



DURHAM V MANCHESTER CITY

SUNDAY 14 JANUARY 2024

THE ADOBE WOMEN'S FA CUP FOURTH ROUND PROPER
OFFICIAL SOUVENIR MATCH DAY MAGAZINE | £5

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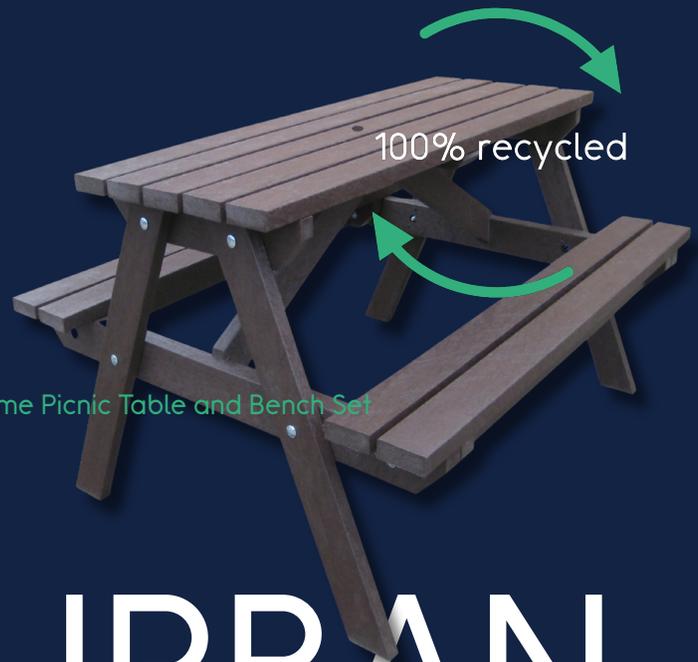
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WELCOME TO DURHAM V MANCHESTER CITY

INSIDE TODAY'S SOUVENIR MATCH DAY MAGAZINE...



GROUND GUIDE

Maiden Castle is all set for today's big game - with a few changes to our usual match day arrangements. This Ground Guide is the perfect reference point if you're looking for anything during your visit today. And of course, you can always ask one of the friendly stewards we have situated around the ground if you need any further help or have any queries - we're always happy to help!







SARAH WILSON

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Adobe Women's FA Cup Fourth Round tie against Manchester City.

Our last game before Christmas saw us claim a massive win over Southampton. It was made really difficult because of the wind and that was the case for both teams. In the first half you could see that we had to ride the storm a little bit but we stayed in the game after going through a lot of pressure. But in the second half we came out fighting and it was just about who wanted it more - we kept pushing and pushing and the girls never stopped. Fortunately we then came out with the win.

Everything that we had to face in the game was pretty much in front of us, and we obviously had a game plan to try and keep it that way. All credit to T in goal and we kept it quiet for her. As a defender, that's exactly what you want - to relieve as much pressure on the goalkeeper as possible. Keeping a clean sheet gives you the best possible chance and we did well to steal the win at the end.

It's great when you're on the end of those last minute winners and it's fantastic to win a game like that - but we put ourselves under so much pressure! Obviously we'd like to see a game out earlier and I'm sure the coaches would as well, but at the end of the day it's about getting over the line and we don't care how we do it.

Since that game, we've been able to properly focus on today's visit from Manchester City. It was a busy week when the draw was made and we had to go to Aston Villa a couple of days after. When we saw the draw we knew it was going to be unbelievable and there's been such a buzz around the club ever since. All the information that's been coming out with the game selling out so quickly, it just shows how exciting it is for everyone. It's huge for the club and for me, being here from the beginning and seeing it, it's fantastic. I don't know if people understand how big it is for the club, so we're going to make the most of the day.

The fact the game has been selected for broadcast on the BBC is very exciting and personally, it's something of a career highlight. It's something you dream of and, I'll be totally honest, playing in front of the TV cameras like we will today is something I never thought I would get the opportunity to do.

Seeing all the work that goes in behind the scenes at the club as well, it's just as important for those staff as it is for the players. It's massive and it's just so exciting - I'm like a kid at Christmas!

We've played against a lot of the big teams before and it's an incredible experience that never gets old. It's amazing to do it. Everyone always talks about the Manchester United games at Maiden Castle and they were amazing, but my favourite has to be the Chelsea game at New Ferens Park. It was one of the biggest games I had ever played in - the Quarter Final of the FA Cup, one of our biggest crowds - and we stayed in the game the whole time. It was an incredible goal by Ji that won it for them and I think she did a Cruyff turn mid-air before scoring a wonder goal! We had a big chance at the end of the game where we could have got ourselves back into it and it just shows that it's down to what happens on the day. I'll never, ever forget that day and it just shows how special the Adobe Women's FA Cup can be.

In the last few years, we've made Maiden Castle our home and I think the fans play a key role in that. It's a close environment and you can feel the fans and the atmosphere they create. How they support us is really what gives us the edge. We've played some big teams here and got results in the past and we always say that anything can happen on the day - especially when we're at home. We're under no illusion that the game today will be one of the toughest games that we've ever played in, but we have to back ourselves since we're at home.

We know we're set for a record crowd today and the scary thing is how quick the game sold out. That just shows the demand. Of course people are going to be coming to see some of the best players in the world and while it's an amazing experience for us to be playing against them, for the fans it's so special and important too. We want you all to make the most of the day and we know you'll back us throughout. We're all really looking forward to the game and we know the atmosphere you'll create today will really help in pushing us over the line.

Thanks as always for your support - and hopefully we'll see you back here on January 28 when we play Watford.



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INTRODUCING DURHAM WOMEN

We introduce you to the Durham Women players who could be taking the field today - including club stalwarts, international players and bright young talents...



POSITION
GOALKEEPER

NATIONALITY
IRISH

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#1 | NAISHA MCALEON

The Irish goalkeeper joined Durham in January 2022 after coming through the ranks at Peamount United in the Irish top flight. While with the Peas, McAloon featured in the UEFA Women's Champions League. The stopper has now made close to 50 appearances at Maiden Castle and has developed a reputation as a fine shot-stopper and penalty saver - helping the Blues to no fewer than four penalty shoot-out victories since her arrival!

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#3 | LAUREN BRIGGS

A product of the club's youth system, Briggs has spent her entire senior career with Durham - expect for a brief spell at Sunderland. Happy playing at full-back or in midfield, Briggs' versatility and quality has seen her be a near ever-present so far this season. The 27-year-old has made 113 senior appearances at Maiden Castle - and has scored four goals for the first-team. Today will be an interesting day for Briggs - who is a lifelong City fan!

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#5 | SARAH WILSON

Durham's captain, Wilson joined the club in 2014 during their first ever season at the elite of the women's game. Formerly of Newcastle United, the centre back took the armband in 2015 and hasn't looked back since. Having now racked-up 208 appearances for the club, Wilson is one of the most respected defenders in the Barclays Women's Championship - strong and reliable at the back, while also a threat in the opposition box at set-pieces.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
NORTHERN IRISH

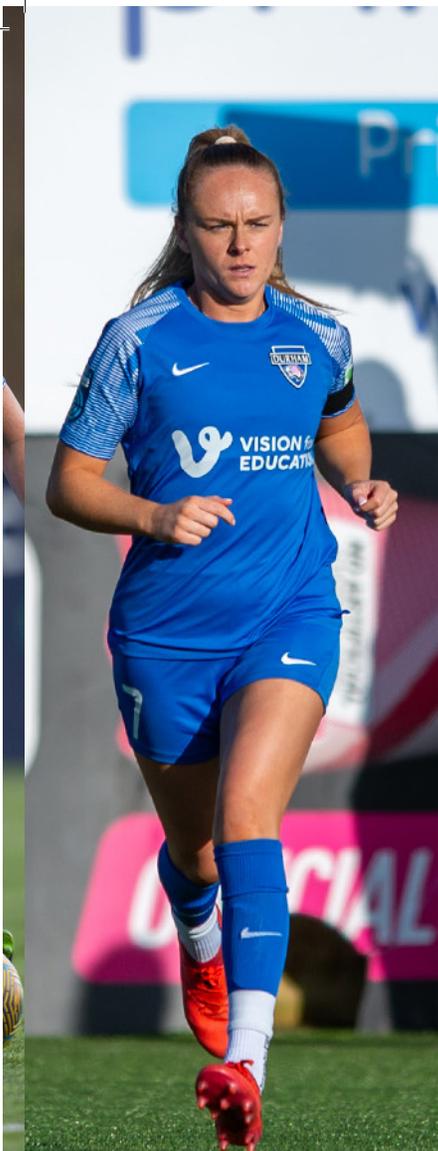
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#6 | SARAH ROBSON

Robson joined the Blues in 2016 after spells with Sunderland and Grindavik (Iceland). She quickly became an integral part of the side that competed at the top of the second tier while continuing to shine on the world stage - the centre back captained Northern Ireland at points during the 2022 Women's Euros and recently gained her 100th cap. The 36-year-old is comfortable at the heart of defence or midfield.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:

CRAIG STEPHENSON
PERSONAL TRAINER

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#7 | BETH HEPPLE

Another long-serving member of the club, Hepple has spent her entire senior career with Durham and is our record appearance holder - having featured 235 times. Her tally of 90 goals in that period showcases the attacking quality that Hepple brings to the side, while she is also a tenacious and creative player in the engine room. Watch out for her set piece deliveries too - as they've laid on plenty a goal for Durham throughout our history.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:

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#8 | MOLLIE LAMBERT

After spells with Newcastle United and Sunderland, midfielder Lambert put pen to paper ahead of the 2020/21 season. She quickly became a regular face in the starting line-up and is now closing in on 100 appearances for Durham - having featured in every competitive game so far this season. The 25-year-old has also found the net twice during the current campaign, with a goal on the opening day at Watford followed-up by a cup goal against Sunderland.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#9 | AMY ANDREWS

Andrews arrived at Durham in the summer after a goal-laden spell with Western Illinois University in the USA. The forward's time in the States also saw her represent Tormenta FC - with her goals helping the side to the 2022 USL W League title. Andrews' pace and cool finishing have seen her become a fast fan favourite at Maiden Castle - and she has five goals to her name already this term.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#12 | LILY CROSTHWAITE

A product of the North Yorkshire Girls' Centre of Excellence, Crosthwaite initially represented Durham Cestria before breaking into the first-team setup during the 2020/21 campaign. Since then, the winger has been a regular in the team with her pace and directness giving opponents plenty to worry about. Crosthwaite ended 2023 in fine form, playing a crucial role in our final two goals of the calendar year.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#14 | BECHKY SALICKI

Salicki joined Durham from Sunderland ahead of the 2016 FA WSL 2 season - and has been a mainstay in the backline ever since. Comfortable playing anywhere across the defensive unit, her passion and tenacity have been standout qualities. Salicki has also chipped in with a number of key goals over the years and is a major threat from set pieces. She is also eligible to represent either Denmark or Lithuania at international level!

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
AMERICAN

SPONSORED BY:



#15 | DEE BRADLEY

Bradley's road to the professional game has been one of determination - having overcome two ACL injuries during her time at Old Dominion before arriving in the North East. The midfielder put pen to paper with Durham in 2021 and battled her way into the side with a number of committed displays. Tough in the tackle and a threat in the air, she can play a key role at both ends - breaking up opposition attacks while contributing to our own.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#17 | POPPY PRITCHARD

After making a handful of senior appearances last season, this campaign has been a breakthrough one for Pritchard, who has been a regular in the first-team squad. That run of games has also yielded her first two Barclays Women's Championship goals, while the forward has been capped by England U19s in recent months. Capable of playing anywhere across the frontline, Pritchard's pace and trickery make her a handful.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#18 | GRACE AYRE

Having progressed through Durham's Regional Talent Club - and after playing for Durham Cestria - Ayre broke into the senior set-up in 2021 before nailing down a regular starting berth last term. A number of impressive performances saw her earn an England U23 call-up last spring, too. Capable anywhere across the backline, today could be a very special day for the versatile defender - as it's her 22nd birthday!

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#19 | ELLA WILSON

Another player to have enjoyed a breakthrough season at Maiden Castle. Wilson made her senior debut on the final day of the 2022/23 campaign during the victory at Lewes and has gone on to make a further 11 appearances this year. That progress was rewarded with a first professional contract, which was signed in November. While usually a left-back, the England youth international can also play in a more advanced role if required.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
IRISH

SPONSORED BY:



#20 | SAOIRSE NOONAN

Formerly of Cork City and Shelbourne, Noonan joined Durham in 2022 - scoring on her debut against Sunderland. The forward went on to net five times during her first campaign in blue and has already beaten that tally this season, with six goals to her name in 2023/24 - including braces in the league and cup against Blackburn. Noonan is also a regular in the Republic of Ireland national squad and was part of the side that topped their UEFA Nations League group recently.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

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#21 | ERIN NICHOLSON

Nicholson is another player to have progressed through Durham's ranks - and actually made her senior debut back in 2021 against Manchester City, during a 3-0 defeat in the Continental Tyres Cup. A cultured midfielder with bags of technical ability, Nicholson is definitely one to watch for the future - and is another whose set piece deliveries can prove exceptionally useful.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
IRISH

SPONSORED BY:



#22 | ELEANOR RYAN-DOYLE

Ryan-Doyle cut her teeth in the Irish top flight with Peamount United - where she was a prolific scorer - before joining Birmingham City in the Barclays WSL. After a loan spell with Coventry last term, the forward joined Durham in the summer and has quickly established herself as a key player. With five goals and four assists to her name already this season, she's one to watch in this afternoon's clash.

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#24 | ABBY HOLMES

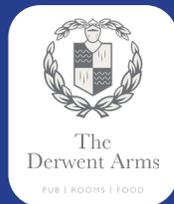
Holmes' return to Durham in the summer was met with celebration from the Maiden Castle faithful as the full-back re-joined the club after a year with Sunderland. Prior to her departure, the determined defender had enjoyed a fine four-year spell with the club and became a firm fan favourite due to her passionate displays. The 32-year-old has plenty of top level nous and has previously played in the Netherlands for PEC Zwolle too.

AUTOGRAPH

POSITION
GOALKEEPER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

SPONSORED BY:



#30 | TATIANA SAUNDERS

Stopper Saunders has played across the globe - after deciding to park her career on Wall Street to become a professional footballer. After representing Dartmouth University and clubs in Iceland and France before joining Lewes. Following two years with the Rooks, Saunders joined Durham last summer. The goalkeeper also holds a Guinness World Record - after she scored from her own half against Liverpool while at Lewes!

AUTOGRAPH

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FA CUP MEMORIES

Durham have enjoyed some fine memories in this competition in recent years - and here we recount some of the most memorable days for the Blues in the famous FA Cup...





0-1



The biggest cup tie that Durham have faced prior to today saw Chelsea visit New Ferens Park back in the Quarter Final in 2019. Emma Hayes' side brought a star-studded team full of internationals to the North East - but almost fell behind early on when Lisa Robertson's free-kick struck the bar and Sarah Robson headed the follow-up narrowly over. A moment of magic from Ji So-Yun then saw the visitors take the lead as she cleverly spun in the box before slotting home. Chelsea had further chances through Fran Kirby and Ramona Bachmann but it was the Wildcats who came closest late on - as Zoe Ness' cross was agonisingly close to being turned home by Nicki Gears and Caroline Dixon, as Durham only narrowly fell to defeat.

Durham XI: Reid, Holmes (Gears 53), Robson, Robertson, Christon (Dixon 87), Wilson, Ness, Salicki, Roberts (Cottam 87), Hill, Hepple



0-2



In order to tee-up that tie with Chelsea, the Blues had to overcome a stern test away at Barclays Women's Super League side Bristol City. Durham travelled to the South West without some key players due to injury, but succeeded in mounting a major shock. There were few clear-cut chances in the opening exchanges and indeed the game remained goalless until late on. It took until after the hour mark for Durham to open the scoring - Lisa Robertson latching onto a through ball from Zoe Ness before firing home from a tight angle. And Robertson would double the advantage and seal victory late on - picking up possession and sending a superb lob over Sophie Baggaley and in from the halfway line.

Durham XI: Reid, Hill, Robertson, Wilson, Robson, Ness, Gears, Salicki, Christon, Roberts, Lee



5-2



What a win this was back in 2018! The victory secured a first-ever Quarter Final place for Durham, who were in fine attacking form at New Ferens Park. Early goals from Zoe Ness and Ellie Christon looked to have put Durham in control, only for Leigh Dugmore to pull a goal back. Abi Cottam's fine effort - which won her the Player of the Round award - then restored the two-goal advantage for the hosts, only for Sophie Domingo to put Leicester firmly back into contention with a goal deep into first half injury time. But Cottam's second and a strike from Emily Roberts sealed progression for the Wildcats as they were made to work hard against the impressive Foxes.

Durham XI: Alderson, Johnson, McCatty, Robson, Hepple (Worthington), Ness, Salicki, Christon, Roberts, Hill (Briggs), Cottam (Dalgliesh)



0-9



This game kicked-off Durham's 2016 season - and what a fantastic win it was! The Blues headed south to face a tricky test in second tier rivals London Bees, but it was a test they passed with flying colours. Jordan Atkinson opened the scoring after eight minutes before Beth Hepple slotted home a second moments later. Nat Gutteridge added a third and Hepple a fourth with Atkinson sealing her brace and Durham's fifth before the interval. And the momentum continued after the break - Hepple netting a 25-yard stunner for her hat-trick and Chloe Macek scoring a similarly fine effort to make it seven. Gutteridge then added an eighth before Jess White rounded-off the scoring late on.

Durham XI: Alderson, Macek, Wilson, Salicki, Christon, Lee, Hepple, Gutteridge, Atkinson, Eadon, Gears

MURRAY HOGG

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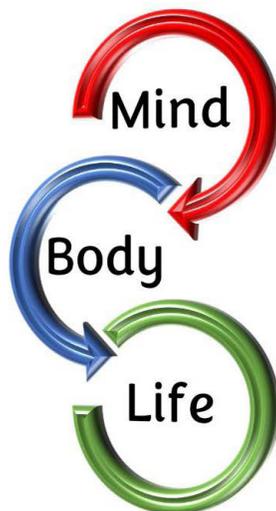


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LATEST PATHWAY NEWS

After beating London City Lionesses in the PGA Plate Quarter Final, our Under 16 side are now preparing for their semi-final against Birmingham City or Bristol City!

The winner of their last eight tie will visit Maiden Castle on Saturday 10th February, and we wish the team all the best for the big game!



Our last home game of 2023 saw us host The Katem Logistics Cup at Maiden Castle! 18 teams and over 200 players took part before watching our 1-0 win over Southampton.

Whickham FC and Workington Reds scooped the trophies, that were presented by Dee Bradley and KATEM's Cheryl Smith!

Our Under-21 Professional Game Academy team saw their PGA Cup campaign come to an end after defeat to a strong Arsenal side, and this week resumed their league campaign against Liverpool.

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LEAGUE TABLES



	TEAM	PLD	PTS	GD
1	CHELSEA	10	25	+21
2	MANCHESTER CITY	10	22	+19
3	ARSENAL	10	22	+14
4	MANCHESTER UNITED	10	18	+14
5	LIVERPOOL	10	18	+4
6	TOTTENHAM	10	15	-5
7	EVERTON	10	11	-10
8	LEICESTER CITY	10	10	-6
9	ASTON VILLA	10	9	-10
10	BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION	10	8	-12
11	WEST HAM UNITED	10	5	-13
12	BRISTOL CITY	10	5	-16



	TEAM	PLD	PTS	GD
1	BIRMINGHAM CITY	12	23	+13
2	CHARLTON ATHLETIC	12	23	+7
3	SUNDERLAND	12	22	+4
4	CRYSTAL PALACE	11	21	+20
5	SOUTHAMPTON	12	21	+6
6	DURHAM	12	17	-8
7	BLACKBURN ROVERS	10	15	-5
8	SHEFFIELD UNITED	11	14	-1
9	LONDON CITY LIONESSES	12	12	-7
10	READING	11	11	-5
11	LEWES	11	7	-11
12	WATFORD	12	6	-13

FIXTURES & RESULTS

DATE	OPPONENT	H/A	COMP	KO	SCORE
27/8	WATFORD	A	BWC	12PM	D 1-1
3/9	LEWES	H	BWC	12PM	W 2-0
10/9	CRYSTAL PALACE	A	BWC	12PM	L 1-9
17/9	LONDON CITY	H	BWC	12PM	W 1-0
1/10	READING	H	BWC	12PM	L 2-0
8/10	CHARLTON	A	BWC	12PM	D 1-1
11/10	BLACKBURN	H	CC	7PM	W 3-2
15/10	SOUTHAMPTON	A	BWC	12PM	L 1-2
22/10	BLACKBURN	H	BWC	12PM	W 2-1
5/11	SUNDERLAND	H	BWC	12PM	L 0-1
8/11	SUNDERLAND	A	CC	7PM	D 2-2*
12/11	SHEFFIELD UNITED	A	BWC	2PM	W 1-0
19/11	BIRMINGHAM CITY	A	BWC	1PM	L 1-3
23/11	SHEFFIELD UNITED	H	CC	7PM	D 1-1*

DATE	OPPONENT	H/A	COMP	KO	SCORE
10/12	WEST BROM	A	FAC R3	3PM	W 5-0
13/12	ASTON VILLA	A	CC	6:15PM	L 1-5
17/12	SOUTHAMPTON	H	BWC	12PM	W 1-0
14/1	MANCHESTER CITY	H	FAC R4	12:30PM	
21/1	LEWES	A	BWC	12PM	
28/8	WATFORD	H	BWC	12PM	
4/2	SHEFFIELD UNITED	H	BWC	12PM	
18/2	LONDON CITY	A	BWC	12PM	
3/3	BLACKBURN	A	BWC	2PM	
17/3	CHARLTON	H	BWC	12PM	
24/3	SUNDERLAND	A	BWC	2PM	
31/3	CRYSTAL PALACE	H	BWC	12PM	
21/4	READING	A	BWC	12PM	
28/4	BIRMINGHAM CITY	H	BWC	1PM	

*DURHAM WFC ON PENALTIES

2023/24 PLAYER STATS

PLAYER	START	SUB ON	GOAL	ASSIST	YC
Naoisha McALOON	10				
Lauren BRIGGS	14	1			4
Sarah WILSON	17		1	1	4
Sarah ROBSON	13	1	1		1
Beth HEPPLER	3	3		1	1
Mollie LAMBERT	16	1	2	4	1
Amy ANDREWS	11	6	5		
Lily CROSTHWAITE	9	4	1	2	1
Becky SALICKI	14	2	1	1	1
Dee BRADLEY	16			1	6

PLAYER	START	SUB ON	GOAL	ASSIST	YC
Poppy PRITCHARD	9	7	2	2	
Grace AYRE	5	4			2
Ella WILSON	5	6			2
Saoirse NOONAN	14	3	6	4	4
Erin NICHOLSON	2	5			
Eleanor RYAN-DOYLE	8	8	5	4	1
Jess CLARKE	6	5		1	1
Abby HOLMES	9	3		1	2
Tatiana SAUNDERS	6				2
Anna KING					

IN-DEPTH STATS ARE AVAILABLE AT DURHAMWFC.CO.UK

GET INVOLVED

We hope today's game leaves you inspired to start - or keep - playing football, and we have a number of ways you can get involved with the path to the professional game...



Emerging Talent Centres

Our Emerging Talent Centres are always extremely popular - and are a great addition to playing with your local grassroots team!

Our ETC sessions allow you to train once a week with our club coaches at a location close to you, while also representing your current club. You could also be selected to form part of a representative team for Durham too!

The sessions are for U8, U10 and U12 players and are held at three venues: New Ferens Park, Monkton Stadium and Bede Sixth Form.

To sign-up visit tinyurl.com/ETCJan24



Post-16 Football Academy

In partnership with Durham Sixth Form Centre, we run both Male and Female Post-16 Football Academies!

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Post-16 Football Academy

We also run a Post-16 Female Football Academy with Bede Sixth Form, which is ideal for players in the Tees Valley area.

You'll benefit from regular coaching, fixtures and can also choose from a range of subjects to study alongside your football - with both A-Levels and BTECs available to select from!

To find out more, visit durhamwfc.co.uk/education-partners/



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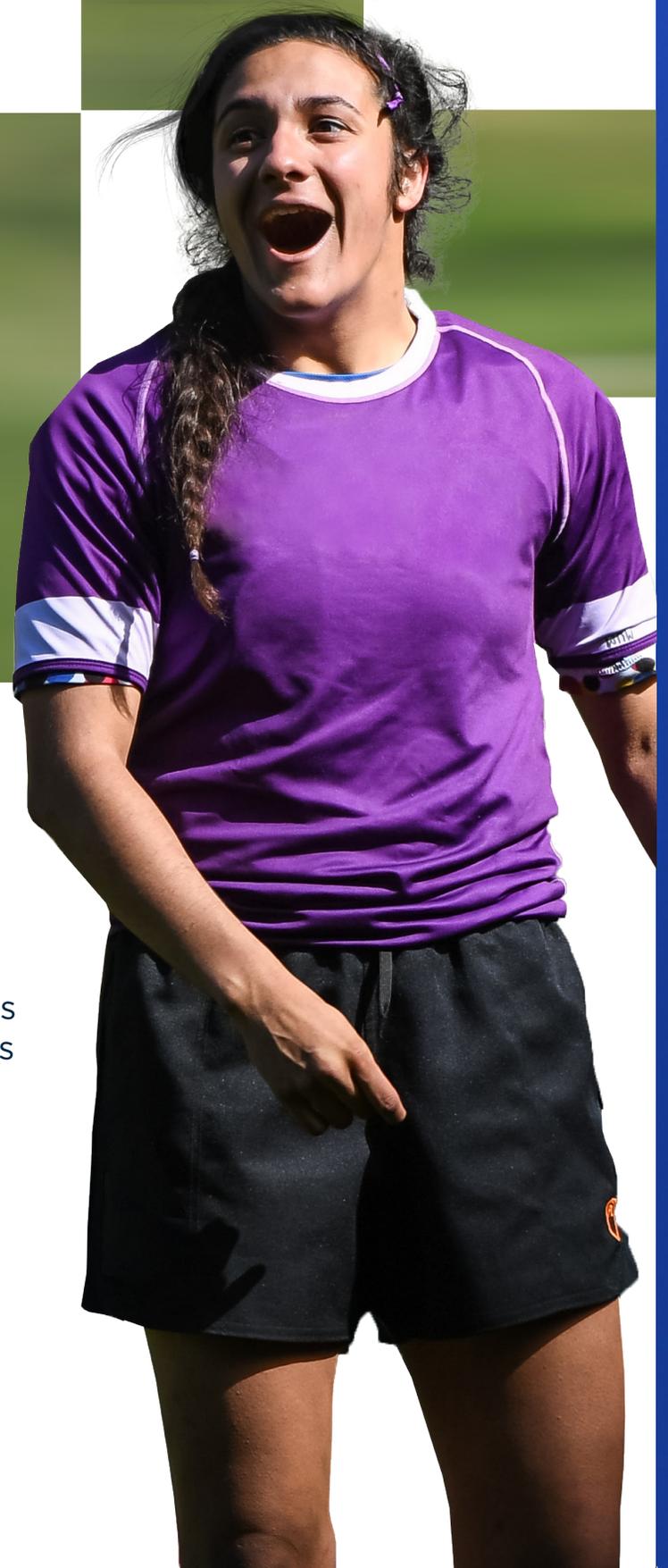
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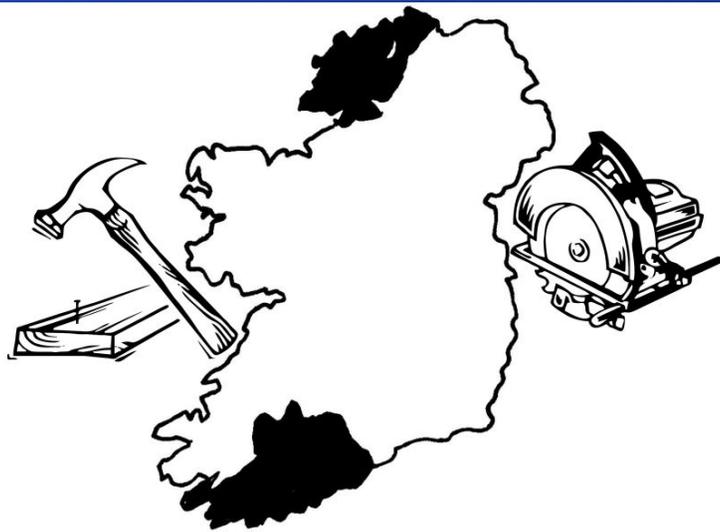
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INTRODUCING MANCHESTER CITY

With a host of Lionesses and international players fresh off the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in their ranks, this is a City squad packed with quality. Here's a look at who could be involved today...





POSITION
GOALKEEPER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

A product of City's Development Squad, Roebuck signed her first professional contract with the club in 2018 after impressing in the absence of Karen Bardsley. A first senior call-up to the England national team along with a contract extension - as the stopper established herself as the club's number one. The accolades kept on coming, with Roebuck nominated for FIFA's The Best Women's Goalkeeper awards before being called-up to the Team GB squad for the Tokyo Olympics. She was then part of the England squad that won the UEFA Women's Euros in 2022, before Sarina Wiegman also named the 'keeper in her squad for the 2023 World Cup. Roebuck played in 17 league games last term and has now featured in well over 100 games for her club.

#1 | ELLIE ROEBUCK

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Having grown up in South Shields, left-back Stokes will return to familiar ground in the North East today. Having come through the ranks at Sunderland, she secured a four-year scholarship to the University of South Florida in 2011 and also represented Vancouver Whitecaps while studying. A spell with the South Florida Bulls followed before Stokes joined City in January 2015. She has been an integral part of the club's success ever since, helping the side to Barclays FA WSL and FA Cup triumphs. Stokes has also been a regular for England - representing her country at various age groups while also racking-up over 70 senior caps. The 32-year-old was also part of the England side who won the European Championships in the summer of 2022.

#3 | DEMI STOKES

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
SPANISH

The Spanish defender joined City in July 2022 after a promising start to her career in her homeland. Aleixandri came through the Barcelona academy and played with the club's B Team for two seasons before being snapped-up by Atletico Madrid in 2017. She helped the club to back-to-back Spanish league titles in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons and just shy of 50 appearances for Atleti, a number of which came in the Champions League. The centre back, who can also play at right back, then made the switch to Manchester and has already become a key component in Gareth Taylor's side. Aleixandri has made 10 league appearances this term and also scored her first goal for City - netting in the 5-0 win over newly-promoted Bristol City.

#4 | LAIA ALEXANDRI

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

A player with vast experience in the English top flight and overseas, Greenwood joined City in September 2020. The defender - who can play either as a full-back or centre back - began her career with Everton, where she named as the FA's Young Player of the Year in 2012. A move to Notts County then followed before Greenwood returned to her home city and joined Liverpool. Manchester United came calling in 2018 and the 30-year-old captained the Red Devils to the Championship title before joining Lyon - where she tasted Champions League success. Greenwood then returned to home shores and joined City, where she has been a regular ever since. The defender is also a regular in the Lionesses squad and played at last summer's World Cup.

#5 | ALEX GREENWOOD

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Another North East native returning to the region today, Houghton represented Sunderland before joining Leeds in 2007. The defender won the FA Cup with the Yorkshire side before then earning a high-profile move to Arsenal - joining the Gunners in August 2010 ahead of the launch of the FA WSL. The Durham-born star impressed in North London and quickly became a household name - thanks in no small part to her 121 England caps and performances for Team GB at the 2012 London Olympics, where she scored in all three group games. Houghton joined City in 2014 as they prepared for their first-ever season at the elite of the women's game and has been a key driving force in the side as they established themselves as a force in the women's game.

#6 | STEPH HOUGHTON

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Coombs brought a great deal of top flight experience to City when she put pen to paper with the club in 2019. The midfielder began her career with Charlton Athletic and spent time with Arsenal and in Los Angeles before making her senior breakthrough at Chelsea. A loan spell at Liverpool became permanent in 2017 and Coombs was a key cog for the Reds in the Barclays WSL. Since joining City, the 32-year-old has made just under 100 appearances for the club while netting 16 times - with a number of those strikes spectacular ones from range. Coombs has also earned senior international with recognition with England having also represented the Lionesses at youth level, and was part of the squad that jetted off to the Women's World Cup last year.

#7 | LAURA COOMBS

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
AUSTRALIAN

The exciting young forward joined City with plenty of potential and a raft of awards already secured - with Fowler having won Australia's PFA Young Women's Footballer of the Year accolade while coming second in NXGN Football's 2022 Women's Next Generation shortlist. After starring for Adelaide United in her homeland, Fowler joined Montpellier in France and netted 10 times in 42 games while featuring in D1 Feminine. That drew admiring glances from a number of clubs, but it was City who won the race for her signature in the summer of 2022. She's already netted five times for her current club and is also a regular for Australia - scoring four times in 14 senior appearances while also playing at last summer's World Cup on home soil.

#8 | MARY FOWLER

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Kelly will go down in English football history after scoring the goal that secured the Lionesses' victory in the 2022 European Championships - and the forward has enjoyed a fine career in the domestic game. After coming through the ranks at Arsenal - where she scored just 22 minutes into her debut against Watford - Kelly spent two spells on loan with Everton before making the move permanent in 2017 following the Toffees' promotion back to the top flight. An England debut followed a year later before City came calling and sealed a deal for the pacy forward in the summer of 2020. The 25-year-old has gone on to make 80 appearances at the Joie Stadium, scoring 26 times in the process.

#9 | CHLOE KELLY

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
VENEZUELAN

Regarded as one of the most exciting youngsters in world football, Castellanos began her career with Escuela de Futbol Juan Arango in her homeland before heading to the USA and joining Florida State University. Her three years playing college football brought 48 goals in 82 appearances and a nomination for FIFA Best Women's Player of the Year award in 2017. That made Castellanos the youngest-ever player to be nominated for the prestigious prize, and the accolades kept on coming - with Atletico Madrid offering the forward a professional contract in 2020. After two years in Spain - during which she helped Atleti to the Supercopa de Espana Femenina success in 2020/21 - the 24-year-old joined City, scoring on her debut against Tomiris-Turan.

#10 | DEYNA CASTELLANOS

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

The pacy winger has been at the forefront of England's fine form in recent years and has been a mainstay in this City side for several seasons. Hemp originally came through the ranks at Norwich City, her hometown club, before joining Bristol City in 2016. After helping the South West to promotion back to the top flight of English football, Hemp kicked-on in the WSL and really shot to prominence in the 2017/18 campaign - netting nine goals while also earning the England Young Player of the Year award. City then came calling in May 2018 and Hemp has now gone on to make over 130 appearances in Manchester, scoring 59 times. The 23-year-old also has 51 caps for England which have yielded 16 goals since the forward made her senior international debut in 2019.

#11 | LAUREN HEMP

AUTOGRAPH



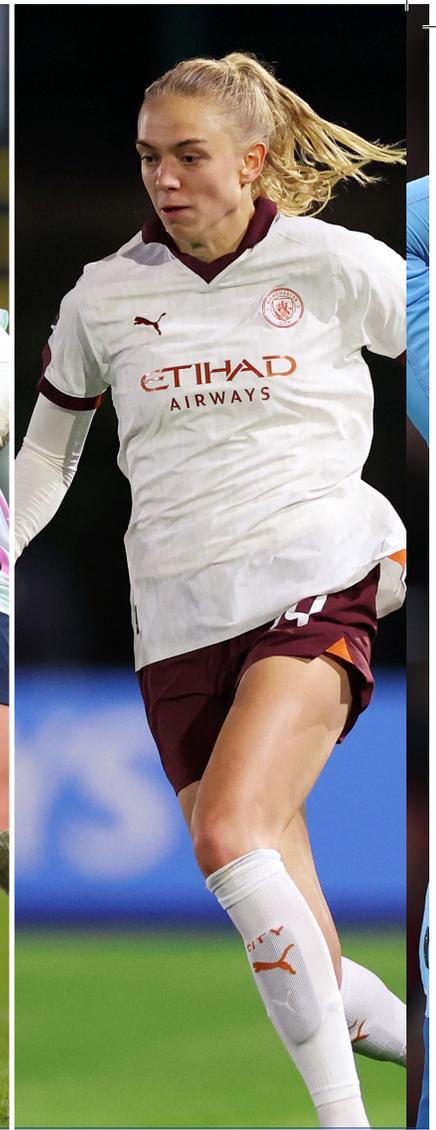
POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
SWEDISH

A Swedish international, Angeldahl spent the formative years of her career in her homeland. After beginning with IK Sirius, the midfielder joined AIK in 2014 and spent just two years with the side before being snapped-up by Hammarby. It was here that Angeldahl really began to cut the eye and she scooped the Damallsvenskan Most Valuable Player award in 2017 before transferring to league champions Linkopings. Ten goals in 38 appearances brought interest from BK Hacken and - after two seasons with the club - the midfielder made the move to Manchester City. Angeldahl has now scored eight times for the Citizens in just over 50 appearances, and also has 50 caps for her national side - scoring for Sweden at the recent Women's World Cup.

#12 | FILIPPA ANGELDAHL

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

A lifelong City fan, centre back Morgan joined the club at U15 level and progressed through the ranks - earning her first senior recognition when former manager Nick Cushing selected her to accompany the first-team on pre-season tours of Frankfurt and Toulouse. Her competitive first-team debut came against Yeovil in September 2017 and Morgan remained in and around the senior environment before being handed a first professional contract in 2019. That was followed by a loan switch to Everton which saw Morgan gain regular gametime in the top flight, featuring 13 times for the Toffees during the COVID-disrupted 2019/20 season. Once football resumed, Morgan found herself as a key part of the City squad - while also earning regular England call-ups.

#14 | ESME MORGAN

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
SPANISH

Flying wing-back Ouahabi was a product of Barcelona's famed academy, spending eight years with the Catalan giants across two spells. Having joined Barcelona at the age of 13, Ouahabi made her senior breakthrough in the 2011/12 season - the campaign in which the club won their first league title. The defender then made the switch to Valencia in search of regular football, spending three years with the side before returning to Barcelona in 2016. Her second spell with the Blaugranes yielded further success with Ouahabi winning practically every trophy possible - including the UEFA Women's Champions League as part of a treble in 2021. A switch to City followed in 2022 and the 30-year-old has now made 30 appearances in Manchester.

#15 | LEILA OUAHABI

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

A former teammate of Lily Crosthwaite at the North Yorkshire Centre of Excellence, Park joined City in 2017 and has remained with the club ever since. She made her debut in December of the same year during a 3-2 win over Doncaster Belles, and the creative winger quickly became a regular. The 2019/20 campaign was a breakthrough one and a first professional contract followed at the end of it. A loan spell at Everton during the 2022/23 saw Park really catch the eye and she has now made over 50 appearances for City - who the forward has supported all her life. The 22-year-old is also starting to earn international recognition with the senior England side, and scored her first goal for the Lionesses during a win over Japan in November 2022.

#16 | JESS PARK

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
DUTCH

The promising young Dutch defender joined City after spending the early years of her career in her homeland. After making her debut for Heerenveen in the Eredivisie at the age of 15, Casparij joined VV Alkmaar for the 2017/18 campaign before returning to Heerenveen. The defender continued to be a regular in the top flight in the Netherlands and was signed by Twente in 2020. After 57 appearances and six goals across two years with 'The Tukkers', the right-back joined City in 2022 - fresh off the back of her representing her country during the Women's European Championships. Casparij has now made close to 40 appearances for Gareth Taylor's side while continuing to rack-up international caps - having now represented the Netherlands 32 times.

#18 | HERSTIN CASPARIJ

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
DUTCH

Another player to have spent time with Twente in the Netherlands, midfielder Roord began her career with the side and spent four years in their senior setup before making the switch to Bayern Munich. The Dutch international spent an impressive two years with the German giants, scoring 25 times in 50 appearances before joining Arsenal in 2019. Roord spent just two years with the Gunners in the WSL before heading back to Germany and joining Wolfsburg. After winning the German league title in her first season, and finishing runners-up in the Champions League in her second term, Roord returned to England last summer and joined City on a long-term deal - before jetting-off to the World Cup with Holland.

#20 | JILL ROORD

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
FORWARD

NATIONALITY
JAMAICAN

The 26-year-old - better known as 'Bunny' - was born in Spanish Town in Jamaica and kick-started her football career in the USA. After spending time with Eastern Florida State College Titans, Shaw joined University of Tennessee in 2017 and later represented WPSL side Florida Krush. The summer of 2019 brought a move to France and Bordeaux, where the striker continued her prolific scoring record. She netted 34 times in 39 games during her time with the French top flight club before joining City in 2020. Shaw has netted 60 times already while in the North West and continues to be a regular scorer on the international scene too. With 55 goals for Jamaica, Shaw is her nation's record goalscorer across both the male and female national teams.

#21 | HADIJA SHAW

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
GOALKEEPER

NATIONALITY
SCOTTISH

Stopper MacIver spent time with both Everton and City during her youth career before joining Clemson Tigers in the USA as part of an academic scholarship. After four successful seasons in the States, MacIver returned to England with Everton in 2020. She went on to make 49 appearances for the Toffees before City secured her services for an undisclosed fee in the summer of 2022. After making nine appearances last season, MacIver remains a key part of the first-team squad this term. In addition to her success at club level, the 'keeper has recently earned international recognition for Scotland. She previously played for England - earning one cap in a friendly fixture - and was also a reserve player for Team GB at the Olympics.

#22 | SANDY MACIVER

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
JAPANESE

A versatile midfielder, Hasegawa is a prominent name in her native Japan and it was here that she began her career - representing Tokyo Verdy Beleza over 200 times before making the switch to AC Milan in 2020. After impressing in her one year in Italy, the 26-year-old made her first foray into English football when she joined West Ham United in 2021. A regular for the Hammers during her one and only season in London, Hasegawa was signed by City in 2022 and played 27 times during her debut season in Manchester - scoring once and being named in the PFA Team of the Season. The midfielder remains a key part of Gareth Taylor's side this term after a summer spent with Japan at the World Cup - where Hasegawa added to her 77 international caps.

#25 | YUI HASEGAWA

AUTOGRAPH



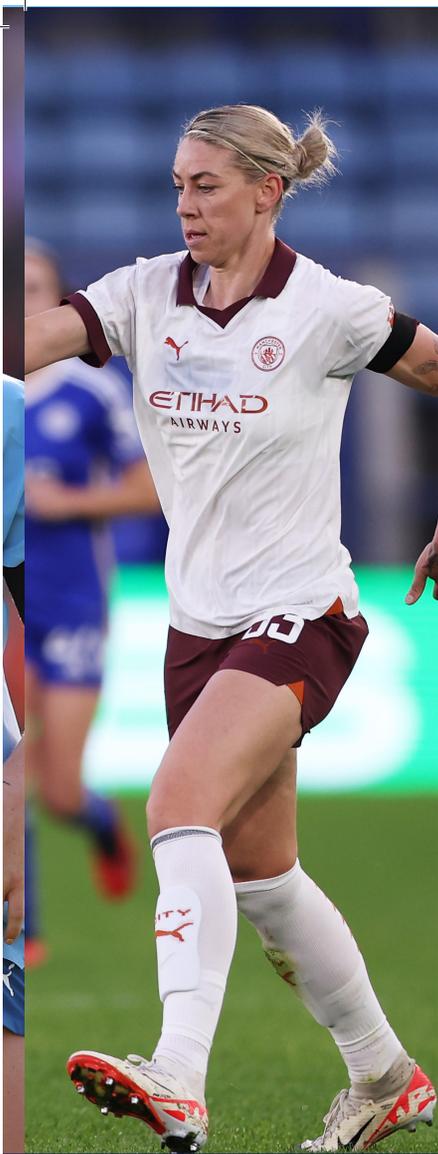
POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Still only 20, Mace already has a wealth of WSL experience under her belt. The defender - who can also play as a holding midfielder - started her career at Arsenal and made her debut in the North London Derby against Tottenham in September 2020. After a string of first-team opportunities, Mace joined Birmingham City on a dual-registration basis for the remainder of the 2020/21 season and helped the Blues stave off relegation and retain their top flight status. Her form in the Midlands drew admiring glances from a number of clubs, but it was City who sealed her signature in the summer of 2021. Mace has now gone on to play 26 times for the club, while she spent last season on loan at Leicester City - playing 11 times for the Foxes.

#30 | RUBY MACE

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
DEFENDER

NATIONALITY
AUSTRALIAN

An experienced player who has plied her trade in three countries, Kennedy began her senior career in Australia with Sydney FC. Spells with Newcastle Jets, Western Sydney Wanderers and Perth Glory followed before the defender - who can also play in midfield - headed Stateside and agreed a deal with Western New York Flash. After just a year with the NWSL side, Kennedy made the switch to Orlando Pride and quickly became a key player. She racked-up 60 appearances across three seasons before joining Tottenham on loan. After that spell in North London, City came calling and signed Kennedy on a permanent basis in 2021. This is the Australian's third season in Manchester and she has made close to 40 appearances.

#33 | ALANNA KENNEDY

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
GOALKEEPER

NATIONALITY
ENGLISH

Keating began her career with local rivals Manchester United before making the move to the blue half of the city in 2015. After progressing through the ranks at the Academy Stadium, while also spending time on loan at the likes of AFC Fylde and Coventry United, this has been a breakthrough campaign for Keating. Handed an opportunity by Gareth Taylor, the stopper hasn't looked back and has played 11 times in all competitions already this season. She signed a first professional contract with City in November of 2023 having been handed a maiden senior international call-up for England the month before - with Keating having been named in the squad for a pair of UEFA Women's Nations League matches.

#35 | HIARA KEATING

AUTOGRAPH



POSITION
MIDFIELDER

NATIONALITY
NORWEGIAN

A regular in the Norway national team, Blahstad spent time with FL Fart in Norway before joining Rosenborg in the top flight. She made an immediate impression, scoring on her debut against LSK Kvinner before helping her side to an undefeated 2020 campaign. The midfielder was named as the division's Young Player of the Year and was subsequently picked on UEFA's list of ten footballers to watch out for in 2021. After an equally impressive 2021 season - during which Blahstad scored 15 times - she left Rosenborg and joined City. After a loan spell at BK Hacken last season, the 22-year-old represented her nation at the World Cup over the summer before returning to Manchester. She has since made seven appearances for City this season.

#47 | JULIE BLAHSTAD

AUTOGRAPH



PLAYED

13

WON

9

DRAWN

2

LOST

2

GOALS

34

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Rethinking Water

Greetings from the Back of The Stand!

Happy New Year to you all too (if I may still say that?)!

2023 was a rollercoaster; 2024 will start with a rocket. What a game we have in store; it will feel like Christmas all over again!

When the draw was made, knowing I'd have to write this for you, I started to think back; delving into the depths of my memory. Of course, I can be forgiven I'm sure, I had to check my notes a little....

The last time we welcomed Manchester City to Durham was nearly 10 years ago in the League Cup; more will remember a more recent visit over there in the same competition.

379 were in New Feren's Park to witness a 3-0 win for the visitors in our 1st season of

existence, a battling performance by our young side; who had succumbed to a 7-1 loss to Liverpool the week before.

That match was early on in our Club's history and therefore in DHR's coverage. Lots has happened since then, on and off the field.

Only three players who played that day could appear at Maiden Castle today - the two Club Captains, Sarah Wilson and Steph Houghton, together with Beth Hepple.

Off the field, the changes are there for everyone to see, here in Durham and around the country; not just the size of the sell-out crowd today!

I feel privileged to have been able to be there every step of the way; hopefully the coverage has improved over the years!

Is this the biggest game in Durham's history? Perhaps not, but it is up there; being against a giant of the WSL, together with the coverage.

It is certainly a good marker and milestone in the short history of the Club and an important game within this season. Another chance for us to be the "underdogs" which we always have enjoyed being.

Cup games are always exciting and special here; I hope you can join us on DHR inside and outside the ground, as many continue to do around the world. Please also join me on the 'Durham Roarcast' podcast next week for after-match reaction etc.

Enjoy the game!
Let's hear the 'Wildcat Roar'!

John

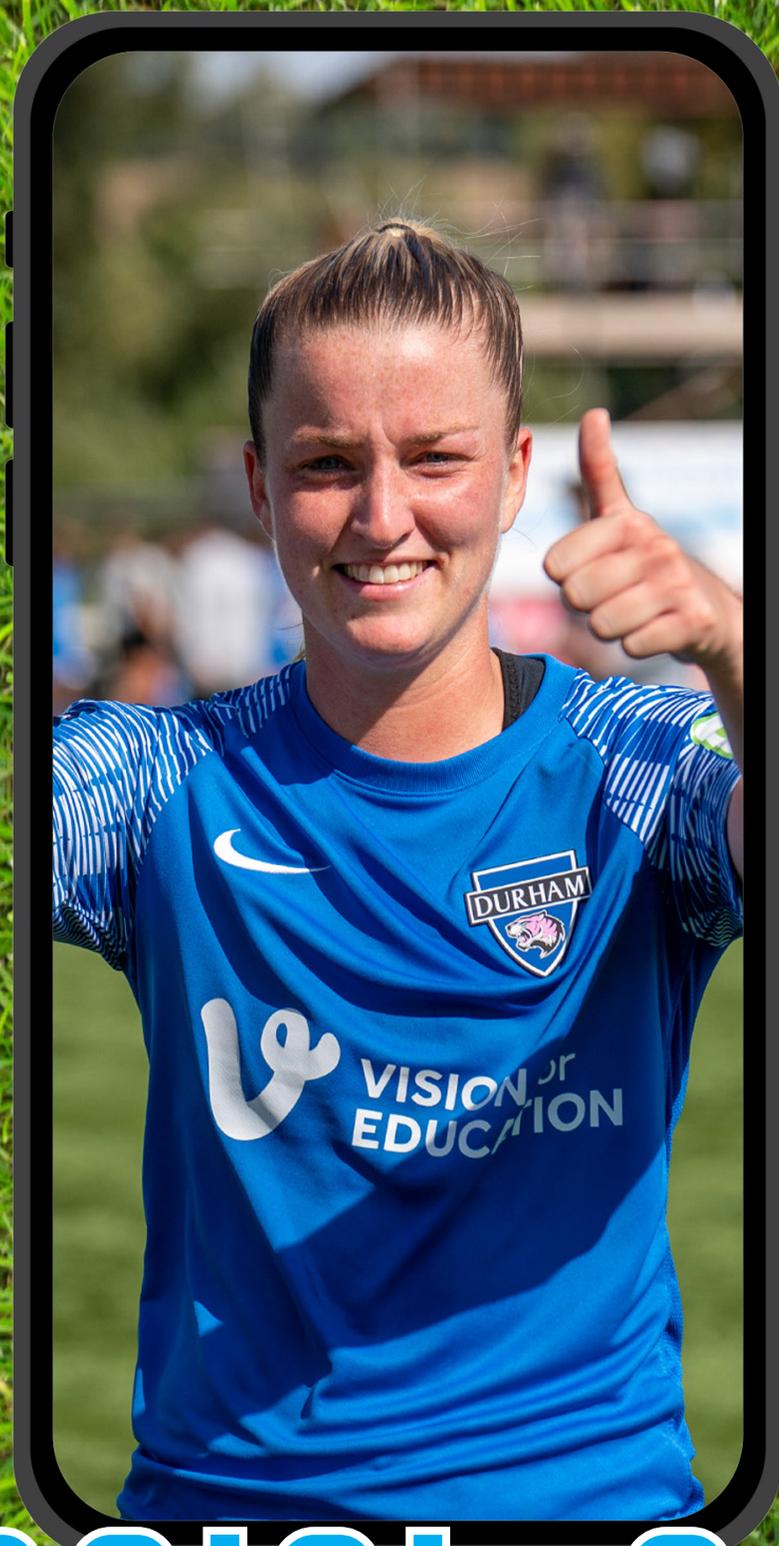
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SOCIAL Q+A WITH DEE BRADLEY

WE ASKED YOU FOR YOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE
MIDFIELDER - AND NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT THEM TO HER...

Q: What are your targets for the rest of the season?

A: As a team, we want to collect as many points as we can until the end of the season. And of course we will work on making sure it's three points every weekend. Personally, I'd like to contribute to the team's success as much as I can continue to grow as a player every week. I just want to keep pushing my game to different levels!

Q: What's your favourite colour headband?

A: Shocked Becky hasn't noticed yet, but I have sadly retired the headband. Thought it was maybe time to let the roots get some sunshine!

Q: What's your favourite football memory?

A: I think one of the proudest moments not only for myself, but for my family, is signing my first professional contract with Durham. It was a long journey to get to this point, and one that very few thought was possible, so be able to do it after a few injuries made it all worth it

Q: What genre of music do you listen to before a game?

A: Whatever DJ Salicki has on the speaker! I will give credit to her, she does a decent job

Q: What's been your best moment as a Durham player?

A: Scoring against United and then beating them the following year at home will be very very hard to beat. Being the underdogs and beating one of the top women's football teams in England is such a statement from little ole Duzza!

Q: What's your usual pre-match meal?

A: In the morning, I tend to have my overnight oats with fruit of some sort and then if I'm still hungry (which I always am) - I'll make some toast.

Q: How does playing football compare between the US and Europe?

A: To me, US 'soccer' is very very focused on athleticism. I think you can get away with lack of knowledge of the game if you're quick and strong. But football here is so tactical and I think there's the perfect combination of athleticism and football knowledge that goes into how this game is played here.

Q: What's the best thing about playing for Durham?

A: For obvious reasons, the sense of community here is unmatched. The fans are just absolutely incredible! But I will say I've made friends for life here and created a little family away from my family in Philadelphia, and that's the thing I'm most grateful for.

Q: What inspired you to overcome the hardest challenges you've faced as a footballer?

A: My family are genuinely the sole reason I was able to stay motivated and determined to not let anyone or any injury define how long I played football for. If it weren't for them, I know for a fact I wouldn't have the privilege of fulfilling my dream. It's so important to surround yourself with people that bring out the best in you and believe you deserve the best.



CHANGING ROLES

WITH NAT GUTTERIDGE

Having played a key role in helping push Durham forward on the pitch, Nat Gutteridge is now playing a different role - as our Lead Physiotherapist. We caught up with Nat to discuss her change in roles at Maiden Castle...

How did your career start as a player?

"I started at Chester-Le-Street Town Ladies before signing for Sunderland Women and finished my playing career at Durham WFC. My biggest highlight was playing in the FA Cup Final in 2009 with Sunderland, although we lost on the day, it was an unforgettable experience. I then moved to Durham in 2015 at a point when the club was really starting to grow. The transformation of the club has been the biggest highlight, although there were a few goals that stood out even if some of them were tap-ins!"

How did you initially come to join Durham as a player?

"I was returning to play after my first ACL reconstruction but had limited game time at Sunderland who had been promoted to the WSL. The opportunity came about to sign for Durham, with some persuasion from goalkeeper at the time Helen Alderson, who I had previously played with at Sunderland (including the 2009 FA Cup final). I remember having a meeting with Lee and Dawn and have not looked back since!"

How did you become a physio? Was that a career you always wanted to pursue?

"I'd always had an interest in becoming a physio as I loved the idea of having a career in sport and (without sounding too old) back then, signing a professional contract and playing football full-time wasn't really heard of. I had been told that getting into physio was very difficult so this had put me off initially therefore I ended up taking a slightly longer route into the profession. After my undergraduate degree I was working in admin and then as a physio assistant within the NHS before deciding to do a masters in physio. Once I qualified, I worked in the NHS for 8 years before taking up my current role at the club last season.

How did you make the transition from player to physio at the club?

"After rupturing my 2nd ACL I had every intention of returning to play but as I got to the later stages, the club were looking for a physio and after struggling with an ankle issue, this helped me make the decision to hang up my boots and take on the role. I did

this whilst working full-time within the NHS and the transition from player to physio was quite a good one for me as it allowed me to stay in the game."

How was the dynamic different and how did you adapt to that?

"Initially it was quite strange as one day the players were my teammates and then suddenly I was their physio! It didn't really take long to settle into the role though as knowing the players probably made things a little bit easier. There has been quite a big turnover of players since I first joined the club, although there are still a few going strong who I have played with."

What is a normal day and week life for you at the club?

"The start of the week usually involves assessing players following the game at the weekend and providing treatment to those who need it. It is then a case of preparing players for training (activation/taping etc) and depending on whether there are any injuries, I may need to plan and deliver rehab sessions. This may be in the gym or out on the pitch which I enjoy as it allows me to get my boots back on! Towards the end of the week, the focus then turns to the next game and ensuring the players are fit to play."

How proud are you to have played a big part in the growth of the club - both on and off the pitch?

"The growth of the club is something I never imagined when I first signed. The opportunity to get regular game time after being out injured for so long was the big appeal to me and I didn't really think beyond that first season at the time but 8 and a half years later and I'm still here! In my time as a player the club has progressed so much and we really established ourselves as a competitive Championship side. In more recent years we've taken that to the next level as the game grows, transitioning into a professional club in a very competitive league. It's been great to see players who I have played with have the opportunity to sign full-time contracts. I know how hard some of those players have worked over the years to get to this position and I also feel privileged to have the opportunity to take on my full-time role at the club."



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BIG GAME BUILD-UP

AMY ANDREWS TELLS US HOW SHE PREPARES FOR A BIG GAME THROUGH THE WEEK...

MONDAY

Monday is all about of recovery. I eat lots of pasta and things like that and make sure I watch our game from the day before back. I watch the highlights on The FA Player and then our full game. I'll speak to people - family, friends - and see what they thought of the game and get their feedback.

TUESDAY

We're back in training on Tuesday and do some analysis on the game that's just gone. It's usually a light training day with some small games at the end. When I'm home I'll watch Match of the Day again because I feel like the mental part of preparing for the game is important and I watch football all week.

THURSDAY

This is our day off and I love to use it to play on my Xbox! I play Call of Duty and Fortnite because I think it's a great escape. I'll call my friends, family and partner and try and relax and take my mind off football - which is pretty impossible for me! I go to the Raddison Blu in Durham and use their facilities to recover too.

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday is the most high intensity day and we have to hit a certain amount of distance covered, so I need to make sure I fuel properly on a Tuesday night. We go in the gym and lift too. I'll watch football when I get home and start to manifest ahead of the game at the weekend.

FRIDAY

This is when we start to look at our opposition and analyse them, looking at their build-up and defensive shape as well as training. When I'm home I watch even more football - I'll watch strikers on YouTube like Mbappe, Haaland and Ronaldo just to prepare and envision me in those scenarios. It's a lot of mental rehearsal.

SATURDAY

We have a team meeting on Saturday morning where we know the starting eleven and then we get ourselves prepared before a session. I really manifest hard on this day and sometimes record it so I'm speaking it out into the universe. It works - I can show you a recording of me saying I was going to score against Southampton when I came on!



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THE BIG INTERVIEW

BETH HEPPLER

The midfielder is our record appearance holder and has been a mainstay in the side since our first senior season - taking part in many cup classics along the way. Here, Hepple relives those as well as talking her season to date, City, and coaching connections in the visiting ranks...



**Sunday 9th February 2014.
New Ferens Park.**

Durham Women are taking to the field for the first time in a competitive fixture since being accepted into the FA WSL - and their opponents are Chichester City.

The Blues ran-out 4-0 winners and for many members of that squad it was their first taste of the famous competition.

That was the case for Beth Hepple, who is the only player that featured that day to remain at the club.

"Growing up in England, the FA Cup is a huge competition to be a part of," she said.

"To be a part of it was really special and it was the first time for the club.

"I was only 17 at the time and it was a dream to be part of it."

That win over Chichester was followed by a 3-1 triumph over Sheffield FC - which given the South Yorkshire side's record at the time was considered something of a shock; the first of many that the club has completed in this and other competitions.

It also yielded a fine moment for Hepple, who netted a stunning goal from 40-yards to open the scoring for Durham.

"They are really good memories and that was huge for the club at the time," admitted the 27-year-old.

"We were underdogs in that game and to win was huge.

"I remember that we weren't on a great run in terms of league performances at the time, but we got the cup win and that kick-started a bit of momentum for us in that year."

That goal and her performance also saw the midfielder handed one of the first-ever FA Cup Player of the Round awards.

Such was the freshness of the prize, that Hepple admitted she wasn't entirely sure of its significance at first.

"Someone rang me about the award and had no idea what it meant!

"It was brand new for that season and it was really cool to see who you were up against and who has won it since.

"That gave me a lot of confidence when I was younger and helped me push on."

Since then, the FA Cup has continued to deliver a number of big memories for Hepple and her teammates - with a 9-0 win at London Bees in the Third Round in 2016 delivering another key milestone.

"That was my first senior hat-trick," she

explained.

"Again, it's taking me back but that shows the development of the club because by then we had a quite a few of the core of the squad that are still here now. That's another happy memory.

"You forget about some of the great games we've had in the FA Cup because we've had so many," she continued.

"We've always had a good run in the FA Cup - there's only been one or two seasons where maybe we should have done a bit better.

"We've always tested ourselves and pushed ourselves beyond our expectations and those of other people in this competition."

But while Durham's approach to and success in the competition hasn't changed - plenty else has. Not least the fact that this game will be played in front of a record-breaking crowd and the BBC TV cameras.

So has that level of progress off the field sunk in for Hepple yet?

"Not really - it's quite mind-blowing to be honest.

"When we were talking about those first few games I was thinking back to playing them at New Ferens Park and there weren't too many fans there, it was mostly friends and family.

"And now, what the club has built-up and what we've built-up as players, it's mind-blowing.

"It's so exciting and I just wish I was 17 again to see where it will be in another ten years."

The draw was met with excitement within the club - albeit tempered given there were still crucial games to play in 2023.

But with full focus now on the visit of City, Hepple admits that the dressing room are relishing the occasion.

"Everyone is really excited," she said.

"We've got a number of younger players who haven't had the opportunity to play against such huge names in world football.

"I think you just have to embrace it because it's going to be such a huge occasion and a huge test.

"But this is literally what you play football for, to test yourself against the best in the country and the world.

"You don't get many occasions like this so we need to embrace it."

The fixture will also bring about an interesting dynamic for Hepple, who will reunite with one of her former coaches.

"I used to be part of Sunderland Academy and I think Steph Houghton was still at Sunderland at the time.

"She was my coach for a couple of years and it's cool - she obviously went on to have an incredible career and is still having an incredible career now.

"You just have to look up to people like that and to say she's coached me is really cool."

While this will undoubtedly be one of Durham's toughest-ever assignments, the club have defied the odds many times before to spring shocks.

And having been part of all of those memorable days, Hepple is in an ideal position to explain why it is that the Blues constantly surprise.

"It's a good question and I think as a club and a group of players, we enjoy being that underdog and having that mentality," she said.

"People say we're 'dirty' and have for a long time, but I don't think you can get as far as we've got by being 'dirty'. We have a lot more about us and have always played some good football.

"I think it's a mentality thing - hard work, wanting to prove yourself against top opposition, sheer grit and determination and wanting to prove people wrong."

This season has seen Hepple return to the field after a spell out injured, with the midfielder making her return in the Third Round tie at West Brom.

"It was really nice to be back amongst the girls and the squad," she said of that game.

"There were a couple of months where I wasn't able to train and there are some



harder days where you just want to be involved and around the squad.

"It was huge for me to be back and to get my start in the FA Cup, I was really grateful for that.

"We had a good week and a good win before the end of the year, and hopefully we can carry that on."

Focus for Durham is now on the New Year and pushing up the Barclays Women's Championship table.

So what are Hepple's hopes for the new calendar year?

"We finished 2023 with a good end and we want to carry that momentum forward.

"Hopefully we can kick-on. We've got the players, the staff and the club to do that, so I'm hoping 2024 we can push on and push ourselves.

"If you look at the table we're not far away and anything can happen."

But before the focus shifts back to the league, there's the small matter of this tie with Manchester City.

Almost a decade has passed since Hepple took to the field in that FA Cup tie against Chichester and so much has changed.

So how will it feel when the midfielder sees a packed-out Maiden Castle and the broadcast cameras this afternoon?

"It's mad to actually think about.

"I'm just really looking forward to the occasion.

"You don't get many days like this in your career so I just want to embrace it.

"It will be a 'pinch me' moment definitely and to be a part of it in whatever way I am, it'll be an honour."



BEHIND THE SCENES

While her daughter plays a key role in helping the club push forward on the field, behind the scenes Dawn Hepple has been a pivotal part of the club's growth. We caught-up with her to get an insight into her role and the club's continued progression...

"I'm a Director at the club and have been involved in the club since its inception in 2007 as Cestria Girls FC. My role encompasses the finance for the whole club and strategic decisions regarding safeguarding and welfare. However, I still wash the first team kit so no task or job is off limits! It's the 'can do' attitude that myself, Lee (Sanders), Mark (Donnelly) and many long standing staff have had that has got us to this point. Working for a club like ours is a vocation.

"I'm at the club simply because of my daughter Beth (Hepple). She's played from the age of four and I wanted to give her and her teammates the best opportunities to play, she's 27 now so you can imagine how little there was at that time. For a long time as she grew up most players went to the USA. Obviously the advent of the WSL in 2011 and then the WSL2 in 2013/4 changed that.

"Lee has always been the driving force with myself and then Mark making his ideas come to life. When he first spoke of the application to enter WSL2 I just laughed! We had just won promotion to the Women's Premier League (that proceeded the new setup) and we were competing with mainly 16/17 year old talented and dedicated players. But he wrote the bid, approached Quentin (Durham University) and the partnership was forged. We attended meetings and briefings up and down the country before this to help complete the bid. A lady called Sally Horrox really encouraged us and gave us the confidence to think 'yes, we actually can make this happen.' We were short-listed and then had an interview at Wembley Stadium. It was nerve-racking, especially as we were different in that we didn't (and still don't) have a men's club backing us. Some weeks later Sally was the one who made the call to Lee to say we had been successful. I was at home with Beth when I heard and I felt elation quickly followed by sheer terror!

"We have been on quite a journey since that point and it hasn't always been easy. Our work ethic, sheer determination and business acumen has got us through - and having a thick skin! I'm happy when I look in the mirror that I have tried my best to give girls and women in the North East the opportunity to play at the highest level on offer. Hundreds of girls have played at various levels and benefitted from our pathway programme which has been held up as an exemplar of good practice by the FA. The first team is the nucleus of the club but we've added the RTC (now ETC), the PGA Academy team and College football with our educational partners along the way (whilst having Cestria continue to run as a separate open age club who have worked their way up the pyramid again from tier 7 to tier 4 now) and they all play their part. We have Beth and Lauren who have been at the club since the beginning and long serving players in Wills, Becky, Mac and the recently departed Ellie alongside Lily and Grace who have come through our pathway along with some other up and coming young players at the club. To think what some of the girls in our youth system now could achieve in years to come is exciting and I'm willing them all on, to realise their potential.

"Going from Lee and I to now having over 30 full time and numerous part time staff with hundreds of players is quite some feat and it's only now when I was asked to do this piece that I realise just

how far we have come. It's also great to give ex-players the opportunity to stay within the club, Natalie Gutteridge our Lead Physiotherapist being a prime example. It is also lovely to see players do well outside of football once they move on with three this year alone becoming mums!

"The highlights for me have been winning WSL2 club of the year in 2017 and I make no bones that the addition of Mark Donnelly in 2015 was a game changer. His skill set is quite unique and it's hard to believe he's still only 27! Some games also stand out, our FA cup Quarter Final game against Chelsea is probably my best memory. We lost 1-0 that day but it was a massive crowd and such a great atmosphere as we pushed them all the way. The 2020/2021 season when we were narrowly pipped to promotion is also up there for me although it was all played out behind closed doors because of Covid. I can only imagine how the fans we have now would have loved that.

"My background before I started working for the club was as an Exams Manager at Sunderland College and I still work part time for the NHS (a personal decision). I very nearly lost my life in September 2021 to Sepsis (nod to Dr Dougal Southward, our Club doctor from the very beginning, who diagnosed me over the phone and advised Beth to get me straight to A&E, literally saving my life). This left me with some health problems that have forced me to slow down quite a bit, but my hope for the future is to stabilise the club with the investment needed, to be able to compete at this level and of course to be promoted to the WSL would be our greatest ambition. The advent of massive investment and sponsorship along with broadcast deals in women's sports as a whole has changed the map completely. So it can be done and we will endeavour to make that happen.

"I would like to thank our fantastic sponsors, some of whom have been with us from the start, Liam from Vision for Education for one and more recently Katem Logistics, Patrick and Frances from the Plastic Furniture Company/PFC Trust and Nike our kit providers who believe in us and enable us to run this great club along with all the individual player sponsors who return year on year. John Middleton also broadcasts our home games with Durham Hospital Radio voluntarily and has done for a number of years, these are all people who have contributed to the clubs longevity.

"I would also like to thank our players who for the most part have been the same core group over the last 10 years with others coming and going along the way. Welcome to Manchester City Women and their fantastic players whom I know you will all enjoy watching but massive good luck to our players and staff. Don't forget most of them worked alongside training and playing until a couple of years ago when we went fully professional and to a full time model. They deserve games like this for their loyalty and hard work day in and day out.

"Lastly, thank you to you for coming and your continued support at Maiden Castle and a special shout out to those that follow the girls up and down the country. We really do appreciate you all. Enjoy the game!"



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15	DEE BRADLEY
17	POPPY PRITCHARD
18	GRACE AYRE
19	ELLA WILSON
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21	ERIN NICHOLSON
22	ELEANOR RYAN-DOYLE
24	ABBY HOLMES
30	TATIANA SAUNDERS



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DEMI STOKES	3
LAIA ALEIXANDRI	4
ALEX GREENWOOD	5
STEPH HOUGHTON	6
LAURA COOMBS	7
MARY FOWLER	8
CHLOE KELLY	9
DEYNA CASTELLANOS	10
LAUREN HEMP	11
FILIPPA ANGELDAHL	12
ESME MORGAN	14
LEILA OUAHABI	15
JESS PARK	16
KERSTIN CASPARIJ	18
JILL ROORD	20
KHADJIA SHAW	21
SANDY MACIVER	22
YUI HASEGAWA	25
RUBY MACE	30
ALANNA KENNEDY	33
KHIARA KEATING	35
JULIE BLAKSTAD	41

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