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Femininity, Sexuality and English Women's Football, c.1960 – c.1990

Fig. 1. Newspaper photograph, May 8th 1980, 'Enfield stages Women's FA Cup Final… Move Over Men the Girls are in Town!', *Weekly Herald*, p.20, Liz Deigham Scrapbook Collection (L.D. Collection), National Football Museum Archive, Preston (NFMA).

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Introduction

In October 1990, the first edition of *Born Kicking*, a pioneering fanzine for 'women who love football', was published.[1] Editor Jane Purdon articulated its importance in an arresting editorial preface; football, she noted, is popularly and paradoxically conceived as both a 'people's game' and a 'man's game' - 'these two statements cannot exist side by side and that is what this fanzine is going to be all about'.[2] *Born Kicking* was established near the end of the twentieth century to disrupt masculine footballing norms by providing women with a vehicle to 'exchange [...] ideas and experiences' and forge a 'like-minded' community.[3] Purdon was bold about how female footballers and fans should tackle their multifaceted exclusion: 'it is vital that women stand up and make their contribution [...] heard'.[4] The consequence of inaction, she thought, was clear; women would continue to be symbolically and physically excluded from a game as 'intrinsic and important [to] everyday British culture as the royal family, the pub and the double decker bus'.[5]

Born Kicking was founded in an optimistic context. By 1990, there were 274 clubs affiliated to the Women's Football Association; England Women had finished as runners up in the 1984 inaugural UEFA women's European Championships; and 1985 saw the creation of the Football Association's (FA) 'Football in the Community', targeted at increasing female participation rates.[6] And yet, Purdon's observations were not exaggerated. Still, in 2020, public knowledge about women's football, let alone its history, is sporadic and reductive; recognised sites of women's football are few; and spaces for female footballing communities are fractured. Administratively, it was not until 1991 that the first National Women's Football league was founded, nor until 1998

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[1] Jane Purdon, 'Editorial (Introduction)', *Born Kicking*, October 1990, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Jane Purdon, 'Editorial (Introduction)', *Born Kicking*, October 1990; '1984: Sweden take the first title', History, *UEFA.com* [https://www.uefa.com/womenseuro/season=1984/index.html, accessed 30/04/20]; Jean Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* (Routledge, 2003) p.44

that England Women had a full-time coach.[7] Culturally, female footballers remained marginalised: throughout the twentieth century, an overwhelming majority of girls did not play football in school, and, when sociologist Jayne Caudwell asked a sample of players in 1999, 'Have you ever experienced any difficulties playing a 'traditional' male sport?', only 22% had not.[8]

This dissertation seeks to explore the questions of why, how, and to what consequence women played football in the later twentieth century. It considers women's experiences of football, both directly, through their participation (or lack thereof) in the local and national game; and more sociologically, through examining the implications of historical constructions of sporting women, and more specifically, female football players. It aims to situate continuity and change in women's football within the wider landscape of the social and cultural developments of the late twentieth century. Through this approach, this study demonstrates how an exploration of women's football can nuance, extend and perhaps even shift our understandings of historical conceptions and self-conceptions of the female body, female agency, and the performance of gender. It will be suggested that a focus on the representation and lived identities of footballing women complicates historiographical narratives about the increasing individualisation and diversification of popular images of femininity and gendered norms from the 1960s onwards; often, the discourses surrounding female footballers testify to the continued cultural pervasiveness of traditional gender expectations throughout the period.

By situating women's football within wider narratives of gender, social and cultural history, this study challenges the isolation of the history of women's football from wider historical research. Despite the growth of women's and gender history, the more subjective analysis of women's experiences of football in this period, including how it interacted with shifting ideals of femininity

[7] 'The History of Women's Football in England' Women and Girls, *The FA* [http://www.thefa.com/womens-girls-football/history, accessed 28/11/19].
[8] Jayne Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom: Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 23 (1999) pp.390-402 p.396.

and domesticity, sexuality and female physicality, has been slow to develop. Claire Langhamer, for instance, reductively groups women's sports into the categories of 'team' and 'individual', leaving little space for exploration of the specific gendered codes of football.[9] Sociological scholarship has enriched our understanding of the sociocultural world of women's football, including how this might interact with constructions of womanhood in the later twentieth century.[10] However, as Caudwell suggests, the disjuncture between gender theory, history, and football studies remains.[11] Thus, this study will advocate for the untapped potential of cross-disciplinary research into women's footballing communities'.

The period c.1960-1990 forms the parameters of this dissertation both because of the eras centrality to discourses about femininity and sexuality, and because of the contemporary growth of women's football. The significance of social change in postwar Britain has been the subject of much historical analysis, where the changing position of women in relation to the workplace, the family and the state has been highlighted.[12] The history of twentieth-century English organised sport, however, is largely conceptualised as harboring continued social and institutional masculinity.[13] Although, as Martin Francis notes, 'female marginalisation did not necessarily imply absolute exclusion' from the sporting world, scholars have demonstrated how participation remained strongly gendered, even continuing into the rise of 'keep-fit' classes in the later 1980s.[14] Such a dynamic will be fore-fronted in this study, with the aim of demonstrating how a

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[9] Claire Langhamer, *Women's leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester University Press, 2000) p.82

[10] See Jayne Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom: Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image'; Jayne Caudwell (eds) *Sport, Sexualities and Queer Theory* (Routledge, 2006); Jayne Caudwell, 'Gender, feminism and football studies', *Soccer and Society* 12 (2011) pp.330-344; Jayne Caudwell, 'Sporting gender: Women's footballing bodies as sites/sights for the [re]articulation of sex, gender and desire', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 20 (2003) pp.371-386; and Jayne Caudwell, *Women's Football in the UK: Continuing with Gender Analysis* (Routledge, 2011).

[11] Jayne Caudwell, 'Gender, feminism and football studies'.

[12] See Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain* (Marlowe & Co, 1995); Jane Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945, Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Palgrave, 2012).

[13] Martin Francis, 'Leisure and Popular Culture' in Ina Zweiniger- Bargielowska *Women in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2001) p.236.

[14] Ibid. p.236.

consideration of sporting females can rework our understanding of the extent to which movements for gender equality and liberation were realised.

Women's football in England has a turbulent and unusual history.[15] As will be developed upon in the following pre-history, English women's football was, and to a certain extent, continues to be overshadowed by a 1921 FA ban, which prevented women playing on any affiliated grounds, or using any affiliated referees until the ban was lifted in 1971. The exact impetus for the removal of the ban is debated; indeed, Jean Williams' emphasis on how 1971 should not be seen as a marked turning point, as 'the independently held material' suggests that there was, in fact, more of a gradual than a 'pivotal' change in the development of the women's game seems astute.[16] This study will continue this perspective, treating the period between 1960 and 1990 as one in which women's football underwent an important and gradual process of stabilisation, growth and diversification. Archival material from the period illuminates a collection of localised communities of female footballers, most often workplace or neighborhood teams, based in and around Yorkshire and the North West. By 1969, women's football had secured its own central administration: the Women's Football Association (WFA) was established with 44 registered clubs.[17] Post-1971 saw the development of centrally organised tournaments, such as the WFA Cup (established in 1971), and the first official international match (England v Scotland 1972).[18] It has been suggested that the 1970s saw a trend away from the charity or festival-type matches of previous decades towards a regional league structure.[19] This administrative change was

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[15] The official history can be surmised by the implementation of a Football Association (FA) decision to ban women from playing football on affiliated grounds or using affiliated referees in December 1921; the reassertion of this ban in 1936, 1946 and 1963; the continuous penalisation of managers, clubs and referees that defied the ban throughout its tenure; the formation of the Women's Football Association (WFA) in 1969; the lifting of the 'ban' in 1971; the eventual affiliation of women's teams to the FA (on the same basis of County Associations) in 1983; the gradual merging of the WFA and the FA between 1993 and 1994; and the appointment of the first full time national team coach, Hope Powell, in 1998.
[16] Jean Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.38
[17] Jean Williams, *A Beautiful Game*, *International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Berg Publishers, 2007) p.144.
[18] 'Mitre Challenge Trophy 1971', c.1971, Women's Football Match Programmes Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[19] Jean Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.37

solidified in the 1980s; in particular, 1984 saw the affiliation of the WFA to the FA.[20] By 1990, though there is a marked discrepancy between official and estimated figures - 8,000 official players versus 45,000 estimated – women's football had much more of an administrative and cultural presence in England.[21] This, however, should be qualified: even by 1990, women's football was largely a localised minority sport dependent on unregulated, grass-roots interest, detached from central officialdom.

This study is divided into three targeted chapters. Chapter 1 examines how female footballers have been constructed in various forms of public media. Building on this, Chapter 2 explores how, and to what end, female footballers might have navigated with such constructed identities. Chapter 3 concludes by examining the effects of gendered childhood socialisation, and more specifically the position of men, on the construction of women's footballing communities, both in terms of their own teams, and in broader footballing culture. The following brief overview of the history of women's football prior to c.1960 provides crucial background for this analysis.

Historical Overview: Women's Football in England c.1890 – c.1960

Williams has highlighted how the typical definition of sport as 'an institutionalised, highly structured, rule-bound physical contest' makes determining women's first participation in football difficult.[22] The foundation of the British Ladies Football Association in 1894 by upper-middle class socialite and feminist Lady Florence Dixie and her associate Nettie Honeyball is thus taken as the first marker of the organised women's game in England.[23] Dixie had a declared 'endeavour to popularise the sport by playing some matches in different localities'; indeed, one game in Newcastle played host to 8,000 spectators, and the Association's tenure as a whole saw

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[20] Ibid. p.41/2.
[21] 'Facts and Figures' *Born Kicking*, October 1990, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[22] Williams, *A Beautiful Game, International Perspectives on Women's Football* p.26.
[23] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.26.

the establishment of popular charity matches and ladies touring teams.[24] Yet, whilst the period saw a thriving women's football culture, the contemporary press coverage of a seminal North v South match in March 1895 reveals early tensions surrounding footballing women; in light-hearted articles, emphasis is placed on the 'novelty' of watching ladies play football, and there is a distinct intrigue into the respectability of their 'costumes'.[25] Such allusions hint at an ambiguous wider discourse surrounding female bodies in this period; Williams explores the distinct 'ambivalence over how to dress women football players', and, in particular, the concern about the appropriateness of bifurcated garments for sportswomen.[26] Moreover, Honeyball's much-cited promotion of football as a means to express feminine strength is complicated by the ways in which she engaged with conventional ideals surrounding the 'physique of women' when advocating the game.[27] The 1902 FA decision to ban male clubs from playing 'lady teams' institutionalised the social unease regarding women's football, in turn creating long-lasting gendered divisions in the game.[28] In this way, the early years of organised women's football harbored a discomfort around female footballers, which subsequently translated complexly into the social practices and images of the sport.

The First World War saw a renewal of interest in women's football: a match at Goodison Park involving women's football legends Dick Kerr Ladies FC on Christmas Eve 1916, for example, drew a crowd of 53,000.[29] Ali Melling has explored the notable foundation of women's football teams by welfare officers at WW1 munitions factories.[30] Again, although Melling situates the

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[24] Ibid. p.26.
[25] A Lady Correspondent, 'The Ladies' Football Match', March 25, 1895, *The Manchester Guardian* (1828-1900), The Guardian and Observer Online Collection, University of Cambridge British Newspapers Online Collection.
[26] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.27.
[27] Museum Exhibition 'The Game' gallery, Level 1, National Football Museum, Manchester (as of 25/11/19).
[28] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.27.
[29] Timothy F. Grainey, *Beyond Bend It Like Beckham: The Global Phenomenon of Women's Soccer* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012) p.218.
[30] Ali Melling, 'Wartime Opportunities: Ladies Football and the First World War Factories' in *J.A. Mangan, Militarism, Sport, Europe, War without Weapons* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2003).

development of women's football teams within a broader context of female empowerment during the war, her study also illuminates how football was seen as a way to entertain (and control) displaced, unruly working-class girls during wartime.[31] Despite becoming mainstream, with match coverage and discussion included in some Football Magazines of the day, women's football thus still carried an element of transgression, sitting uneasily with the norms, values and behavior of what society considered to be the 'ideal women'.[32]

Fig. 2. Newspaper photograph, c.1921, 'Toilet Time on the Football Field', ''Football Girl' Column, *Football Special*, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London (BL)

Fig. 3. Newspaper photograph, c.1921, 'I'll soon put you right!', 'Football Girl' Column, *Football Special*, Women's Football Collection, BL

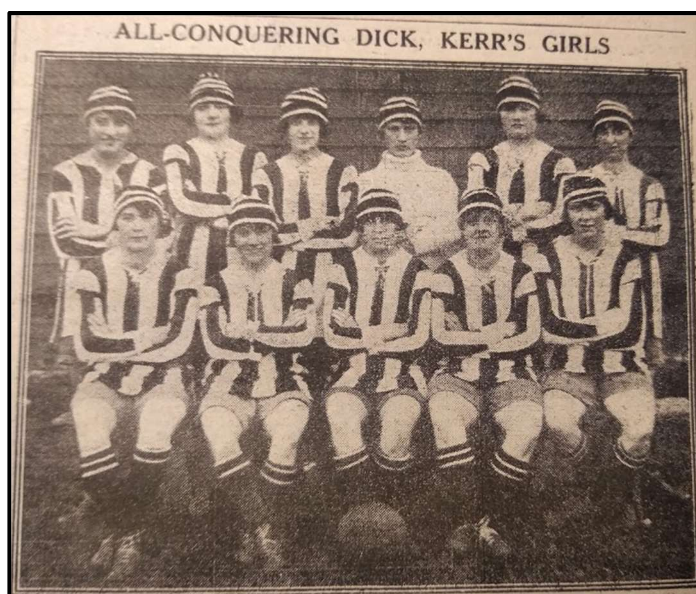

Fig. 4. Newspaper photograph, c.1921, 'All-Conquering Dick Kerr's Girls!', 'Football Girl' Column, *Football Special*, Women's Football Collection, BL

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[31] Ibid.

[32] See 'The Football Girl' Columns, c.1921, Football Special Magazine, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London (15 editions leading up to the FA ban in December 1921).

On the 5th of December 1921, the FA banned women from playing on all their grounds, reducing women's football to recreation overnight.[33] The exact trigger for the 'ban' is unclear; concerns about the handling of charity collections at matches and the desire to 'recoup and defend a masculine image of football' in a context of post-war restoration of social 'order' have all been cited.[34] Whilst such knee-jerk and practical triggers for the ban are certainly reflected in contemporary press coverage, this should not overshadow the generalized anxiety about the appropriateness of women playing football, and particularly, the widespread social and scientific concerns about sportswomen, in informing the ban. Indeed, the ban carried the headline statement; '[football] is unsuitable for ladies, and ought not to be encouraged'.[35]

Recent scholarship has emphasised the relative resilience of women's footballing communities following the ban, which was implemented and reinforced by the FA throughout the period.[36] We know of at least seventeen women's teams, in addition to records of international competition between 1930 and 1950.[37] The story of Dick Kerr Ladies FC, a Preston based munitions team (1917 – 1965) dominates much of the historiographical literature of post-WW1 women's football.[38] Moreover, recently catalogued collections illuminate the development of a small, unique female footballing culture, centered around local community and pragmatism; the spectacle-like, charity matches can be related to both the socio-economic hardship and the constraints of women's domestic responsibilities in the first half of the twentieth century. The community pride that surrounded female football players, however, did not equate to an absence of concern regarding their femininity and modesty. Williams highlights how serious players were controlled by 'disciplinarian managers and chaperones plus trainers and physios', and 'were

[33] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain* p.33.
[34] Ibid. p.33.
[35] '1921: the year when football banned women', First World War, *History Extra* [https://www.historyextra.com/period/first-world-war/1921-when-football-association-banned-women-soccer-dick-kerr-ladies-lily-parr/, accessed 28/03/20].
[36] Ibid. The ban was reinforced in both 1936 and 1946.
[37] Williams, *A Beautiful Game, International Perspectives on Women's Football* p.130.
[38] See Gail Newsham, *In a League of Their Own, The Dick, Kerr Ladies Football Team* (Paragon Publishing, 2014); David Williamson, *Belles of the Ball: Early History of Women's Football* (R&D Associates, 1991).

required to be modest in their behavior at social functions when representing the team'.[39] Moreover, much of the pre-1960 press coverage of women's football exhibits a focus on the gender, physicality and behavior of players over their actual ability.

It is against this background that women played football in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. On the eve of 1960, women's football did indeed nurture intimate and vibrant communities for some. However, for many, it was an overlooked sport, without a proper institutional and cultural presence.

[39] Williams, *A Beautiful Game*, *International Perspectives on Women's Football* p.137.

Chapter 1: (De)Constructing Stereotypes

This chapter examines how female football players were represented in English public media between 1960 and 1990, and considers how this might have shaped broader public attitudes towards, and assumptions about, women's football. It is grounded in an analysis which positions the media as significant in influencing the 'public imagination'. As Ann Hall notes, a growing corpus of sociological work has explored the complex ways which ideologically-encoded 'texts' are 'read by those who consume them (audiences)'.[1] The effect of such research has been to increase recognition of the power media-regulated discourses have in the construction of the 'sporting female'. As Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy persuasively suggest, whilst one should thus be critical of press influence, given an individual's ability 'to ignore, resist and misunderstand', one should not ignore the 'subtle process' through which the press is able to frame issues, 'helping to set the agenda for public and private debate', and exerting a 'longer-term cumulative influence'.[2] By extension, one should consider the lack of coverage of women's football; if the press' silence is considered active rather than passive, its role in shaping popular perceptions becomes more dynamic.

Similarly, media representations of footballing women should not be detached from wider contemporary public discourses surrounding gender and sexuality between 1960 and 1990. This chapter argues that the socio-political shifts in the perceived and lived roles of women cannot be straightforwardly translated to the perceptions or experiences of women in sport. Whilst this disjunction is not absolute, Francis' observation feels salient: 'the role of sport in the emancipation of women should not be exaggerated'.[3]

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[1] M. Ann Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies, Essays on Theory and Practice* (Human Kinetics, 1996) p.41. Hall details 'texts' as 'newspaper accounts, television broadcasts, sports magazines, comic strips, advertisements, feature films etc.'

[2] Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century, The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the present* (Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlga de Wissenschaften, 2015) p.21.

[3] Martin Francis, 'Leisure and Popular Culture' in Ina Zweiniger- Bargielowska *Women in the Twentieth Century* p.237.

This chapter examines a select base of primary source material drawn from national, regional and sport-specific newspapers and magazines, alongside a short exploration of two popular sports films, Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl* (1981) and Philip Saville's *Those Glory, Glory Days* (1983).[4] This focus on sport-specific magazines and the films differs from what has been examined in existing secondary literature.

Through an exploration of two discursive themes - politicisation and sexualisation - this chapter suggests that female footballers were presented as disrupting the norms of both gender and the English footballing world between 1960 and 1990. The independent consideration of the two films extends this perspective. It will be proposed that media sources often presented a fundamental, but not always destructive, tension between female footballers and the overarching norms of feminine domesticity and physicality.[5] Such a tension seems to have been grounded in the consistent presentation of female footballers as objects of socio-cultural interest rather than as serious sporting subjects, a trend which often resulted in the messy conflation of sport-specific coverage with complex and competing contemporary discourses surrounding womanhood, gender and domesticity. Whilst footballing women were not always overtly criticised or politicised, one should be aware of the ability of even humorous coverage to propel this presentation; as Williams highlights, the droll depiction of female footballers as 'endlessly novel' acts to fragment the collective cultural memory of women's football.[6] It will thus be argued that in both popular and sport-specific media, female footballers never achieved a stable, normative image which appropriately reconciled their gender and their sport.

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[4] The mainstream material focuses on nine articles collected from *The Guardian and Observer*, the *Daily Express* and *The Times* archives, scrapbook items from the personal collections of Gladys Aikin and Liz Deigham (NFM), and source extracts as found in Jean Williams' seminal book, *A Game for Rough Girls*. The sport-specific material focuses on editions of a Football Association magazine, *FA News,* published between 1969 and 1971 (NFM), and *Women's Soccer Views and News*, a magazine complied and distributed by those involved in the South-East recreational women's league from 1989 (British Library, London).

[5] Defining what the 'feminine norm' was is complex, and has been the topic of extensive historical debate. In this study, 'femininity', 'masculinity', and similar terms, will be used to denote gendered norms and expectations that are commonly understood to have broadly operated between 1960 and 1990 even in literature that highlights social change. See Footnote 12, Introduction.

[6] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women's Football in Britain* p.74.

'A revolution born of broken bra straps and muddy knickers'[7]: The Politicisation of Female Footballers

The association between female footballers and political rebellion is a pervasive theme in media coverage, a connection which is likely related to the visibility of women's liberation movements between 1960 and 1990. Indeed, the discourses of women fighting to play, and rebelling against the ruling authorities (in this case, the FA) often carry allusions to the direct political action taken by women's rights movements.[8] At times, this association is made explicit - John O'Callaghan's 1968 *Guardian* article, 'Women footballers fight for "respectability"' is a case in point.[9] After discussing the attempts to secure FA recognition of women's football, O'Callaghan concludes, '[Female footballers] will fight for equality in a field Miss Pankhurst never dreamed off'.[10] Beyond its blatant factual inaccuracy, this comment is of interest because of how it draws a direct link between women's football and the suffragette movement, inadvertently politicising female footballers by associating them with rebellion.[11] The paralleling of the linear progression towards gender equality with the development of women's football may also have further encouraged readers to associate the game with the women's rights movements occurring contemporaneously to them.

This theme is also reflected in a November 1970 *FA News* article. Written amid the affiliation of the WFA to the FA, the piece is a pertinent example of a footballing community in a state of flux, and the article associates the changes in women's football with the gendered changes in wider society, stating that 'the view […] has been until recent times that football is a man's game' but

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[7] 'It's Goals before Guys, The Sunday People looks at a revolution…Women's Soccer' May 13th 1973, *The Sunday People*, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London.
[8] See 'Timeline of the Women's Liberation Movement', in Sisterhood and After Collection, *British Library* [https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/timeline, Accessed 09/02/20].
[9] John O'Callaghan, 'Women footballers fight for respectability', October 15th 1968, *The Guardian,* Guardian and Observer Online Collection, University of Cambridge British Newspapers Online Collection.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Miss Pankhurst could likely have imagined women playing football, as she was born prior to the 1921 ban.

that 'this thinking […] is not in accord with modern times… it is now difficult to find examples of activity exclusive to male participation'.[12] Here, it seems that women's football is subtly but powerfully politicised, constructed as part, and possibility even result of 'modern times'. The use of language of 'rights' in the article – 'no one can deny the right of women to play football if they want to do so' – develops this, conclusively framing women's football in conjunction with contemporary women's rights movements.[13]

Gillian Murray's analysis of the politicised presentation of female bus drivers on ATV Regional News between 1963 and 1979 provides an interesting comparison.[14] Murray highlights how, in a period of industrial discontent amongst Midlands bus companies, the female bus driver 'became a pivot for discussions of women's 'progress' at large'.[15] She explores how ATV News rooted the specific bus debate in the wider societal context, using the figure of the female bus driver to 'illustrate a range of social questions raised by (married) women's employment'.[16] Though the specifics of the issues vary, the parallels with the representation of female footballers, in a similar period of changes and decisions, are evident: media coverage similarly positioned female footballers as engaged with, and representative of, contemporary general and political discourses surrounding women's rights and roles. In this way, it seems that media representations of female footballers must be seen in relation to contemporary politicised discourses concerning the bounds of femininity; often, they were framed in the context of a society undergoing gendered change.

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Gillian Murray, '*Should Women be Bus Drivers?* Defending a Permanent Position for Women on the Buses in ATV's Regional Television News, 1963-1979' in Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara (eds.), *Women and the Media: feminism and femininity in Britain 1900 to the present* (Routledge, 2014).
[15] Ibid. p.172.
[16] Ibid. p.169.

‘Great big beautiful sports girls’[17]: The Sexualisation of Female Footballers

Another theme repeated throughout the media coverage is the sexual undertones - indeed, frequently, sexual overtones – in articles about female footballers. Interestingly, the sexualisation of female players is most prevalent in the early 1970s, when administrative change saw women's football enjoy more frequent coverage. Subsequently, when female footballers were in a relative limelight, their contested relationship with heterosexual ‘female’ sexuality comes into sharper focus. Indeed, the implications of this alone are intriguing, particularly given that the increased coverage of the women’s game did not result in its socio-political neutralisation.

The focus on the physicality of female players is relentless. Often, it feels as though articles reinforce a constructed divide between sporting bodies and ‘ladylike’ appearance and behaviour, inadvertently suggesting that feminine bodies were out of place on the football pitch. Even in articles which present women’s football positively, female players are often constructed as big and strong via a series of masculinising adjectives. A 1968 *Manchester Gazette* article, for example, details the players actions which resist the ‘weakness’ of traditional femininity: ‘Nobody made a fuss’ when players were injured; the Spur’s captain Sue Williams was the ‘bigger of the two’ when she met the male Mayor of Brent; and the success of the Northerners’ was because of their ‘stronger build’.[18] The devaluing of femininity continues in the alignment of moments of weakness with more feminine traits: players lost ‘composure when [they were] struck by the ball in the chest or in the reverse portions of their anatomy’.[19]

Similarly, in an interview with *Sunday People*, a certain ‘Clive’, the 22-year-old husband of Julia Manning (centre-forward for Lowestoft Ladies) lamented that ‘women are degrading themselves in a way [...] wearing men’s kit and all that. Just look at them with their big backsides! Most of

[17] [author unknown], ‘Round about Wembley’, c.1968, *Manchester Gazette*, Gladys Aikin Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

them are overweight as well!'[20] In complaining about the 'big backsides' of the women, Clive inadvertently associates football with the masculine form: it is less the women's weight that is the problem than their shape.[21] The societal relevance of Clive's comments is indeterminable; however, it seems that his constitution as the 'everyman' in a national newspaper renders it reasonable to imagine that such ideas would have been met with a degree of public receptivity.

In depicting a female player who has a body too feminine to be a footballer, but who wears an attire and performs an activity too masculine to be feminine, Clive's comment also speaks to the contested ways in which female football players have been represented. This tension, where the physicality of female footballers is depicted as ambiguous and thus disconcertingly transgressive, also appears in the *Manchester Gazette* article, which encapsulates the tension between a focus on the 'womanly' parts of the body, and the need for football to be played in a masculine framework. This is especially felt in its closing observation that 'generally […] it was the Manchester thighs that looked the heftier'.[22] The frequent representation of the physicality of female footballers as both deviant from, but also in partial alignment with, feminine norms, is indicative of a contemporary confusion over how the bodies of female footballers should be to conceived of and represented. The derogatory, yet sexualised, tone with which female footballers' physicality is often discussed – the charged term 'wench' in *Manchester Gazette*, and the provocative illusions to transgressive cross-dressing in Clive's disgust at players' 'men's kit' are apt examples - does indeed feel rooted in a gendered disdain for the non-conformity of women's football to gendered norms.[23]

[20] [author unknown], 'It's Goals before Guys, The Sunday People looks at a revolution…Women's Soccer' May 13th 1973, *The Sunday People*, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London.
[21] Ibid.
[22][author unknown], 'Round about Wembley', c.1968.
[23]Ibid; [author unknown], 'It's Goals before Guys, The Sunday People looks at a revolution…Women's Soccer' May 13th 1973.

Even media coverage which does not overtly criticise female footballers' bodies constructs the players' physicality as central to the game. When considering the tactical decisions a women's manager might have to make, sports journalist John Morgan writes,

> Just imagine Tommy Docherty, for example, managing the Aston Villa Amazons, and they have reached the final of the Ladies League Cup. He needs a new centre forward. Does he go for a Twiggy-type who can bang 'em in with both feet? Or does he go for a Sabrina (that means 42-24-39) who can pull 'em in by the thousands?[24]

Against a background of journalistic under-coverage of women's football, Morgan's apparently jovial comment carries cultural weight; writing in a commentating sport column, he reduces competitive women's football to a contest of heterosexualised physical attractiveness. He frames the physicality of the female footballers within conventional beauty norms of the period, describing them using famed contemporary models – a 'twiggy-type' versus a more curvy, voluptuous 'Sabrina' – and engages in a coverage of sportswomen that objectifies and sexualises their bodies, thereby further exacerbating the discourse of conflict and opposition between 'athlete' and 'women'.[25] This is further reflected in a newspaper extract found in Liz Deigham's Scrapbook collection (Fig. 5). The photograph dates most likely to the mid-1980s and carries the subtitle 'What's a goalie doing with Lipstick?' It depicts a female player 'saving' her 'feminine image' by applying lipstick, both centering the coverage on her physical appearance, and enforcing a further disjunction between women and football. The excessive focus on players' bodies in both 'positive' and 'negative' discourses surrounding women's football seems ultimately to have reduced the scope for the development of public understanding of women's football as a sport, and thus of women footballers as sportswomen.

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[24] John Morgan, [title unknown], c.1969, [publication unknown], Gladys Aikin Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.

[25] 'Twiggy' was the nickname of model Dame Lesley Lawson (b.1949), famed for popularising a 'thin frame' in the 1960s. 'Sabrina' refers to 1950s 'hour-glass' glamour model Norma Ann Sykes (1936-2016).

SAVED! Terri reserves her feminine image.

Fig. 5. Newspaper photograph, c.1980, [publication unknown], L.D. Collection NFMA.

Caudwell observed in 1999, that 'the lesbian image is one of the most popular notions of women who play football in the United Kingdom, in particular, the butch lesbian identity'.[26] In the source base studied, allusions to the sexual deviance of female footballers are subtle; whilst relatively few articles use the word 'lesbian' outright, if one considers the context, the implicit suggestions of queerness in the framing of the women's game become palpable.[27]

Allusions to the (homo)sexuality of female footballers must be viewed within their contemporary context. Several scholars have emphasised the circumstances that resulted in the systematic erasure of lesbian women from historical narratives; their treatment as 'unnatural' and 'abnormal' seems often to have rendered them 'unmentionable', limiting their 'collective social history'.[28] Moreover, when lesbianism does appear in the popular historical record, it is often in medicalised or derogatory settings. Both Ann Hall and Susan Cahn have argued that the increased awareness and visibility of diverse sexualities after World War Two compounded this

[26] Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom: Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image' p.391.
[27] The terms 'queer' and 'queerness' will be used here and throughout this study to denote 'a sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender, especially heterosexual norms'; See 'queer, *adj.* 1', *Oxford English Dictionary*, [https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/156236?rskey=EZyLB7, accessed 17/04/20].
[28] Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport. The Politics of difference and identity* (Routledge, 2001) p.131.

phenomenon. Hall highlights how, in the 1970s, academic discourses concerning sex roles and identities focused on the question of 'whether or not competitive sport masculinises the female athlete either psychologically or behaviourally', with Cahn tracking the post-war conceptions of the sportwomen from a 'vague suggestion of lesbianism' to a 'full-blow stereotype of the mannish lesbian athlete'.[29] Although authors such as Rebecca Jennings have heralded the development of lesbian sub-cultures in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this 'progression' bears little correlation to wider discourses; both popularly and academically, 'functionalist conceptions of gender' (and, by extension, sexuality) limited any scope for understanding of experiences of non-heterosexualised womanhood.[30]

In the *Sunday People* article, the narrative of women denouncing heterosexual femininity - 'snapping bra straps are an everyday hazard' - is imbued with a sense of atypical sexuality.[31] Players are depicted as being obsessed with football, to an extent which builds to a level of abnormal devotion. When interviewed, 16-year-old player Melinda Wilcock is recorded as saying, 'most boyfriends have to take second place with the girls who play football. They are our second love'.[32] The article also reports that 'anyone not working their heart out for the team will be substituted'.[33] Whilst this does not outright assert the non-heterosexuality of players, when situated in a wider discursive sphere which associated female sport with lesbianism, such a discourse of utter devotion feels decidedly targeted.[34] The directed journalistic reporting of a 1969 interview piece with the manager of the Manchester Corinthians, which declares that 'the

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[29] M. Ann Hall, 'How should be theorise gender in the context of sport?' in Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, *Toward a Critical Feminist Reappraisal of Sport, Men and the Gender Order* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1990) p.228.
[30] Ibid. p.228.
[31] [author unknown], 'It's Goals before Guys, The Sunday People looks at a revolution…Women's Soccer' May 13th 1973.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

only time [players] are allowed to wear trousers is at practice' and 'All but three of [the teams] players are single, aged 20 to 30' speaks to the strength of such stereotypes.[35]

Similarly, a special reader written article in the August 1989 edition of *Women's Soccer Views and News* passionately describes and critiques the continuation of associations between football and non-normative femininity at the beginning of the noughties.[36] The reader/writer, Anne Thompson, writes that, because of the pervasiveness of the message 'THAT REAL FOOTBALL = MALE FOOTBALL' in the popular media, football is perceived as something that is male, and thus is constructed as a 'physical activity' that is not 'female appropriate'.[37] Therefore, because of the 'social pressure […] to behave as a woman is expected to do', and the need to 'be seen as a real woman' and 'to attract a man', it is only those women who 'are able to go against society's accepted notions about what it means to be a real woman' who participate.[38] Though Thompson does not explicitly address queerness, the strength of her emphasis on the disjunction between femininity, and feminine behaviours (such as sexual attractiveness) and football is notable – seeming, then, to reflect the continuation of a fractious discourse around the sexuality and normality of female footballers right into the later stage of the period.

Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl* and Phil Saville's *Those Glory Glory Days*: 'Synthesised Nostalgia'

Both Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl* (1981) and Phil Saville's *Those Glory Glory Days* (1983) are films about, in different ways, women in football. Both reached a considerable popular audience. One of David Puttman's 'First Love' series for Channel 4 Films, *Those Glory Glory Days* has been

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[35] John Morgan, [title unknown], c.1969, [newspaper unknown].

[36] Anne Thompson, 'Women's Football, Some Thoughts on Media Coverage and the Development of the Game', August 1989, *Women's Soccer News and Views Magazine* 10, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

hailed as 'the rarest of things, a film about football that [...] has appeal beyond fans of the sport.'[39] The reception and reach of *Gregory's Girl* went even further: the film won a BAFTA for Best Screenplay, beating Colin Welland's acclaimed *Chariots of Fire* (1981).[40]

Scholars have emphasised the theme of 'nostalgic fictions' in 1970s and 1980s British sports films – that is, how, due to the contemporary environment of significant 'social and economic change', which made the traditionally 'established norms of masculinity [...] increasingly difficult to live out', there was appetite for films which offered and made a 'retrospective version of masculinity available for popular consumption'.[41] While neither film has been subject to extensive academic analysis, both exhibit significant features of such a 'synthesised nostalgia'.[42] This is not to suggest that they do not also offer a level of transgression and challenge in terms of their focus on women in football: Sinyard's emphasis on the 'satirical critique of the relation society often posits between sport and the concept of masculinity implicit in *Gregory's Girl* has merit.[43] However, in the context of this study, the ways in which both films aestheticise and sentimentally (re)imagine a recent past of gendered footballing codes inadvertently reinforces the foundational tenets of masculine football hegemony, limiting the degree to which either film can be read as providing evidence for an uncomplicated cultural acceptance of footballing women. It should be noted, of course, that socio-political transgression was not the aim of either film – both were made for popular entertainment purposes – so their value as historical sources is found in how they might act to reflect the perspectives and desires of contemporary cinema-going audiences.

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[39] Martin Cloake, 'Remembering "Those Glory Glory Days" – A film that understood what football can mean to people', 31st January 2014, *New Statesman*, [https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/01/remembering-those-glory-glory-days-film-understood-what-football-can-mean-people, accessed 10 March 2020].
[40] Yoram Allon, Del Cullen, Hannah Patterson (eds.) *Contemporary British and Irish Film Directors: A Wallflower Critical Guide* (Wallflower Press, 2002) p.98.
[41] Marjorie D. Kibby, 'Nostalgia for the Masculine, Onward to the Past in the Sports Films of the Eighties' Canadian Journal of Film Studies 7, 1 (1998): 16–28. p.17.
[42] Lester Friedman, *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires were started* (Routledge, 1993) p.68.
[43] As quoted in Kibby, 'Nostalgia for the Masculine, Onward to the Past in the Sports Films of the Eighties' p.17.

Gregory's Girl is a coming-of-age meets rom-com set in a 1980s Scottish comprehensive school.[44] When Dorothy (Dee Hepburn) joins the failing school football team as the new star striker, replaced player Gregory (George Gordon Sinclair) falls head-over-heels. Gregory eventually asks Dorothy on a date, only to become victim of an elaborate plan to set him up with another student Susan (Clare Grogen). The film ends happily, with Gregory quite content with Susan, much to the awe, bemusement and envy of his male friends.

On one level, Dorothy boldly subverts the trope that women are unable to play football. Her success on the football field is celebrated; she jogs majestically to the trials to an uplifting soundtrack, cleverly undermining the sexist coach (Jake D'Arcy) by rebuking his assertion that 'football is for boys' with the observation that it 'didn't say so in the notice, just said talented players'.[45] The transformative effects of Dorothy's participation and skill on the views of her male peers is also spotlighted. It is Gregory's sincere and heart-warming defence of Dorothy – that girls playing football is 'just modern' – that is constructed as triumphant: he reprimands his friend 'Andy' for believing that football is 'too tough, too physical' for girls, and earnestly critiques constructed gender in the school dark-room with a student reporter – the boys conclude, rather endearingly, that in the future, there will in fact be 'no more men or women', and instead 'just a whole world full of wankers'.[46]

Throughout the film, the boys come across as naïve and youthful, engendering the stereotypical adolescent condition. That the film is primarily about the angst and silliness of teenage boys, in the context of a coming-of-age rom-com, feels significant. In the dark-room scene, for example, dialogue which in another setting would be transgressive, and almost profound, is softened by the comic context of teenage romanticism and innocence.[47] Similarly, Gregory defends Dorothy

[44] Bill Forsyth, *Gregory's Girl*, Scottish Television and National Film Finance Cooperation, United Kingdom, released 23 April 1981.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

chiefly because he is besotted with her, rather than because he has abstractly strong feelings regarding gendered sporting inequalities. Moreover, the film's wider script generally reflects and upholds standard societal norms regarding feminine domesticity, masculine desire and gendered social interactions – be this ingenuously and gently. Dorothy, for example, is primarily an object of desire, her empowerment only making her more attractive; whilst she is 'a really good footballer', she also has 'lovely long hair and she smells mmmmm really gorgeous'.[48]

In this way, then, whilst *Gregory's Girl* does champion the idea of practically successful female footballers, this is not without significant qualification. The female footballer Forsyth creates is not disruptive; Dorothy is beautiful, soft, and smart. Indeed, given the context of what has been examined in terms of representations of female footballers in the national and sport-specific press, *Gregory's Girl* platforms a female footballer carefully orientated towards comfortable public consumption, navigating away from the more contentious and 'unsavoury' aspects of the debate around gender and sport. For instance, Dorothy expresses no desire to play in professional, or adult leagues. Furthermore, the link between masculinity and football is not fundamentally disturbed in the film; Dorothy is the single, and thus acceptable, exception to an otherwise male sphere.

Those Glory Glory Days (1983) has a slightly different narrative.[49] A semi-autobiographical account of pioneering female sports commentator Julie Wench, the film tracks the quest of four Tottenham-obsessed schoolgirls to watch their heroes win the infamous 'double' (the FA Cup and the English League) in the 1960/61 season. The film's protagonist, Julia (Zoe Nathenson) has an unsettled home life, where her family's newfound affluence and her tomboyish ways distance her from her squabbling parents. Julia does not fit in at her new all-girls private school until she finds three other similarly ostracised girls, Toni (Sara Sugarman), Tub (Cathy Murphy) and Jailbird

[48] Ibid.
[49] Philip Saville, *Those Glory Glory Days*, Engima Films, Goldcreast Films and Television for Channel Four, released 17 April 1983.

(Liz Campion). Much turmoil and drama follows as the girls' attempt to secure tickets, ultimately to no avail – though Tottenham do emerge victorious. The film ends on life-affirming moment when adult Julia meets her childhood idol, Tottenham striker Danny Blanchflower.

Social class and gender are key themes. A key sub-plot is the fractured relationship between Julia and her mother Mrs. Herrick (Julia McKenzie). Exacerbated by her daughter's obsession with football, dislike of feminine niceties and unrefined demeanour, Mrs. Herrick consistently attempts to edit and sharpen Julia's manners, habits and interests in accordance with more suitable feminine norms. After discovering the extent of Julia's plot and lies to gain football tickets, Mrs. Herrick bans Julia from socialising with Toni, Tub and Jailbird, and instead arranges a sleepover with the demure, middle-class Petrina (Amelia Dipple). In this way, the film positions Julia's obsession with football as coming into conflict with her gender and (aspirational) class, thus reinforcing cultural ideas about the masculinity and roughness of football.

Certainly, this must be qualified - Julia's character has a charming vulnerability and an endearing passion for football, and the warm, reminiscent feel of the film offsets an entirely masculine view of the game – however, much like *Gregory's Girl*, it seems that *Those Glory Glory Days* depicts a certain, more palatable version of women's place in football, where childhood aspirations to masculine archetypes, and 'rough' behaviours are equated with a passion for football. Furthermore, the role played by Mrs. Herrick as Julia's mother is of note: the film displays the distinct lack of homo-sociality in women's football by presenting Mrs. Herrick as disdainful of her daughters' image. By depicting football as abnormal to the usual activities of girls, then, the film reinforces gendered ideas about the game articulated within the popular and sport-specific press. Indeed, this theme of childhood and socialisation in terms of the formation of women's football is something that will be returned to in Chapter 3.

In this way, then, though they give affectionate space to female footballers, both films act to reinforce footballing masculine hegemony. Moreover, interestingly, both films avoid, to differing extents, engaging in discourses surrounding the sexualisation and politicisation of female players. By situating their narratives firmly in the commercially successful sphere of adolescent adventure, both films avoid seriously engaging in the politically contentious debates around adult female sexuality and liberation.

Conclusion

Whilst the representations of female footballers varied, and, indeed, were marked by both affection and disdain, this chapter has demonstrated the pervasiveness of a discourse of discomfort and ambiguity in public media coverage between 1960 and 1990. Be it through criticism or suggestion, obscuration or omission, it seems that all the sources examined act to buttress a constructed divide between conventional (and ideal) femininity and football, ultimately positioning footballing women as a transgressive entity in a masculinised sphere.

Chapter 2: Navigating Identities

This chapter explores how female footballers navigated their representations in film and the popular press. It feels important to ground this in the recognition that, whilst female footballers all existed within a cultural landscape of 'male sporting hegemony', the way in which power structures influence individuals are not homogenous. Thus, while this chapter seeks to identify trends and commonalities in how female footballers interacted with ideas about and surrounding them, this is with mind to the personalised ways in which individuals can enact agency within structures of power.

Coverage of the women's game has tended to focus on one-off events of national or international importance, and subsequently, there are significant gaps in the historical record regarding the events and lives of recreational players. Similarly, there is little historical knowledge about individual players, even those at the top of their game. Therefore, the analysis in this chapter focuses on the published autobiographies of two international players, Hope Powell (born 1966) and Kelly Smith (born 1978), and of Alyson Rudd (born 1963), a pioneering sports journalist who played recreational football throughout much of her adult life.[1] The chapter also utilises national and specialist newspaper articles either written by or containing interviews with footballing women, a selection of Match Day Programmes held at the National Football Museum Archive, and the personal scrapbook collections of two players, Gladys Aiken (Manchester Corinthians, c.1960-c.1970s) and Liz Deigham (St Helens WFC and England, c.1970s-c.1980s).[2] Finally, this chapter draws on interviews with three members of the Harry Batt's 1971 unofficial England Women's Team, conducted by Jean Williams, Joanna Compton and Belinda Scarlett in at the 2019 reunion

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[1]Hope Powell*, Hope, My Life in Football* (Bloomsbury Sport, 2016); Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* (Transworld Digital, 2012); Alyson Rudd, *Astroturf Blonde: Taking on the Men at Their Own Game* (Headline Book Publishing, 1999).

[2] The articles focused upon are Linda Spurr 'A Bird's Eye View', August 1971, *Football Association News* Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston; June Corner, 'June Corner looks at the Woman [...]' May 27th 1971, *Manchester Evening News*, Gladys Aikin Collection, National Football Museum, Preston; FA News' Reporters, 'Women in Football, A special investigation by a team of FA news reporters', July 1972, *'Football Association News'* Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.

of the squad.[3] Although the richest material focuses on national and international players in the latter part of the timeframe, there is scope to consider the whole period and gain an albeit small insight into the experience of recreational players. The voices of male coaches, administrators and fans is discussed briefly to explore how their discourses and understandings might have impacted female players; indeed, the visibility and volume of male voices in the records of women's football is significant.

This chapter explores how footballing women navigated stereotypes and perceptions through several different lenses. It considers the media's representation of and attitudes towards the 'politicisation' of the women's game, focusing on how players navigated their position as footballers with women's rights movements and sporting norms, from which, it will be suggested, footballing women were relatively isolated. The following section builds on this analysis with an examination of how female footballers interacted with the proliferation of gendered languages and images of sport, and specifically how they received and performed more stereotypically masculine traits such as strength, speed, toughness and aggression. In particular, this chapter will explore how such dynamics can be linked to contemporary ideas about non-normative sexualities, suggesting that for many footballing women, associations with masculinity or homosexuality were uncomfortable and, at times, unwanted. Sources are largely marked by either a reluctance to engage explicitly with the topic, or by blanket assertions of heterosexual femininity. The reasons for this are undoubtedly complex, but seem likely to have been rooted in a desire to make women's football 'mainstream' (or indeed, prevent it being further ostracised) in a societal context where the 'sociocultural process that normalises men's and boy's involvement' in football relentlessly placed women as 'other'.[4]

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[3] The transcripts of interviews are found in Jean Williams, Joanna Compton & Belinda Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' *Sport in History* 39 (2019) pp.229-250.
[4] Jayne Caudwell, 'Gender, feminism and football studies' p.333.

This chapter will also suggest that one should think critically about notions of female 'leisure liberation' in the 1960s and beyond, and about the impact of gendered legislative and social changes when studying sportswomen. It finds that suggestions, such as that by Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, that the popularisation of the 'muscle' in the feminine body culture of the 1980s meant sport was a vehicle for women to appropriate 'essentially masculine attributes', and 'symbolise female power', are overstated; work by sociologists such as Ceclie Doustaly and Jennifer Hargreaves instead highlight the continuation of the pervasive force of feminine respectability in governing women's sporting participation, with most women taking part in sports which 'fit with the social perceptions of femininity (i.e. balance and grace) and do not challenge the traditional gender divide'.[5] In this way, one should be skeptical 'about the extent to which individual 'agency' and capacities for 'self-construction' have replaced structural constraints'.[6] Such a perspective is extended by a consideration of the centrality of sport in the social reproduction of masculinity. Donald Sabo and Joe Panepinto's study of how American football rituals aided expression of the ultimate 'macho' man can be saliently compared to English football, especially in terms of the cultural associations created by its overwhelming persistence as a homosocial male space.[7] Thus, one should be cautious of overstating the role of the expansion of women's sport in invoking socio-cultural change in terms of gendered roles and expectations.

[5]Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture' in Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women in the Twentieth Century* p.195; Ceclie Doustaly, 'Women and leisure in Britain: a socio-historical approach to twentieth-century trends' in Brett Bebber, *Leisure and cultural conflict in twentieth-century Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2016) p.197.
[6]Ceclie Doustaly, 'Women and leisure in Britain: a socio-historical approach to twentieth-century trends' in Brett Bebber, *Leisure and cultural conflict in twentieth-century Britain* p.197.
[7]Donald F. Sabo and Joe Panepinto, Football Ritual and the Social Reproduction of Masculinity' in Messner and Sabo, *Toward a Critical Reappraisal of Sport, Men and the Gender Order*. p.118.

'It has been a long struggle'[8]: Navigating Politicisation

The sources suggest that female footballers were aware, often acutely, of the stereotypes that marked their 'public perception'. Frequently, players consciously noted the adversity they experienced because they were women. The emotive introduction to Hope Powell's autobiography succinctly illustrates this. By situating her story within the historical context of the FA ban, her opening words alert the reader to the institutionalised discrimination central to the history of the women's game:

> Before I tell you about my life, it's really important to understand this because it's one of the major reasons why women's football has to fight so hard for recognition in this country.[9]

> It's probably one of this country's biggest sporting injustices, but sadly unknown by many and largely forgotten.[10]

Here, Powell makes clear that she sees this as a history characterised by injustice and silence; indeed, her message is that there was, and remains, a need to redress this injustice. Powell's retrospective statement that 'most of the world has had a long head start on us' consciously grounds her experience of football in the wider history of the women's game.[11] This theme is repeated throughout various sources. An interview with Gill Sayell, a member of the 1971 unofficial England team, provides a comparable example: 'We had to face a lot of adversity towards women/girls playing football, but we were determined, and pushed forward in doing a

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[8][author unknown], 'FA to think again about women footballers', 11th November 1969, *The Guardian*, Guardian and Observer Online Collection, University of Cambridge British Newspapers Online Collection
[9] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.1.
[10] Ibid. p.3.
[11] Ibid. p.1.

sport we all loved'.[12] A similar sense of historical legacy is clear in a 1975 letter by WFA secretary David Marlowe to the editor of *TitBits* Magazine, G. Anfield. Marlowe wrote to ask for the sources behind a derogatory article about women's football, which included accusations of the improper behavior of the Association's players and administrators.[13] He emotively appealed to the sensitivity of the magazine editor by alluding to an impassioned history of the game. He writes that, 'there are a great many people who have fought for many years to build up the sport'.[14] Thus, whilst Marlowe is not himself a female footballer, his appeal displays how the turbulent history of women's football was centralised in the narrative of the contemporary game: Marlowe's letter feels representative of the collective identity of the organised women's football community.

The above source extracts are all imbued with a sense of fight. Indeed, this often coincides with female footballers identifying themselves as engaging in active resistance against wider structures which limited the women's game. Both Sayell and Powell, for example, again explicitly place themselves as resisting cultural norms; Sayell states that she 'like[s] to think [she] was one of the pioneers for the game as it is today'.[15] Similarly, Powell, after writing that 1969 was when 'the fight back began', polemically notes that, 'it was against this background that I began to play football. All I ever wanted to do in my life was to play the game and to fight the cause for women's football'.[16] For both Powell and Sayell, fighting the wider cause of women's football is intrinsic to their participation in the game. In other words, both players associate the very act of playing football as synonymous with advocating and 'fighting' for its existence.

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[12] Gill Sayell's Interview in Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.245.

[13] David Marlowe to G. Anfield, 9th February 1975, 'WFA's complaint to the Press Council against 'Tit-Bits', Women's Football Association Archive, British Library, London.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Gill Sayell Interview in Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.245.

[16] Hope Powell*, Hope, My Life in Football* p.4.

Often, this fight was centred upon changing the administrative structures of English football. Powell emphasises the impact of the rules of the FA in shaping her early experiences of the game, detailing how she and her school friend, and later England teammate 'Jane', were 'banned from playing mixed football with the boys' at school.[17] Her PE teacher 'Mr. Morland', and later her headteacher, both appealed against the decision under the Equal Opportunities Commission, to no avail.[18] The involvement of Powell, and the adults that shaped her early experience of the game, with a resistance to and challenging of the institutional bias in the English FA suggests a willingness for women's football to involve themselves with more politicised movements for equality. This dynamic is also reflected in the actions of the administrative and organised women's football community. Williams' analysis of the early publications of the Women Football Association, formed in 1969, hints at a somewhat 'politicised' agenda in the early administration of women's football.[19] She highlights how titles such as 'A New Era is about to Start' and 'Are we doing Enough?' construct the women's game as newly liberated, and emphasises that progress in the women's game was largely dependent on the 'ambitious, timely and innovative' activism from within the women's football community rather than from the FA, even post-integration.[20] In this way, the women's football community did share characteristics with 'activist' movements; they were both acutely aware of the gendered inequalities in football and continuously acted to rebel and resist in the face of a context of FA inaction.

Yet, if women's football exhibited activist tendencies, it did not represent a social movement akin to, or in dialogue with, organised feminism. The lack of provision for sportswomen within English equality legislation feels central to this: sport was excluded from the remit of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, without supplementation with other legislation, such as was done in the US.[21]

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[17] Ibid. p.15.
[18] Ibid. p.15.
[19] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women's Football in the United Kingdom* p.85.
[20] Ibid. p.85; Williams, *A Beautiful Game, International Perspectives on Women's Football* p.141.
[21] 'Title IX' of the 1972 US Education Act states that public schools and universities risk losing funding unless if they do not provide sport programmes for both sexes.

This lack of legal protection had significant implications for the security of female footballers. In the absence of a clear gender equality framework, often the arguments for female footballing parity were fought by women on the basis of their individual exceptional talent rather than a philosophy of equal opportunities.[22] Understanding this background when examining the construction of female footballing identities is vital; female footballers navigated a unstable context where, by legal precedent, their right to play had to be justified by their exceptionality.

The stoic tone emblematic of many accounts illustrates how such an emphasis on the exceptionality of female players may have been internalised in complicated ways, but chiefly, in a desire to associate women's football with a wider normalcy. Players often couched their experiences in languages of personal responsibility and individual strength, rather than situating them as part of wider social and political structures. In doing this, female footballers seem to have attempted to distance themselves from 'radical' movements for gender equality, associating themselves with broad ideas of normality. In an article written in August 1971 by the Sport's Editor for *The Wembley News*, Linda Spurr is particularly explicit about how politicised movements such as 'Women's Lib' did not work for female football journalists like herself;

> Women's Lib. is certainly going great guns at the moment and I only wish it wasn't. I seem to spend half my time convincing the male population that I am not just jumping on the bandwagon in the search of female equality.[23]

For Spurr, whose job entered both a literal and symbolic male space, 'Women's Lib' was not liberating. Instead, for her, the concepts of 'female equality' championed by feminists made her experience at the heart of the footballing spaces of the period more difficult.[24] The language and

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[22] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women's Football in the United Kingdom* p.125 Williams notes this in the 1978 Theresa Bennet Case. Theresa Bennet was a twelve-year-old girl prevented from playing for her local football team, Muskham United, by a legal FA ruling.
[23] Linda Spurr, 'A Bird's Eye View', August 1971.
[24] Ibid.

tone used throughout the rest of the article suggests that, whilst resistance to male footballing hegemony was intrinsic to Spurr's experience and actions, she enacted and constructed this as separate to the type of resistance engendered by the political and social feminist movements of the early 1970s. Her approach to rebellion and resistance is matter-of-fact, and rooted in her personal reality; a work environment in which her male colleagues look at her as if 'I'd just landed from Mars'.[25] For Spurr, casual sexism and male advances from reporters and players alike are 'all part of the reporting game', and the best way to deal with this kind of behaviour was through the learning of 'suitable rejoiners to the somewhat worn opening remarks'.[26] Her tone is plucky, chirpy and rebellious, imbued with the idea that she is taking direct action, where other women fall back on movements and identity politics. She sees it necessary to reassure the reader, 'that this female's interest in the game is entirely genuine'.[27] Such an approach is echoed by Alyson Rudd's account of when she first asked her male work colleagues if she could join in with their park football games; she describes how she rebuked the men's reservations by changing their opinion with her 'powers of reason' rather than by a 'squeal or stamp [of her] foot'.[28] Rudd's autobiography carries a sub-text which champions women who fight everyday sexism on the ground with individual pluck and 'sarcastic remarks', and, by extension, quietly critiques and dismisses feminist movements for structural and political change as indulgent and impractical. Both Spurr and Rudd operate, and resist and rebel, within a male footballing hegemony: for both women, the emphasis is not on structural change, but on individual toughness in the fight back against men. As Linda Whitehead (Women's Football Association Secretary) said in a 1989 interview with Louisa Sanders, success for women's football was conceived as coming when they were 'finally proving to men that [they] have something to offer'.[29]

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Alyson Rudd, *Astroturf Blonde: Taking on the Men at Their Own Game* p.34.
[29]Louisa Sanders, 'Some fancy footwork', April 20th 1989, *The Guardian*, Guardian and Observer Online Collection, University of Cambridge British Newspapers Online Collection.

By extension, there was an expectation, largely accepted by footballing women, that they would adapt to and adopt aspects of male football culture. A series of interviews conducted by FA News, published in July 1972 under the headline *'Women in Football, A special investigation by a team of FA news reporters'* illustrates this.[30] In her interview, filmstar and Liverpool fan, Rita Tushingham remarks,

> Facilities at football grounds for women are not luxurious but they're adequate. I don't expect a super loo. If you're a real fan you accept things as they are. You expect long walks from car to ground, getting cold and wet on the terraces and things like that.[31]

The idea of being a 'real fan' meaning that one must 'accept things as they are' is notable: 'things as they are' in the footballing world is essentially synonymous with female marginalisation.[32] Moreover, Rita hints that there are feelings of toughness, and even pride, in being a woman who can endure the difficult conditions of a football ground. Implicit in this interview, as in Spurr's article, is the necessity of women's subscription to basic precepts of an entrenched male-defined footballing culture. In both a reaction to, and as a consequence of, their relatively vulnerable position as a minority, it seems that whilst footballing women acted to resist absolute exclusion and outright discrimination, they displayed a reluctance to engage with discourses and ideas which aimed to deconstruct structural inequality. The ubiquity of such an approach seems to be rooted in the need for female footballers to neutralise their existence by subscription to a more socially comprehensible, and less politically charged, set of roles and values. Indeed, the influence of the fact that female players were often socialised in male football cultures, and trained and organised by men, on this approach will be explored in Chapter 3.

[30] F.A. Reporters, 'Women in Football, A special investigation by a team of FA News reporters'.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

'Girls seeking dates'[33]: Navigating Sexualisation

Popular ideas and stereotypes relating to female footballers' femininity and sexuality further contributed to the uneasy relationship between 'feminist' movements and footballing women. Jayne Caudwell's sociological research stresses the current high level of awareness amongst footballing women of their gendered and sexualised position in society.[34] She observes that 'women who play football in the UK do so within a cultural arena that has discourse drawn from notions surrounding gender and sexuality, in particular the alignment of masculinity and lesbian desire'.[35] For Caudwell, a repeated theme in the field is the ubiquity of female footballers' 'awareness of embodiment, and their location of a sex-gender-desire landscape'.[36] Her research stresses how 'women's accounts [of football] suggest that gendered and sexual stereotypes abound'; in other words, the female footballers she studied were actively engaged and concerned with how they are perceived by others, both inside and outside the women's footballing community.[37]

The exact ways through which women experience and enact this are highly individualised and heavily influenced by place, space and time. What Caudwell's analysis reveals however, is that outside of specific 'out' teams, footballing women are fundamentally 'other[ed]', and thus have been continuously preoccupied with the repetitive process of challenging the consequences of this 'othering'. Often, it will be suggested such normalisation involved attempts by players to reconcile football with femininity and heteronormativity. This, in turn, can be linked to the complicated relationship between 'feminist' movements and footballing women: in attempting to 'normalise' the game in the post-ban era, female footballers found themselves isolated from wider

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[33] [author and title unknown], c.1969, [publication unknown, Local Manchester Newspaper], Gladys Aikin Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[34] Jayne Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom: Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image' p.397.
[35] Ibid. p.497.
[36] Jayne Caudwell, 'Sporting gender: Women's footballing bodies as sites/sights for the [re]articulation of sex, gender and desire' p.336.
[37] Ibid. p.336.

experiences of conventional femininity, as they navigated the unique tension between embodying a resistance to male sporting hegemony whilst also reaching for public acceptance.

As explored in Chapter 1, images of female footballers often involved an emphasis on their physicality, articulated through a depiction of their appearance and actions as 'unladylike'. At times, this took the form of the 'butch' player, who was constructed as overly aggressive and macho. It seems that female players frequently acted to distance themselves from the 'butch', instead appealing to how they, despite the nature of their sport, upheld key pillars of conventional femininity. When she was interviewed by the *Mail on Saturday* in December 1991, Linda Whitehead, Secretary of the Women's Football Association, stated: 'In the seventies the women had a jokey image, but in the past few years the girls have overcome their early butch image because a more sort of feminine girl has been coming into the game'.[38] Whitehead, in her official capacity, here makes explicit a desire to associate football with femininity. Interestingly, Whitehead associates the 'butch' with a 'jokey image', implying that for the women's game to be taken as serious, and conventional, it must be played by women who look conventional and serious. Whitehead's comment also suggests that, in her view, female footballers continued to be plagued with an undesirable public image into the early 1990s. Certainly, contemporary interviews with football players throughout the period from 1960 to 1990 reiterate this view: as Chapter 2, illustrated, the advent of more public interest and greater publicity of the game between 1969 and 1971 seems to have been paralleled with female footballers' assertion of their conventional femininity.

Coverage of the notorious Manchester-based team, Manchester Corinthians, around the lifting of the ban (c.1969-1971), is one such example of this. Formed in 1949 by Percy Ashley, the team was very successful, with a 1967 programme from a match held at Fulwood Barracks Ground

[38] Carol Thatcher, 'The Girls going for Goals', December 1991, *Mail on Saturday* in *Women's Soccer News and Views* 17, Women's Football Magazine Collection, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London.

detailing how, of 405 games they have played, 363 were won and only 20 lost.[39] Williams writes that the team was 'one of the most important women's clubs after 1945', pioneering 'women's football as socially acceptable'.[40] Indeed, in a 1969 interview with a local newspaper, Corinthians manager Gladys Aiken made explicit the expectations of femininity she had for her players.[41] In a sub-section entitled 'Always Ladies', Aiken is recorded as saying: 'If you saw our girls arrive for a game you'd never dream they played football. We call ourselves the Corinthian Ladies and wherever we go, we go as ladies'.[42] Aiken's inadvertent pride in the fact that people would not assume that the members of her team played football speaks to the very particular terms on which women's football could become socially acceptable. Regardless of how particular players wished to be perceived, her comments construct femininity and football as irreconcilable. The desire of footballing women to neutralise stereotypical images of the female footballer becomes further clear when paralleled with comments by female players which actively distance their sport from the male game, and by extension, their female physicality from male aggression and strength. Shelia Isherwood, for example, commented in 1971 that women's football is a 'bit more classy than the men's game […] less rough contact'.[43] Similarly, Rita Jenner suggested in the same year that her injury can't have come from a 'rough tackle' because women's football 'is always ladylike'.[44] In order to become a respectable team, the Corinthian players had to be 'ladies', and this femininity had to be expressed and reiterated in public behavior and interviews. In the above examples, football is not embraced as a mechanism whereby women could challenge gender norms and expectations; instead, the onus is on making football more feminine.

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[39] 'Corinthian Ladies v All Star Ladies XI', 13th June 1967, Match Programme Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[40] Jean Williams, 'We're the lassies from Lancashire': Manchester Corinthians Ladies FC and the use of overseas tours to defy the FA ban on women's football' *Sport in History* 39:395-417 (2019) p.396.
[41] [author and title unknown], c.1969, The Gladys Aiken Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[42] Ibid.
[43] June Corner, 'June Corner looks at the Woman […]' May 27th 1971.
[44] 'The Football Suffragettes', January 1971, *Football Association News* Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.

The association between masculinity and football was such that women could not completely disassociate the two; in short, the material importance of stereotypically male attributes - physical speed, strength and stamina - in football had to remain. Female footballers, therefore, had to navigate how they could reconcile this with more socially acceptable behaviors and, as illustrated above, this was often articulated through distancing from such attributes. The continued power of such discomfort with masculine traits is also present, be it more subtly, in Powell's twenty-first century reflections. Interestingly, she uses the language of aggression and brute strength to criticise her first experience of the then highest tier of English Women's Football (in the 1980-81 season).[45] She writes that '[…] back in the early eighties, women's club football in England was rough, tough and very physical' and that this was a 'far cry from the much more skillful women's game of today'.[46] In drawing an implicit juxtaposition between being 'strong' and being 'skilful', Powell seems to extend this sense of discomfort with more masculinised sporting attributes. In depicting herself as a 'skinny little kid' who could 'beat anyone for pace', in the context of a league comprised of players that were 'sheer muscle', Powell acts to not only to reinforce the popular stereotype of the butch, masculine female football player, but also, to isolate and critique her existence.[47] Her closing comment about another local club, 'Staines' - her team's 'biggest rival' - further exemplifies this, where 'big-ness' and strength is clearly associated with meanness: 'They were the worst but plenty of other teams at that time were big, strong and mean.'[48]

The extent to which footballing women went to distance themselves from stereotypes of masculine power also seems to have been a product of the specific associations between lesbianism and women's football. As Chapter 1 illustrated, allusions to non-normative sexuality in female footballers are implicit throughout the source base, and moreover, persisted

[45] Powell*, Hope, My Life in Football* p.20.
[46] Ibid. p.20; Ibid. p.21.
[47] Ibid. p.20.
[48] Ibid. p.21.

throughout the period. Even some of the latest source materials exhibit such features clearly: in an interview for the Summer 1992 edition of *Women's Soccer Views and News*, a certain Jane Purdon talks of wishing 'I had a pound for every time I've been asked if we're a load of Lesbians'.[49] Often, female sportswomen, and specifically female footballers, acted to differing degrees to erase and marginalise queer women within their public narratives. Such exclusion is complex – indeed, Cahn has emphasised how in orientating 'their programs towards a new feminine heterosexual ideal', 'leaders of women's sport unwittingly contributed to the homophobic climate'.[50] However, it seems that the desire to popularise women's sports came at a cost to queer sportspeople: Hargreaves details how the US Ladies Professional Golf Association hired a fashion consultant in the 1980s to promote 'heterosexual femininity', aimed at countering accusations of lesbianism among the golfers.[51]

The complicated ways in which footballing women navigated such stereotypes are quietly omnipotent throughout the source base. In her 1969 newspaper interview, for example, Corinthian Manager Gladys Aiken's declared that not one of her players is 'a tomboy'.[52] In 1969, the use of the term 'tomboy' feels loaded; Jennings has explored how in postwar Britain, a context where lesbianism remained 'largely unnamed and unspoken', 'fluid and ambiguous concepts' such as 'tomboy [...] were sufficiently flexible to be deployed as indicators of sexual dissidence'.[53] The strength of Aiken's outright assertion of her players universal heterosexuality is striking, reflective, perhaps, of the damning effect associations with lesbianism had on the public perception of women's football in the late 1960s. Whilst, as Caudwell's work with Hackney Women's United (est. 1986), the 'first totally women run team and the first predominantly lesbian team in London, possibly the UK', illustrates, the 1980s saw the establishment of some specifically

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[49] [title unknown], Summer 1992, *Women's Soccer News and Views Magazine*, Women's Football Magazine Collection, Women's Football Collection, British Library, London.
[50] As quoted in Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport, The politics of difference and identity* p.136.
[51] Ibid. p.142.
[52] [author and title unknown], c.1969.
[53] Rebecca Jennings, *Tomboys and Bachelor Girls* (Manchester University Press, 2013) p.2.

LGBTQ+ women's teams, her recent work is testament to the continuation of a complicated relationship between 'mainstream' women's football and homosexuality.[54] Her fieldwork dating from the mid-1980s suggests that the societal focus on female masculinity in women's football means players 'either [...] celebrate the butch or view her as a troublesome presence on the field of play; she is often seen as having potential to devalue 'women's footballing status'.[55] In this way, the assertions of heterosexuality, and feminine physicality by female footballers examined in this study seem again tied up in attempts to position the women's game as normal, against a background in which 'women's footballing status' was devalued and insecure.

The linguistic marginalisation of queer footballers from the public image of 'mainstream' women's football communities certainly makes [re]constructing their lived experiences difficult. Indeed, in this area, silence is the overwhelming feature of the historical record; an account of a homophobic 'direct assault' on an openly-gay player at Hackney Women's Football club c.2000 hints at how such how pervasive intolerance might have shaped the historical make-up and public persona of women's football communities.[56] Indeed, it seems that the current historical literature sometimes lacks a more critical engagement with the impacts of such a climate of homophobia, particularly in how it might have resulted in footballing women omitting or even disavowing suggestions of non-normative sexuality in their communities. Williams, for instance, frequently assumes the heterosexuality, or straightforward valuing of heterosexuality, of the players she writes about, building an analysis of femininity and sexuality which at times feels based on a binary: the interests of the 'heterosexual majority' as opposed to the 'gay minority'.[57] At times, it feels as if the presence of lesbian players is associated with being a 'stereotype' to the extent at which the two become conflated, a discourse which threatens to erase the lived realities of queer footballers. Such a historiographical tendency could fall prey to essentialising the identities

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[54] Jayne Caudwell, 'Femme-fatale, Re-thinking the femme-inine' in Caudwell (eds) *Sport, Sexualities and Queer Theory* p.147.
[55] Ibid. p.149.
[56] Ibid. p.149.
[57] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women's Football in Britain* p.37.

female footballers. For example, the lack of engagement with the potential differences in performances of gender and sexuality in 'private' versus 'public' spaces reduces historical understanding of the potential contradictions and complications in women's football public marginalisation of queerness; the experience of the 'private worlds' of the game may tell a more complicated story. Indeed, as Caudwell observes, the presentation of heterosexuality in the public discourse of female football communities must be understood 'in relation to difference and non-shared gendered identities'; although not the focus of this study, the navigation of 'difference' – be this in sexuality, or other 'identities', such as race, class or disability - within historical women's football communities, and how this might have interacted with inclusion and exclusion within such spaces is a topic requiring further research.[58] In the same way, then, that reconstituting sportswomen into broader social histories complicates narratives of 'leisure liberation', a 'queering' of football history enables us to engage more dynamically with the promotion of heterosexualised femininity by late twentieth century 'mainstream' women's football communities, and thus understand why heterosexualised femininity came to be centered in their public self-presentation.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how, through accepting, and thus assimilating to, footballing masculinities, female footballers turned their marginalisation into a practical and direct form of feminist resistance; as Alyson Rudd's imagines, 'If I had grown up in a world where women's teams were accepted, I might not have summoned such resolve to prove myself among men'.[59] Such an approach, which often took the form of individual toughness and defiance rather than advocacy of cultural change, was suitably distanced from the divisive ideas of women's liberation, likely rooted in the need for players to navigate the practical constraints of playing a sport dependent on popular support and cultural acceptance. In a historical context where the

[58] Jayne Caudwell, 'Gender, feminism and football studies' p.334.
[59] Alyson Rudd, *Astroturf Blonde: Taking on the Men at Their Own Game* p.8.

'respectability' of women's football remained 'linked to the femininity [and thus heterosexuality] of the players', the players prominent in the historical record thus acted to assert themselves as 'normal' per the norms of feminine physicality and heterosexuality.[60] Whilst the latter 1980s saw players begin to engage more critically, and publically, with the relationship between football and femininity, for the majority of the period female footballers seem to have been occupied with conforming to feminine norms in all the ways they could, perhaps in order to neutralise the controversy inherent in their sport.

[60] Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women's Football in Britain* p.97.

Chapter 3: Building Communities

Exploring how women experienced footballing spaces between 1960 and 1990 is a fraught task; as highlighted in the introduction, historic women's footballing communities are not only scarce in the historical record, but were diverse and largely unregulated. Subsequently, the cultures of different teams varied between localities, as did their interaction with the communities they played in and around. Several authors have focused on (re)constructing and investigating the community of specific football teams in the period between 1960 and 1990.[1] Such research has contributed valuably to the extension of knowledge about women's football communities. However, as yet, little historical research has been conducted on how women in these teams negotiated their 'gender' and 'sexuality' as a community. This chapter contributes to this task by examining the creation and nature of women's footballing communities and women's position in the wider, imagined 'football community' through focusing on the influence of men in both the junior and adult game. It sees as significant the lack of homosocial spaces in women's football. In light of this, it will be suggested that both football's culture of masculinity, and the power of men in the female game acted in combination to destabilise the ability of footballing women to create a stable, self-determined collective identity.

'Lifelong friends'[2]: Building Women's Football Communities

Even a brief exploration of the scrapbook collections and memoirs of female footballers between 1960 and 1990 testifies to the existence of strong and much-loved female footballing communities. In much of the source base, images of the women's game are celebratory; match

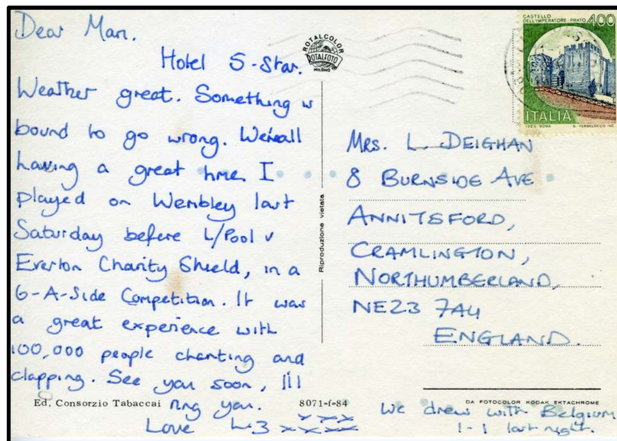
[1] See Jean Williams, 'We're the lassies from Lancashire': Manchester Corinthians Ladies FC and the use of overseas tours to defy the FA ban on women's football'; Williams, Compton and Scarlett, 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team'; Jayne Caudwell, 'Hackney Women's Football Club: Lesbian United?' in J. Magee, J. Caudwell, K. Liston, S. Scraton (eds.) *Women, Football and Europe: Histories, Equity and Experience Vol 1* (Meyer & Meyer, 2007).

[2]Leah Caleb Interview in Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.238.

programmes, to take one example, detail the accolades of teams and players. The programme for a June 1967 game, Corinthian Ladies V All Star Ladies XI, is typical in how it boasts the teams' success, including how the Corinthians had just returned from a 5-week tour of Africa and were about to return for a similar trip to Tunisia.[3] The international exploits of such teams in this period is a noteworthy fact in itself, forming the focus of William's most recent study but, for this dissertation, it is the strength and scope of the team's activities that is of the most interest.[4] International tours signal a team that spent extended, intense time together, and a culture in which football played a powerful role in the players' lives. This expression of the closeness of women's football teams is similarly evidenced by the scrapbook collections; Gladys Aiken extensively documents her 1970 trip to Rheims, France, where, under her management, the Corinthians participated in a 2-day knockout tournament against international teams, Juventus, Kaplice and Stade de Rheims.[5] Aiken's and Deigham's preservations of personal and press photographs, match-day memorabilia, personal letters and good luck cards, alongside some scraps of paper with playful drawings and notes from the players, testify to the consistency and security of the community of the team.

[3] 'Corinthian Ladies v All Star Ladies XI', 13th June 1967, Match Programme Collection at the National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[4] Jean Williams, 'We're the lassies from Lancashire': Manchester Corinthians Ladies FC and the use of overseas tours to defy the FA ban on women's football'.
[5] Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.

Fig. 6. Personal photograph, c. 1970, Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection (G.A. Collection), NFMA.
Image depicts a Corinthian player drinking from a trophy, as her teammate tips it into her mouth



Dear Mam,
Hotel 5-Star.
Weather great. Something is bound to go wrong. We're all having a great time. I played on Wembley last Saturday before L/Pool v Everton Charity Shield, in a 6-A-Side Competition. It was a great experience with 100,000 people chanting and clapping. See you soon, I'll ring you.
Love L3 xxx

Mrs. L. Deighan
8 Burnside Ave
Annitsford,
Cramlington,
Northumberland,
NE23 7AU
England.

We drew with Belgium 1-1 last night.

Ed. Consorzio Tabaccai 8071-f-84

Riproduzione vietata

ITALIA

Fig. 7. Liz Deigham to her mother, photograph, c. 1970, L.D. Collection, NFMA.
A postcard sent when Liz was playing for England in Italy.

Fig. 8. Personal photograph, c. 1970, G.A. Collection, NFMA.
The Corinthian's board their flight to France to compete in an international tournament.

HAMMERING it out for a smashing cause are the talented players of St. Helens Ladies soccer team, runners-up in this year's Womens FA Cup. Here they prepare to break the bank of money collected for the OAP's of Sutton Arms (85110).

Fig. 9. Newspaper photograph, c. May 1981, [publication unknown], L.D. Collection, NFMA.

Beyond the existence of these collections and memoirs, however, we have few sources which allow for an exploration of how women's football communities were experienced. Research of the type conducted by Caudwell, which seeks to observe and critique the intimate dynamics within female football spaces through fieldwork and use of feminist and queer theory, does not exist for most of the period here studied. Indeed, Caudwell's own work of this kind, which began in 1986, specifically focuses on an openly queer women's football team, and so, whilst providing vital insight into how some women navigated queerness in some women's football spaces, does not provide a broader insight into how gender, femininity and sexuality were engaged with in female football teams without an explicit socio-political association.[6] There is a similar lack of historical research exploring the racialised experiences of gender and identity in women's football communities. A coherent historical perspective which examines lived identities of black and minority ethnic women in football is yet to be produced, despite the publicity surrounding the racism case brought by star international striker Eniola Aluko against previous England Women's Coach Mark Sampson (2013-2017), and recent popular interest in Emma Clarke (c.1895), thought to be England's first black female football player.[7] In absence of such scholarship, this chapter therefore focuses on the implications of a repeated theme throughout the source base: the presence of boys and men in the lives of female footballers. It suggests that an analysis of how the position of men in women's football teams has been navigated provides an illuminating entry point into the socio-cultural world of women's football teams between 1960 and 1990. The role that boys and men played in the lives of female footballers is striking, and, in comparison with other sports, the scale and scope of male influence is a relatively unusual dynamic; despite this, it has not been the subject of any extended historical study.

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[6] Jayne Caudwell, 'Hackney Women's Football Club: Lesbian United?' in Magee (eds.) *Women, Football and Europe: Histories, Equity and Experience Vol 1*.

[7] 'Mark Sampson: FA sorry over race remarks to Eniola Aluko & Drew Spence', 18th October 2017, BBC Sport, [https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/41617223, accessed 03/04/20]; Hollie McNish, 'Revealed: Britain's First Female Black Football Player after case of mistaken identity', *The Guardian*, [https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/mar/28/britains-first-black-female-footballer-emma-clarke-1890s-play, accessed 03/04/20].

'We had taught them how to kick the ball into the net and then we found we could not stop them doing it'[8]: Men in Women's Footballing Spaces

The prominence of boys in female footballers' accounts of their early experiences of the game is marked. All oral histories and autobiographies considered here include some reference to a childhood spent playing football with the boys. Leah Caleb, one of the youngest members of Harry Batt's 1971 team, recounts how during her childhood in Luton in the mid-1960s, she 'developed [her] football [...] at school in the playground and in the park with the boys'.[9] Likewise, Kelly Smith, who grew up in Garston, Watford in the 1980s, writes how she was 'always with boys, playing football'.[10] Often such memories come with an emphasis on how female players were the only girls participating in a playground sport dominated by the boys. Indeed, the emphasis on childhood time spent with boys and men in place of mixed gender or single sex environments is notable. Chris Lockwood cites the accessibility of her male cousins as instrumental in the development of her love for the game: 'although my sisters were not into sport, cousins were all boys who, like myself, loved football'.[11] Similarly, Gill Sayell places being surrounded by brothers as significant to her participation: 'having four brothers there was always a ball and a brother to kick a ball about with'.[12] For girls growing up between 1960 and 1990, then, an interest in football was not the norm, and their participation in the game placed them somewhat outside of the traditional gender divides of the playground.

The ways in which women have conceptualised and articulated the implications of this, however, varies in the sources. Frequently, the accounts of women which focus on childhood football

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[8] Tom MacNeece, 'Will Soccer Admit the Girls // They wait on the touchline', c.1969, Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[9] Leah Caleb Interview, in Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.237.
[10] Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* p.14.
[11] Chris Lockwood Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.241.
[12] Gill Sayell Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.244.

emphasise how an important part of playing was being accepted as 'one of the lads'.[13] Kelly Smith for example, writes about her place in the school team: 'I wasn't seen as a girl by the boys at Lea Farm, I was just Kelly'.[14] This sense, that playing football with the boys somehow distanced girls from more traditional feminine characteristics and social structures, is quietly pervasive throughout the source material. How players interact with the concept of a 'Tomboy' is illustrative of this. Both Smith and Sayell identify themselves explicitly with the label; Smith writes of how she 'looked like a tomboy back then as I had short hair' and Sayell talks of how she was 'very much a Tom Boy'.[15] Both women recount their experiences in such a way that it feels as if their successful participation with the boys was in part because of the absence of their femininity; thus, acceptance into such childhood footballing worlds was dependent on girls assimilating to the masculinity of the space.

Similarly, the value placed on successfully mingling with the boys comes through vividly, but fragmentally, in such early accounts. There is often an emphasis on how, as children, female footballers were better than the boys they played with. Powell, Smith, and Sayell all write explicitly of having exceptional skills, comparing themselves to the boys they played with. Powell remarks upon how she 'was always better than all of the boys in the cage'; Smith notes how fathers would shout at their sons from the sidelines about the 'girl running rings around [them]', and Sayell relates her teenage exclusion from competitive football to the fact that 'boys didn't want to play against [her] as [she] was better than them!'[16] Such a dynamic suggests that, for girls to operate in footballing spaces, they had to be exceptional. The casualness of how the women navigate and summate this gendered comparative exceptionality is worth noting: it suggests that

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[13] Kelly Smith, *My Story* p.15.
[14] Ibid. p.15.
[15] Ibid. p16; Gill Sayell Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.244.
[16] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.5 ['the cage' is a reference to the space on Powell's childhood estate where local children played football]; Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* p.17; Gill Sayell Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.244.

an unequal expectation and pressure on female players was, at least in lived experience if not actual belief, normalised and accepted by everyone in the footballing community. Indeed, Caleb even attributes her 'natural progression to continue playing' as a teenager and adult to the fact 'at such a young age [she] could compete with the boys'.[17]

Such a dynamic cannot be detached from the gendered elevation of different footballing skills woven throughout contemporary accounts. Whilst all, to varying degrees, place importance on the quality and skillfulness of the female game, the male-dominated early experiences of players often acted to reinforce the notion that footballing expertise was inherently masculine. Powell's discussion of her time in the 1983 England Squad is a primary example of this. She suggests that, although her stature, race and social background made her first experience of the national team difficult, the style of football she played was secure and solid because she was 'physically strong and learnt [her] football playing on the street with boys'.[18] The centrality of male influence on the early experiences of female players is also present through the influence exerted by male role models (both professional players and family members). For example, two of the three players interviewed by Williams, Compton and Scarlett talked about the role their fathers had played in encouraging their love for the game.[19] Similarly, both Smith and Powell describe the influence professional players had on their ambitions and progression; Powell's inspiration came from 'Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins', whose pictures she had 'on [her] bedroom wall'.[20] She writes of how she 'related to him so much' because of his 'energy' and 'industry'.[21] Interestingly, the fact that Keegan is a man seems not to have been questioned, or even considered by a young Powell, who retrospectively writes that it was not until the 1978 World Cup that she 'realised […] that

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[17] Leah Caleb Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.237.
[18] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.22.
[19] Chris Lockwood Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.241; Gill Sayell, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.244.
[20] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.5.
[21] Ibid. p.5.

there were no female footballers playing in the matches. It had just never occurred to me before that it was only men'.[22] Even after this revelation, Powell writes that she just, '[…] didn't care. I was convinced that one day I would earn my living being a footballer. Today, I can't quite believe my naivety'.[23]

A repeated theme, then, though communicated in various ways, is the centrality and importance of men in the childhood memories of female footballers. The masculinity of the footballing community, both in terms of population and culture, remains remarkably undisrupted: female players often made a concerted effort to recreate and assimilate to masculine traditions, acting through and around dominant male influences on their game. Indeed, against this background, the impact of the later gendered division of competitive school and club football (occurring often upon entry to secondary school) on senses of community and identity amongst female players is particularly poignant.

Notably, all accounts studied touch upon how the beginning of their teenage years coincided with their exclusion from the male footballing spaces they had grown up playing in. The account of Caleb aptly summarises the official process many girls came up against, writing how she was told that, 'football was not 'for girls' and [the Local Authority] would not agree for me to play'.[24] Though the individual experiences of players vary, and the official regulations did not always align with the views of players teammates or families – Smith movingly recounts how after she was prevented from playing with her first boys team, her teammates rallied together to find a new club.[25] There is a strong sense throughout accounts of the fractures and instability created by such exclusions, which, in turn, seems to have had significant implications for the formation of a collective female footballing identity.

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[22] Ibid. p.8.
[23] Ibid. p.8.
[24] Leah Caleb Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.237.
[25] Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* p.18.

Study of this topic is complicated; accounts are highly personalised and reflect the retrospective individual perspectives of players. Overall, however, many female players clearly experienced isolation and confusion, perhaps struggling to navigate and reconcile the gendered codes enforced upon them with their previous admiration of male players and (albeit partial) inclusion in masculine football spaces. For example, Powell talks of how her mother's initial insistence that football was 'a manly game' left her acting like the 'first *Bend it Like Beckham* girl', sneaking out to train and play.[26] Likewise, Smith emotionally recalls her childhood feelings when 'suddenly [no team] would give [her team] a game if I was playing'.[27] Her observation that this was a 'terrible thing for a young girl to go through' seems pertinent: both Powell and Smith experienced a stark rupture in their experience of the football community, one which isolated them for participating fully.[28]

The discourse surrounding players' childhood discoveries of other female footballers, and, for some sooner than others, all-female football teams, inadvertently acts to both underline the extent of this isolation, and conversely suggest the importance and strength of the community forged between female footballers. Talking of the time when she discovered that her 'great friend […] Jane Bartley' played for Millwall Lionesses, Powell writes that, 'This was amazing and inspiring news for me – that girls were playing organised football in teams together'.[29] Powell goes on to reminisce over her experience at her first Millwall training session: 'I was so full of adrenalin and enjoying myself playing with loads of other like-minded girls for the first time in my life'.[30] Such delight upon finding like-minded women is equally reflected in other accounts; Lockwood, for example, affectionately remembers when she met fellow 1971 World Cup Squad member Caleb:

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[26] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.17; *Bend it Like Beckham* is a 2002 British rom-com sports film which tells the story of a British-Indian Sikh girl's football dreams, despite her families (initial) disapproval.
[27] Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* p.17.
[28] Ibid. p.17.
[29] Hope Powell, *Hope, My Life in Football* p.16.
[30] Ibid. p.16.

> While I was sitting about, knowing nobody, a skinny little girl with a ponytail came up to me and said 'Do you want a kick about?' That girl was Leah Caleb who became a teammate for club and country and a lifelong friend.[31]

Such happy memories of shared interest are, however, tinged by a sense of the isolation that came before. Lockwood remarks that, before being asked to play with another girl, she 'didn't ever know there were any other girls that played football'.[32] Likewise, Powell states that, before Millwall, she had 'never played football with other girls' except 'Jane'.[33] The excitement in players' accounts feels bittersweet: in the childhoods of many girls, football was such a male space that the engagement of a community of women came as a shock. In this way, one should appreciate the twofold effects of gender divisions on the creation of female footballing communities; whilst multiple accounts emphasise the intimacy of women's clubs and player's relationships, this is distorted by female isolation from the wider football community, which ultimately destabilised and marginalised female footballing identities.

The continued impact of this disruption on the communal identity of female footballers was at times compounded by the prominence of men in women's footballing communities. With the exception of some self-defined queer/feminist recreational teams, most professional, semi-professional and recreational teams involved men as coaches and administrators (and often very opinionated husbands). Men acted as significant and instrumental advocates for the women's game and have been embraced by the teams they have coached and communities they have supported. Both Aiken's and Deigham's scrapbooks depict strong bonds between female players

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[31] Chris Lockwood Interview, Williams, Compton & Scarlett 'Sporting reunions, contemporary collections and collective biographies: a case study of Harry Batt's 1971 England team' p.241.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Hope Powell, *Hope: My Life in Football* p.16.

and their male coaches (Fig. 10, 11, 12).[34] Similarly, Powell, Smith and Rudd all include moving tributes to men who inspired and nurtured their footballing success.[35]

Fig. 10. Magazine photograph, [publication unknown], [date of creation unknown], L.D. Collection, NFMA.
Original image caption: 'The Northern Region Squad, […] with coach Don Holley and manager Martin Reagan'

Division donate cup

Corinthians' Ladies football captain Pat Quayle receives the Silktown Challenge Cup, donated by the Division, from local footballing star Keith Goalen.

Fig. 11. Newspaper photograph, c. March 1971, [publication unknown], G.A. Collection, NFMA.

[34] Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection; Liz Deigham Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[35] Hope Powell*, Hope, My Life in Football* p.257-258; Kelly Smith, *Footballer, My Story* p.339-340; Alyson Rudd, *Astroturf Blonde: Taking on the Men at Their Own Game* p.ix.

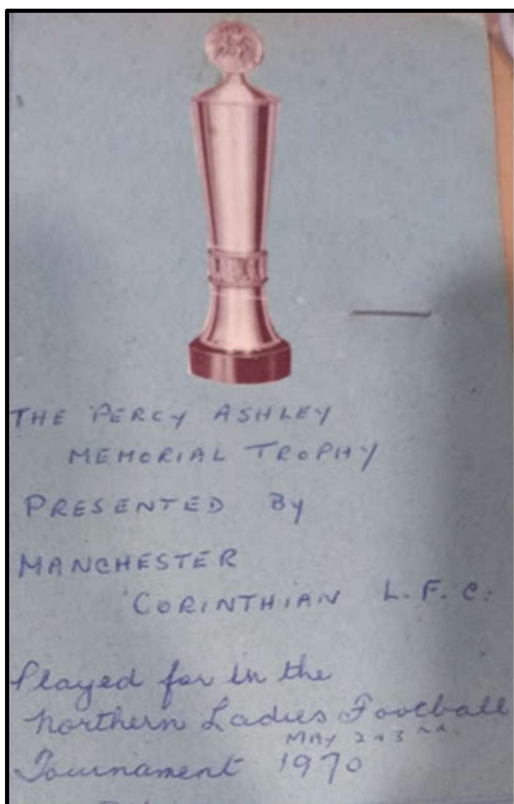

Fig. 12. Gladys Aiken, photograph of a scrapbook, [date of creation unknown], G.A. Collection, NFMA.
Percy Ashley was the much-loved founded of the Manchester Corinthians (est. 1949).

It is important, however, to evaluate the influence of men in women's football spaces critically. A *Finchley Times* article from October 1968, entitled 'Ladies want equal rights – on the soccer field' illuminates the nuances in the implications of their presence aptly.[36] The article focuses on Spurs Ladies Football Manager Norman Firth in the pre-ban period. Though Firth is, in a straightforward sense, a die-hard champion of the women's game – he declares that he wants 'the FA to recognise that ladies are capable of playing football and are as capable of playing it as boys. I want to see ladies play on first-class pitches and have official referees' – the gendered ways in which he talks about his players rather complicates the picture.[37] As illuminated in previous chapters, representations of female players in the popular press often focused on their subscription to or deviance from contemporary feminine ideals; subsequently, members of the female footballing community have acted to emphasis the ways in which female footballers subscribe and suit such norms. Firth is no different; emphasising that his players are 'feminine

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[36] [author unknown], 'Ladies want equal rights – on the soccer field', 18th October 1968, *Finchely Times,* Gladys Aiken Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[37] Ibid.

when they are off the pitch', he talks of how 'he had never seen a lady player raise even a hand against another […] if 'Spurs girls are angry – they sulk'.[38] Firth's discussions of the femininity and physicality of his players feels uncomfortable given his position of influence. The fact that no female player is interviewed in the article furthers this uneasiness; Firth acts as the voice of the team, asserting and representing female players in an ultimately gendered and patronising way.

Such a dynamic is mirrored in other newspaper articles. A 1969 article, subtitled 'Tom MacNeece reports on the latest moves to bring women footballers into the FA' refers constantly to female players, supposedly the subject of the article, as 'them', centering male voices as representative of the female footballing community.[39] Moreover, in a similar article 'A world cup for women?' the women's footballing community is constructed in relation and comparison to gendered footballing traditions: 'now it's the turn of the boyfriends and the husbands to sit at home and twiddle their thumbs until their wives and girlfriends return from the soccer field'.[40] The close situation of women's football with male perspectives and opinions, even from those within the community, seems destabilising. In other words, the presence of men in women's footballing communities seems to have acted to obscure the visibility of female footballers, in turn, demarking and delineating what kind of women's football community was created.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the continuous prominence and influence of men in the lives and communities of female footballers throughout the period. It contends that the construction of men as the role models, teachers and experts of football, often resulted in a gendered distribution of power within female footballing communities. Compounded by the wider context of footballs'

[38] Ibid.
[39] Tom MacNeece, 'Will Soccer Admit the Girls // They wait on the touchline', c.1969, Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.
[40] [author unknown] 'A world cup for women?', c.1969, Gladys Aiken Scrapbook Collection, National Football Museum Archive, Preston.

structural and cultural masculinity, then, this seems to have had notable implications on the formation of female footballing identities; the relationship between female footballers operating within spaces regulated by men (and boys), and their lack of organised or wholesale resistance towards or reinvention of male footballing hegemony should not be ignored.

'The Future Rests With You'[1]:Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to explore how, why, and to what consequence women played football in England between 1960 and 1990. Chapter 1 explored how female footballers were represented in the public media, ultimately demonstrating the prominence of discourses of confusion and accusations of transgression surrounding female footballers. Chapter 2 developed this analysis, illustrating how the ambiguous media image of the female footballer manifested itself in the lived identities of players, who were continuously engaged in processes of neutralising and depoliticising their bodies and actions. Chapter 2 also further examined the relationship between Women's Liberation and women's football suggesting that players both displayed a reluctance to formally engage with, and were excluded, from such activities. Though this has no single explanation, this study has highlighted the links between the unstable position of female footballers within the footballing community and their tendency to favour individual toughness over structural change. By focusing on the formation of women's footballing identities and communities, Chapter 3 further explored where female players were situated in the wider football community, contending that the particular structures and dynamics of their childhood socialisation and adult teams resulted in a gendered distribution of power. Such a proliferation of gendered power structures in female footballing spaces seems to have translated in complex ways into the formation of players' personal and collective identities, most notably through how they were seen, and saw themselves, through the lens of masculine footballing hegemony.

A continuous contention of this study has been the importance of further archival research into historical women's football communities. Though limited in its source base, this study has attempted to demonstrate the transformative potential of focusing on the lived identities of female footballers, as represented in memoirs and interviews, in terms of broadening our understanding of femininity between 1960 and 1990. It is only by conducting and collating the

[1] Speech from Women's Football Association Chairman, Tim Stearn, 1987 as recorded in Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls* p.87.

fractured records and living memories of women's football, that we will be able to move beyond women's football histories concerned with chronology, figures and heroic individuals and fully engage in the discourses and questions posed by the broader socio-cultural world of women's football. In engaging with the work of sociologists and social theorists, this study has also illustrated the potential of cross-disciplinary research to both enrich our understanding of historical identities and to assist in the [re]construction and analysis of the social and cultural dimensions of women's footballing communities. Moreover, by engaging with film, sport-specific magazines, 'fanzines', and scrapbook collections, this study has highlighted how utilising diverse forms of public and private media acts to deepen our understanding of women's football, even in the context of a scarce public historical record. Indeed, diversifying our methodological approach becomes even more pertinent to topics relating to women's football not in the scope of this study, such as race and class.

At its core, this dissertation finds that female footballers in the later twentieth century were continuously shrouded in ambiguity. Though women's football seemed to be gaining greater social acceptance towards the end of the timeframe, the demonstrated limitations in the scale and content of such discourses speak to its enduring social marginalisation between 1960 and 1990. Indeed, this speaks to the essential complexity of women's football as both as a team sport and a means of personal, and, thus political, expression. Women's football carries, and continues to carries, a cultural weight in England that the men's game does not; when men play football, they conform; when women play, they resist. And, it seems, that it is this cultural phenomenon that provides a stimulating reflective point on which to conclude.

Ultimately, English women's football illuminates a social and cultural history much wider than the football field. Between 1960 and 1990, it both experienced and engendered, albeit reluctantly, a contested space, in a society hamstrung between socio-political movements for gender equality, and the persistence of constructionist ideas about gender and sexuality. The lived identities of

female footballers reflect such a contradiction, as does the continued and destabilising presence of men in women's football spaces; the absence of a significant dialogue between footballing (and sporting) women, and organised feminism, particularly how this interacts with homosociality, is a topic worthy of its own dissertation.

The significance of women's football to contemporary discourses surrounding feminine physicality, sexuality and domesticity should not be underestimated. As the growing historiography on the socio-cultural significance of (men's) football testifies, football is a game that touches us all. We must engage with female involvement in football. Without it, we make falsely synonymous a 'people's game' with a 'man's game': what would Jane Purdon think?[2]

[2] Jane Purdon, 'Editorial (Introduction)', *Born Kicking*, October 1990.

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