

Introduction to the Second Special Edition of Upfront and Onside

Jean Williams

Introduction Women's World Cup 2019 and Questions of Legacy

While the first special edition dedicated to women's football came out at the beginning of the Women's World Cup 2019 tournament, held in France, this second edition is released as the legacy of that tournament is being debated. FIFA is a janus-faced institution. It both governs and develops world soccer. Many analysts think that the governance and developmental roles should be separated because the organisation has proven that it lacks transparency, an ethical code and progressive policies. FIFA is also a central command economic regulator – it has a monopoly on international tournament soccer from girl scouts to the world cup, and it makes its own rules. But since the 1980s it has increasingly neglected development in favour of a governance strategy that commercializes its assets for maximum financial benefits.

FIFA has long perceived women's football, girls football and boys football as an economic drain rather than as a financial asset. In the 1980s, thanks to the collaboration between Sepp Blatter and Horst Dassler, of the Adidas family, ISL, a sports marketing company persuaded FIFA to think less of its world cups as cultural festivals of football and more as products, to be trademarked and branded extensively. When the first FIFA women's world championships for the M&Ms Cup was held in China in 1991, it did not have a world cup title, because the marketing department were not sure whether, or not, it would damage the world cup brand. By 1996, following the second women's world cup in Sweden in 1995, FIFA had become over-reliant on ISL for its increasing product revenue and changed to another company KirchMedia, before bringing the whole exercise in-house in 2006.

As the revenues grew, FIFA became increasingly less transparent as an organization and since 2015 scandals have beset the organisation. Importantly, this has not hurt revenues at all: since 2015 the reserves of FIFA have increased exponentially. Gianni Infantino, an academic who has risen through the ranks of UEFA to become FIFA President, has done so on a mandate to increase the commercial assets of FIFA into \$2.7 billions in reserve and unprecedented \$6.4 billion in revenue. So sports development has taken a backseat to commercial enterprise. By 2018, when Russia hosted the men's World Cup, the tournament had expanded to thirty-two teams across 64 games. France 2019 saw only the second Women's World Cup Final tournament to have twenty-four teams, meaning fifty-two games over one month.

Although the women players of the 2019 Women World Cup were told, 'Dare to Shine' the way in which the tournament was presented consistently undermined women's football as a sub brand of the overall FIFA house brand. The opening ceremony was in the Parc des Princes in Paris, and the Final was held in Lyon, rather than the Stade de France. It would be impossible to imagine a men's world cup which did not begin and end in the largest stadium available to the organisers, usually a national stadium. Qatar, in preparation for the men's World

Cup 2022 is actually building stadia large enough to host the tournament. This tells us a great deal about the commercial positioning of FIFA in regards to the tournament.

So, the first kickoff was in the Parc Des Prince in Paris on 7 June, stadium of Paris Saint-Germain in front of 45,000 fans, rather than the 81,000 seater Stade De France where Les Bleus won the men's World Cup on home soil in 1998. Les Bleues, even if they had won the tournament would not have the same national distinction because the final was scheduled for Lyon, home of Olympic Lyonnais. Why position a tournament opening and closing so differently? Because there was an assumption that the larger stadia could not be filled, and there was not the political will, or understanding of the women's football fanbase to sell a more ambitious enterprise. We know that this was possible at the Women's World Cup in Los Angeles in 1999, when 93,000 attended the final in the Rosebowl because other organisers of the US based tournament used a strategy of reaching out to the soccer families who had been priced out of watching the men's World Cup of 1994 as spectators.

If men's football is constantly described as too big and overblown, with excessive money involved, and disproportionately commercialized structures, women's football is compared as emerging, requiring compensatory support and a shadow of the main product. Notoriously the previous Women's World Cup hosted by Canada in 2015 was played entirely on artificial pitches, and recent rule changes made at the end of May concerning VAR came into effect in France 2019. So the game form can be subtly positioned as 'other' to a men's World Cup. Sometimes the message is not so restrained.

FIFA and national associations consistently diminish women's football by structural forces and their own patriarchal assumptions, even while they have expensive PR strategies rolling out slogans like 'Dare to Shine', the motto for France 2019. Never mind the structural forces that prevent individuals and national teams from playing at the highest level, women were told not to be so shy, to take the limelight and 'Dare to Shine.' The mascot for Women's World Cup in France was a chick. As someone who has written seriously about the art history of World Cup posters and mascots from 1930 onwards, this was not very subtle subtext. The mascot was an actual chick. If fans still didn't get it, Ettie had her own backstory, as she was the daughter of Footix, the men's World Cup 1998 mascot, based on the idea of France's sporting cockerel, a very proud national emblem. Ettie's name derived from the French word for star, étoile, representing the gold star that her father Footix was awarded when France won the 1998 FIFA World Cup on home soil. Ettie was diminutive, yellow and fluffy, and, just in case this was not feminine enough, with false eyelashes and freckles. In 2019, not only are all the city posters for the women's world cup replete with women's heads showcasing great manes of Westernised hairstyles and very little reference to football, but the mascot was a chick. Chicks Dare to Shine! In fact birds have been the single most used FIFA mascot for Women's World Cups since 1991. Birds football may sound to us like a Benny Hill sketch but with great seriousness the Local Organising Committee invested this mascot with a backstory and fans were digitally 'chicked' by having Ettie's face superimposed

on theirs during matches on large screens. Many of us who attended the games as fans in France 2019 were bemused as to why we were being asked to perform a chicken dance, with a DJ providing the musical atmosphere, having never voluntarily chicken danced at a football match before. So this was an orchestrated and coordinated marketing campaign which had very little to do with football.

The global inequalities of women's football were highlighted by 2019. Because of the limited number of slots available in France 2019, and because of the way that these were allocated across confederations, only 36 of FIFA's 211 member national associations have currently played in a women's world cup since 1991. So the 13-0 defeat of USA over Thailand was actually a Thai victory, because of the fact that they made the tournament was due to benefactors and well-wishers, not the support of their national association. Similarly, the Cameroon, Jamaican, Nigerian and Argentine national team players had financial difficulties in either getting to the tournament or being paid for appearances afterwards. By 2016 at least five of South America's national associations considered the women's senior team 'inactive' even if, like Chile, they had previously been FIFA ranked. There was no Columbian women's team in France, with their great striker Lady Andrade. The players complained that the national association didn't select a coach or arrange any matches for seven months in early March 2019.

Even Marta, who with 17 goals holds the record for the most goals scored at World Cups, male or female, could not get a boot sponsor for the tournament. Taping over the logo of her chosen boot manufacturer in protest, she pointed to the covered insignia every time she scored to highlight how the missed commercial opportunity had cost the brand. Instead, she wore garishly bright lipstick shades, since her only commercial sponsor was a cosmetic brand. It is hard to imagine Miroslav Klose, whom she overtook as the leading World Cup scorer, having similar difficulties in finding a boot sponsor.

The reality can be much worse than not being funded to compete and not receiving sponsorship or equal pay. While several fans celebrated South Africa's first appearance at a Women's World Cup, in a misogynistic society, being an assertive LGBTQI activist through football can be fatal. In 2008 South African national team midfielder and LGBTQI activist Eudy Simelane was "correctively" gang-raped and murdered, stabbed twenty-five times, for living openly as a lesbian in her local community, where she also coached and refereed football. Two of her attackers were eventually jailed with other alleged participants acquitted.

The role models of the LGBTQI community are much in evidence though in elite women's football, and use this as a platform to protest at inequality, most notably in 2019 Marta's impassioned speech which translated as: 'There's Not Going To be A Formiga Forever, There's Not Going to Be a Marta Forever, There's Not Going To Be a Cristiane. Cry in the Beginning, So You Can Smile in the End.' The various speeches of Megan Rapinoe, the co-captain of the US Women's National Team who won the World Cup while also being in dispute over equal pay with their own national association, also illustrated how conservative world

football remains as an industry. At the same time the dual responsibility of elite players to try enact change, while also performing as world leaders had a huge personal cost. Jill Ellis, who became the first English-born person, and first member of the LGBTQI community, to win and retain back to back world cups. In spite of this, Ellis was only the tenth highest paid coach on US Soccer's wage bill, in spite of the men failing to qualify for Russia.

The main legacy that therefore has to change is the concentration of power in male hands across world soccer. FIFA is not meeting its own gender equity targets, as part of a global strategy. One goal of this strategy is: 'Every Member Association will have one spot on its Executive Committee dedicated to the interests of women and by 2026 have at least one woman seated, while by 2022, at least one-third of FIFA committee members will be women.' In 2019 the FIFA Executive Committee is well below that, not particularly ambitious, one third target.

Reforms to include more women members in the running of the FIFA have been only partly successful exemplified by its Council membership led by President Gianni Infantino. For the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) there is one woman, Mahfuza Akhter Kiron, of Bangladesh, compared with six men. At the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Lydia Nsekera of Burundi is the lone woman compared with six men. On the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) Sonia Fulford of Turks and Caicos Islands is the sole woman with four male colleagues. The single female representative for the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) is Maria Sol Munoz of Ecuador with four male coworkers. Interestingly, Johanna Wood of New Zealand does constitute one third of the Oceania Football Confederation alongside two men, and the European Confederation (UEFA) has the worst record with Evelina Christillin of Italy the only woman from nine representatives. Not only is there is no female at Vice President level, of thirty seven FIFA Executive Committee members, just six are women in 2019. If women are not at the top table, we are never going to get change. Football is slower to change than some political systems which are headed by women, across the world. If women can run large and complex countries, they can organize a little football. Let's hope by the next Women's World Cup in 2023, we see more diverse women in football in the spotlight, not cast in the shade, 'chicked' or infantilized.

The contributors of the second special edition

Continuing the theme of academics working with museums and the archive sector, there are a mix of sources, and approaches. Collections Officer at the National Football Museum, and academic Alex Jackson begins this special edition with a detailed historical overview of Portsmouth Ladies Football Club 1916-1918. We need more local studies of this kind to nuance the overall club history of women's football. Founded in 1916, the Portsmouth Ladies FC were one of many women's football teams active during the First World War. The principal sources upon which the research has been based are images held by National Football Museum and the Pompey Heritage Group, along with newly digitised

newspapers. Three aspects of the club's history are particularly important. To set the scene the article outlines the team's origins, playing record and the types of games they played, including games against male teams. Secondly, Jackson outlines the key role of two men in organising and publicising the club's activities; namely Councillor Tom Langdon, and *Portsmouth News* photographer Steve Cribb. Finally, the social activities that the players off enjoyed off the field illustrate how the club's history offers important contributions to our understanding of the chronology and development of the women's game, as well as its promotion and publicity, particularly in the regional and national press.

This is followed by another club history but this time focussing on the period immediately after the Second World War. Jean Williams revisits the theme of Sporting Reunions, Contemporary Collections and Collective Biographies, but this time with a case study of the Manchester Corinthians Team. Formed in 1949, Corinthian Ladies Football Club went on to pioneer overseas tours with their second team Nomads. Raising over £275,000 during their charitable fund raising tours from 1957 to 1970, often for the International Red Cross, the team played extensively in Europe and across South America. The article first explores this club history, and then expands this in context of several key oral histories, and players experiences of being 'on tour'. Finally, the analysis outlines how teams such as Corinthians who were able to defy the FA ban on women's football from 1921 to 1969, became important providers of playing talent and expertise once official WFA England teams were formed in 1972. Crucially, Williams argues that the amateur traditions of Corinthians were to partly shape women's football into the 1970s and beyond.

In many ways the third article by Dave Day and Margaret Roberts is a partner piece to Williams' work on Corinthians, because it focuses on Foden's Ladies, an important post-war team who also toured widely, and to whom many Corinthians transferred to improve their level of play. Foden's Ladies, formed in 1956 at the Edwin Foden, Sons & Co. lorry manufacturing plant in Sandbach, Cheshire, played for over thirty years. The team established itself as one of the pioneers of a female football revival, including several prominent players such as Sylvia Gore, England women's first official international goal-scorer. Foden's had many works teams and activities so this connects also with the literature on company provision, and the changing nature of women's work. The company team won the Butlin's Cup, in 1969 and 1970, before beating Southampton in the 1974 Mitre Cup final. This combined with six overseas tours before 1979, funded from their own pockets, although Fodens were generous enough to provide a bus. Using company archival records, along with media coverage, personal collections and memories of those involved, this case study outlines the potential for a much larger project on the club and company history.

The two concluding articles debate the difficult nature of legacy and questions of whether hosting major events can act as the catalyst for increasing gender equity in sport. Barbara Bell focuses on England, specifically Women's Euro2005 which was declared to be a 'watershed' for women's football in England and a new era for the game. Starting with how to assess the impact of Euro2005 on women's

football in England Bell shows questions of legacy to be problematic. This was the largest female (single sport) event to that date to be held in the UK, so the Women's European Championships in 2005 were expected to have a significant impact on women's football both in the UK and across Europe. However, despite record crowds and unprecedented media attention, the expected legacy in increased participation did not result. After 2005, grass roots women's football continued to struggle as the FA focused on the elite and Women's Super League development to develop the England team. Subsequent international events in 2012, 2015 and 2017, even with increasingly successful England teams, showed spikes in media interest and fandom, but a minor growth in participation legacy. With the Women's European Championships again scheduled in England in 2021, what lessons can be learned for the future?

The fifth and final article, by Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff explores how France came to host the Women's World Cup in 2019, and how we might understand the legacy of the tournament in changing the face of 'le foot féminin'. Krasnoff argues a confluence of events and cultural changes, combined to energize and grow the women's game in France in the twenty-first century. This newfound dynamism was unforeseen at the turn of the twentieth century and illustrates aspects of hard legacy building, such as infrastructure and capital investment, and some less tangible indicators of legacy, such as the ways in which the country has repackaged itself as a champion of women's football and women in football. The question that remains, as the introduction to this special edition highlighted, is to what extent did France 2019 forever change the face of 'le foot féminin' and to what degree are the continuities in world football likely to shape both the intended and unintended legacies of the tournament. What is now clear is that, as a topic of international academic debate with many nuanced and carefully researched views, women's place in football is likely to continue to grow and diversify.