

LIVING ARCHIVE MK
WOMEN'S EUROS PROJECT
Transcript

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19th April 2022 and my name is Louise Roche and I'm interviewing for the Women's Euros Project. So could you tell me your name please?

Right, my name's Christine Lockwood.

Can you tell me something about your family and your mum and dad's jobs?

Yes, well I was born in South Yorkshire and my dad worked on his father's farm, so we were on a farm for a while. And I was the second daughter, and my dad couldn't, needed, you know more money to be able to.....so there were jobs in Luton at the time for Vauxhall motors. So, he went down for about six months on his own to, to see and then we moved down there just before I was five. And then my younger sister, she was born in Luton so she's a southerner (laughs) and yeah so, we all settled in Luton then. My dad became a factory worker, he was quite homesick, but he did it because the times he had to.

Must have been quite a big difference, a big change.

Yes, it was.

Do you remember?

Yeah, I do, I remember the excitement, we'd gone down on the train I think, then we got off the bus and I do remember getting there. And I remember vividly things, you know like.....because I had a Yorkshire accent and of course some of the other children thought I'd come from Coronation Street and things like that, so yeah, I had to learn to fit in as well. Yeah, so it was good.

Do you remember when you first got interested in football?

Yeah, because my dad and mum were a bit homesick for Yorkshire, we went back a lot and all my cousins are boys. I've got two sisters, but all my cousins are boys, and they were football mad. And in the farmyard, we used to play football and cricket sometimes but mostly football. I just got it, I just got the bug and just loved it, loved it. I was just fascinated with it and so yeah when I went to Luton the first thing I did was find friends, they were all boys, to play football and we'd play football for hours and hours. Yeah.

What was it about football?

I don't know, I think you just get a bug. I talk to young girls now that I love football and they just...yeah, it's just something about it, I can't explain it because people that don't like it, they don't understand do they.

We're probably about the same age, so I was netball and hockey.

Yeah see, I didn't like, unlike some of the other girls, they were hockey players and netballers, I just loved football, yeah I was like that, just that was it so yeah I think when you hear about my school days football was frowned on for girls, so I had a tough time because I didn't like the other sports so....

Tell me something about that.

Well Infant and Junior schools were fine because they just let you run round and do what you want but when I went to senior school women's football wasn't allowed. And if it was netball, I didn't really like it 'cause you caught the ball and then you had to stand still, so it didn't appeal to me. And they didn't really concentrate on hockey, I suppose I might have quite liked hockey if I'd been at a hockey school but our school was more into netball. And sometimes I'd kick the ball and I'd get sent in the dressing room because I'd kicked the ball so, yeah so that's how it was in those days but thankfully now it's hopefully....

Can you remember being positively discouraged at all at school?

Well they just didn't see it, it was...yeah they just didn't...they just didn't see it at all.

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So if I kicked the ball, I was like treated as being a naughty person I guess. And so yeah, I just waited until the end of school and met the boys and played football with the boys. And so that was my life, school was school, but I couldn't wait till quarter to four, to go home, put me kit on and go and play football and that. I've spoken to other women since, my age, and there was a girl in Manchester, she tried to start a women's football after school club and the headmaster called her in and said he didn't want her to do it because it would harm women having children (laughs). They were the days we were in. But we were only kids so we just...you know you're told what to do aren't you. I think maybe people question things more now, but we would come from that era where if you were told you couldn't do it then you couldn't do it, so...

Were you a football fan?

Yeah, yeah I used to obviously go to Luton to start with because my dad took me and then as I became you know, older I suppose about fourteen, fifteen, I started going to London to watch Tottenham, so I'm a big Spurs fan. And then when I got older and an Auntie, I used to take my grandson to Rushden and Diamonds, so we became season ticket holders there, see I've always loved football. When I go abroad, I look and see if I can find a game. I went to Rio de Janeiro and got someone to take me because there was a match on. Been to different parts of the world and watched Barcelona a couple of times, used to go and watch them play. Yeah I just like football.

What was the first team that you played for, like an organised team?

Well because I didn't know any girl that played football at all, I thought I was the only one in the world and I was at school one day and a girl came to me and said 'Oh we're starting a girls team, a women's team, would you like to come'. And I thought 'oh there must be other girls that like it'. So I said 'ok', so I went along and they were all eager but none of them knew how to play and I did. So they put me in goal, so they joined a league and I was in goal to keep the score down. And because I'd played with the boys I could play anywhere because we used to take it in turns, it didn't faze me. But because I started in goal in the women's team and I weren't too bad, but I hated it but I was good at it. I was playing goalkeeper for a while. And then Harry Batt, he had an elite team in Luton, I didn't know about it but he heard about me playing for this team and he asked me to join Chiltern Valley and that's how I first met Harry Batt and er yeah. I got there and they could all play, really play I mean, brilliant, so I just found myself there yeah.

How old were you then?

I was about thirteen er yeah, so, that sort of age. And I think some of the girls were older but some had just started work and that but they could all really play. It was like a revelation to me. We virtually won the league every year, we won cups, I had carrier bags of medals, yeah. And it was just fun you know everybody...that's what it gave us as well, I mean as you know from our story its fifty years ago and we've only just met up again and we still the same as we did fifty years ago, yes. So there's something about sport that does that yeah.

You talked about Harry Batt?

Yeah.

So he heard about you?

Yeah.

Did he approach you or..... what is it that happened?

Yeah,he approached the team.

Yeah, like Harry Batt approached me and I think he

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approached the team manager. And they weren't happy at first because you know they were trying to build a team and all of a sudden Harry might have...but in the end he explained to them the benefit for me and that they would be holding me back because I'd, I was far more progressed than the girls that were learning. And so they agreed to let me play for Chiltern Valley. Harry was.... considering in the years when there's no mobile phones, there's no internet and that, he was very clued up and yeah, you know, he knew a lot about women's football yeah.

What was he like, Harry?

Yeah, he was really, really charismatic and very smart. I mean when I look back now he always had a tie and a blazer and his most casual he would ever be, he'd have like an Hawaiian shirt he would call it and it would have to be a very hot summer's day for that. And he was, he could speak six languages and he was very connected abroad you know 'cause he loved writing letters so he was very, very intelligent and he was a bus driver, yeah, but he was so intelligent, but he used to write for the local papers as well, His love was women's football and he could see a vision for women's football to be quite global, yeah, even in those days.

Where do you think that came from?

I don't know, he did fight in the Spanish civil war so he had connections, that's probably how he learnt his languages as well because he could speak Urdu as well which was, yeah, not a language that everybody speaks so yeah, so he, he had lots of connections and that was what he loved. How he got the connections....'cause I think it started off his wife started to play a bit but she wasn't particularly that good, shall I say, but she liked the idea of it and then he found his niche that he liked the women's game and he could spot players and he decided to build a team. And then his wife became his right-hand woman shall we say, you know she helped to run the team as well so, yeah.

So tell me about where you played and what you wore.

When we were young, and I was still playing with the boys. I was just like the boys you know; we didn't have...you know there wasn't all the accessibility of football kits as now but for birthdays and that or you'd save your money and you'd get a certain shirt or you know. And I was ten when England won the world cup so everything absolutely, you know, ballooned into football hysteria and I remember Celtic winning the European cup, I remember that. Um and all my role models were men obviously because they were the ones...so like Jimmy Greaves I loved, and Match of the Day I loved it and you only got one game a week, you didn't get more. So you got one game and you hoped it would be top.... whatever....and yeah I just used to....there used to be a magazine called 'Charlie Buchan's 'Football Monthly' and I'd be standing at the newsagents waiting for it to be you know, come in that month. So everything...I was just focussed on football.

Do you remember what kit you wore?

In the England?

No in the um...what was it called?

Oh Chiltern Valley?

Yeah.

Yeah, Harry had a green kit, the first kit was like Celtic, green and white hoops. And then we had a green kit that had a green diagonal, like a triangular front but that was quite thick and hot to be honest, it was quite hard to play in the

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summer months. Yeah so we'd all have to pay subs because there wasn't any sponsorship then, very little, I suppose later on in our careers...well I say careers....I mean our football journey, there was a little bit of sponsorship about but nothing like there is now you know. Maybe the brewery company would give us a badge or something or pay for our shirts. But yeah, we had to self-fund ourselves and women weren't allowed to play on FA pitches, affiliated, so we had to find a park that'd let us hire a pitch and some of the pitches used to slope. And we'd always be the last team to have it, you couldn't have it before the, the boys teams had theirs, and the dressing rooms were bad. If you got a dressing room they were all caked in mud by the time it was our turn, if you were lucky to have a dressing room. So yeah, so we were very.... when I think looking back now....we were so happy, I can't tell you how happy we were, it didn't faze us because we loved football but when we look back to what we had it, it could have easily discouraged people but it didn't. We just lived for Sundays, yeah, we loved it, yeah.

What position did you play in that team? Where you goalie?

I was goalie for quite a while but I used to itch to get out and then, and then in Chiltern Valley they had a good goalie so that was my escape route that I could play on pitch as well so, yeah, so like I had played in goal then I was in the, I was Inside Left which is not a position that's heard of anymore but...so I was a Forward. And then after coming back from Mexico I had a very bad injury and I had to stop for a year and then I had to build myself up. I excelled at heading the ball so really when I came back into football it suited me to be like a Centre Half but I wasn't particularly speedy so I used to have a Sweeper which is like you know, once it gets past me someone's very fast that could sweep up and that. And yeah so I had a successful career, football journey in that position yeah.

How did you come to be picked for Harry Batt's International team?

How did you....do you remember?

Yeah, because I was one of the girls that played at Chiltern Valley so I was in his club anyway but he did scout around everywhere, and I was only fifteen so I didn't know the difficulties Harry would have until now looking back. He asked some girls that were older than me and they couldn't go because they would have lost their job. Some girls wouldn't go 'cause their parents wouldn't let them. Some, quite a few girls didn't go because they knew that they would get banned for going and they thought if they go and then they come back and they can't play football again...and so they didn't go. Harry come to my mum and dad's, and he went to obviously every person he wanted to take he went to their parents, he and his wife. And asked.... explained to them where we'd be and that we'd be looked after, what we'd do because we went to Sicily first in I think that was May or June because we had to qualify to get to Mexico. So we were in the qualifying rounds and we went to Sicily for about three weeks and er...so that was the first time abroad. And then we qualified and then he asked me to go to Mexico. We're all grateful that our mums and dads said yes because I was the third youngest, there was two younger than me, and yeah when we look back we think 'wow our parents were amazing to let us go'.

How was it financed?

Martini Rossi, the drinks company, they financed nearly all

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of it and they paid for our flights, we had tracksuits, walking out suits. We couldn't have gone if it weren't for them. And then in Mexico it was an enormous success, so there were a lot of companies that had advertised.....like the first commercial thing that had happened in women's football and we thought 'this is it, women's football is going to progress'. But it hasn't until, virtually now you know, where it's, you know, right direction but yeah.

Tell me a bit about Mexico, tell me about what happened to you.

Yeah we, we all gathered together and of course 'cause I was from Chiltern Valley I knew a few players but some players didn't know anybody that was the first time we'd met. And we met at Heathrow, and we all got on the plane and Jumbo Jets had only just started commercially flying, so it wasn't like it is now with EasyJet up the road so it was really, you know, business people used to fly. And so we got on the plane and we took off and we went, we had to fly to Mexico, to New York and then we had a seven hour stop-over in the airport to wait for the connecting flight to Mexico. And when we got to Mexico, well I've said this quite often, it was dark, at night and the doors opened and all these lights flooded in our face and we were tired and I said to this girl 'there's someone famous on this flight' and it was us and we didn't know until that moment, that very, very moment, none of us knew that it was a big event. And we were on the TV quite often, we had to sign autographs all the time yeah and we had, every team had their own photographer that went round, newspaper photographer, so they were clicking away all the time. And we had a police escorts because the crowds were, well, they were still in the fever from the 1970 World Cup which was Pele's, they always call it Pele's World Cup but it was when the best Brazilian team probably hadn't won so they had football fever anyway, but it just spilled over into, into the women's game. And we just took it all in our stride. It didn't change us strangely enough, we were still, we still all had the camaraderie, the fun, we didn't...it probably changed us in as much as it shocked us, but it didn't change our you know, we didn't become a celebrity or anything like that. We just, we all loved the Mexican people because they were so wonderful and the reason you know we had a police escort wasn't because we were in danger it was because they just wanted to give us gifts and get us to sign things, yeah so.

Must have been like a different world.

It was, it was bonkers. I mean now I look back I think....now I'm telling the story and I think 'good job we've got some memorabilia otherwise people would think this is crazy' you know. But yeah, it happened, and I was very fortunate that I was the right place, right time because I knew a lot of...as time

goes on, once I knew there was women footballers I saw some brilliant women footballers that never got a chance. You know, never, never got anywhere that should have been. So, yeah, so I don't feel sorry for myself at all, I feel very happy that what happened, happened in my life, I was fortunate even though we didn't win (laughs).

Tell me about that, what were...what was it like when you got there?

Yeah, the match, now we've met up we've realised that we didn't know we were playing in the Azteca stadium, we didn't even know that. We didn't know we were playing in it and we'd never have dreamt that when we played the Mexicans that there was

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an eight-five, ninety thousand crowd we'd only played on a sloped pitch in a park. We were very ill-prepared I know, and we could have been better prepared but there was no-one to support Harry in his dream so he did everything he could and the best he could with what he had. And if he'd have been more supported or whatever so...for example the Italian team were kind of semi-professional so before the Mexico competition they'd already been out and acclimatised and had like a few friendly's and things like that, yeah and so we were ill-prepared. And of course, in our group were the two South American group so they didn't need to acclimatise. And we'd never, ever played football like that because they, they're, it's the same in the men's, they've got a very aggressive football way. So, it was quite a shock to us really, yeah we didn't know that side of football so yeah and there was only fourteen of us in the squad. So once your injuries started coming in yeah it was tough.

Were there injuries?

Yeah about out of the fourteen I think about eight were injured yeah. And two had spots on their legs when they came home. Yeah there was quite a lot of injuries and also I didn't realise at the time I was there that I was carrying a serious injury and it wasn't till I got back and somebody said to me 'there's more of a problem than you think'. I worked at Vauxhall when I got back, I'd just started work...well I was still at school, did exams and then I went to Vauxhall, then they...I was in the private hospital scheme, and I went and they found an ulcer embedded in my knee and at first they said 'you can't play anymore again' and I was heartbroken. And the surgeon said to me 'if you promise not to play for a whole year I'll, you can come back to me and we'll see'. And I didn't, I didn't kick a ball for a year which was, by then I was seventeen, it was difficult, but I didn't. And then I

went back to the specialist, and he said 'yeah you carry on' yeah, so.

So that must have been a strange time, coming back, injured and telling you, you can't play again but having come back from that just like amazing experience.

Everything was strange, everything. Every...for me at fifteen everything was strange because going to the qualifying games in Sicily meant I'd missed my O-level mock exams and the school said 'if I don't do them, I can't take them' I'd have to do GCSE's I think it was instead which was....so I didn't do them and my mum and dad stood by me which, I know it sounds crazy now, but in those days you could get a job and I was pretty sure I was going to work at Vauxhall and I wanted to get into IT 'cause that was a new thing then. So, my mum and dad didn't say 'you can't go' so I still went and I came back and then I went to Mexico. I think I went...anyway it was before, yeah, I think when I came back from Mexico, I took my GCSE's and I passed all eight of them, so I did it. So that was crazy to start with, it was crazy because I was leaving school and starting work and trying to find my way in life really, so it was quite traumatic but the camaraderie of sport, and the football was brilliant for me you know, it kept me sane in some ways, yeah, yeah.

What would you say to your fifteen-year-old self now?

That's a really good question because now I'm comfortable with myself but then I wasn't because I was a very different person. I'm not a girly girl, yeah it was a tough time, and I

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was very insecure even though I didn't show it, I was....now I look back I can see, I was insecure, frightened but the club, the spirit of football kept me happy. I wished I could have had the confidence that I've got now but I bet everybody says that anyway so not, it's not unique is it, no.

Do you think football saved you?

Yeah, I do, I think football saved me yeah, yeah. It made me, because I am a different person to the normal but when you play football you, you know, you've just got a spirit amongst you, so I just think football was great, yeah without a doubt. And yeah, see I'm happy and I'm fun but because I'm different sometimes people are wary of you but in sport no – we're all, we're all happy. I mean yeah when I look back now, I got on that plane but I did know some people but some of the girls knew no-one. The confidence that they got from that is amazing really. So yeah, we meet up now fifty years later and we just talk like we did when we were together in the hotel in Mexico with our own

suites. We had the same the hotel we were in was the one the men had the year before, the England men. So yeah, I mean we were so looked after it was unbelievable yeah. And I think it was quite a journey really. There's lots of things, you know you said about that, I also look back and think I'd wished that I'd supported Harry more than I did 'cause with, I mean, when we came back we all got banned because we'd been beaten. The younger ones got banned for three months so I just played with the boys, then I started playing again, then I got in the hospital so that stopped for a year. So, it was a bit stop start after that but for Harry he was banned for life, yeah. I never, you know, well we didn't know he was banned for life till we saw his son recently and he said 'no they never let him do it anymore'.

Banned from...?

Women's Football, managing women. Never got the opportunity anymore so to me that's the heartbreaking part of the story 'cause my side of the story it's amazing, we had that experience, got over it, carried on playing, we've all met up, we're all happy. The whole team are alive, sadly Harry and Jean aren't and that's the heartbreak really for me and most of the girls I think feel the same.

So what happened after that in terms of your involvement in football?

Leah and I, we were Chiltern Valley so because Harry got banned the team split up and 'cause it was a small band we had. Leah used to come over to me and play with the boys up the road so we were still playing football. And then we started playing for another team in Luton called Daytell's and we played with them for a while and won things and got successful, there were some great players. And then Leah, myself and Tina, Tina was, she went with Harry Batt to Italy the year before, so she'd had experience of playing for Harry's teams. Aylesbury asked us if we'd join them, and they had a good team and it was run by Gill's father.

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He was a manager and he asked us over and Gill...so me and Leah reunited with Gill from the Lost lionesses. So, three of us carried on for Aylesbury and we were very successful, won a lot of things. And we played for some time, and we never spoke about Mexico to each other. Someone said, 'Oh did you chat about Mexico together?' and we went 'well no we didn't really, just carried on playing in the now'. I think Gill said she remembered we were at someone's barbeque, and someone went 'these three girls played in Mexico' and we went 'yeah have you still got your medal?' and we went 'yeah' and then we just carried on. And we've analysed why, and we think because we were banned we think we'd done something wrong, so we

were banned, our schools never spoke about us doing it, so it felt like ooh. Yeah so when we've all reunited not one girl speaks of...well they do now but nobody had spoken about it so nobody knew where we were, yeah . It was only a professor, Jean Williams who knew something about it and she put it on the BBC website and Leah's brother saw it and that's how it all started. He said 'you should get in touch and tell them' and we did and then the story's out (laughs).

So it was almost like you were ashamed?

Yeah, I think so, although consciously I didn't...that's the only thing we can say that it must have subliminally - I can't say that word very well – we felt like we'd done something wrong so we didn't speak about it. And occasionally perhaps one of our family or our partners might have said 'oh they played...' and then we'd go 'oh yeah' we didn't say much about it because yeah and that was it. Once the story came out we found how really interested people are in it and so I'm pleased, I'm pleased that they are interested really.

I could go on forever really (all laugh)

(2nd interviewer) I think you can end in a minute but the only other one was whether you went on to have any other kind of involvement with football after you stopped playing as a player and did....was there anything else? Go on.

I just wanted to mention the matches that were played in the World Cup as well 'cause we haven't, we haven't done that. You know what the scores were.

(2nd interviewer) I don't think so.

Maybe Leah might be...yeah because....

(2nd interviewer) Well there's four people being interviewed

Yeah

(2nd interviewer) so we'll piece it together. People will....

I'll be blabbing on about it if you want it.

Yeah so yeah um....

I'm still in touch with the girl that, the Danish girl, Denmark won it three nil in the final, 110,000 people watching. A record to this day but not allowed to be because it's unofficial. Yeah Susannah Augustesen she scored the hat trick, she was fifteen and I'm still in touch with her.

Amazing.

Yeah it is yeah. And we're all, since we all got together we have been in touch with Argentina, Mexico like they, sang me 'Happy Birthday' on What's App the other day. Yeah, so we've got that now, that bond between us all yeah.

Only time does that, you weren't allowed to talk about it now it's....

I think the saddest thing for me, and it really is sad, the Harry thing, the fact that he was banned for life. And some of the...when we tried to find everybody 'cause myself and Leah and Gill went on a big, you know, to find the rest of the squad and it took us quite a while. And we were, I said 'we've got to understand that someone might not be here you know things happen and that' but we were all alive. But when we spoke to the Danish and Mexico's and the Argentinean's some...there's

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not...like I think Mexico they've lost seven, seven players have passed away since so. So yeah, we are very lucky but we were the youngest team so I suppose, yeah.

(2nd interviewer) Any involvement with football after you stopped playing?

Yeah I, I stopped, when I look back, quite early really 'cause in my late twenties I stopped because I started doing twelve hour shifts. I was in IT and I was doing support, technical support and I was doing twelve hour shifts and I was doing ridiculous hours and I thought I can't do training, do that, do that and I stopped. So I regretted it a bit because I, you know, it was mortgage and money over playing, so I stopped. Since then, no I, I haven't, I've been involved in watching football but since our story came out we have been to some schools and I've loved it, playing football with the kids. Some of the girls are good, really good and I've noticed that you know. Now there's no stigma, you go to the park and you're just as, you're just as sometimes you see more girls kicking the ball than boys so but that was never the way when we were young unless you had cousins or brothers, it was discouraged yeah.

(2nd interviewer) One more, what about these other countries and their FA's was, was England unique? From.... point of view....

Yeah, I think we were, I know we were banned, to my knowledge I don't think the other countries were banned but the, what this tournament had was disbanded like the people that run it, the committee that run it, they were gotten rid off but how, well

FIFA and the FA got involved etcetera, etcetera. I'm not very good at the politics of football, how that side...but the FA got involved in Women's football in 1972 which I think they...it was probably on the back of what had been achieved in Mexico. Um but women's football was stagnant, even in '72, they played but we were in touch with some of the girls that played in the '70s and '80s for England and they had to pay their way so, but in Italy the standard of football for women was good because some of the players, some of the girls I know went out and played in Italy and got paid but then of course they got banned because they'd played. One of the greatest story is Rose Riley who she went to Italy, she was Scottish, and she wasn't allowed to play football, so she took herself off to Italy and played and they adopted her as an Italian and they won the World Cup with them so yeah. But yeah so, but they all seem....now we've got back together and are talking, and it's very difficult because some only speak Spanish but it seems like they were shut down as well if you know what I mean, their football never progressed. And I think until FIFA got involved in the late '90s and now women's football's blooming. I think if people look at women's football as women's football and men's football as men's football, we'll be fine, they shouldn't judge it as a men's game 'cause it's not. Was that all right?

That was brilliant.

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(interview ends)