

THE FIGHT FOR FEMALE FOOTBALLERS CORNER

Football is the most popular team sport for women and girls, with 1.1 million women, in England, who take part. A sport that reaches every corner of the globe, football grabs the hearts of billions (both male and female) night and day. With girls' football, continuously on the rise, why is it that so many still spurn those who play?

From, my own experience, football is my sport – my chance of freedom and to express myself. Just like men's football, you have eleven players on each side. Just like men's football, there is one referee who abides to the same rules. Just like men's football, the crowd celebrates when you score a goal. And just like men's football, you are either left elated or depleted after the match of your life. So what's the difference? We are women.

There is a vastly uneven platform when it comes to the sport. Starting even with the base level of salary for men and women: men's football wages are generally astronomical (with players like Cristiano Ronaldo earning £20 million per year compared to the England Women's National Team who are paid the national average of £23 thousand per year, without advertisement). Furthermore, women's sport is only 2% of the TV broadcaster – *SportsCentre's* air time; (a statistic that hasn't changed in 25 years). This has to change.

Why is there such a vast difference between awareness for girls' football compared to that with boys? Despite



the acceptance of female athleticism at a professional level, the rate of girls continuing sport to this level is minimal. The likelihood of girls dropping out of sport is six times more likely than boys at school level. This is largely due to a confidence drop in teenagers. As early as the age of 7, girls are in fear of being judged or becoming different to the ideal but unrealistic body standards. Therefore, girls in fear of being too 'muscly' or for 'running like a girl' must be more encouraged at a young age to continue sport.

However, Hebe and Selinay, both 13, give their views: "Although football is mainly associated with men, it shouldn't be because women are just as strong. More girls should take up the sport because it is a chance to gather and share a passion as well as promoting women empowerment."

Nonetheless, there are improvements being seen on a wide scale. Bucking the average trend, the number of girls being active is increasing faster than those in boys. Now, 150,000 women in the UK do exercise on a regular basis, therefore, improving health levels and resulting in an, overall, better standard of living. With more girls taking part in football (and other sports across the spectrum), the future of female sports looks more hopeful.

By Maddie, Lady Margaret School