

**LIVING ARCHIVE MK**  
**WOMEN'S EUROS PROJECT**  
**Jon Dewick**

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*Today's date is the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022*

*So you're here to discuss football, can you tell me when you first got interested in football?*

I was roundabout six years old, I've an older brother who played he was playing for a local team, and I just went along, started kicking a ball round with him and then that was it really, hooked at the age of six, yeah.

*Could you tell us about your family*

So my dad played, so my family are from Tottenham. My mum's from Tottenham, my dad's actually from Wolverton, from round here so he's from local and he played locally for a team down here. And just came into a team, I'm a Liverpool fan unfortunately my cousin, so I've got an older cousin who's a big Liverpool fan so I was one of those where my team was never thrown on me as a kid. It was...I was given kits, I was given tops, I was given stuff and it was, that was, Liverpool were a team that stuck.

*So well let's talk about today. Can you tell us about your current role?*

Yeah, so I'm a girl's football manager for the MK Dons supporting education trust but I link in with the MK Dons. So my role and my job is I manage all the girl's teams and staff with our MK Dons RTC which is a regional talent centre, which is the equivalent to an academy in the sort of club. And we play...so I get players into our first team, Lionesses and into the women's game as much as we can really, that's my current role.

*And can you tell us....you mentioned the Lionesses, is there anyone that you cultivated that is, that has gone into the....*

No, not...yeah....

*...girl's team or any other team?*

Yeah, so we've got a few that played in the sort of youth systems, they've gone on to play for other clubs at the moment. And so we've got a couple currently on camps. but, I mean the most famous one is Leah Williamson, she went through Arsenal early on so she's one that we missed. but we've got lots of players in the youth system at the moment which is, which is really good for us.

*And how, and how long have you been doing that for?*

I've been doing this job for about three years but in total in the club since I was eighteen so nearly twenty years now in the game yeah.

*And how do you find it, do you enjoy it?*

Yeah, I love it, it's one of those jobs where you look forward to getting up in the morning I think. I think anything with football where it's one of those things. You're a fan you know, as I said to you earlier when I was six, I'm now thirty eight years old, I still have the same interests, passion, effort, love every day when I turn up to work, which is, which is something that I'm very fortunate of to do, yeah. I just love the game, sad as it sounds but yeah just love being involved in the game. When...this time of the year is strange 'cause this is when the season stops and this is when people like me get very itchy and antsy but we should be resting and recovering but we love the game so much that we just can't stop, so yeah, I love the game yeah.

*And do you see somebody and think that they are...how do you see them, see a genius or something?*

As in players or just anybody? I think you just see an interest I think, you just see something in them that yeah I mean we've got players from six to thirty-two, thirty-three and there's just something in them, actually it's either their personality, it's either how they play, it's either just when they turn up, they're bouncing, they're bubbly, they're there before the coaches, they're there just doing kick-ups or something before the actual session starts. So yeah I think if you've got that it's difficult to um, what's the word, it's difficult to sort of see it straight away but you can see something in them when you....never judge a player you know, six year old starts she's just going to go and play professionally, but you can see they've got the love for the game. I mean that's the best thing around my job is you just for the love of the game you know, you've got, you work with people of all ages that are share the same passion so, share the same love of the game then you do as well so yeah. Not, either you

get them you know, the exact science yeah, you just see something in them really.

*So tell us about the difference between men's football and women's football.*

So for me the female game that people talk about is the physicality of the game, I don't think that's the case at the moment. I think it's becoming a real sort of technical game and I think there's some really good players currently. I moved from the men's game to the female game, I think the biggest thing for me in the female game is how the female players just sort of interact with you and they've just got this,

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just got this desire and the willingness. That's not to say the men have, I think the females are...it's difficult because they don't get the same sort of numbers, you know the female game is very small but I think you can find that where there's interest now. So I think the biggest difference is hard you know to tell, if it's a huge difference but I just think it's just there's a... the exact answer I think is quite tricky to kind of put your finger on it but I think you just see the player. I think I said to you earlier, if someone's got the love and the willingness to play football I think that's the, the biggest bit between the game is...but at the moment the game is so massive you know, the girls game is huge. So girls are now being treated as equals which is fantastic in the game whereas we've more girls playing in boy's teams and school football and things like that. So I think one answer is quite tricky.

*Do you think that men's teams are more violent? There's lots of sort of ducking and diving and all that sort of thing.*

(laughs) Er yeah, I think that, I think the men's game is so, is so, I can't think what the word is

*Aggressive?*

It's not being aggressive, it's competitive is an element to it, it's win at all costs in the men's game. You know I think you look at the professional game, has turned into a bit of a business and the longer it goes down I think the competition now is where you want to get to. Whereas the female game there's that competitiveness, there's that element to win but I think it's played in a completely different way and it's the love of it. And people just trying to encourage players to play in the game. I think that's the biggest opportunity at the moment, is the business side of the game is growing huge, there's a lot of money on it, there's lots of reputation wise. Whereas the female

game is a slow burner, that's a slow builder and it's a good thing I think that we doing that.

*So what do you think still needs to be done to, for women's football to get it onto a higher level or is it already on that way?*

I think it's on that way, I still think the finances you know, I think the finances are still there. I think that's obvious to the public. I think the money in the game is still not like it should be in the men's game. I think the backings getting there, you saw at the weekend there was twenty-five thousand fans at a tearful women's game which is unbelievable achievement in the game. So I think the backing I think is still unfortunately is deemed as not a exciting sport which it is whereas I think it's the backing nationally, locally, where people just need to jump on board with it and accept it now that's it's part of you know...you've got these young girls growing up where when I was six years old it was all about the men's game. Whereas now you've got young girls growing up and they want to play, so them being accepted I think is the biggest part of it and having to accept it because it's growing so quickly and we've having to keep up so quick. The mass impact of the Euros this year, which is huge, huge for the area, huge for us in the game. So, I think just support in general and take away the comments about it, I think that's the least bit, I think just accept it as it is. If you don't like it – fine, if you like, if you like it – encourage it, embrace it. So, I think that's the biggest one.

*Can you tell us more about the original Talent Club and what has happened to former and current players?*

It's the Regional Talent Centre. So the Regional Talent Centre or the Regional Talent Club is a licensed centre for young females who are showing an element of excellence in, in football to come and be part of a Talent Pathway. So Talent Pathway where we get a license to try and produce players for one for our first team, two for the female game in general and three to become hopefully a Lioness in the game. We have five teams so we go from Under 10's through to Under 16's and they link into our MK Dons Women's First team. Some have gone on to play for other clubs in the championships of WSL, some have played for England, some are in America at the moment doing a scholarships and high scholarships and playing at a good level. So that's our kind of remit is one we want to try and get in the first team but to keep them in the game. We did a study just before lockdown so we have a thing called a graduate scheme, so anyone who comes out of our team we call that a graduate. We had ninety six in a ten year span that have graduated and ninety five are still playing. So that's who are playing for our

women's first team somewhere in the women's pyramid abroad, they're still in the game which for us at MK Dons is a massive achievement for everyone involved in the individual Talent Centre. So yeah it's huge for us yeah.

*So tell us now, you mentioned the Women's Euros, tell us what you're most looking forward to. If you wouldn't mind starting with 'the Women's Euros'.*

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So the Women's Euros coming to Milton Keynes is massive for us in the set because it's you know those that have been in the area, it's an international tournament being held on our doorstep. I think that's the biggest part is we're going to see the best players, women's players in the world at Stadium MK, which is huge. I think that's the biggest part is seeing us on the map as Milton Keynes. People still think of us as the place of roundabouts and cows whereas actually we've got this huge football stadium, we've got this amazing football club that we're doing some brilliant work. So I think just us being on the map and being part of something that's, that's international I think is, is huge and the excitement of the female game, already getting with the club and people around us and how it's being spoken about. So I think just being talked about in a, in a positive light I think is the biggest part. So yeah I think that's the most exciting....and again like I said earlier, just football. You know it's an off season, it's the summer, we should all be resting and going on holiday but we're watching, watching international footballers and hopefully our lasses can bring some success to be honest. And if they come...how they're grouped sort of finishes, they could potentially play in Stadium MK in an international tournament which is, which is massive. So yeah I just think football in general, I think I'm more excited about than just having football around in the summer to be fair, so yeah.

*What do you think the chances are for the Lionesses?*

Yeah huge, yeah. I think, I think I spoke about this. The World Cup in 2019 was a huge step for the game a tricky spell afterwards but I think how the game's going and how strong the our Lionesses team, and we've got to be in as favourites. So you know hopefully a semi-final at least but another final, especially after last year with the men's national team, I think out of the two years to have that would be amazing yeah.

*So is there anything else you'd like to tell us that we haven't asked you about? About what you're up to?*

No, we're at the end of the season so we're just currently going through the last sort of stages of the game. Our women's team stayed up Sunday which is fantastic for the area. So our women's team secured their status as a Tier 2, sorry National

League South team, which is amazing for the area. So that's Third Level Women's football so at least they're playing against Southampton, a big team in Women's game which is incredible so as a women's and girl's programme it's, it's a really good place to be a part of and the game's just growing. So yeah get on board with it I think is the biggest thing in my mind.

*What would you say to parents who have a daughter who was say seven or eight, who was really keen and really good, what would you tell them to do?*

Get out and play, I think that's the biggest bit. I think nothing compares to playing you know as old as you get wherever, I think, wherever. As soon as they show an interest get them to a club or we've got centres, just get them playing. Encourage them to play at school, encourage them to play out of school. If they...I think that's the biggest part of playing is the love, you know if someone finds an interest, then the love of it, it's called the 'beautiful game' for a reason as well. So I think you just play it for the love of it and so yeah I think the biggest encouragement is just to get out there, play, enjoy it because it is....when you're involved in it you don't know where it can take them you know. We could potentially see the next Lioness playing for Milton Keynes and it could be from any part of the area, could be a school, could be a club. So yeah, definitely get them playing.

*(2<sup>nd</sup> interviewer) Tell us about the scouting.*

So in terms of scouting players we don't actively go and look. We do go to watch teams and players and clubs we are on the lookout all the time but I think we have a good reputation in the area. We have really good links with teachers and schools and clubs so we don't really actively go to look, we get a lot of recommendations. We're quite lucky that our boy's scouts are at games where there are girls so we have that link between our boys academies scout looks. And we get recommendations all the time and the game is so big and huge that people are going 'oh my daughter is at this stage, what do you suggest?' So we try and find the best route for those players. We have development programmes which are players that are still playing for club teams that are looking to try and get better at football. Then we've got our academy girls which are on the pathway to become professionals, hopefully professionals is what our, is what our aim is. So yeah not massively actively but we, we get recommendations and again like I keep saying, it's so big that we have you know players from five, six all the way up so um

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yes sometimes but also no we don't actively go up there and find that they just come to us sometimes as well, so.

*Just one more question.*

Yeah (laughs).

*So the, the women, the MK Dons women's team...*

Yeah.

*...do they I mean I presume they don't earn as much as the men's team, but will there be a day when they'll be, we'll see women footballers earning, I don't know what it is, thousands of pounds a week do you think?*

Yeah...

So yeah, for women's earnings I think we have to get to a stage I think the, what Barclays have done to put the money into the game, I think it's got to be that stage it has to you know. I don't think maybe you'll get to the heights of the stupid money in the men's game, you know I think the money is mad in the men's game. But we hope so, I believe that they could get paid even for our level what they're paid, they're not at sort of at that first team level but I think you'd, on men's first team level, I think there's got to be a point where they're paid what they deserve. I mentioned earlier about twenty five thousand fans turning up a Tier for women's game is incredible, that's just never heard of. So you hope so, I think we can just keep encouraging people, keep supporting it, keep pushing it, keep pushing the numbers, so the people in charge of the game, the money, the businesses jump on board and yeah want to get invested. So I think at some stage we will do, I think you'll get...you'll start to hear about high transfers being paid for female players. I think that's got to be because the standard's going up each time. We hope so, I hope it seems fair, hope the MK Dons players, hope it's a goer for Milton Keynes. Then we talk about Leah, Leah Williamson a lot, which is fantastic, born and bred in Milton Keynes which is fantastic, who's going to captain the team this summer as well, which is incredible. So I think that's huge, but yeah I hope so. I think we can just keep trying, keep pushing and plugging it to be honest.

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