC setting. Now a RTC graduate, McQuade moved onto senior football with her current team Middlesbrough Women FC where she enjoys her football, and the club environment has allowed her to blossom as a player.

It's without a doubt that the lockdown period has affected all Women National League Premier teams negatively, McQuade emphasised this by saying: "It's [lockdown]

prevented players from keeping their fitness up to the standard due to lack of facilities and ability to train as we're not classified as elite, so we don't have the same privileges as players who play in the Women's Championship or Super League have."

When getting more personal, England youth McQuade said: "Lockdown has been difficult for myself, especially with the weather, it has been hard to motivate myself and balance football with my college work and my job. I have tried my best to keep a routine to make sure I don't fall behind with my football as it affects my mental health when I feel like I'm not keeping up with what I need to.

"I'm sure I speak for most female players when I say I'm excited to get back to football, as it will give me a boost that I need and something to look forward to that I enjoy and love. We are all feeling slightly unmotivated at the minute so I'm sure this will give players the lift they need to move closer to normality."

For more information and updates regarding the re-start of the Women's National League, information can be found via the following links below:

Twitter: @FAWNL

Facebook: The FA Women's National League

Official Website: <https://www.thefa.com/womens-girls-football/leagues-and-competitions/the-fa-womens-national-league>

Simon Says

This month I spoke with Alex Liddiard the Sales and Marketing Manager at Boldmere St Michaels Football Club as well as being a coach for the Boldmere St Michaels Girls U16 and playing for the Boldmere St Michaels Women's first team.

You began playing football at a young age is that correct?

Yes, that's right, I've been kicking a ball around ever since I could walk. I joined my first team when I was about 6 or 7 which was actually a boy's team called Beacon Park.

When you were getting older, were you aware that you had the talent to be a footballer?

I think by playing from such a young age this really helped me in my development as a footballer. I always just played because I loved the game and didn't really think too far ahead. It probably wasn't until I got into the Villa Centre of Excellence (now called RTC's) that I realised how much potential I had. I went on to play for Aston Villa for 3 years and then Stoke City for another 4 years with their U16 and Reserve teams, making a few First Team appearances aged 16-18.

Having been able to combine education and football saw you move over to the USA to play. How did that come about?

Getting my degree whilst also playing football on a scholarship in America was something I had wanted to do ever since I was young- quite cliché but it was probably after seeing 'Bend it like Beckham' that I first thought about doing it, but didn't think it would actually happen. When I was 16/17, one of my teammates from Stoke City Ladies was going to an open trial

day with a company who help players get scholarships to the U.S., so I decided to go along with her.

That's really where it all started- I was selected by the company and became one of their clients. They then held more 'showcase matches' where they filmed me and put together a video of my highlights, which they then sent out to coaches in the U.S. I also had to sit the SAT exam where your score can determine which university you are able to go to, and also if you could be eligible for an Academic Scholarship as well as a Football Scholarship. I ended up getting a decent score and therefore also got a really good academic scholarship to go alongside my football one.

04 What did you enjoy about playing in the States?

Firstly, I was lucky enough to go to a university based in Long Island, New York, which was just a 45-minute train journey from Manhattan- so it was a dream destination! You also get to experience playing and training every single day at a very high standard, which makes you feel like a professional.

We had a physio room which had ice baths and heat baths, along with much more! Unfortunately, I tore my ACL whilst out in the states, but they had excellent facilities and physios to help me with my recovery. I had my own physio who I would see three times a week and got back out playing as soon as I possibly could. Not only do you get to train and play football with your teammates, but you also go to classes together so they really do become like your second family- which is very important when you're an international player with no family close by. Overall, it was a fantastic experience and I'm so glad I decided to do it!

Having returned to the UK what was your first role?

When I first returned to the UK I didn't really know what exactly I wanted to do- I just knew after a year and a half without playing football that I wanted to find a job that would allow me to get back to playing again. I was interested in the events industry after studying Hospitality Management for my degree in the States.

It was hard as I'd only really had one year working and most companies wanted people with more experience. Fortunately, after not too long, I was hired as an event sales coordinator for a company called 'thestudio...' based in Birmingham. It was rare to find a job in events that allowed you to have evenings and weekends free, but luckily this job was a Monday-Friday schedule with normal working hours.

Once I had secured this position and knew my schedule allowed for me to play football again, I immediately looked for local teams. It was difficult as by this stage it was mid-late August and most teams already had squads selected and had completed most of their preseason. I also hadn't played in a year and a half so didn't really know what standard I was at, as the women's game had come on massively in the five years I was away. I joined Burton Albion, which allowed me to get my match fitness and confidence back. I was then asked to trial with Birmingham & West Midlands (now Boldmere St Michaels Women) for the next season. I got in and am now currently in my second season playing for them and have loved every minute of it!

You were appointed by Boldmere St Michaels to oversee the day to day running of the facilities there. What does your work involve? Is it a 7 day a week operation?

My official job title is Sales & Marketing Manager, but I do a bit of everything including pitch bookings, organising the junior subs payments, booking out our newly renovated function room, alongside trying to bring in sponsorships for the club, plus much more!

It's been difficult this past year due to COVID-19, but we have so many things planned for when we are able to reopen again which I'm really excited about! Despite everything going on with the pandemic I have really enjoyed my time working for the club. Usually the club is a 7 day a week operation from our weekly junior and senior training sessions and games (we now have over 50 teams in our junior section), our Academy teams training in the daytime (for which we will also be adding a girls Academy next season too), alongside all of the events we would have in our function room and our sports bar.

Not only are you involved with your full-time work there, but you also run the team's U16 girls' side. How do you manage to combine the two and how has your playing and coaching evolved over time?

The U16 girls' side is a new team that we have added this season and I was really excited to have been asked to help coach them. I'd never really coached before, but it was something I'd always been interested in. They train twice a week and play on Saturdays- I usually coach them on a Monday evening, right after I finish working which is really convenient for me. Rhi (another first team player) coaches them on a Friday evening.

We then both, alongside Abbi (the manager), are there on a Saturday for their games. Boldmere have been really flexible with my schedule on a Saturday working around the times of my U16's games as the kick off times aren't always the same. I was due to do my Level 1 FA Coaching Course last May which unfortunately got cancelled due to the pandemic, but I'm hoping to be able to do that as soon as I'm able to. As the season has gone on I feel my confidence as a coach has definitely continued to grow and it's been helped by the fact I have a great group of players and coaches to work with. The girls are currently top of their league after winning every single game they've played so far! Hopefully we are able to finish the season and they can continue their fantastic form.



FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

Northern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Huddersfield Town	10	8	1	1	16	25
2 Fylde	8	6	1	1	18	19
3 West Bromwich Albion	9	5	1	3	10	16
4 Derby County	9	5	1	3	7	16
5 Sunderland	9	5	0	4	0	15
6 Nottingham Forest	9	4	2	3	10	14
7 Stoke City	8	3	2	3	-7	11
8 Burnley	7	3	1	3	0	10
9 Middlesbrough	9	2	1	6	-9	7
10 Sheffield FC	9	2	0	7	-18	6
11 Hull City	7	1	2	4	-8	5
12 Loughborough Foxes	8	0	2	6	-19	2

Southern Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Watford	8	6	1	1	22	19
2 Oxford United	7	6	0	1	16	18
3 Portsmouth	8	5	1	2	13	116
4 Milton Keynes Dons	8	5	0	3	12	15
5 Crawley Wasps	7	5	0	2	9	15
6 Cardiff City	4	3	0	1	11	9
7 Chichester & Selsey	6	3	0	3	4	9
8 Yeovil United	5	2	2	1	1	8
9 Keynsham Town	7	2	0	5	-2	6
10 Gillingham	7	2	0	5	-4	6
11 Plymouth Argyle	7	0	0	7	-40	0
12 Hounslow	8	0	0	8	-42	0



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

Division One North

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Chester le Street Town	6	4	2	0	8	14
2 Brighouse Town	5	3	1	1	6	10
3 Norton & Stockton Ancients	6	2	2	2	1	8
4 Leeds United	6	2	2	2	0	8
5 Durham Cestria	5	2	1	2	2	7
6 Liverpool Feds	3	2	0	1	2	6
7 Stockport County	4	2	0	2	1	6
8 Newcastle United	3	1	1	1	0	4
9 Barnsley	6	1	1	4	-2	4
10 Chorley	3	1	1	1	-3	4
11 Bradford City	4	0	3	1	-1	3
12 Bolton	3	0	0	3	-14	0

Division One Midlands

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Wolverhampton Wanderers	6	6	0	0	34	18
2 Doncaster Rovers Belles	8	4	3	1	8	15
3 Lincoln City	6	4	1	1	19	13
4 Solihull Moors	6	3	2	1	9	11
5 Long Eaton United	7	3	2	2	6	11
6 Boldmere St Michaels	4	3	1	0	12	10
7 Sporing Khalsa	6	2	2	2	-2	8
8 Bedworth United	7	2	0	5	-10	6
9 Wem Town	4	1	1	2	-6	4
10 Holwell Sports	6	1	1	4	-9	4
11 Burton Albion	7	1	0	6	-41	3
12 Leafield Athletic	7	0	1	6	-20	1



TheFA Women's
National League

FANWNL 2020/21 Tables

(up to date as leagues were suspended)

Division One South East

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Ipswich Town	4	4	0	0	18	12
2 Hashtag United	5	4	0	1	9	12
3 Enfield Town	6	3	2	1	7	11
4 Actonians	4	3	1	0	7	10
5 Norwich City	4	3	0	1	3	9
6 AFC Wimbledon	5	2	1	2	4	7
7 Cambridge United	6	2	1	3	-10	7
8 Kent Football United	6	1	3	2	-1	6
9 Leyton Orient	3	1	1	1	1	4
10 Cambridge City	7	1	1	5	-14	4
11 Billericay Town	3	1	0	2	0	3
12 Stevenage	7	0	0	7	-24	0

Division One South West

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1 Southampton FC	4	4	0	0	17	12
2 Chesham United	5	4	0	1	15	12
3 Swindon Town	4	3	0	1	5	9
4 Busckland Athletic	5	3	0	2	-1	9
5 Exeter City	6	2	2	2	-2	8
6 Cheltenham Town	5	2	1	2	4	7
7 Larkhall Athletic	5	1	3	1	0	6
8 Maidenhead United	3	1	1	1	0	4
9 Southampton Women's	4	1	1	2	-1	4
10 Brislington	3	0	0	3	-13	0
11 Poole Town	6	0	0	6	-24	0



TheFA Women's
National League

GRASSROOTS



Suffolk Girls & Women's Football League declared null and void



Suffolk Girls & Women's Football League chairman Alex Shipp has taken to social media to announce that the season has been declared null and void.

The statement said: "Dear All, it is with regret that I must announce that the league management committee has made the difficult decision to null and void all divisions for the 2020-21 season.

"This is not a decision we have taken lightly and we will set out our reasons.

"This past season has proved a particularly challenging season. As you will recall, our season started mid way through September but was quickly brought to a halt within a few months for the November Lockdown. This lockdown lasted a month and in total we lost four weeks to it.

"With many teams also taking another week to ensure the safety of their players. We were fortunate to get back to playing but this was short lived with only 3 weeks until Christmas

and then the next national lockdown which is due to consume another 14 weeks of playing time."

Many took to Twitter to air their feelings about the decision.

Gary Chapman wrote: "What a disgrace considering it's International Women's Day on Monday. Using availability of pitches as an excuse so how come the boys leagues can go ahead?? Do they not use the same pitches?? What a sexist decision."

Ipswich & South Suffolk School Games wrote: "What a sad and poor decision to have made for the girls. Should be the same decision for the boys as well I hope the girls don't give up football now but if they do, who would blame them."

Suffolk Girls & Women's Football League responded to the criticism: "There will still be girls football being played. All clubs can opt to have all ages play in our mini-football tournaments and cup matches."

CUPS



English sides in pole position in the Champions League



By Marissa Thomas

Both Manchester City and Chelsea emerged victorious in the first legs of their round of 16 ties in the Champions League.

Manchester City were in pole position after four minutes when they found themselves 2-0 up. Chloe Kelly, one of City's most impressive performers this season, drove down the right and crossed for Lauren Hemp who finished with ease. Two minutes later, Hemp turned provider down the left with Ellen White tapping home. Despite continued dominance after establishing a two-goal lead, City took their foot off the gas. Caroline Weir forced Fiorentina goalkeeper Katia Schroffenegger to punch an effort away as the away side held firm.

Fiorentina will be disappointed to have missed a golden opportunity when Frederikke Thogersen was played through. The Danish forward lacked composure, curling her effort away from goal. Fiorentina were left to rue their missed opportunity when substitute Sam Mewis completed a far post header to make it 3-0 to Man City as Kelly provided the assist once more. Gareth Taylor's side were dominant from the first whistle and having gone in front so early in

the game, they could be disappointed their advantage was not even bigger.

While Man City had it easy early on their game, the same could not be said for Chelsea. The Blues were down to 10 players after 12 minutes with Sophie Ingle sent off for fouling Rasheedat Ajibade and conceding a penalty in the process. Goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger saved Denya Castellanos' spot-kick to keep Chelsea in the game.

In spite of the uphill battle they faced, Chelsea stood firm and Maren Mjelde converted from the spot for Emma Hayes' side after Sam Kerr was brought down by Aissatou Tounkara. Five minutes later, Fran Kirby continued her excellent form by doubling Chelsea's lead. The drama was by no means over as Berger went hero to villain to hero again by giving away another penalty and then denying Merel van Dongen from the spot.

Man City and Chelsea will feel they have a good chance of going far in the Champions League and potentially winning it. With the second legs looming, they have every reason to dream of lifting the coveted European trophy that has not been won by an English team since 2007.

Round of 16: Leg One results

Barcelona 4-0 Fortuna Hjorring

Man City 3-0 Fiorentina

Rosengard 2-2 St Polten

Wolfsburg 2-0 LSK

Chelsea 2-0 Atletico Madrid

BIIK– Kazygurt 1-6 Bayern

Lyon 2-0 Brondby

Paris St. Germain vs Sparta Prague
(March 9, 15:00)

*Second legs to be played
Wednesday, March 10 and
Thursday, March 11*

*Sparta Praha vs PSG leg
two will be on
Wednesday, March
17.*

When is the final?

The Champions League final is
set to be held on Sunday, May
16.

It will be played at Gamla Ullevi,
Gothenburg.



2020/21 Vitality Women's FA Cup to return



The Football Association (The FA) has confirmed that following the Government's recent roadmap announcement which will see the safe return of grassroots football from 29 March, the 2020/2021 Vitality Women's FA Cup will recommence at the end of this month.

The competition was paused in January at the Second Round after the country went into its third lockdown, with all 'non-elite' football suspended as a result.

With the recent announcement that the suspension will be lifted in a few weeks, The FA is in a position to reschedule the first four rounds of the competition – with one tie still to be played in the First Round and 17 in the Second Round, before the Third and Fourth Rounds can be played.

The rescheduled dates – subject to ongoing Government guidance as we follow the roadmap out of lockdown - are as follows:

- First Round – 31 March 2021
- Second Round – 4 April 2021
- Third Round – 11 April 2021
- Fourth Round – 18 April 2021

To ensure clubs can plan and prepare for their upcoming ties, the draws for the Third and Fourth Round have been made, which can be viewed in full here.

The FA must also acknowledge FIFA's support for completing the later rounds of the competition. Conversations concerning a date for the Fifth Round, which will be completed this season, are ongoing.

Following the Fifth Round, up to three rounds, including the Final held at Wembley Stadium connected by EE, can be completed next season, with dates to be confirmed.

2020/21 Vitality Women's FA Cup fixtures, key dates & information

Vitality Women's FA Cup third round proper

Huddersfield Town	vs	Brighouse Town or Newcastle United
Middlesbrough or Hull City	vs	Stoke City or Wem Town
Burnley or Fylde	vs	Sunderland AFC or Sheffield FC
Cardiff City or Oxford United	vs	Billericay Town or Ipswich Town
West Bromwich Albion or Lincoln City	vs	Loughborough Foxes or Derby County
Watford or MK Dons	vs	Wolverhampton Wanderers or Nottingham Forest
Portsmouth or Cheltenham Town	vs	Crawley Wasps or Gillingham
Southampton or Plymouth Argyle	vs	Keynsham Town or Yeovil United
Hounslow or Leyton Orient	vs	Chichester & Selsey or Kent Football United or Enfield Town



Third round proper

- All ties must be played on Sunday April 11, kick-off 2pm
Unless arrangements made before
- Deadline for player registration for the third round is 12 noon on Saturday April 10
 - Prize fund payments:
 - Winners £1,250
 - Losers £315

Fourth round proper



- All ties must be played on Sunday
April 18, kick-off 2pm
*Unless arrangements made
before*
- Deadline for layer registration for the
for round is 12 noon on Saturday April
14
 - Prize fund payments
 - Winners £2000
 - Losers £500

Vitality Women's FA Cup fourth round proper

Leicester City	vs	Liverpool
Middlesbrough or Hull City or Stoke City or Wem Town	vs	Sheffield United
Birmingham City	vs	Coventry United
Burnley or Fylde or Sunderland or Sheffield	vs	Manchester United
Everton	vs	Durham
Manchester City	vs	Aston Villa
Watford or MK Dons or Wolverhampton Wanderers or Nottingham Forest	vs	Blackburn Rovers
Huddersfield Town or Brighouse Town or Newcastle United	vs	West Bromwich Albion or Lincoln City or Loughborough Foxes or Derby County
Reading	vs	Tottenham Hotspur
Cardiff City or Oxford United or Billericay Town or Ipswich Town	vs	Charlton Athletic
Arsenal	vs	Portsmouth or Cheltenham Town or Crawley Wasps or Gillingham
Chelsea	vs	London City Lionesses
Lewes	vs	Southampton or Plymouth Argyle or Keynsham Town or Yeovil United
Brighton & Hove Albion	vs	Bristol City
West Ham United	vs	Hounslow or Leyton Orient or Chichester & Selsey or Kent Football United or Enfield Town
Crystal Palace	vs	London Bees

Chelsea and Bristol out in Continental



Stephen Flynn Sports Press Photo



Gerant Nicolson

The stage is set for the final of the 2020-21 League Cup with defending champions Chelsea going up against first time finalists Bristol City.

Watford's ground Vicarage Road will host the final which will be held on Sunday, March 14.

Last season Chelsea beat Arsenal 2-1 at the City Ground to win their first League Cup and Emma Hayes' side are back hoping to retain it.

Bristol City, who have struggled in the Women's Super League this season, have found form in the cup.

Meet Chelsea...

Squad

Goalkeepers: Zećira Mušović, Carly Telford, Ann-Katrin Berger

Defenders: Hannah Blundell, Millie Bright, Jessica Carter, Magdalena Eriksson (captain), Jonna Andersson

Midfielders: Sophie Ingle, Melanie Leupolz, Ji So-Yun, Guro Reiten, Jessie Fleming, Maren Mjelde, Drew Spence

Forwards: Bethany England, Fran Kirby, Sam Kerr, Niamh Charles, Erin Cuthbert, Pernille Harder

Management team

Manager: Emma Hayes

Assistant manager: Paul Green

Head of technical/goalkeeping coach: Stuart Searle

Head of performance: Bart Cauberg

Assistant coach: Denise Reddy

Opposition analyst & coach: Leanne Champ

Road to the final

Group Stage

Chelsea 4-1 Arsenal

Chelsea 2-0 Tottenham

Quarter-final

Manchester City 2-4 Chelsea

Semi-final

Chelsea 6-0 West Ham

Bristol City to battle it out in the Tyres Cup final



Meet Bristol City

Squad

Goalkeepers: Sophie Baggaley, Benedicte Håland

Defenders: Faye Bryson, Gemma Evans, Jasmine Matthews (captain), Laura Rafferty (on loan from Brighton & Hove Albion), Florence Allen, Meaghan Sargeant, Jemma Purfield, Naomi Layzell, Kiera Skeels (on loan from Reading)

Midfielders: Molly Pike (on loan from Everton), Carla Humphrey, Aimee Palmer, Megan Wynne, Emma Bissell, Maisy Collis, Georgia Wilson, Ella Mastrantonio, Ellen Jones

Forwards: Ebony Salmon, Yana Daniëls, Charlie Wellings, Abi Harrison, Jessica Wooley

Management team

General manager: Lee Billiard

First team manager: Matt Beard (taking over from Tanya Oxtoby who is on

Maternity Leave)

Assistant manager: Marco Chiavetta

First Team coach: Loren Dykes

Goalkeeping coach: Dan Smith

Physiotherapists: Chris Underwood & Yaw Billy

Strength & Conditioning coach: Ellen Davies

Analysts: Ben Roberts & Luke Morgan

Road to the final

Group Stage

Bristol City 4-0 London Bees

Crystal Palace 2-4 Bristol City

Lewes 1-3 Bristol City

Quarter-final

Bristol City 2-1 Aston Villa

Semi-final

Bristol City 1-0 Leicester City

HOME NATIONS



Scott marks 150 Lionesses appearances



Everton and England midfielder Jill Scott has finally earned her 150th cap after having to wait almost 12 months for the honour.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, England last played in March 2020, which was when Scott made it 149 caps.

The achievement means she is only the second player to reach 150 caps for the Lionesses.

Reading's Fara Williams currently holds the record-appearances at 177.

Speaking after the game, Scott said: "It's a big sigh of relief after waiting a year for it. I am just so overwhelmed by it all.

"The girls did a little presentation to us last night.

"It was so uncomfortable because I just had to sit there and listen to all these plaudits.

"I can't believe it but I am really, really happy.

"I had so many feelings going into the game, I was nervous, anxious.

"I just wanted to have a good performance as well.

"Massive thanks to Steph [Houghton] for letting me have the captain's armband today. She's made so much effort to make sure it was a special day for me.

"I've been overwhelmed by all the messages, I was just trying to concentrate on the game but now I can finally relax. Everything I do is to just make my family proud but I don't think this has sunk in yet."

England put on a strong performance against Northern Ireland in the friendly at St Georges Park.

A hat-trick from Ellen White as well as goals from Lucy Bronze, Rachel Daly and Ella Toone finished off a dominant show.

Scott added: "I think the performance by the girls was brilliant.

"There were some really standout performances—Ellen White, Lucy Bronze, Georgia Stanway.

"I think it has just been a good day all round and the four debuts as well."

Meet Hege Riise, En



By Ali Rampling

Hege Riise is a World Cup, Olympic gold medal and European Championship winning player, regarded as one of the finest of her generation. She has won Olympic gold again as assistant coach with the United States in 2012, has led LSK Kvinner to six successive

Norwegian titles and was long listed for Fifa Best Women's Coach of the Year in 2020.

Despite boasting such a glittering CV, the former Norway midfielder was content to play second fiddle to Phil Neville in a short-term role when she applied to be England's assistant coach prior to the arrival of Sarina Wiegman in September.

Neville's premature departure to take up the reins at Inter Miami resulted in Riise being offered the Lionesses' top job instead. The fact that she had originally been more than happy to be England's number two in a brief, temporary position despite everything she has achieved as a player and coach is testimony to the humility of Riise's character.

"I feel I'm comfortable in all positions," England's new interim coach said at her first press conference.

"I've been assistant coach, I've been head coach. It's not about me, it's about the coaching staff that we have and I trust the team I have around me."

Riise will jump straight from the Lionesses job into a head coach role with the Norway Under 19s, and asked to delay taking up the position in her homeland in order to pursue the opportunity within the England setup.

"I accepted the Under 19 job for Norway up front before this," she added. "I said yes to the job and I kind of said if I get offered the England job will you give me eight months permission to do that? And they said yes so I'm excited for both of the jobs. In the end it benefits all of us."

It was England's physical performance manager Dawn Scott who alerted Riise to the job, the pair having worked together previously with the USWNT. The England interim boss spent three years as assistant to Pia Sundhage in the States, culminating with Olympic gold in London.

Riise highlighted the USWNT's famed winning mentality as the difference between them and England, and added that this was something she wants to help change during her short time in charge of the Lionesses.

"I think the confidence and the confidence in a great team, a connected team, that's a big difference," Riise explained. "Knowing the US mentality, they are strong, competitive, eager to win and the confidence and belief that they will win

England's interim boss



is strong. That's something we need to work on in this group; the belief in the quality we have. Going into every game to dictate the game and make sure that we get a result.

"Hopefully I can bring more of a confidence in the style that they have been playing and make small changes in that. When I played against England, they weren't developing as they are now. They have improved massively and are now one of the top nations.

"I will hopefully just add a few things but more so the belief in what we are doing. That will be the key message: believe in how good we are and think that winning a gold medal is possible. That will be our message in the camp, to be brave and believe."

Riise was among the best in the world during her playing days, an instrumental part of Norway's esteemed side during the 1990s. She won 188 caps for her country, scoring 58 goals, and is one of just three women in world football who can boast a World Cup, European Championship and Olympic gold medal in their trophy cabinet.

However, she quick to shun the spotlight, emphasising that she is part of a coaching team with the Lionesses - and seeing the job as an opportunity to inspire the next generation of female coaches.

"That was my thought when I got this job; this is something I need to do in order for

other female coaches to go abroad and do what they love the most," said Riise. "Pia Sundhage, Jill Ellis: there's been a lot of female coaches who have moved around. The more we get for youngsters coming up to see you can be a coach, you can be a player, you can be professional or you can go as me now coaching England."

Riise's England tenure started with a comprehensive 6-0 win over Northern Ireland. Although this was a match the Lionesses would have been expected to win, it was the sharpest England had looked in the final third since the 2019 World Cup - all the more impressive given they hadn't played a competitive fixture together for 12 months.

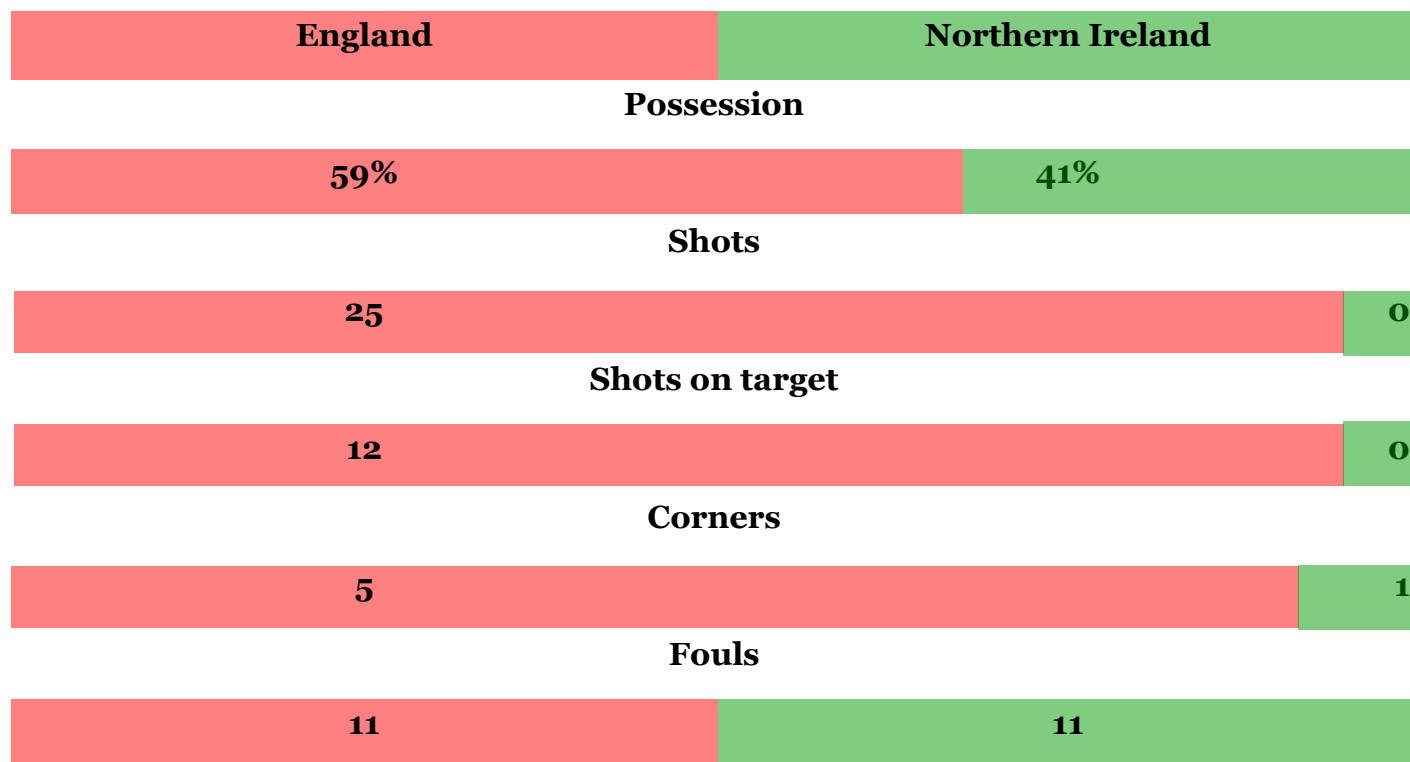
It was these attacking principles that Riise had cited as part of her footballing philosophy - and what she hoped to impact during her brief stint in the England hot seat.

"I look at the game as an attacking, in possession game," Riise said. "(I will) just add a few things; how we can score goals, how we can create chances. We hope to be able to work on breaking down opponents, create chances with numbers in the box and be enthusiastic and energised when we step on the field."

Stat Attack: England

England	Northern Ireland
1 Ellie Roebuck (Sandy McIver 61)	12 Becky Flaherty
2 Lucy Bronze	13 Abbie Magee
5 Steph Houghton	5 Julie Nelson
6 Leah Williamson (Lotte Wubben-Moy 75)	4 Sarah Robson (Samantha Kelly 84)
3 Alex Greenwood	17 Rebecca Holloway (Toni Leigh Finnegan 83)
8 Jill Scott	11 Lauren Wade (Louise McDaniel 73)
4 Georgia Stanway	7 Chloe McCarron (Rebecca McKenna 57)
7 Rachel Daly (Ebony Salmon 84)	16 Nadene Caldwell (Kelsie Burrows 84)
10 Jordan Nobbs (Ella Toone 45)	8 Marissa Callaghan (Caira Watling 58)
11 Lauren Hemp (Chloe Kelly 61)	10 Rachel Furness
9 Ellen White (Beth England 76)	9 Simone Magill
Substitutes	
13 Sandy McIver	2 Kelsie Burrows
14 Ella Toone	3 Rebecca McKenna
15 Lotte Wubben-Moy	6 Ashley Hutton
16 Millie Turner	14 Toni Leigh Finnegan
17 Chloe Kelly	15 Samantha Kelly
18 Beth Mead	18 Louise McDaniel
19 Bethany England	19 Emily Wilson
20 Ebony Salmon	20 Casey Howe
21 Hannah Hampton	21 Ella Haughey
	22 Caira Watling
	23 Maddison Harvey Clifford

6-0 Northern Ireland



When are England and Northern Ireland's next games?

England will host Canada in a friendly on Tuesday, April 13.

Kick-off is at 3pm.

It is not yet confirmed where the match will be played but it is expected to be at St. George's Park.

Northern Ireland will play their two play-off legs against Ukraine on Wednesday, April 7 and Tuesday, April 13.

It is unknown what time kick-off will be yet.

White: “I was running around with a smile on my face”



Hat-trick scorer Ellen White believes getting back on the pitch and wearing an England shirt has been the perfect game after such a long time out.

England have not played for almost 365 days due to the global Covid-19 pandemic cancelling planned fixtures on numerous occasions.

Speaking after the 6-0 win over Northern Ireland, White said: “To play for England again, I was literally running around the pitch with a smile on my face.

“It’s been a long time coming.

“To play and get my first hat-trick, Jill to get 150 caps, four debuts, it’s pretty decent.

“We also got the win and a clean sheet.

“It’s all really positive and exciting. We haven’t played for so long, there was so much excitement and expectation on us.

“I think the whole squad and coaching staff put a lot of training in.

“We are really delighted and proud of the result.”

Speaking about her Manchester City and England teammate, Jill Scott, White added: “She really doesn’t like us talking about her but she deserves it and everything that comes her way.

“Her career has been phenomenal and I am really proud to be a little part of her journey.

“I hope everyone sees how much passion and desire she gives to the games and how much love she has for England as well.

“She is a true advocate for England and I am really proud of her.”

Stanway: “If I do part of what Keira can do, I have done a good job”



Manchester City star Georgia Stanway found herself in a different position for England's 6-0 win over Northern Ireland.

Keira Walsh took a knock late in training during the camp, ruling her out for the friendly.

Stanway wore the number four shirt during the game and played a different role, something she greatly enjoyed.

“It was a different one for me but I really enjoyed it.

“It was an opportunity for me to showcase that I am versatile and that I can play in many positions.

“It's just something else which is a challenge for me.

“I really enjoyed it and getting on the ball and getting involved with the tackling side.

“I was working closely with Keira [Walsh] pre-game to get some tips on



what is best to do.

“It's important that everyone gives as much as they can.

“Keira got a knock late in training and I was called upon.

“I took it in my stride. I like to tackle and pass and they are the attributes you need as a number four.

“Keira is a master at that position and if I can take 10% of what she does then I think I have done a good job.”

After the game, Stanway was asked if being versatile meant she had more of a chance of getting in the Olympics squad.

She replied: “You could say that.

“I think I am the type of player that slots well into a team and I know what I can contribute to the team.

“If I do those things well and remain technically consistent and put my boy on the line, that's all I can do.”

Scotland dominated but falter in final Euro 2020



Scotland's final European Championship qualifying game ended in disappointment as they fell to a 2-0 defeat to Portugal.

The result came after they dominated against Cyprus just days before, coming out 10-0 victors.

Interim head coach Stuart McLaren was in charge for the two games after stepping in following Shelly Kerr's announcement she had stepped down from the job.

McLaren, previously of Stirling Albion, was the National Youth team coach and was placed in temporary charge whilst the Scottish FA search for a new permanent head coach.

Whilst their European qualifying hopes had ended last year, Scotland were determined to finish the campaign on a high.

Against Cyprus goals from across the squad saw Erin Cuthbert, Martha Thomas and Jane Ross score doubles.

Lizzie Arnot, Claire Emslie, Kirsty Hanson and Caroline Weir also found the back of the net.

After the game, McLaren told BBC Scotland:

"They've certainly set their stall out.

"I thought they showed terrific character to come into a game which unfortunately doesn't mean anything in terms of qualifying, but they still went about their business in a thoroughly professional manner.

"There is a real determination to make sure this is the start of the next stage. There's been some fantastic success, qualifying for successive tournaments and it was well deserved and well earned. Now it's about not looking back so much on that.

"I'm a happy man, absolutely, after that performance and that result. We challenged the players to just go and remind everybody how good they are.

"We asked the players to have a bit more conviction and be a wee bit more ruthless in front of goal. They obviously did that with scoring 10 goals in the 90 minutes.

"The pleasing aspect for me most of all was that they never let up for the full 90 minutes. There's a real determination to make sure that this is the start of the next stage."

te against Cyprus

2021 game



Sadly, Scotland could not end the campaign with a win despite “battering” Portugal according to McLaren.

The result was their fourth in five games and they missed a number of key chances throughout the game.

Ana Capeta scored after a goalkeeper error from Jenna Fife, and Fatima Pinto doubled the advantage late on.

The result means that Scotland finish third in the group with Finland qualifying and Portugal reaching the play-offs.

Scotland interim head coach Stuart McLaren: "One of the key points was to dominate possession but have a purpose to it, and I think the players did that very well.

“Unfortunately, and it's maybe reflective of the campaign, we just didn't have that finishing product often enough in the final third.

"We all know how important the first goal is in a game of football. We didn't get it and we were obviously culpable in a sense. It's a good press from Portugal but we invited that press.

“The second one is purely trying to keep as many bodies up the pitch as we possibly can.

"Disappointed in the result but really, really pleased with the performance in terms of the application of the aspects of football that we asked the girls to go and apply.

"Nothing has changed from my perspective. I was asked by the association to take on the interim role. I've done that now for the two games so unless anything changes then I'll go back to my role as the U16 national team coach on the men's side.

“If something changes within that, I'll deal with that as it comes.

"There's obviously a process in place from the hierarchy to make sure that we get the very best candidate to be the new head coach of the Scottish women's national team and whoever that will be will be (revealed) in the course of time."

Stat Attack: Cyp

Cyprus

- 1** Maria Matthaïou
- 3** Maria Ioannou
- 5** Victoria Zampa
- 19** Filippa Savva
- 23** Efthalia Siakalli
- 7** Maria Panayiotou
- 6** Georgia Xenafontos
- 16** Sara Papadopoulou
- 11** Loucretia Chrysostomou
- 21** Krystyna Freda
- 9** Antri Violari

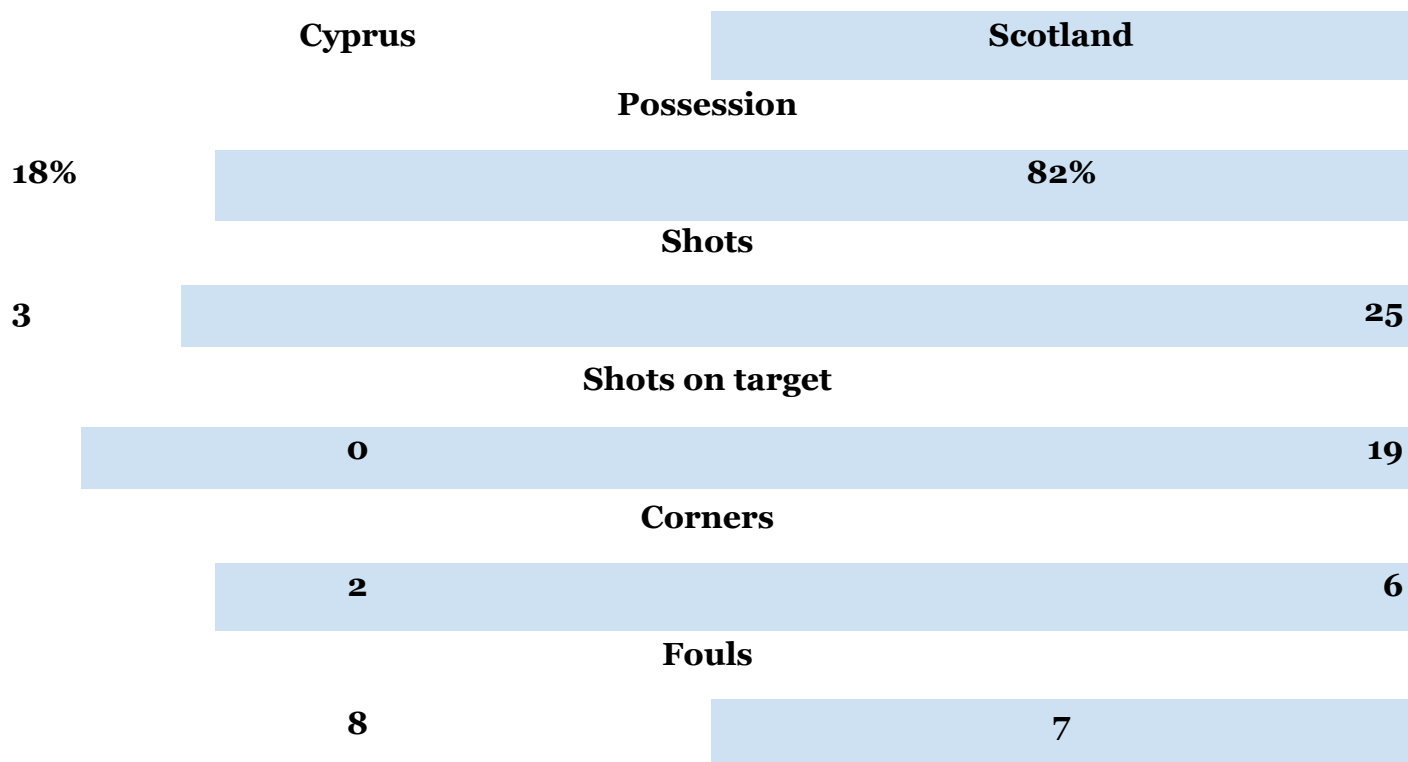
Scotland

- 1** Lee Alexander
- 17** Nicola Docherty
- 15** Sophie Howard
- 4** Rachel Corsie
- 2** Rachel McLauchlan
- 20** Kirsty Hanson
- 9** Caroline Weir
- 8** Lucy Graham
- 23** Lizzie Arnot
- 19** Martha Thomas
- 22** Erin Cuthbert

Substitutes

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2 Chara Cbaralambous | 3 Emma Mitchell |
| 4 Maria Tomazou | 5 Jennifer Beattie |
| 8 Antria Michail | 6 Rachael Boyle |
| 10 Christiana Solomou | 7 Samantha Kerr |
| 12 Ioanna Achilleos | 10 Zoe Ness |
| 13 Korina Paola Adamou | 11 Lisa Ecans |
| 14 Kyriaki Vasiliou | 12 Megan Cunningham |
| 15 Stavriana Antoniou | 13 Jane Ross |
| 17 Stefania Iosifaki | 14 Lisa Robertson |
| 18 Elena Aristodimou | 16 Natalie Ross |
| 20 Eirini Michail | 18 Claire Emslie |
| 22 Konstantina Kouzali | 21 Jenna Fife |

rus 0-10 Scotland



When are Scotland's next games?

There have been no friendlies announced for Scotland as of yet.

It is thought that they will announce a new head coach before they announce games.

A number of Scotland players are expected to be called up for the 2021 (2020) Tokyo which will take place this summer.

It is currently unknown who will lead Team GB in Tokyo but an announcement is expected soon.

McIntyre appointed head of girls' and women's football

The Scottish FA has appointed Scottish Women's Football Chief Executive Officer Fiona McIntyre as head of girls' and women's football.

In a seven year spell with SWF, holding the position of Chief Executive Officer since June 2017.

Fiona has helped to drive huge growth in the game, from participation levels to restricting SWF competitions.

Her new role, commencing on 15 March, will see her lead on the delivery of the Scottish FA's Girls' and Women's Strategy across a multitude of key areas, including National Teams, elite competitions, clubs, grassroots and youth participation.

Fiona McIntyre: "The growth of the girls' and women's game in Scotland in recent years has been a tremendous success story, so it is extremely exciting to be appointed Head of Girls' and Women's Football at the Scottish FA and be in a position to try and capitalise further on the increased interest."

"Most importantly, this is a terrific opportunity to build upon the fantastic work and foundations laid before me.

"It is certainly a challenging time for all levels of the game, which only adds to the fundamental responsibility to ensure progress can continue to be made, but it is a challenge for which I am prepared.

"Participation in the girls' and women's game has almost doubled in the last five years, the domestic game is growing, our international players are doing so well and we're seeing large commercial growth in the game.

"The game is in a strong place, but crucially, it is about building on that to try and take it to the next level."

Scottish Women's Premier League 1 set for return

The Scottish FA have announced that the Scottish Women's Premier League One will return to football 'immediately'.

Rod Petrie, Scottish FA President: "We are pleased that the First Minister has again recognised the importance of football in Scotland. The decision to temporarily suspend parts of the professional game played by predominantly part-time teams was not an easy one to take. None the less, given the sharp rise in infection rates caused by new strains of the virus at the start of the year, it was the right thing to do to assist the national effort to reduce its prevalence during lockdown.

"The preparatory work undertaken with representatives of affected leagues and their commitment to the inclusion of weekly PCR testing, has given ministers the confidence to permit the return of SWPL 1 and SPFL League One and Two."



Wales begin new era



The Welsh international squad have met for an international training camp during the break.

The training camp was the first since Jayne Ludlow stepped down from her position as manager.

FAW Technical director David Adams was joined by Matty Jones and Loren Dykes for the camp.

Ludlow stepped down after Wales failed to qualify for the Uefa Women's Euro 2022 tournament.

Speaking to the FAW, Natasha Harding said: "We were disappointed and devastated not to qualify, but if anything, it's motivated us for the next one.

"We've got a great chance and this is the best group we've had, and will have, for a number of years.

"The older ones are hitting their prime and playing their best football, and the players coming through are really exciting."

When asked about Ludlow leaving, the Wales vice-captain said: "We were shocked, sad and angry initially,"

"She's our manager and you don't want anything to affect the group.

"You ask yourself if you could have done more, and if we had qualified, would she still be in the job?

We're angry at ourselves and we have to take a lot of the blame and responsibility for not qualifying.

"Jayne made me vice-captain and I will always be forever grateful for that.

"This week has been a week for us to talk about Jayne and the positive things that she did for us.

"I think it was very important to have this camp to move forward and have that space to talk about it, which is an important part of closure."

Wales announce friendlies for April



Wales will face Canada and Denmark in two home friendlies in April.

The games will be part of preparations ahead of the 2023 Fifa Women's World qualifying campaign.

The game against Canada will be held on April 9 with a venue and kick-off time to be announced.

It will be the second time the Welsh team have faced Canada, who are ranked eighth in the world

The first time they played the former World Cup hosts was at the 2002 Algarve Cup when they lost 4-0.

Canadian legend Christine Sinclair scored a brace in the game which took place before current squad mates Maria Francis-Jones, Carrie Jones and Esther Morgan were born.

The game against Denmark will be played at the Cardiff City Stadium with the kick-off time to be confirmed closer to the event.

Both matches will be played behind closed doors.



The draw for the World Cup qualifiers is set to take place on Friday, April 30.

Wales have failed to qualify for the World Cup and have not qualified for the Uefa European Championships either.

No news has been announced yet as to who will take over as manager following Jane Ludlow's departure.

There is also a space for assistant manager after Lauren Smith left the side to go to Tottenham.

Wales last game was on Tuesday December 1 in their final qualification game.

The side were 3-0 winners over Belarus at Rodney Parade but it was already too late for qualification.

Rachel Rowe, Natasha Harding and Jess Fishlock were the goalscorers that night.

FAW & FAWT PARTNER WITH WEETABIX



Weetabix Food Company has become the Official Partner of the Cymru Women's National football team and title partner of the FAW Trust grassroots girls' football initiative Huddle, which will be renamed Huddle, powered by Weetabix.

The agreement is part of a long-term partnership between Weetabix Food Company and the home nations' respective football associations.

Showing support for women's and grassroots football, Huddle, powered by Weetabix, aims to introduce girls aged between four and eleven to football in a fun, friendly and inclusive environment ensuring they have a positive first experience of football. The programme is delivered by clubs and partners across Wales who are committed to introducing football to girls in their communities.

From May, a number of money-can't-buy experiences with the Cymru

women's team, including the chance to watch training sessions and signed shirts, will also be up for grabs as part of an on-pack promotion on the Weetabix cereal range, as well as ticket prizes to international matches.

Gareth Turner, Head of Brand at Weetabix, said: "This partnership reinforces our belief that everyone can achieve their best with a proper, Weetabix start to the day."

Lowri Roberts, Head of Women's and Girls' Football at the FAW said: "We have ambitious targets for the female game in Wales and are delighted to have a committed partner in Weetabix to help us achieve these.

"Huddle, powered by Weetabix, is focused on fun, making friends, building confidence and provides the perfect start for girls in football. With Weetabix's support we aim to have 100 centres across Wales by 2023."

‘Elite status’ reinstated for Welsh Premier & WPWL



The Football Association of Wales has announced that the National Sport Group (NSG) has reinstated the ‘elite status’ for the Orchard Welsh Premier Women’s League.

Although the country remains at Alert Level 4 of the Welsh Government Control plans, clubs in the league have been allowed to prepare for the resumption of fixtures under the FAW’s Return to Play Covid-19 protocols.

The NSG includes representation from Sport Wales, Welsh Sports Association, Welsh Government and Commonwealth Games Wales to consider the ‘Elite Status’ designation.

The decision meant that games were allowed to go ahead from Sunday March 7, with Aberystwyth Town and Briton Ferry Llansawel going out in a 1-1 draw.

This was the first league game which had been played since November 29.

Upcoming fixtures

Sunday, March 14

Cascade YC vs Port Talbot Town

Briton Ferry Llansawel vs Cardiff Met

Swansea vs Aberystwyth Town

Cardiff City vs Abergavenny

Sunday, March 21

Abergavenny vs Aberystwyth Town

Cyncoed vs Briton Ferry Llanaswel

Cascade YC vs Swansea

Port Talbot Town vs Cardiff City

Thursday, March 25

Cardiff City vs Cardiff Met

Briton Ferry Llansawel vs Port Talbot

Sunday, March 28

Swansea vs Cyncoed

Cardiff Met vs Abergavenny

Cascade vs Cardiff City

Aberystwyth Town vs Port Talbot
Town

Northern Ireland to face Ukraine in Euro 2022 play-off



Northern Ireland have found out their Euro 2022 play-off will be against Ukraine.

Kenneth Shiels' squad won their final two Group C games to edge out Wales on head-to-head away goals and secure second place behind Norway in qualifying for the tournament.

Ukraine overtook the Republic of Ireland in their final Group I match to claim the runners-up spot behind Germany.

The draw for the play-offs was held on March 5 with the other ties seeing Portugal take on Russia and Czech Republic to play Switzerland.

The matches will be held over two ties with the first on April 7 and the second on April 13.

The results will determine the final three places for the 2022 (2021) European Championships which will be held in England.

Euro 2022 will see 16 nations compete across 10 venues during July, with the final

to be played at Wembley.

Ukraine were 24th in the last FIFA world rankings, with Northern Ireland, who are looking to qualify for a major tournament for the first time, in 49th position.

Northern Ireland captain Marissa Callaghan told the County Press: "We were hoping and praying to stay away from the Swiss and Russia, so anyone apart from them would have been a great draw.

"I jumped up and down with delight because it was just kind of a relief that we have a good draw."

"It is over to us now, we are just looking forward to it.

"We have played them a couple of times in the last few years and it is a good draw for us.

"We have matches (against them) which we can look back on and make sure we are prepared."

Shiels pleads for games ahead of play-off ties



Northern Ireland manager Kenny Shiels has called for games ahead of April's play-off games against Ukraine.

The 6-0 defeat to England is the sides' only game since December when they finished their initial qualifying campaign.

NI have previously played under-17 teams to build conditioning but only the men's and women's Irish Premiership are allowed under current restrictions.

The Women's Premiership in Northern Ireland ended in December and the new season is not set to begin until after the play-offs take place. The vast majority of Shiels' squad belong in the domestic league and haven't played competitive football since the win over the Faroe Islands at the beginning of December.

In a statement the Irish FA said it is "in constant dialogue with the NI Executive on all footballing matters" but it is understood that the association has not yet asked Stormont about considering granting an exception to the women's senior team.

"We were brave to take the England game on because our girls haven't played for months. We needed three games and two of them were wiped out. That was difficult for us," said Shiels.

"The same thing will happen as they did against England unless we get three of four practice matches - which we aren't allowed to do at the moment.

"We would love to have friendly games against boys teams, for example Glentoran, Coleraine or Linfield under-17s like we did in the summer, but it's not allowed.

"I don't want it to be like lambs to the slaughter like it was against England, I want there to be match fitness and for us to prepare professionally.

"I would plead with the Northern Ireland Executive, please alleviate the stress on these young girls because we still cannot have matches."

INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS



2021 Uefa Women's Under 19 Championships cancelled

The UEFA Executive Committee today decided to cancel the 2021 UEFA women's and men's Under-19 Championships due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the staging of competitions.

In making these decisions, the UEFA Executive Committee took note that, with the

government restrictions currently in place the travelling of teams and staging of mini-tournaments would prove very difficult.

Cymru were due to host the qualifying rounds for both the women's and men's U19 (born 2002) teams during March and April.

There will now be training camps for the men's U18s (2003) and U17s (2004) squads in March, while plans for the women's intermediate teams will be confirmed in due course.

The women's tournament was due to take place between Wednesday, July 21 and Monday, August 2.

France are the current holders, beating Germany to lift the trophy in Scotland in 2019.



GB Women's football to with support from National Lottery



The National Lottery is to back GB women's football at Tokyo 2020 by providing crucial support as players from across the four home nations come together with the ambition of striking gold.

The partnership and investment, overseen by the Football Association which is coordinating the GB team this summer, will see The National Lottery support a warm-up international on home soil before departing for Japan - as well as providing for training camps and the squad's travel and logistics needs.

Furthermore, The National Lottery will ensure the British public get a rare chance to see a GB team compete on home soil through supporting the staging of a home international immediately prior to departure for Tokyo.

As part of the partnership, The National Lottery will be acknowledged in a variety of ways, have access to a range of content opportunities and National Lottery players will benefit from tickets to events and unique opportunities with the GB Women's Football

Team. National Lottery players have played a crucial role in supporting Olympic and Paralympic athletes since the 1996 Games and this partnership ensures the very best for the GB Women's football team in Tokyo.

This sits alongside the significant contribution National Lottery funding makes to women's and girl's football at a grassroots level – including a £1m contribution to the participation legacy of The UEFA European Women's Championship in 2022.

The FA's director of women's football Sue Campbell said: "We would like to thank National Lottery players for their support for our Olympics campaign.

"The funding provided will make a huge difference to our preparations for the tournament.

"In sport, where even marginal gains can have a significant impact on a team's chances of success, the National Lottery support really could make all the difference.

!We are very grateful for the generosity of everyone whose contributions have made

Team prepare for Tokyo National Lottery players



this possible.”

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said: "The National Lottery and our elite sporting success go hand in hand - both are part of a great British success story that is both admired and envied around the world.

"I am delighted that the National Lottery is providing further support to give the GB Women's Football team a strong opportunity for medal success in Tokyo this summer."

Nigel Railton, Chief Executive of National Lottery operator Camelot: "Every day The National Lottery and its players make a huge difference to communities across the UK – and have been doing so since 1994.

"This inventive partnership demonstrates how, by working together, we can have a real impact on a sport and boost the chances of gold in Tokyo.

"With the four nations coming together to form one team this is something all National Lottery players can be proud to support and cheer on in the summer."

The money for these initiatives is coming from a National Lottery promotional fund.

It is not being funded by money allocated for National Lottery Good Causes or by Camelot.

Team GB will announce their new head coach in the next week, with England interim boss Hege Riise expected to take charge for the summer.

She will have the difficult job of choosing a squad combined of players from the four home nations and it is thought some big names could be left out.

The women's football games at the Tokyo Olympics will start on Wednesday, July 21.

The gold medal match and ceremony is due to take place on Friday, August 6.



UEFA
WOMEN'S
EURO 2022
ENGLAND



500 days to go (again)



On Sunday, February 21, the countdown once again began to the start of the Uefa Women's Euros which are to be held in England in 2022.

The tournament, which was originally due to be held in 2021, was moved due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the date once again marks 500 days to go.

A new identity was unveiled by the Football Association and the 'biggest women's football event in Uefa history' has been promised.

The FA believed that the tournament deserved a fresh, open and contemporary look that 'reflects the strength, diversity and ever-growing popularity of the game'.

"We're thrilled to share this new identity for the UEFA Women's EURO 2022," said UEFA chief of women's football, Nadine Kessler.

"This new branding brings a fresh look and eye-catching feel for the tournament as we begin the countdown to next summer. We

can't wait to see this emblem across host cities, stadiums and television when the action begins in 500 days' time."

As well as the new logo, extensive coverage of all 31 matches at UEFA Women's EURO 2020 will feature on free-to-air television, radio and online as 16 nations compete to be crowned European champions. This will ensure anyone, from committed or curious fans to the next generation of stars, can tune into the tournament and be part of the excitement.

"By moving the competition to 2022, we guaranteed that the biggest women's sports event in Europe receives the exclusive platform it deserves," Kessler said. "Alongside the English FA, we are confident of delivering a first-class tournament that will attract global attention and media coverage, leaving a legacy to inspire many more girls, and boys, to take up the game."

The opening match will be on Wednesday, July 2022.

Around the World



NWSL announce second Challenge Cup



The NWSL have announced the details for the 2021 Challenge Cup.

The tournament will be presented by Secret Opener.

It will kick off on April 9th with a re-match of the 2020 final between Houston and Chicago at the BBVA Stadium.

The 21-game tournament will be played in group stages with each team playing four matches before the final.

The games will be live on CBS and Paramount in America and will be available internationally on Twitch.

“We’re ready to build on our success of the last year and I couldn’t be more excited to open the 2021 NWSL Challenge Cup presented by Secret the same way we left off in the summer of 2020, watching Houston and Chicago showcase the very best in women’s professional soccer,” said NWSL Commissioner Lisa Baird.

“I want to thank Secret for once again helping us put on this incredible event, and for their continued commitment to the NWSL and our players, including the NWSL’s 2021 rookie class.”

This year’s tournament will see the league’s 10 teams organized into two divisions, East and West.

The East is comprised of:

- Racing Louisville FC
- North Carolina Courage
- Orlando Pride
- Sky Blue FC
- Washington Spirit

The West includes:

- Chicago Red Stars
- Houston Dash
- Kansas City
- OL Reign
- Portland Thorns FC

More details on the full match schedule are expected later in March.

Houston Dash, who England star Rachel Daly plays for, are the defending champions.



News from around the world

USA hold on to SheBelieves Cup

USA successfully defended their SheBelieves Cup title and a fourth victory in the tournament. The hosts won all three of their games against Brazil, Canada and Argentina. Brazil finished second in the tournament after beating Argentina 4-1 and Canada 2-0. Megan Rapinoe was the top goalscorer with three goals in the competition.

SHEBELIEVES CUP

History made in Argentina

History has been made in Argentina after a team of women began broadcasting first division matches.

The idea of a women-only programme was started by Hernan Avella, a radio presenter with the show commentating on men's football matches on one of the country's oldest radio stations.



She asked other people what they thought. "I spoke to Antonio Fernandez Llorente, my co-director, and he liked the idea too. And that's how the idea of putting together a team of women to broadcast River and Boca games came about."



New era for Saudi Arabia women's football

The Women's Community Football League has been launched in Saudi Arabia and will see twenty four teams compete for the title.

The league was originally set to begin in November 2020, but had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Players aged 17 and over will feature with teams from Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam playing in the league.



News from around the world



Marta given official day

Brazilian football legend Marta has been given her own day.

February 19, which is also her birthday, has been declared Women's Football Day in the state of Rio de Janeiro in her honour.

Rio's legislative assembly passed a law to institute a date on the calendar to celebrate women's football in the state.

The law has been passed at the time when the Women's Carioca championship is being played.

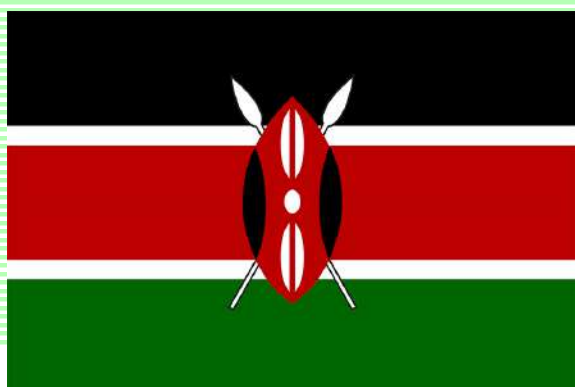
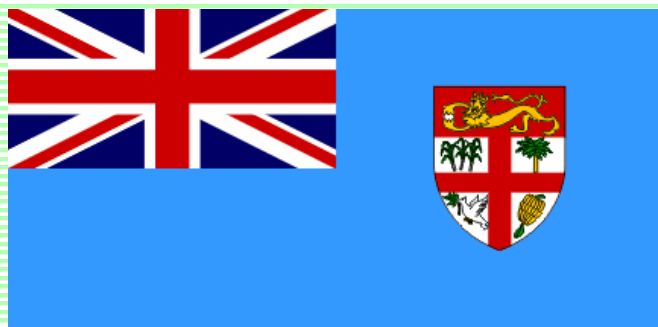
Fiji launches new league

Fiji have announced a new chapter in their footballing history with a new women's league in the country.

Six teams, funded by Fifa will compete in the National Women's Super League.

Fifa's involvement also includes provision of support equipment, funding and capacity building for coaches, with a women's football grant also recently approved.

The news comes after Fiji reached new heights in the 2019 World Cup qualifying campaign and they are ready to begin their next campaign for the 2023 tournament.



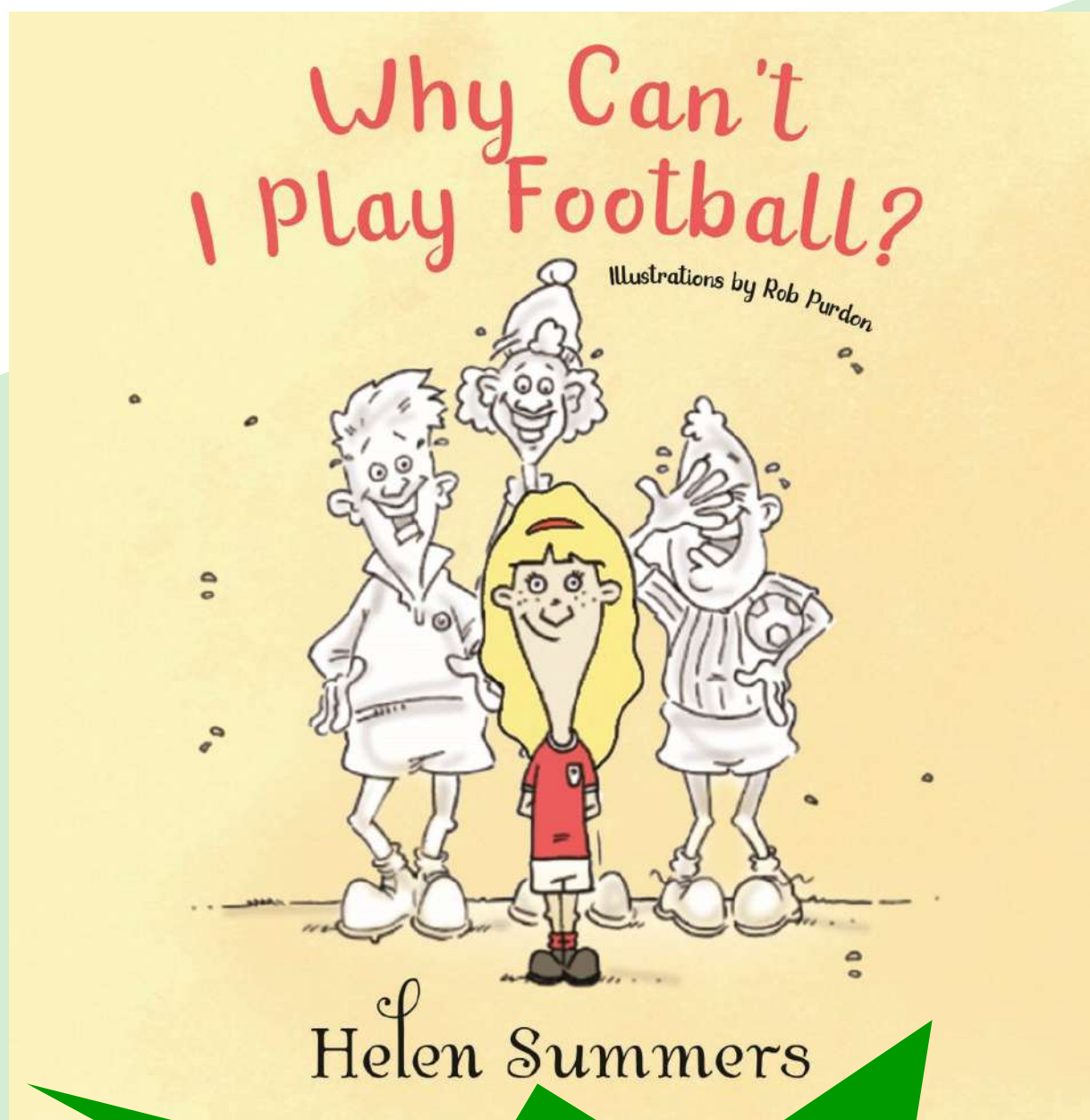
Football helping to change perception of women in rural Kenya

Under the motto "Tunaweza", which is Swahili for "we can", and with funding from the FIFA Foundation's Community Programme, Moving The Goalposts (MTG) is been helping women from the region find a voice, fight for their rights and complete their education.

Some have gone on to careers as teachers, musicians, procurement officers and journalists.

The idea behind MTG is simple. By organising football, it provides girls and young women with a safe space where it can also educate and support them. "We use football to pass our message and our information around reproductive health and women's rights," said Mrs Amakobe.

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**THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
MAGAZINE**