

THE FINAL WHISTLE BULLETIN



THE HOME OF
**FEMALE
FOOTBALL**
IN NORTH HERTS

A message from The Chairman.....



Like for many things across the country here's been a bit of a break since our last Newsletter issued just before Christmas, and how much has changed since then! My thoughts go out to all our Belles family, and I hope you are all keeping well in these difficult times.

It's been a crazy few months, and a very strange time to take over as Chair of a football club, but there have been plenty of positive things to celebrate for the club even among the suspension of football as a small part of the efforts to slow down the spread of Covid:

- We've had the fantastic news of our new partnership with the Priory School. This gives us the home we have been craving for as the club has grown over recent years and means that all teams will be able to play our matches in one location. Once the new 3G pitch is built, it will also be home to all our training all year round.
- Many of our teams have stayed in touch through online training sessions. It's been great to see the enthusiasm and endeavour shown by coaches and girls to keep playing football and be part of the team even if we haven't been able to do so in person.
- We've recently seen the return, for most teams, of in person social distancing training and I hope you have all enjoyed seeing the girls out there enjoying their football together as much as I have!

Planning for our face to face sessions was a huge part of our recent AGM. We've included in this Newsletter some updates from some of the other areas discussed, from the clubs finances, through subs for next to the tooting and froings in the Committee. We haven't had much football to report on, but have got a feature on how one of our former players has successfully got herself onto a football scholarship in the US. Something for our girls to aspire to!

I'd also like to pass my thanks to Gemma for her 3 years as club chair. She's given her all to the club, and they are some big boots to fill. I look forward to continuing to work with her in her role as social media officer and development officer for our older girls.

Fingers crossed we can resume football properly in the not too distant future! At the moment there are no dates set for the start of the new season, but we will let you know as soon as we know more.

Stay safe and keep practising – Simon White, Hitchin Belles Chairman.



Fundraising update

It feels like many moons ago now, but the end of February saw our annual swimafun party at Hitchin swimming pool. Open to our younger age groups, it made a fabulous £475.16 for the club and, more importantly, all the girls had a fantastic evening scrambling over the inflatables!

Update from the Committee and the AGM

Committee Roles and Vacancies

As we reach the end of another season, there has been lots of movement in the Committee, in a number of different roles:

- After 3 seasons, Gemma Smith has stepped down as Club Chair and will be replaced by Simon White, who is also our U11 Blues Manager.
- Keeping it in the family, Simon's wife, Sarah will be taking on the role of Registrations Secretary, a role Simon previously held!
- Hannah Maxwell is stepping down as Minutes Secretary and will be replaced by Liz and Rob Brettell who will be jointly taking on this role. They are parents from the U11 Whites team.
- Jez Wood has joined the committee as Schools Liaison Officer, taking over the role from Stuart Nellis. In addition, Jez has also taken on the further role of Club Brand and Marketing Coordinator.
- Stuart Nellis has taken on the role of Fundraising Coordinator.
- John Martin has agreed to take on an additional role to his Newsletter Editor role, which is that of Grants Officer.

The club would like to thank the years of service those stepping down have given to the club's committee and welcome the new members who have agreed to join and fill vacant roles.

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.....Calling all volunteers.....

The club continues to welcome anyone who has some spare time to help out and has the following roles still vacant:

- Child Welfare Officer Assistant
- Kit and Equipment Coordinator

If you are interested in any of these roles and wish to find out further details, then please speak to Simon White or Jason Slade.

Finances

The clubs finances have held up well over the last year. This is particularly important as we start our partnership with the Priory School. A huge amount of investment is needed in pitch maintenance and equipment. New goals themselves will cost the club in excess of £20,000, and the cost of pitch maintenance will also be over £20,000 each year. We will in the future be paying less in terms of pitch rental for our training and match facilities than we have in the past, but this does represent a material outlay for the club.

To help us finance this, we have already received a significant grant from the Football Foundation, which will also help us in future years, but it covers less than half of our year 1 expenditure. The club is in a good position to make this investment, but we will continue to explore other avenues to get additional funding.

We are very exciting about our new home, and hope our investment to bring many benefits to the club and support our continued growth over the coming years.

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Subs for next year

The club has carefully considered the yearly subscription fees for the coming season and have decided not to raise fees. In addition to this, recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic may have caused financial hardship for some of you, we would like to offer a 20% rebate to those who will experience difficulties in making the payment of the fees in full. This option can be indicated when making payment for the first half of the season payment and you will receive this rebate on registration and payment of this half season payment through your team manager.

We would encourage those that are in a position to pay in full to do so, as this will ensure the club are able to continue to invest all funds back into the club to enable us to provide more opportunities for more girls and young women to enjoy their football within the Belles family. The more funding that can be put back into the club, the more investment we can make in the new Priory School facilities, further advanced coaching qualifications for managers / coaches and other projects which the club are actively looking to run.

If you are in a position where you need further support over and above the rebate to make payment of the fees, then please speak to your team manager.

Club contacts

Contact details for all the committee members and team managers are on our website (along with lots of other useful documents including our club ethos, safeguarding policy and code of conduct).

Some of the contacts are also set out below:

Simon White Chairman 07804 635569	Jason Slade Secretary 07976 671631
Lisa Tollervy Welfare Officer 07884 261475	John Martin Newsletter Editor 07591 571498

Meet the volunteer



Name: Alex Gale

Club Role: Hitchin Belles U14s WHITES – Assistant Coach.

Why did you volunteer? I started volunteering as part of my DofE and never left!

Favourite football moment: Liverpool winning the league this season.

Worst footballing moment: Liverpool missing out on the league by a point last season!

What are you outside of the Belles? I play drums, various different sports, and work while I try to figure out what I want to do with my life ;)



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Where can football take you?

Former Belles player gains USA soccer scholarship

Erin Davies, an ex-belles player, and sister of Cerys in the Under 12 Blues team has completed her first year on a 4 year football scholarship at the American International College, Massachusetts, USA, where she combines her 'soccer' with studying for a degree in English.



Erin started at the Belles in 2010 at u10's with Terry White, Simon O'Leary and Greg Philip, playing for 3 seasons with this team before moving to play a year up with the u13's team. She was involved in Belles squads that won both the league and league cups, and reached the National Futsal Finals in Birmingham twice.

From here, Erin gained a place in Cambridge Centre of Excellence before moving to MK Dons Centre of Excellence and participated in Wales regional and national camps, before making a transition to play senior football at the age of 16 and eventually captaining the Hertfordshire senior representative side last season.

She trialled with a soccer scholarship agency CSUSA back in January 2018 who put her in contact with potential universities in the States.

In her 1st season in USA, Erin has cemented her place as a centre back in the team which reached the semi-finals of the Northeast Conference Tournament. She was also selected to the All-Rookie team from all the Northeast conference teams.