

LIVING ARCHIVE MK

WOMEN'S EUROS PROJECT

Gillian Sayell

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Today's date is the 19th of April 2022. My name is Louise Roche, and I'm interviewing for the Women's Euros Project. So, if you could tell me what your name is and where you were born and when please?

Yep, my name is Gillian Sayell. I was born in Aylesbury.

Can you tell me about your family, your mum and your dad and siblings or anybody like that?

Yeah. My mum passed away, twenty-odd years ago, twenty-two years ago. Dad's still going. He'll be 94 this year, lives in Menorca. I've got three, four brothers, two sisters, and myself. So quite a large family. My dad was a plasterer builder, but then he was the proprietor of a fishing tackle shop in Aylesbury called the Caught Angler. The mum stayed at home. But then as we grew up, she went to work as a Test-Baker at DCA in Aylesbury. And yeah, that's our family really, just growing up on a local estate in Aylesbury.

And can you tell me about you know, what piqued your interest in football? How come you...

Yeah, that's quite easy. I was a tomboy anyway, having four brothers you know, I was always out and about, where we lived there was a big green in - all the houses surrounded a big green. So, it was a big field to play on. And I was always out there playing with the lads and kicking the ball about, climbing trees, everything like that. So as far as I can remember, I've always played football, I loved football and there was always a ball and a brother to kick a ball around with, and plenty of friends as well. And so, by the age of about eight, a schoolfriend, his dad was starting up a lads team and so I went to play in the boys team. But at that time, girls weren't allowed to play football. So, I had to pretend I was a boy. So, I'd already got short hair anyway. But I was called Billy, everyone used to call me Billy, because my name is Gill and Gilly, so they used to call me Billy. And just so I could play football, really, and be in the team. And we were we were a pretty good team,

but then soon became apparent I was a girl and the other teams didn't like it. So then that stopped me playing in a team but...

Who suggested you pretend to be a boy? Who knew and who didn't?

Well all of my...obviously my teammates knew I was a girl. But I think probably my dad used to call me Billy. Come on, Billy. He still calls me Billy now. In fact, a few years back, he bought me a Lladro figurine of called Sport Billy. And it's a little girl with a football. And he's always wanted to get me that and yeah, so a few years ago, he managed to find one. And so I've always been called Billy, you know, through the football, friends and that still call me that now as well. So but yeah, that was the only way I could get to play in a team.

Genuinely, the other teams thought you were a boy?

Yeah, because I had short hair, I was little. And I was just one of the lads really? Yeah, I just, just sort of fitted in with the boys. Because I was a tomboy and stuff. So and as I say, I was as good as them if not better. I think so. Yeah, it didn't-wasn't an issue to my team, you know, myself, but it's the others. And as I say at the time, girls weren't allowed to play football at all.

Do you remember when you were found out?

Well, not specifically. No. But it just got, you know, the manager had to say, Well, I'm afraid you can't play in the team anymore. Yeah, basically. So yeah, I couldn't play. I were still friends with the lads and everything, you know, be kicking around, but not just part of the team. Yeah, so that's quite hard. Yeah.

How did that feel?

It's quite upsetting because you just say I didn't that age, you don't really know the reasons why or that, you just want to play football. You just wanted to get out there and kick the ball around and have fun. And, you know, it was a passion really, even at that age. You know, you just couldn't wait for Match Day, basically. Yeah. And so yeah, it was it was quite upsetting. You know, at the time, I couldn't imagine, since I can't be specific how I felt but yeah, a bit disappointed. Yeah, because I knew I was good enough to be in the team. That's the thing. Yeah.

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Can you describe what it was about football? Because I never played football. I was never encouraged...

Yeah. Well, I like all sports anyway, I've been very sporty, anything on sports days, whatever was going I did. I was on all the teams; netball, hockey, anything like that. So yeah, I think it's just sport in general. But football has always just been the one that I've just loved all the way throughout my playing career really? Yeah, I can't imagine not playing ever, you know, only now I can't! But, yeah, growing up.

And if I could play then I'd play and just, it was just a natural thing, I suppose. I was sort of leant towards football more than, than any of the other sports, even though I loved like the Netball teams. I liked the team sports more. You know, I did athletics and things like that. But team sports I liked. Yeah.

So what about when you went to school, were you discouraged from playing football? Were you encouraged at all?

Where we weren't encouraged? No, because there wasn't any, you know, there was obviously we weren't allowed to play with the boys or anything like that. But I did have one sports teacher, a PE teacher, who was knew I liked football. And I think we were doing gymnastics. And she said, "Gill, if you don't want to join in, you can go and kick the ball around in the playground." So, I did that on my own in our PE lesson. But I mean, the lads at school would, you know, want me to join in. Excuse me, I remember. In my junior school, we went to school camp in the Isle of Wight, camping, you know, and everything, and they had little tournaments going on, one thing and another. And there was a football tournament and the lads from my school, wanted me to be in a team to play the other school but I wasn't allowed. You know, so I was accepted by all the boys and the lads. But the people above they're just, you know, "no, it's not allowed." No reason given really, it's just that you didn't mix. You know, I think that was that was the main reason that you just didn't mix, the two. So, you know, all throughout my school days, girls were still not allowed, even when I left school, girls weren't allowed to play at school.

And so when did that change, so when did you get to be in girls football teams?

When I got into the girls football team? That came about when I was twelve. I still carried on playing with the lads on the field, the front of the house and everything and, and stuff like that. But my brother was dating a girl from Thame and she said oh, they've got a girls team there. So my dad said, okay, and took me over. There's, I don't know, if I was 10-12 miles from Aylesbury and I got into the reserve side at 12, 'Thame Wanderers' it was called. But that was great, because I was part of the team again, you know, I could play and we had a proper League and everything. And then played in the reserve side for the year, got Player of the Year that year, and then progressed into the first team the following season. And then it was just, you know, started playing 'proper football', as you'd like to say, you know, other than just kick about, it was all organised. And if it wasn't for my parents, you know, I wouldn't have been able to do any of that. They drove me around everywhere to train in, over in Thame every week and then playing on a Sunday. And it was just yeah, it was a big part of their life as well as my life. You know, I couldn't have done it without them.

They're probably pretty unusual at that time really?

Yeah, yeah. We were really, because we had the car and everything. And I think a lot of parents weren't that encouraging of the girl, the daughters playing, but because, you know, having such a large family and my brother did boxing, two of my other brothers played football. I like football, you know, they would encourage us in whatever we wanted to do, basically and help us so yeah, I was very fortunate that they would support me in that way. But it became a big part of their life as well. Everything was geared around the Sunday game, you know, and my dad used to be on the phone organising referees and things like that. And yeah, major part of their lives as well.

So, he was, he was involved in organising was he?

When I was at Thame he wasn't, he was just there in supporting with my mum and then I think it was 1976....what age would I have been then? I can't remember now. About seventeen, I suppose, I can't remember. There was a split in the Thame Team and the majority of the girls came and we started up an Aylesbury Team, and my dad was manager. So that was Aylesbury Ladies Team. I mean with Thame, we were a very successful team. We were one of the top teams in the country at the time. And then Aylesbury, again, we became one of the top teams in the country. And it was divided, you know, north and south. So we were in the Home Counties League, which played mainly in the south, it was only when we got in Cup games that we played anybody from the north. So yeah, dad was very much involved then, you know, say ringing around organising referees and pitches and things like that. Yeah. So, as I say, that's how it became a big part of their life as well.

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Is it just me, I grew up in the '70s, I didn't know anything about women's football?

Well, it wasn't known, no, if you didn't move in those circles, you probably didn't know. I mean, we didn't get a lot of support, then, you know, it's only if somebody was passing by and stopped. Because we weren't allowed to play on associated football grounds. It used to be park pitches and everything. And so if people were passing, they'd stop and watch for a little while, and then maybe carry on. But there was a saying, my mum had said many years ago that, you know, "they come to jeer, but stop to cheer" when they start watching the women's game, because it is a good technical game. It's never going to be as physical as men, we're not built the same way. And we don't try to compete with the men's game or, you know, match, match that, it's a game on its own right. Women's Football is its own right. And so yeah, you get people watching and, just a few. We had a few followers, we used to have a coach, my dad bought a coach, so we could go to games as well. And he'd quite often pick girls up who lived out in Oxfordshire and all over the place, you know, traveled around to play for our team, and Beaconsfield and all over but he picked them up and drop them home. As I say, it was just a massive part of his life. Yeah, and as I say, as you say, you know, you didn't see many girls' teams around then, but there wasn't that many. So we used to have to travel quite

a way to find games, you know; Swindon, Southampton, Devizes, you know, and all over the South. And that's how far the, the league was, you know, Home Counties League.

So, you were involved in the League. So, how come you ended up being part of the England squad?

That came about again with Aylesbury. We'd played Foden's. And they were the top team in the country, Foden's Ladies. And that was to do with like the Foden's Trucks and that. I think it used to be a works team. And they were very a good team anyway, they'd beaten us in a game - in a cup game, a few weeks prior to a charity game that was set up. One of our players, had set up a charity game, I think for their daughter, who was an invalided child. That was set up in Aylesbury at Stocklake Sports and Social Club. And that was in '71. Ron Atkinson came and kicked the game off, he was manager of Oxford United then. And Harry was at that game, he was scouting for girls to join them, the England team for Mexico. My parents were obviously there and Harry came up after and asked if I'd be able to join them in the team. Because he scouted me from that game. There were three other girls in our team that were picked, that he wanted to go, but one was at university couldn't go and two others, they'd have lost their jobs if they'd have gone but because I was still at school, you know, I was, it wasn't a problem for me. So yeah, the girls, three of the girls turned it down. So they couldn't make the trip. But fortunately

How old were you?

I was fourteen then. And yeah, so I didn't have a passport or anything, never been abroad. So this was in the June this was I think six of June I remember that when we beat Foden's, just as it's on the record, we beat them five, three. So that was a real big coup, that was, or scalp, to beat them. So yeah, great game. And so yeah, my dad had to take me to Peterborough to the passport office and get a passport and everything like that. I didn't know any of the other girls in the team at the time. I think I had two training sessions with them before we went to Mexico in the August, so yeah.

What position did you play?

Right-Wing, outside right. Yeah, I was quite fast, quite nippy. Yeah.

Did you realise the sort of magnitude of what you were being asked to do?

Not at all. No. I had no idea what what it was all about because my dad was talking to Harry and sort of organised it. You know, I used to just pick the boots up and just go to play, really, that's about all the involvement I had in it, no, and as I say, going from playing on park pitches to where we were where we went to the Azteca Stadium. You mean that was just you know, unbelievable really.

Tell me about it.

Well, yeah, it's, we flew from Heathrow to JFK, on a 747. And that was the one of the first jumbo jets of that time. They'd only been flying about a year, I think. So it was a very new aircraft. As I said, I didn't really know any of the girls. I was sitting on my own. There was a couple next to me, but I didn't know who they were. But anyway, I remember going upstairs in the plane, they shoved me upstairs because it used to be a cocktail bar type of thing there. Anyway, we flew to JFK at just have a seven-hour stopover there. And we had to wear these walking-out suits, tartan blazers, the white crimplene skirt, white blouse, and everything. People in the airport thought we were a girl's choir. But if they could have heard me sing, they'd have known that we weren't a girl's choir for sure [laughs]. So yeah, seven hours stop there, then flew on to Mexico City, which was getting on for midnight, I think by the time we got there, it was late at night. And as we stepped off the plane, it was, there was all photographers there. And everything. And Crystal probably maybe mentioned that, you know, she thought it was somebody famous on the plane. And it turned out it was us! They were all taking pictures of us. So that was quite crazy to start with. Got the coach to the hotel. And there was a few of us myself, Lea I believe, a couple of others. They asked if we'd go on TV, the programme is '24 Hours'. Like a news programme in Mexico. I think it was, might have been played in England as well, 24 Hours. But yeah, so we went on there. And then from there, you know, we stayed in the same hotel as the England team did the year before. 1970 World Cup team. So it was a really nice hotel, we just, you know, you just couldn't believe, going "what's happening?" basically, you know, as, as a as a school kid, you know, you never had such sort of luxuries and adulation really.

So yeah, just to, to even when we went out training in the morning, at seven o'clock in the morning, we go training, there'd be a couple of 100 people watching us training, and things like that. And then, as I say, we were taken to different places, the embassy, had a cocktail evening there, British embassy, say TV programs. And everywhere we went, you know, there was crowds of people wanting your autograph, and things like that. And then when match day came, where the changing rooms are, they're underground, so you have to come up the steps to come onto the pitch. And the noise is just, you know, deafening, it was pretty special, really. Yeah. So unfortunately, I can't really remember too much about the games, it's all a bit blurry. You know, it's only because we've got photographs and memorabilia that we can remember, bits and pieces, and I kept a little diary. Some of the other girls have kept bits. So since we've sort of got back together, we've been exchanging stories and things, and then it triggers you know, you can remember, but it was just amazing.

Can you remember anything about how it felt? You know, you talked about that moment coming up, can you remember the feeling at all?

Yes, kind of breathtaking, really. And a real sort of shiver because you think I'm part of this, you know, how did I even get here? You know, it is? And you think right, well, I've just got to do my best, you know, just get out there and play your football. Obviously, you know, I'm always quite serious about football, wasn't just thinking, you know, I'm here for a good time. No, it's football for me. I needed to put in a good performance and that. And yeah, it was just, it was just amazing really that to be playing in front of all those people and in such a magnificent stadium. I mean, it was bigger than Wembley, much bigger than Wembley. Yeah, as I say, I was probably just like a little dot. I've been remembering in my passport, talking about that earlier, my heart, you used to have to put the color of your eyes and your height, which I've still got that passport as it goes, that's how I know. I was four foot ten, I haven't grown much since then. I'm about five-foot-one now. So you can imagine on that pitch that, you know, I was just a little dot on the pitch, but it didn't faze me I don't think, I just concentrated on the game, you know, but it was fantastic just to be part of it really, really.

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Can you remember anything that was said to you before? Like, did Harry do a team talk or? Was there anything like that?

Good question, but I can't, I can't honestly, remember details like that, he obviously would have done. And our captain Carol Wilson, she would have, you know, been giving direction on pitch and everything like that. I think because I was so young, I didn't get involved in that side of things so much. The older girls would have had more detail and would remember more, but to be honest, I can't really remember that, that side of it.

Do you, do you have a particularly special memory of that time that you spent in Mexico? Is there anything that?

Just the whole trip really, no nothing. It was all just fantastic really? No, I can't, can't sort of pinpoint any single thing that would have stood out but as I say it was just fantastic to be part of, of what was going on. And the other teams.

What were the matches like, were they different to the ones you'd played before?

Yeah, very much. Yeah, much more physical than we'd ever played. Because I think like with Argentina, Mexico, South American players, it is a different style of play. We were we were fit team, we were very fit. But tactically we weren't as tactically clever as they were. And they would play you know, the dirty tricks as well as you know, as you see now in the men's game. But yeah, it was it was much more physical game, as the tournament went on, you know, girls, few of our girls took quite serious injuries, you know, legs in plaster casts and things like that. So, but yeah, fortunately, I didn't didn't pick up any injuries. But yeah, it was a physical tournament.

So, were there fourteen of you?

Yeah it was only 14 in the squad.

And all those injuries! Did you think at any point that you might not have a team?

Yeah, well, in the...we played, we lost our games to Mexico and Argentina. So that put us out and then we played France for the third or fourth playoff place. And we didn't have enough players for that team. So I think we borrowed a couple of the Mexican players to play in that one. So just to make the numbers up, basically, but they, Martini Rossi, who sponsored the whole competition, wanted to put the game on because obviously it was more revenue, getting another crowd in, you know. So yeah, we had to loan a couple of players to field a team, really. Yeah.

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Did you have any contact with your parents when you were there?

No, no, it was a month trip. Just over a month. There wasn't any internet or telephones, you know, mobiles or even at home people didn't really - we had a phone at home. But not many people did have a phone at home. So, the only way you'd communicate was if you've written a letter. And I wasn't one of the good girls that did that. So, I know Leah did and Trudy, they were very good. They, I think written letters home. But no, it was my mum did keep a few snippets out of the national papers that were here in England. Just to get a little bit of an update of what was going on in Mexico. But apart from that, they didn't know really what was going on. Know how we were or anything.

Did you get home-sick at all?

No, not at all [laughs], you know, I was having such a good time, and then just enjoying the moment I think, and being with the girls and everything, you know, being part of that team. Yeah, it. No, I didn't get homesick at all. No, I could have quite stayed on and kept playing.

What about when you got home? What was that like? Because you've gone from this amazing experience?

Yeah, it's quite deflating. Really. Yeah, we've got back and there were a couple of photographers, but they were there just really to take pictures of the girls that had got the injuries, you know, England had had a physical time over there and Mexico or whatever. But no, it wasn't covered really at all. Even at school in school assemblies, it wasn't you know, "what did you do through the summer holiday?" Nothing like that. You know, the boys knew I'd played and gone out there. But there wasn't any note made of it, you know? No sort of saying, you know, Gill played for England in Mexico City. And anything No. And then when we did get back, we were banned. I was banned for three months because the FA wouldn't didn't sanction the tournament. So I got banned, Harry got banned for life. Some of the

older girls got banned for six months, I only got banned for three. And some of them gave up playing. They didn't play again after that. But I was, you know, determined I wanted to play. So just had to sort of forego a few games in the season and then start playing again.

What did that feel like when you were banned? I mean, if you were that age, did that feel really unfair?

But yeah, for sure. Yeah. Again, you just don't understand why. Why do they not want you to do something you really enjoy, you really love? It's a game. You know, you just want to play a game and why would anybody want to stop you doing that just? Just doesn't make any sense. It's just all bureaucracy. And that way above us, you know, it's just didn't make any sense at all. And then for Harry to get banned for life for doing, for trying to promote the women's game. It wasn't for his own self-gratification. It was for the good of the girls, the women's game, you know, he just wanted it to progress. And he was it, had the contacts, and he was in the right places, to be able to help them with it. He wasn't against the FAA or WFA, at the time. He wanted to be part of it, but they didn't want him to be part of it. Something that was beyond me.

You were quite young at the time. What do you remember about him?

Well, I don't really because that's the only time I had anything to do with him. With the England. Chris and Leah played in his team, whereas I was at Aylesbury, and Thame at the time. So that's the only connection I have with Harry is through the Mexico trip, really. And then played a couple of games when we got back. But then I just carried on with the team I was with, with Thame. And we kind of lost touch Leah, Chris and I. And then joined, you know, met up again later, playing at Aylesbury. Chris and Leah came across, and played for Aylesbury, yeah.

What about you with your, with your career, your football career?

Yeah, so played for Aylesbury. So Leah and Chris joined and again, say very successful. And in 1987, I fell pregnant. I had my daughter in 1987, in the February. My parents were thinking about moving abroad to Menorca back then anyway. So one of our girls who played at Aylesbury was a doing a work experience at Arsenal. And Vic Akers, who was the Arsenal women's manager, since, he wanted to start up a women's team. So Ali Clement, who was the girl that was the trainee there, work experience, she said, "Well, Aylesbury's got a team and their manager's moving abroad. So you've got a ready made team", you know, because it will take a while to get a girls team together to start playing. So he picked up on that idea. And he said, Yeah, we'll go with that. And my dad was more than happy, you know, that the girls would do that. And so, we played a tournament in July, I believe. My daughter was five-months old, and she was sitting on the sideline. And that's the first time I pulled on an Arsenal shirt, with my daughter sitting on the sideline with

my mum. Yeah. And that's how Arsenal women's team was formed. So I was a founder member of that team. Yeah.

But having said that, when I was saying about Harry having the contacts, and for the good of the game, we've actually got a paper cutting where he said, "one day, there will be an Arsenal women's team", you know, and so, all those years back then in '71, he had that foresight that it could be part of the professional men's setup, you know, so he had a vision all the way back then. And, and as you see the girls game now, which is brilliant, the way it's going, you know, it's fantastic. How true those words were, you know, all those years ago. So, yeah, so I played for Arsenal. I was thirty then, when I started playing for Arsenal, and I played up until I was thirty-four. So I had some knee problems, had an ACL and a cartilage operation. So, yeah, I finished playing when I was thirty-four.

And then I managed the reserve side for a year, but I didn't really enjoy that side of it, because I just wanted to play and it's very frustrating when you can't play. So then yeah, I just stopped playing then. And a few, and I moved over to Menorca with the parents for a while. But having said that, again, just going back, my parents did move over to Menorca in 1989. But, I was still playing at Arsenal then. And it was in the January they went and I said well, "I gotta to finish the season off at Arsenal." So my husband and my daughter went with my mum and dad to Menorca, and I stayed here so I could finish the football season at Arsenal. And then I joined them after. But that was just for the summer. It was supposed to be I was moving out there permanently, but I could settle out there and I came back and started playing again, the next season basically.

So, I just couldn't get away from football. I just needed to play football.

Why?

Because I love the game. I just love, love the whole thing. The friends, camaraderie, the whole setup, you know, just match day just gets you, you know, you just, just put your boots on. And you get out there and you just you just want to play and when I played at Arsenal, Vic Akers, he moved me from a winger to the centre back, I think it was because of my height. Because normally centre backs are quite tall. No, just joking. He could see I could read a game, because obviously I was older, that bit older I could, you know, I've got the knowledge and I could just sit at the back and I could conduct the game basically at the back and I, I think going from the Aylesbury Team, and not knocking the coaches or anything with the training that we had, it was brilliant for then, but then joining Arsenal and having coaching under Vic Akers, it changed my game, totally changed my game. So much more professional. And I think I played my best football then, and I think that's why I didn't want to stop playing. You know? Yeah, just, just something you just can't let go off. Really, you know, I watch all the games now. I still, still love the football.

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Were you paid at all?

No, no, never, never was paid. No. We had to pay to play. We got the kit from Arsenal. We got the kit supplied and everything in the tracksuits and stuff which I still got, the tracksuit and my kit, still kept that. But now it was we all start to pay subs and things like that. Yeah. Wasn't until in the '90s. I'm sorry, but I can't remember the year, that the professional team started to play. It's only the last few years in the WSL that they fully professional, because they were semiprofessional to start with, with the guy from Harrods, at Fulham, he, some of the girls who played for Fulham then, were semiprofessional, but still had to have jobs like when I was playing at Highbury, at Arsenal, we used to train at Highbury. So I had my job, and then I sued to twice a week drive up to Highbury, from Aylesbury Tuesdays and Thursdays and then play on a Sunday.

But, but again, the women's game was put in the last slot for the training session. So when all the guys had finished their training at nine o'clock we could get onto the ball court till 11. So we could have our training nine till 11 at night and then I'd have to drive back from North London to Aylesbury, go to work next day and then do a bit of training in between, the day off, and then train again. So you know you had to do your own physical stamina training in between.

So you have to really want it?

Yeah, but then that's how you improve, that's how you get better, you feel a bit more professional just being there, part of the club. You know, that's, that's how it made you feel. And, and when you were going to an away game, you act to be professional, you have to act professionally, you have to if you're bringing on an Arsenal shirt or the jacket you had to act in a proper manner you know, like the men did, it wasn't just you know, come on, let's get on the bus or anything like that, you know, although you know, we did enjoy ourselves and that obviously it was wasn't all seriousness but match days was serious.

Did you ever think it was unfair?

What?

The lack, the lack of parity between the two like, they were paid so much and?

At the time, no, because were just pleased it was progressing, I think. From what we did start with, when I first started on the park pitches, we used to have to change in the scout hut down the road, walk up the road to the game. And then there was one game, it was so muddy there that we had to go and be hosed off down at the cattle market in Thame, because we had no showers or anything. But because of the girls playing on there, the council actually put up some porta cabins on the Thame rec that obviously the men and the women could use. So we had showers

and toilets and changing facilities. And that was a big part to do with the girls, the women's team. So going from that up to where I was at Arsenal when I finished playing was a huge step in itself. And because it was just the start of the women's game being adjoined to men's professional teams, that was a major thing.

But looking at it from where we were starting at the men's game to where the girls are now. it's huge, but it's taken so long, even now to get to where it is. It's just in the last five years, I would say maximum that things have really started to go, you know, be televised, and in papers and, you know, people are - girls now have women idols. You know, whereas when I was growing up, it was Peter Osgood or Charlie Cook, or, you know, Bobby Charlton and George Best. But now the girls have got women idols; Lucy Bronze, Leah Williamson, Millie Bright, you know all the girls that you know of now in the England team, or even at club level. And it's great to see. So no, we didn't actually - we're not jealous of it. We're not anything. We were just glad that the women's game was getting more accepted, I think.

00:36:43

What does it feel like really, to be one of that 14?

Now, because, I don't know if Chris mentioned, that we didn't actually speak about it, you know, as I say, it wasn't mentioned when we got back, we didn't speak about it. Even though we played together, some of the other teammates didn't even know we went to Mexico, we never spoke about it or anything like that. And so it's been weird. It's only till Leah's brother picked up on an article on the for the BBC, that they were going through 10 top points of women's football or something like that, that Leah actually got in touch with Jean Williams, who's the professor, or the archivist at the Football Museum in Manchester. And Leah said, Well, I played in that World Cup.

So then, then, because Leah and Chris lived near each other, and were in contact a bit more than I in recent years, and then they contacted me and, and it's sort of all come about again, you know, it's come back to life again, because we've shut it back for so many years. You know, I'd got my, my football bag, I've still got my kit bag and memorabilia, my medal and everything. An odd look at it from time to time, but it wasn't- we never used to bring it up. It was our parents used to say, oh, "Gill played in Mexico" in that when you say yeah, you know, you kind of play it down a bit. But - or friends would say "oh Gill played for England in Mexico."

But now we realize the enormity of it. Now. We didn't then, we did when we were there. But because it would shut it down for so long, it kind of got pushed to the back, you know, nobody was interested in it. But because that's because women's football hasn't taken hadn't taken off like it is now and people do want to know about it. And I think it's great that it is being heard and people do know of it. Now it fits in the history of women's football, you know, as the football line of women's games, history, has gone on, tournaments. It fits in its place there.

What about you personally, do you have pride in it?

I do now. Yeah, I think because it wasn't spoken about I It felt like we'd done something wrong because we were banned at the time. And I felt, felt like I'd done something wrong, that I shouldn't have played in that tournament. So I didn't feel great about it. But I do now, I feel very proud to have been part of it and feel like I was an early pioneer for the women's game. To look back on it now and for people to think of us like that. I'm very, very proud of my football career. Yeah, very proud, brings tears to my eyes actually to think about it. Yeah, that I, you know, because I just played, I just wanted to play and that's what I did and it was great that I did it.

But, looking back now, I can see how fantastic you know, my football has been for me, you know my parents, and my family. Yeah. I don't know why I'm tearing up. But, it's, it's quite emotional already just reliving it, you know, and talking about it. You know, makes you feel you know, that. To have friends for all this time. I've got lifelong friends. You know, I've got a friend now that I met when I played at Thame when I was twelve. And we live close to each other. She came from Oxford, I would have never met my friend Allison, from Oxford if I hadn't have played for Thame, and things like that. It brings everybody together. Yes. And you do, as I say, Chris and Leah, I've known them all that time. Over 50 years. It's crazy. You think where's the time gone? Turn back the clock, I want to put the boots on again. Because I can still do it in my head. But physically wouldn't be able to do it now. But yeah. Yeah, it's just, just really good times. Good memories and fantastic friends.

Far cry from Billy?

Yeah far cry from Billy, from those early days. Yeah. Who would have thought? Billy on the pitch in Mexico City? [Laughs]. Yeah.

Wonderful.

Wonderful stuff.

Thank you. Yeah, I'm in tears now. [Laughs].

00:41:06

[End of Interview]

Another clip from same audio:

Yeah, just to say my, my dad was so involved. My parents were both very involved with the girls football team. And my dad actually got on the Board of Directors at

Aylesbury United, so we could use their pitch. But again, after all the men's teams and everything I mean, so that was a big step up for us because it was an enclosed ground with a, with a stand and everything. And we used to get quite a few people come along to watch, our name got around then, that there was an Aylesbury's women's team again.

So yeah, he used to do all sorts of the ground, he'd be groundsman. As I say, he was a builder. So he sorted out all the, the showers and bath and everything. You know, he would really, everything was geared up to the football, and Leah did a little interview with him out in Menorca, a few years ago. And there was one thing that I didn't know, he said to Leah, when I saw the video back, that he said, you know, "football was our life". My mum's name was Popsy they would call my mum Popsy Bob and Popsy. And he said it was mine and Popsy's life. He said, You know, if we win, lose or draw, he said, we'd go to bed and he's say "We've had a good day today ain't we Pops, you know, we've had a really good day". Because they just loved it. It was it was just their life as well as mine.

So, I was I was very, very lucky to have parents like that to, to be involved as you say, that not many parents got involved. But they certainly wanted to be much a part of it. You know, they just loved the game and my dad used to play when he was younger. So he liked football anyway. But for him to encourage me and to help me in that way was just amazing to go to the lengths that he did to and I don't think I appreciated it at the time, but I certainly do now. Yeah, certainly do. Yeah, bless him.