

Kick off your career

Turn your passion for football into your job





FA Women's Cup Final 2013

Introduction

As The FA celebrates 20 years of running women's football huge progress has been made. You are one of 1.4 million girls and women to play football regularly up and down the country, but you can also have a career in the sport that you love.

Two decades ago only men would be seen around the pitch or training ground, but now there are female coaches, physiotherapists, doctors and sports scientists. Behind the scenes, there are female lawyers, accountants, club secretaries and chief executives; the press box on match days is sprinkled with female reporters, and female directors now sit on the board at many top clubs. And that is not forgetting the supporters, with more and more women and girls filling the seats in the football stadiums. There is even an organisation to support women in football (WIF). WIF is a network of professional women working in and around the football industry who support and champion their peers.

The Football Association and the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation have come together to show you how 20 women have succeeded in the football industry and how you can too.

This is the story of 20 women who ignored the stereotypes and, in many cases, have become football pioneers. They are women whose passion for the game has helped them to achieve extraordinary success. They come from all over England with varied academic and social backgrounds; they are all ages and come from different ethnic groups; they are mothers, wives, daughters and sisters.

There are two things they have in common; they are women who love football and they have turned their passion into their career.





Foreword



I am delighted to be involved in this project as I have spent the past 20 years in women's football and understand the joy of working in a field I am passionate about.

I became the first Women's Football Co-ordinator when The FA assumed responsibility for the female game back in 1993. As the game has grown so has my career: I am now Chief Executive of Dorset County Football Association, Chairman of the FA Women's Committee, one of only three women who sit on the FA Council and the only female ever to be elected to the National Game Board.

I graduated as a teacher in Physical Education in 1971, and then as a girl who lived and dreamt sport, teaching PE was one of the few career pathways available.

How things have changed in 20 years. Women's football is now the top female team sport, England are consistently ranked in the top eight in the world and there is a clearly defined Pyramid of Women's Football. The development of the FA Women's Super League has given women the opportunity to play semi-professionally and a girl with talent has a clear pathway to progress to the top of the game.

It is not always easy operating in a traditionally 'man's world' but in The FA's 20th year of running the women's game and The FA's 150th anniversary I would say to all girls who love football that there really is a role for you in our national game.

Read these inspirational stories of women who have played football and turned their passion into their career and we'll pass you the ball.



SUE TIBBALLS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WOMEN'S SPORT & FITNESS FOUNDATION

The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) is a small charity that aims to create a nation of active women. But this isn't always easy. Men's sport dominates our TV screens and only one in five board positions are held by women in publicly funded sport. Girls are doing less activity than boys by the time they're eight or nine. At 14 years of age, only 12% of girls are active enough. And by the time they leave school, they have habits and perceptions that are hard to shift.

WSFF's challenge is to make a positive difference in all of these issues, and ensure that sport recognises your talents, both on and off the field.

I have always passionately believed in women being able to follow the career of their choosing. Just 20 years ago, football was not an industry where women prospered. This publication shows how far football has come, with The FA's support, but also how far we need to go. The 20 women featured here show that incredible things can be achieved, but we need this 20 to become 20,000.

Your generation are the key to continued change. While you now have a wealth of opportunities to play football, we need many more of you to take a step into the industry and have a say in how the game should be run, how it is portrayed in the media, or to coach the next generation. Many girls tell us that they are put under pressure to choose sport or their studies. Our message is that you can have both! Football can offer you a rewarding career, not just a 90 minute game on a Sunday afternoon.

The future is yours. Make it count.

WSFF are particularly excited to be launching this joint publication alongside The FA. We look forward to working together in many more ways in the future, and watching how the girls of today transform the beautiful game. We can't wait.



Introducing 20 Inspirational Women



NAME:
Hope Powell CBE

England Women's National Coach

Hometown: East London

First Club: Millwall Lionesses

Favourite Men's Team: Arsenal

Favourite Women's Team: Croydon WFC

'There were no other girls on the estate playing; I thought I was the only girl in the world who could play football.'

NAME:
Kelly Smith MBE

Professional Footballer

Hometown: Watford

First Club: Watford Ladies

Favourite Men's Team: Arsenal

Favourite Women's Team: Arsenal



'They said girls shouldn't play and that it was a boy's game. So one day my dad had to tell me that I couldn't play anymore because the other teams were refusing to play my team. It was heartbreaking.'



NAME:
Kelly Simmons MBE

Director of National Game and Women's Football, The FA

Hometown: Brighton

First Club: Warwick University Women's FC

Favourite Men's Team: Liverpool

Favourite Women's Team: Whitehawk LFC

'I love being at the heart of things here in Wembley. It sometimes doesn't feel as if I have ever worked a day in my life, I enjoy this so much.'

NAME:
Jacqui Oatley

Broadcast Journalist, BBC

Hometown: Wolverhampton

First Club: Chiswick Ladies

Favourite Men's Team: Wolverhampton Wanderers

Favourite Women's Team: Chiswick LFC



'I suddenly realised I was at a crossroads in my life, and I knew that I wanted to do something in sport. I realised I was going to have to take a gamble and start all over again.'



NAME:
Tracey Crouch MP

MP for Chatham

Hometown: Kent

First Club: Hull University

Favourite Men's Team: Tottenham Hotspur

Favourite Women's Team: Meridian U15s

'My first football memory is Tottenham losing to Coventry in The FA Cup. My mum was hovering, totally oblivious to the fact that I was sobbing my eyes out.'



NAME:

Jen O'Neill

Editor, She Kicks

Hometown: Tyne and Wear

First Club: Sunderland

Favourite Men's Team: Sunderland

Favourite Women's Team: Sunderland

'When we were really small, one of my neighbours put a 'NO BALL GAMES' sign up, my dad checked with the council and found out they didn't put it up. So we used that as a goal.'



NAME:

Jessica Creighton

Journalist, BBC Online

Hometown: Kent

First Club: St Vincent Vikings

Favourite Men's Team: Manchester United

Favourite Women's Team: Charlton Athletic

'Being a girl, they always tried to make you play netball, but I just wasn't into it, I desperately wanted to play football.'

NAME:

Lauren O'Sullivan

Football College Coordinator,

British College Sport

Hometown: Bristol

First Club: Keynsham Town

Favourite Men's Team: Bristol City

Favourite Women's Team: Bristol Academy WFC

'Eventually I came to a crossroads in my playing career. The coach at Bristol City was leaving and setting up a local team, and all my friends were going to play. I had to decide whether to stay at the academy and play at a higher standard or go with my friends.'



NAME:

Liz Ellen

Lawyer and Licensed Football Agent, Mishcon de Reya

Hometown: London

First Club: SOAS, University of London

Favourite Men's Team: West Ham United

Favourite Women's Team: Doncaster Rovers Belles

'My school had no women's football team. I joined my university team, 'a modest but determined bunch of women', winning 'one or two' games throughout the season.'



NAME:

Hannah Simpson

CEO, West Riding County FA

Hometown: Nottingham

First Club: Gedling Athletic, Nottingham

Favourite Men's Team: Nottingham Forest

Favourite Women's Team: Everton Ladies



'My dad has certainly got something to do with my attitude as well. He used to say: 'If you are hurt stay down, and if you are not, just get up and get on with it.'



NAME:

Naomi Datson

England Team Exercise Scientist

Hometown: Stourport on Severn

First Club: Kidderminster Harriers

Favourite Men's Team: Aston Villa

Favourite Women's Team: Fulham Compton

'One thing I think you really need is the 'softer skills' that you need to be able to communicate effectively. Sometimes there are difficult situations and you need to know when to speak and when not to speak; which battles to fight and which to walk away from.'

NAME:

Pippa Bennett

England Team Doctor

Hometown: Norfolk

First Club: London Women

Favourite Men's Team: Aston Villa

Favourite Women's Team: Old Addeyans WFC

'These days the players are athletes first and footballers second. The girls are not big and tall like their counterparts from Scandinavia or Germany, so they have to compensate by being agile, quick and strong.'



NAME:

Tracy Lewis

England Team Physiotherapist

Hometown: Loughton

First Club: Newham WFC

Favourite Men's Team: West Ham United

Favourite Women's Team: Barking WFC

'You don't have to get all your experience in a football setting, just take opportunities as they arise.'

NAME:

Clare Wheatley

Development Manager, Arsenal Ladies

Hometown: London

First Club: Friends of Fulham Ladies

Favourite Men's Team: Liverpool

Favourite Women's Team: Arsenal LFC

'I also remember going along with my junior school boys team to play, my teacher asked the opposition school if I could play and they said no. So I had to watch the whole game from the sidelines with my boots over my shoulder.'



NAME:

Kira Johal

National Administrator, The FA

Hometown: Marlow

First Club: Marlow Ladies FC

Favourite Men's Team: Manchester United

Favourite Women's Team: University of Salford WFC

'I was quite a shy timid little child when I was younger, but football really brought me out of myself and it was just something that I loved to play.'



NAME:
Marianne Spacey

Regional Coach, The FA
Hometown: London
First Club: Friends of Fulham
Favourite Men's Team: Chelsea
Favourite Women's Team: Arsenal LFC

'Be driven and be ambitious, but be humble and don't ever get into a position where you think you've made it.'



NAME:
Kathryn Hall

Development Officer, Northamptonshire County FA
Hometown: Northampton
First Club: Plymouth University
Favourite Men's Team: Yeovil Town
Favourite Women's Team: Yeovil Town/Arsenal

'I saw a coaching job advertised, I didn't have my level two badge at the time, but that sparked my interest.'

NAME:
Abbie Sadler

FA Tesco Skills Coach
Hometown: Gloucester
First Club: Gloucester City Football Club
Favourite Men's Team: Manchester United
Favourite Women's Team: Forest Green Rovers

'In those days there weren't a lot of female role models, but it is a different story now. Rachel Yankey and Kelly Smith stick out as real role models for young players growing up today, but I wish I'd had more chances to see the top women players ten years ago.'



NAME:
Radha Balani

Head of Communications, Football Foundation
Hometown: London
First Club: St Thomas Colts
Favourite Men's Team: Liverpool
Favourite Women's Team: Royston Town LFC

'I like to feel like I am on the pitch, and when things go my way in meetings, I have been known to shout 'Goal!''



NAME:
Jane Purdon

Director of Governance, Premier League
Hometown: Sunderland
First Club: Clare College Ladies
Favourite Men's Team: Sunderland
Favourite Women's Team: Sunderland/England

'The club chairman at Sunderland said 'I like having women in the organisation because they bring something different'; I was delighted to find professional football was so welcoming and inclusive.'





Tracy Lewis
England Team Physiotherapist

'The only negative comments came from my mum. She was worried I would get hurt playing football.' **Tracy**



For the love of the game

For many, football is their first true love and like all love stories, everyone's is different. When [Kathryn Hall](#) first fell in love with football there was very little provision for girls to play, certainly not at Kathryn's school, so it wasn't until university that she first started playing her favoured sport.

[Tracy Lewis](#) was one of the lucky few growing up, playing the beautiful game in the playground of her

local primary school (although she was the only girl) and then progressing to a secondary school with a passionate PE teacher who was in the process of starting a 5-a-side league for girls. But Tracy still had obstacles to overcome.

For some like [Marieanne Spacey](#), football has been the constant throughout their lives. When she was a toddler, Marieanne's grandad predicted she would

play for her country. She fulfilled his prophecy with 91 caps and 28 international goals and has been described by many as 'one of England's greatest ever players'. Now she has moved seamlessly from playing to coaching, working with the regional academy and as coach to the England blind squad. In this role she calls on all her personal experiences to offer advice and support to young players starting out on their own footballing journey.

'I knew that if I wanted to play football, I would have to be the fittest, which meant making sacrifices. A typical week for me as a 13-15 year old would be training six days a week – both athletics and football – while making sure I did well at school and completed all my homework on time.' **Marieanne**

Marieanne Spacey
Regional Coach, The FA



Clare Wheatley
Development Manager
Arsenal Ladies

For others, there have been times away from the game. Clare Wheatley was determined to play football, and you would often find her 'trying to race around the local council estate after school, trying to get picked.' First joining a Met Police 5-a-side team as a ten year old, Clare later joined the Friends of Fulham football club but soon the demands of education began to pose a strain on the talented footballer. 'I was at a grammar school that had high academic expectations, and football just wasn't the done thing, so it was tough to balance the two; it was too much in the end.'

Clare's footballing days looked all but over when she stopped playing completely at school. But years later, she still had not forgotten about her first love and in her final year of university discovered Sheffield Wednesday were setting up a women's football team and she was reunited with the game that she was passionate about.

Jen O'Neill
Editor, She Kicks -
The magazine for
women's football

While people play football for many different reasons, for Jen O'Neill, football was actually a life-saver. She explains: 'I went to Oxford University and I hated it and football became my refuge. I am so fortunate that through my love of football I have been all over the world writing and reporting on the women's game. If I hadn't played football I don't know what would have happened. Football gave me an identity and lifted a bit of the pressure that life was piling on at the time. Football became my anchor.'

Jane Purdon's involvement in football took a very different route. Despite being an avid Sunderland fan from a young age, she had no opportunity to play football herself as a girl. The first time Jane kicked a ball competitively was when she was 19 years old, and a student at Cambridge University. Such was her determination to have a slice of this footballing action that she started a female college team from scratch. 'Our greatest moment in that first year came when we scored our first goal, although we did eventually lose 3-1. We celebrated that game as if we had won a cup match.'

As Director of Governance for the Premier League, Jane is now at the heart of football administration and goes to as many matches as she can. But there is one game that still brings tears to her eyes when she recalls it. 'I was one of those people watching the GB v Brazil women's game at the Olympics. To hear the cheering and see that people were so behind Team GB... we have come so far and I can't begin to describe how proud I was at that moment.'



Jane Purdon
Director of Governance
Premier League

Tracey Crouch MP for Chatham

Tracey Crouch is not your typical politician. Tracey is the only female MP to date who has turned out for the parliamentary team and there are not many politicians who would admit to sitting on the floor sobbing as their beloved Spurs lost out in The FA Cup Final to Coventry City.

Tracey's love of the game began at an early age. She and her sister were the only girls in their street so they played football with the boys, but going to a traditional all-girls school meant she didn't play formal football until she went to Hull University.

'Even at university it was the very early stages of the game, there was very little structure. I am slightly envious of my girls' football team at Meridian. Had I had that structure I could have been a better player. What we have today is so much more advanced than back in the 1990s.'

Meridian is where Tracey spends her Sunday mornings running up and down the sideline encouraging her team, always in a pair of shorts no matter what the weather, as if ready to run on the pitch.



'Sunday is now the one time in the week when I cannot think about politics as I am too busy thinking about the welfare of 11 or 12 players, the tactics and the game. It is a point of the week where I can wind down and concentrate on something else, so in many ways it is my sanctuary.' **Tracey**

'I got too old to play competitively and anyway the job meant I couldn't commit on a regular basis. I wanted to give something back to the game, so I did my coaching badge at White Hart Lane and really enjoyed it.'



Lauren O'Sullivan Football College Coordinator

'I taught a group of trainee care workers, who were just not "into" sport in any way', says Lauren with a laugh. 'I had a double whammy because they were timetabled for football first thing in the morning. I never thought they would turn up.'

But Lauren is nothing if not resourceful. As a 17-year-old she was chosen by The FA to go to Botswana on Changing Lives, a coaching initiative that combines teaching football and life skills to local children. When you have coached 200 children ranging from five years old to 15 years old on a piece of waste land, persuading a few care worker students that football can be a benefit is a simple task.

'I told the students that many of the children they would be working with would love football and that would be one way to connect with them. So they had a purpose in coming to my football sessions. And they turned up every week.'

One of Lauren O'Sullivan's toughest jobs is to persuade people that they want to play football at all.

You've got to want it

When you think of dedication in sport, and the hours of training that it takes to get to the top, you tend to think of the players. A similar level of determination, talent and dedication is needed no matter what your profession.

When Naomi Datson went to Australia for a gap year it wasn't for the usual round of bar jobs, fruit-picking or casual work. She saw an advert for an intern at the Australian Institute of Sport and the football-mad sports scientist went to the other side of the world to take up an unpaid job to follow her passion. She returned to England, and seven years later found herself in her dream job, as the Head of Sport Science for the Women's Football Team. Naomi is now responsible for the fitness of 150 of the best footballers in England.

For anyone thinking of a career in sports science, Naomi has this advice: 'Getting qualifications and keeping them up-to-date is really important in my job, as is sports-specific knowledge. I wouldn't say you need to have played football necessarily, but you do need an understanding of the game because you need to use terminology the players recognise and understand. The players will challenge you, as will the coaches, so you do need knowledge in order to have credibility.'

Naomi Datson
England Team
Exercise Scientist



'On the course I was the only female, the only black female and there I was with these guys from the professional world of football. I probably worked harder than everyone else; in that situation you've got more to prove.' **Hope**



Hope Powell CBE England Women's National Coach

'Sport was easy for me,' says Hope. 'But the one I loved most was football. I used to play with my stepbrothers. I thought I was the only girl in the world who could play football.'

When Hope joined Millwall Lionesses however, she met plenty of girls just like her, eager to just play football.

Hope's passion for the game occasionally led to trouble. She recalls, 'I got home late after training so Mum said I couldn't go again. She didn't understand why I wanted to play football. I just went upstairs and snuck out of the window.'

Hope dreamt of becoming a professional footballer, but that would have meant leaving the UK. As a 16-year-old this was a daunting prospect so Hope decided to stay in the UK and concentrate upon getting her coaching badges.

'I wanted to make a living from the thing I loved – football – and I was disgusted that I couldn't play professionally.'

Hope Powell grew up during the 1970s in south east London, at a time when girls were discouraged from playing football. But you don't get to be England manager without challenging conventions.

'Sport just gives you so many life skills: team work, the ability to win and lose, how to face challenges, and managing and understanding people. It's the social elements too: football is so much more than just a game,' **Kathryn**

Kathryn Hall
Development Officer
Northamptonshire County FA

Abbie Sadler
FA Tesco Skills Coach



Career success is all about hard work, but sometimes an element of luck is needed to set you on your way. Abbie Sadler's lucky break came when a passer-by spotted her potential as a footballer. 'I was kicking the ball around in my garden and this woman poked her head over the fence and said I should go along to the Gloucester City academy.' This she did, and soon Abbie realised that, not only did she love playing football, but she wanted a career in coaching too. 'Until then I didn't know what I wanted to do, all I knew was that I loved football and I wanted to do something in sport.' While her friends and peers were choosing careers in medicine, law, the media and education, Abbie was taking every opportunity to get involved in coaching sessions at her local leisure centre.

Opportunities can come from anywhere, on or off the pitch. And even the darkest clouds have silver linings. It was a personal tragedy that led Kathryn Hall to quit her school teacher job and move into the world of football development. 'I saw a coaching job advertised, I didn't have my level two badge at the time, but that sparked an interest,' she says. 'So I went for a different job with Northampton County Football Association and got it.'



These scary moments came early on, but I worked every shift going and got better with experience.

Jacqui Oatley Broadcast Journalist

In 2007 Jacqui Oatley became the first female football commentator on television, and hers is a story of pursuing a dream, despite any obstacles.

Until she was 27 she worked for an intellectual property company, enjoying all the benefits of a well-paid job in the city. But in her heart she knew she wanted to work in sports journalism, so she took a gamble and started all over again, giving up her job, her flat and returning to university for a year.

'I really had to put everything into this one year. I managed to get a part-time post with BBC Radio Leeds, covering local league football.

Recalling her first match, Jacqui says: 'I remember thinking, 'this is it, my big moment, but when I got there it was a dreadful press box and I was the only woman among all these newspaper journalists. It was an incredibly uncomfortable situation. Every time I was on the phone giving a report it would go silent as all the reporters listened to my analysis.'

'Whatever you do, don't think anything is impossible. As a 14-year-old I would never have dreamed I could have a job like this, but I am living proof that it is possible.' **Pippa**

Pippa Bennett
England Team Doctor

'I don't know what it was. I had always just been a little tomboy when I was small. I first started playing at the park with the boys. I was the only girl but the boys were so welcoming and they always let me join in.' **Kira**

Kira Johal
National Administrator, The FA



Liz spends many hours dealing with the media and working on crisis management strategies with both players and clubs.

Liz Ellen Lawyer and Licensed Football Agent

By her own admission, Liz Ellen was a 'lousy' football player who did not play until she was at university, and even then she was very much in it for the social element. She soon realised that while she'd never play for England she could follow her passion by entering the world of sports law.

And so she headed off down the academic route, taking the Licensed Football Agents course, and becoming one of only two women in the UK to gain the licence in the process.

Liz then became a trainee solicitor, completing her sports law diploma at Kings College London, before finally moving on to complete her Masters degree in sports management and football.

With sports law covering so many areas, a day in Liz's life can cover a wide range of issues dealing with players, managers, clubs and stadiums. There are the pressures of deadline day, acting on behalf of clubs and players to ensure transfers go through smoothly, often with only hours to spare before the deadline is reached. Describing a typical, panic-stricken call she may get from a club, 'We have this deal going through, can you help us put it together?'

It is now eight years since she became a licensed agent – a cut-throat world for anyone – but Liz loves it.

Radha Balani Head of Communications

At five years old, Radha Balani could not drag her father's attention away from the football match on television. So she started watching too. Soon she was playing football in the playground, for the girls' team at secondary school and the local women's club.

Radha went to Loughborough University, where she was elected athletic union president. 'When it came to the elections,' she says. 'I planned the election campaign much as I would plan a team's tactics: what were my strengths and weaknesses? Then I devised a strategy.'

Not only did the plan pay off, but it laid the foundation for a career in sport.

Radha is now head of communications for the Football Foundation, an organisation that supports football projects in the community. She speaks with pride about these projects.

'Norwich City football club run a scheme to get kids with disabilities playing sport. The kids were saying things like 'this is the only place where I can find friends' and 'this is the only place where I am able to do things like this'.



'You must take advantage of the fact you can do anything. Every job in the football industry, anyone can do.' **Radha**

I planned the election campaign much as I would plan a team's tactics: what were my strengths and weaknesses? Then I devised a strategy.



Hannah Simpson CEO
West Riding County FA

Aiming high

Hannah Simpson faced opposition at secondary school but, with her mum's support, Hannah took up the fight to play and won. Now as Chief Executive of the third largest county football association, she works tirelessly to ensure the grassroots provision for girls is there for anyone wanting to play.

Although it's not all been easy, Hannah attributes her success to being prepared with a strong argument to take on the naysayers.

"I think that is something I have carried over from my football training," she said. "Although my dad has certainly got something to do with my attitude as well. He used to say: "If you are hurt,

stay down. But if you're not just get up and get on with it."

"I use that principle in work as well. If I come up against a problem, I could moan about it for a week, or I can look for a solution and just get on with it."

'It was quite a step up from a trainee to an Olympic correspondent, but football had taught me to step up to those kind of challenges and have belief in myself.' **Jessica**



Jessica Creighton
BBC Journalist

Jessica Creighton tells a similar story. A talented footballer, she had to make a difficult choice while studying for her A-levels. To succeed in her dream of becoming a sports journalist she had to rethink her dream of becoming an elite footballer. For Jessica, and many footballers, it means carefully balancing football training and studying, mastering time management skills that are invaluable now in her career of constant deadlines. She still plays when she can, but there is an air of wistfulness when she says: 'What would have happened if I hadn't gone down that route?'

So much has changed even since Jessica was making her decisions. Academies now cater for the talented players, ensuring that they can continue with their education while following their footballing dreams. Schools and clubs run teams for all abilities; counties and regions run tournaments and leagues so everyone can play; and the footballing opportunities for people with disabilities is growing exponentially. But there is still some way to go if the women's football scene in the UK is to match the top footballing nations of Germany and the USA.

Kelly Simmons MBE
Director of National Game
and Women's Football, The FA

Kelly Simmons regularly speaks to colleagues from other countries and she sums up the difference between Scandinavian and English attitudes. 'They (the Scandinavians) talk about football, and I ask if they mean men's or women's. They look at me with amazement – "football, just football, there is no difference." We are nowhere near that stage yet.'



When [Kelly Smith](#) MBE was told she could no longer play for the local boys U9s team, she would have been forgiven for pursuing a different sport. But with the help of her father, she travelled further afield, firstly to an academy forty miles from her home, and eventually to America where she graced the college football scene and the professional league. Following a career-threatening injury Kelly returned home and through dedication rejoined Arsenal and England.

Thanks to her perseverance Kelly has become one of the greatest players ever to pull on an England shirt with the ability to transform a game in a moment.

Whether it is injury, lack of opportunities, competition or some other obstacle, there are always barriers to achieving goals. For most of these women, the very first barrier was just simply the opportunity to get on the pitch but nothing would stop this gang.

Kelly Smith MBE Professional Footballer

But success has not been easy. At nine she was barred from playing football for the local boys' team after complaints from the parents of the opposition – because Kelly was running circles around their sons.

She shrugged this disappointment off and joined a girls' academy, where she was talent-spotted by a coach from an American university. Three enormously successful years in the US college system were followed by seasons in the US and with Arsenal and England.

She is now one of the best and most famous players in the world.

Now, when she talks about her experiences, a fleeting smile crosses her face. 'If I thought there were girls out there who wanted to be like me I would love that.'



England's top goal scorer, more than 100 international caps, an MBE – Kelly Smith is the footballer a young girl can aspire to be.

The future

The growth of the women's game in this country has been boosted by the introduction of the FA WSL and the television coverage it has attracted. On top of this [Hope Powell](#)'s dream of elite players being paid in the UK is coming true.

[Kelly Simmons](#) has been heavily involved in developing the commercial side of the women's game. 'We have been trying to package the FA WSL in a certain way, making it a bit more of an experience, attracting family groups and switching it to the summer,' she says. 'Families are more likely to come and watch when it is a little cheaper and played in nice, sunny weather. And people find the women's game refreshing; there is no dissent, no diving and people want to watch that sort of play, no matter who is playing.'

What is emerging is a game that is very different to its male counterparts, and it is proving attractive to viewers and players across the country. As someone

whose career has spanned the past 15 years of football development, [Kathryn Hall](#) says 'things are going in the right direction with women's football but we need more support.'

'My next door neighbour is an avid Chelsea fan. If it wasn't for football, I would probably never have even spoken to him, but now he follows women's football and we have a good old chat when he tells me what has been going on in the FA WSL or in an England match. We need to be telling a lot more people.'

[Jessica Creighton](#) agrees, although she believes this problem is not unique to football. 'British society does not value female sports stars as much as it values the men. But times are changing, certainly since I was a kid. There are more opportunities to play, top teams have scholarships to help you study while you play, and women can also now earn a living from playing too. If I was a 15-year-old now, I might have told myself to take the plunge and go for it.'

But [Pippa Bennett](#) wants more. 'Football in this country is changing but not fast enough. There are still people in football who see you only as a woman and not a player or professional.'

But it is early days yet. The FA has been working for the betterment of the men's game for 150 years, the women's game for just 20. In that time the women's game has grown and evolved and is now the third largest team sport in the country behind men's football and men's cricket.

So while the women's game is growing at all levels, and the work of coaches, development officers and administrators is taking the game to new heights, it is clear that the next generation of enthusiastic, talented and dedicated people will be needed to keep pushing and pulling the women's game up to its rightful place in this country and internationally.

You may have your future mapped, you may be considering several options or you may not have a clue. But you know you love football, but how can you turn that into a career? For anyone interested of working in sport, it is important that you are aware of the breadth of options now available.

Your next steps



Want to be the next Jessica Creighton or Jacqui Oatley? Find out how at sportsjournalists.co.uk/training

If you're interested in becoming a Football Coach or Football Official, visit TheFA.com/my-football
The earliest you can take one of our courses is 16 years of age.

Be the next Pippa Bennett to the England stars of tomorrow, visit medicalcareers.nhs.uk to find out all you need in considering medicine.

If you want to be the next Kelly Smith and need to find a club, visit TheFA.com/womens-girls-football or womeninsport.org



Interested in studying law? Start your journey into the legal profession by visiting lawsociety.org.uk/about-us/law-society-careers/ and www.britishsportslaw.org for advice on how to become a solicitor.

To get started on a career in sport administration, visit cimspa.co.uk and visit the 'Train & Develop' section. Also visit leaguemanagers.com for info on their School of Football Management.

To find out how to be like Naomi Datson and become an Exercise Scientist visit bases.org.uk/careers. Or if you like the sound of being a Physio like Tracy Lewis, visit csp.org.uk



To see what's available to study at a College, visit notgoingtouni.co.uk
To see what's available to study at a University, visit university.which.co.uk
To know more about the Women In Football network visit womeninsport.org



Women's football in England a brief history

To find out more

The Football Association

Telephone: +44 (0) 800 169 1863

Email: womens.football@TheFA.com

TheFA.com

TheFA.com/womens-girls-football

facebook.com/EnglandWomen

twitter.com/FAWSL

To find out how to play, coach, referee or volunteer visit:

TheFA.com/womens-girls-football/participation

Women's Sport & Fitness Foundation

Email: info@wsff.org.uk

www.wsff.org.uk/resources/girls-and-education/kick-off-your-career

facebook.com/WSFFUK

twitter.com/WSFF_UK

womeninsport.org

After the game's initial popularity at the end of the 19th century The Football Association came to the conclusion that football was 'unsuitable for women' and in 1921 banned it from being played on its clubs' grounds.

Four decades on and in 1966, the World Cup in England led to a resurgence of interest in the women's game. Three years on and in 1969 the Women's Football Association (WFA) was formed to re-establish the game. It was an independent body and not part of The FA.

The WFA made real strides in the fledgling international competitions and even took an England side to the European Championship Final in 1984. However, they were unable to develop the game at grassroots level due to limited funding.

The FA's direct involvement began in 1993. Since that time, the game has progressed and developed throughout the country and the England women's senior team has been able to participate on the highest stage. In 1993 there were only 80 girls' teams, no professional players, no football development plan and little funding.

In the past 20 years, leagues and competitions have been formed throughout the country to form a thriving pyramid of women's football. It is now the top female team participation sport in England.

There remains considerable work to be undertaken, but The FA is committed to making women's football a credible and financially more sustainable sport in its own right. This means strong domestic competitions, a substantial grassroots game and a successful England team.

Kick off your career project team



NAME:

Annabel Kehoe

Current Job: Sport Partnerships Manager, WSFF

Hometown: Toowoomba, Australia

First Sport Club: F.A.S.T. Swimming Club

Supporting: Tottenham Hotspur and

the Australian soccer teams (Socceroos and Matildas)

‘Working in sport has taken me across the world. All those hours training and studying have paid off in a way that I never imagined.’

NAME:

Katherine Knight

Current Job: Women’s Football
PR Consultant

Hometown: Reading

First Sport Club: Our Lady’s Primary School FC

Supporting: Everton LFC and FC



‘My grandad gave me my first boots aged 8 and said ‘Girl, you can do whatever you want’ Well I want girls to know it’s our game too, on and off the pitch.’

Thanks to Tom Shaw at Getty Images for all the images of the women involved in this project.



NAME:

Rachel Pavlou

Current Job: FA National Women’s Football Development Manager

Hometown: Birmingham

First Sport Club: Sparkhill Tennis Club

Supporting: ‘The Mighty’ Aston Villa

‘My first sports club was not a football club. I was banned from playing just for being born female. That one ridiculous decision has continued to drive me to succeed both on and off the pitch my whole life!’

NAME:

Sarah Juggins

Current Job: Magazine Editor, Freelance Journalist

Hometown: Norfolk

First Sport Club: Pelicans Hockey Club

Supporting: Arsenal and Norwich

‘It’s okay to make a mistake, just don’t do it twice.’



NAME:

Jeanette Kwakye

Current Job: Freelance Journalist and Athlete

Hometown: London

First Sport Club: Woodford Green and

Essex Ladies Athletics Club

Supporting: Arsenal

‘Arsenal are for life not just for Christmas.’



THANK YOU TO:

