

Upfront and Onside: Women, Football, History and Heritage Special Edition

Introduction Women's Football and The #MeToo movement 2019

This special edition of *Sport in History* is an output from the largest academic conference dedicated to the international history of women's football held so far, at the National Football Museum on the 8 and 9 March, 2018, to mark International Women's Day. Twenty speakers presented across a range of topics, and community artists worked with a range of contributors to make a new textile-based artwork, as part of the wider Hidden Histories of Women's Football project, which concluded on 30 September 2018 with the inaugural reunion of women football players mentioned by Jean Williams in the final article of this collection. So one of the key themes of this collection as a whole is how the memory of football as both a sport and as a cultural industry is changing, in part thanks to the revised commitment of the museum and heritage sector to better celebrate the women's game. From 1 March 2019 the National Football Museum has committed to improve its representation of women in football to 50% of the work.¹ As the museum was founded in Preston in 1995 and moved to Manchester in 2012, with a mission to research, interpret and publicize the football history, most of which have been based on collector Harry Langton's acquisitions. The commitment in 2019 to diversify women's football therefore is a major change in the Museum's approach and evidence of how academics can work with public history bodies to produce rigorous, and readily accessible, work that reaches a wide and varied audience. This collection reflects that collaboration with work from key individuals in the Museum, Archives and Library sectors, as well as academics and independent researchers.

The collection raises therefore questions of how documentation and collections policies shape the narratives of museums and public history, as well as presenting new empirical evidence. The historiography of football is therefore slowly changing away from the moral panics of male fan-based behavior, and the elite aspects of the game to include more narratives of women's contribution, and that of girls, but academia has been notoriously conservative in this regard, particularly the historical disciplines and this collection marks another innovation in *Sport in History's* own tradition, as it is the first collection dedicated to women's football history, and heritage.

Not just is this overdue, reflecting the male gaze that tends to dominate the majority of *Sport in History's* content, but also a welcome redress to tidy assertions that 'The history of sport...is a history of men' and its rehashing in subsequent works.² Now thirty years old, and based upon the synthesis of secondary sources, this approach was intellectually uncurious at the time and now looks very out of touch. This hasn't prevented authors who have sought more recently to write 'big' books about football, increasingly with a global focus, to neglect half the world's population and reference women's football sparsely. As such, global claims of academic work that lacks inter sectional awareness are rarely convincing. Ethnicity, class, religious belief and life course affect personal experience, of course, and the geographical focus here is a departure rather than an end point. This special highlights the need for more work on Asia, Africa and South America. We are still awaiting our first rigorous history of transgender

football players, and gender non-conforming experience. Add to this a need for more awareness of disability, including intellectual disability, and the nuances of football's history become more compelling. This said, the focus of most academic work on men's professional elite football has tended also to neglect the game for boys, and the majority of football that is played by amateurs, in local and regional leagues across the world. The new research presented here evidences women as historically integral to the sporting industries, related media and visitor attraction industries, sponsorship, food and drink and travel sectors. A growing globalization of women's football as a twentieth century entertainment spectacle unites the varied geographical case studies.

If academia has been slow to change its attitudes, so have the football industries, and yet, in 2018 and 2019, football has begun to have its own #MeToo movement, protesting against sexual harassment and sexual assault. There have been open secrets within the world of women's football about problems of the abuse of power over players and women within the industry. After #MeToo gained ground in late 2017, over one hundred and fifty allegations were made against former U.S. Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar of Michigan State University. Nassar was subsequently convicted of several counts of abuse of minors and the repercussions for US Gymnastics and Michigan State have been considerable, and those who have brought actions have been incredibly brave in their open condemnation of the abuse of power.

At the time of writing the allegations of physical abuse of Afghan Women's National Team members is ongoing, with six members of the Afghanistan Football Federation, including the president, Keramuddin Karim, presently suspended.³ The players have been led by Khalida Poppal, Mina Ahmadi and Kelly Lindsey and the seriousness of the situation has seen those players not already living outside of Afghanistan helped to move to safety, assisted by the United Nations and Human Right's Watch, with some concern for their remaining family members. Poppal was due to present in Zurich in December 2018 but which she didn't ultimately attend due to the intense nature of the situation. Some players have been fearful of both their own safety and their family members, while Keramuddin Karim remains suspended by FIFA, pending investigations that he had a secret and highly secure room in the Afghan National Football Association headquarters in which players allege they were abused. Through the publicity of this high profile case, more stories are now emerging across world football.

If players now feel that they can speak out, the structures of world football have also been very slow to change. The winners of the 2019 Women's World Cup tournament winners will receive £3.1m, twice the amount the United States received in 2015 when they beat Japan, while the overall prize fund is up to £23.4m. Reflecting that FIFA now accepts a wider professionalization, it is also allocating £15.6m to pay for travel, training and players' club team compensation. Reflecting wider concerns about the gender pay gap, well beyond sport, the gigantism of the men's world cup, and FIFA's attitude that it is their premier product is evident in prize money at the 2018 men's World Cup in

Russia overall prize fund £312m and for winners France took home £29.7m. The prize money, even doubled, is one tenth for women than for men.

Furthermore, the money is paid to the national federation before negotiations with individual players, and current reigning champions the United States, are currently arguing an equal pay case with US Soccer, having won more titles than their male counterparts. Twenty-eight women players described 'institutionalized gender discrimination' for decades, even though U.S. Soccer is generally held to be a world leader in its support for women's soccer. The United States Women's National Team, which has won a trio of World Cups and a four Olympic gold medals, is the dominant national power in the women's game. Even so, the federation's financial support and logistical infrastructure have favoured the men's team. So skewed is the case with US Soccer, that the male players are paid more money and given more resource to achieve mediocre results, than the women are paid and supported to be World and Olympic champions. So sport is particularly guilty of perpetuating gender pay disparity, amplified by the media industries and sponsorship deals available to athletes. Why is this still an issue and why do we accept these conditions in sport when we would contest them in other areas of our lives?

Perhaps the largest factor of sports conservatism as an industry is that elite leadership is a growing and expanding range of professions, and sub disciplines. Those who govern world sport are risk averse and financially astute, rather than driven by conscience. FIFA Executive Council's 2018 governance report, a document that historians should treat with some caution in terms of veracity, reported that FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Secretary General Fatma Samoura were paid a combined total of £3.1 m. Infantino earned a base salary of almost £2 million with a variable salary also available, while Samoura's wages were £1 million. Of course, Infantino and Samoura are running a large and complex organisation with over 280 permanent staff and many subcontractors during tournaments. In spite of a succession of scandals in the administration of the organisation in the last ten years, the inability to self regulate in an ethical and scrupulous manner has not dented FIFA's revenue streams. Quite the opposite: the less transparent the organisation, the more FIFA swells its financial revenues. FIFA made a profit of almost £1 billion from between 2015-2018, which is almost 12 times what was forecast. They also have reserves of £2.5 billion, an unprecedented high for the organisation. Although Infantino has a legal background, as did Sepp Blatter, who he succeeded ostensibly as a reform candidate after seventeen years of scandals, his rise within UEFA and FIFA has developed mainly as a result of growing major tournaments and taking football into new global markets. Samoura, the first woman General Secretary, has a diplomatic and humanitarian background so perhaps there are some causes for optimism. Although in the minority, there are more women also evident from more countries across the FIFA committees, and again this is encouraging. Unless FIFA were to be abolished, and a new organisation created that divided sports development and the marketing, and sponsorship rights we will perhaps see more continuity than change over the next ten years.

In analyzing the historical situation that has led to the present #MeToo movement in football in 2019, this international collection has been presented in alphabetical order by the author's surname.

Sine Agergaard's article, 'Coming to belong? Media representations of a Danish Muslim national women's footballer' concerns the popular Danish national team player of Afghan origin, Nadia Nadim, born 2 January 1988. Nadim has overcome the death of her father, an Afghan National Army (ANA) general, who was executed by the Taliban in 2000. After the family fled to Denmark, where she began to play football. Nadim is now training to become a doctor, as well as earning a living as a professional football player in both Europe and America. Under Danish law, Nadim could not apply for citizenship until she was eighteen years of age in 2006. Though her application for citizenship was granted in 2008, FIFA eligibility rules initially prevented Nadim from playing for Denmark, because she had not been a resident for five years after turning 18. Evidently, the case highlights how forced migration and the recent experience of elite level refugee players can be subject to outdated governance regulations. This has rarely been considered for female athletes in the extant academic literature. A challenge from the Danish Football Association (DBU) led to FIFA's legal department allowing an exception in Nadim's case. As such, this is innovative and important new work.

As Agergaard contends, the national belongings of national team players with ethnic minority backgrounds are increasingly discussed, not least as a consequence of cases in which minority players have opted to play for the national team of their families' countries of origin. However, few historical papers have considered the role of women from ethnic minority backgrounds, as national team members and this is particularly the case with regard to elite women players with Muslim heritage. Amongst the first therefore for *Sport in History*, and probably the first of its kind, this paper sets out to examine, how popular Muslim women footballers express and are ascribed multiple and complex national belongings. The theoretical underpinning of the empirical case study evidence uses Nira Yuval-Davis' distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging. The methodology uses analysis of the media, a staple source of evidence for historical analysis but one which is often read uncritically, and without analysis of conflicting and overlapping interpretations. Throughout 2016 and 2017, hundreds of media representations reflected the process in which Nadim was fashioned into an icon of Danishness, and of Danish national pride, while her popularity as a player and public figure also rose. Yet the paper also analyses how increasing visibility and recognition of women's football provided Nadim with multiple career options, but also limits the extent to which popular footballers may be able to belong and be celebrated as national heroes.

The second article, "'A lesson in football wisdom'? Coverage of the unofficial women's World Cup of 1971 in the Mexican press,' is co-authored by Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster. The 1971 tournament followed a previous tournament in Italy in 1970 and several European tournaments from the 1950s onwards. In this context, the authors argue that, when Mexico hosted the 1971 Women's World Cup, it raised considerable challenges for local journalists. The domestic game had never received significant press attention, but mounting

public interest in such a prestigious tournament held so soon after the FIFA 1970 men's world cup. This demanded a response from national and sporting newspapers and this has never before been analysed in such detail. The work analyses the extent to which the masculine hegemonic environment of the newsroom dictated the perspective, language, and imagery deployed by Mexican journalists in their reports. While underlying sexism and cynicism characterised more traditional, conservative sections of the printed media, the analysis reveals a surprising degree of willingness to adapt and learn new ways of reporting women's football as spectacle and a source of national pride. In tracing the dynamics of these processes, the article evidences a more enlightened appreciation of Mexican women's football, as long as they team continued to win matches. So while the Agergaard article examines how an individual player can be subjected to processes of national identity, the Brewsters' work looks at how a team identity can be shaped by the media during a key tournament.

The third article is by Helena Byrne, who works as the Curator of Web Archives at the British Library. This is evident in the methodology used to research the work reviewing research on the history of women's soccer in Ireland and which argues for some future potential strategies and empirical topics. Byrne argues that it is a common fact that women's sport and leisure history, especially in male dominated spheres, and more specifically football, have been ignored by many academics. However, in recent years there have been major developments in digital technology that have changed the nature of the type of research that can be done. Access to tools to facilitate field research are relatively cheap and with the high volume of digitisation projects that have taken place over the last few years as well as the increasing number of born digital resources that have been published, there are new opportunities. In relation to women's soccer in Ireland, this paper reviews the current literature on this subject. It then focuses on Byrne's oral history research of the women's indoor football leagues that ran in Co. Louth in the mid 1960's. As the author points out, Ireland has a relatively neglected historiography for women's football, and indoor leagues, an important precursor to the separate development of futsal as a form of football, also comparatively neglected. One of several articles in the collection to use oral history strategies, this work enables Byrne to compare a range of methodologies to write innovative history and reclaim some of the stories of women's experiences.

The fourth article provides another geographical case study, in this case Australia, also using oral history and family techniques. Lee McGowan's article is entitled, 'Cricket grounds, junior leagues and local singers: uncovering Brisbane women's football history.' Mc Gowan argues that, what has often been perceived as one of the first women's matches in Australia, in September 1921, two representative women's teams played at the Gabba, the Brisbane Cricket Ground, may not have been an isolated event. The crowd size in Brisbane, approximately 10,000, was not commensurate with those attending matches featuring Dick, Kerr Ladies in England during the same period. However, this was a significant crowd at a match generally acknowledged as Australia's first public game of women's football. New evidence suggests it may be the first between representative sides, with players selected from local teams.

McGowan reviews the media accounts, and while contemporary accounts often note the match as a single event, and a narrative that the emergence of organised competition did not then occur until the early 1970s, and with the formation of a national association. Drawing on a range of historic evidence, and personal accounts of participants, McGowan's work examines the emergence of two competitions, in the 1920s and the 1960s. These two periods foreground Brisbane's contribution to women's football at city, state and national levels, including a significant influence on Australia's first national women's team. The period as whole therefore deserves further and more detailed analysis. This builds upon McGowan's larger 2017 funded project, the Lord Mayor's Helen Taylor Community History Award to develop a crowd-sourced digital history of women's football (soccer) in Brisbane, Queensland.

The fifth article brings us back to Scandinavia, and specifically Norway, written by Bente Ovedie Skogvang. Skogvang argues that to understand the historical development of Scandinavian women's football we have to better understand the role of both male and female pioneers in the development of the sport. Skogvang gives an overview of the literature on migration and offers new empirical evidence about the career of Sif Kalvø who was the first known female football player from Norway who played abroad in Italy, in 1971. After Kalvø's pioneering move, in the early 1980's two further Norwegians, Heidi Støre and Reidun Seth, went to play in Trollhättan, Sweden in 1985, and Lisbeth Karlseng went to play in Modena Italy in 1988. So this adds to the sense of where opportunities to play professionally developed, and the patterns of migratory flow within Scandinavia and beyond. In 1995 a group of players, Gunn Nyborg, Linda Medalen, Heidi Støre, Tone Haugen and Hege Riise went to play for the Japanese company Nikko. Following the theme of oral history across the collection as a whole, this article is based upon interviews with the Scandinavian pioneers and the Norwegian 'Mother of Women's football', Målfrid Kuvås. Skogvang had access not just to Kuvås herself, but also her large collection of scrapbooks (media coverage, letters and other correspondence) from that time. The different stages in the development of women's football in Norway are presented, and an analysis of how professional contracts became established. Finally, the 'push' and 'pull' factors affecting the international migration of Norwegian female footballers are traced from the early 1970s to the end of the twentieth century.

The sixth article, has been co-authored by Jean Williams, heritage consultant Joanna Compton and curator specializing in women's football, Belinda Scarlett of the National Football Museum. The article reflects the collaboration of academic specialists, with using the National Football Museum as a social space, entitled, 'Sporting Reunions, Contemporary Collections and Collective Biographies: A Case Study Harry Batt's '71 England Team.' Having acted as consultant to The National Football Museum to assist with the purchase of the 25,000 item Chris Ungar collection of women's football memorabilia, Jean Williams has subsequently been working with the museum to interpret the collection. A key issue arising out of what is perhaps now the most important global collection of women's

football items, dating back to 1869, was the need to develop contemporary collections for future use.

As a direct result, Williams and the National Football Museum held a reunion of players, over 2 days in 2018 to mark National Sporting Heritage day. The initiative sought out those active before 1993 when the FA formally took control of women's football, and one of the key teams to be reunited was Harry Batt's England team who represented their country, albeit unofficially, at the Women's World Cup in Mexico in 1971. Held outside the auspices of FIFA only one year after Mexico hosted the men's world cup, this was a key moment in the history of women's football because it proved a large commercial market for women-only tournaments. The opening games were played in front of crowds of 80,000 people. England played against the winners Denmark, and also Argentina, France, Italy, and hosts Mexico. Using the memories of players at the reunion, some as young as thirteen, and the academic literature on sporting museums, archives and collections, the discussion first pulls together a collective biography of the England team. Subsequently, the discussion argues that, because of the historic marginalization of women in written documentation in sporting archives, social strategies, such as reunions, combined with oral history research and social media connectivity can help to develop contemporary collections policies in museums and heritage offers.

Williams has subsequently gone on to work with FIFA Museum in Zurich, using the new material of the Ungar collection, the Upfront and Onside women's football conference of 2018, and the new academic material which has resulted to publish the first book backed by the world governing body dedicated to the history and contemporary status of the Women's World Cup to be released to all 211 national member associations at a conference in Paris in June 2019. This is an important departure, since the many unofficial women's international tournaments, held between 1881 and 1991, when the first official FIFA Women's World Championship was held in China are now acknowledged as important precursors to FIFA's Women's World Cup. Williams has some sixty pages in a 300 page volume to explain why a women's world cup was first held sixty one years later than the first men's tournament. The many global examples are helping to develop the geographical focus of this collection and so we are developing a more global awareness of the women's game. The site of the FIFA World Football Museum is also developing as a site of increased public awareness, and planned Fanzone attractions at the Opening matches of France 2019 will also feature historical and heritage features. Similarly, work at St George's Park, the home of the FA England teams, is also telling more diverse stories of England teams, including disability and Futsal squads. This includes cap cabinets, England's most capped player installation, currently led by Fara Williams on 170 caps, and references to individual players such as the Kelly Smith pitch. As public sites of history and heritage, these locations are helping to change the story of who had played, managed, coached, administered and organized football.

More importantly, they are helping to change narratives around the emotional investment of women in the game. So the #MeToo element has a changed inflection, not so much of catching up the male game, but of empathy and resilience. The emotional ownership of football then has a more diverse history

than has so far been little understood. In spite of the problems of the football industry and wider society, outlined briefly in this introduction, women have always wanted to join in on the pitch, in the boardroom, on the page, and on the terraces. While a continuity in the history is that this interest has been decried, derided, prohibited, intimidated, abused and undermined, generations of women across the world have overcome these conditions to take part in a sport that they love. Though there have been many frustrations, disruptions, interruptions and great sadness, the human cost of being female and also being interested in football has inspired strategies to overcome such difficulties as are present at any one time, and place. That resilience is rarely acknowledged in histories of sport. Which is perhaps odd. After all, it would often have been much easier for women to turn their attention to something else. But the articles here are testament to the determination to define the sport on their own terms.

¹ The National Football Women's Football Strategy

<https://www.nationalfootballmuseum.com/news/unveiling-new-womens-football-strategy/> accessed 18 March 2019.

² Richard Holt *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 8.

³ Suzy Wrack and Akhtar Mohammad Makoi 'Afghan football officials suspended over sexual and physical abuse allegations' *The Guardian*

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/dec/09/afghanistan-football-officials-suspended-abuse-allegations-womens-team> accessed 18 March 2019.