

THE FINAL WHISTLE BULLETIN



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

A message from the chairman...

Happy summer everyone! I hope you are enjoying a good season's break. I'll start with a big thank you for all of you for getting through another (at times grim!) winter and for all the time and support you give to the girls at this club.

My own personal highlight was being able to bring everyone together for last month's presentation day. It was great to see you all there, and congratulations to all the girls whether picked up individual awards or not. We haven't been able to do this for a few years and huge thanks to all those who helped make it happen. We now have over 300 girls and women training with us so it's quite the logistical challenge! Particular thanks to the Priory School for use of their facilities and the hall. It was also wonderful to see the 3G in action – we're excited that all teams will be able to train on here from August through to June. The first season ever we've had everyone training at our home 😊

We've got some exciting updates for you in this Newsletter, in particular about the future of our First team. We've also got all the regular news, season reviews, and Meet the Volunteer (a double header this edition..).

Looking forward to seeing you all next season!



Simon White
Hitchin Belles
Chairman

Club news

A few bite sized bits of news to keep you updated on various things:

First team: We're excited to announce that the club has been accepted into the Women's Eastern Region League, which represents levels 5 and 6 on the women's national football pyramid – a wonderful thing for the girls across the age groups to aspire too. For the 2022/23 season we will be playing in Division One North. Promotion to the Premier League could see us up against teams like Luton, Bedford and Stevenage!

Priory developments: It's amazing to have the 3G complete, but the work doesn't stop there! Changing rooms specifically for the 3G will hopefully be built next year. We are also working on improving the draining on the field. Unfortunately this means we'll be down one 11 aside pitch next season, so our U18s, and 1st team will play their matches elsewhere.

One downside to the continued development at the Priory will be even more pressure on parking on matchdays. We will be doing what we can to stagger kick off times appropriately, but please do be mindful that capacity will be down and usage up – if at all possible, please walk or car share when coming to home matches.

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People news

Every year sees some coming and goings and this year is no different:

Stuart Nellis has, after many years of loyal service to the club as a manager and fundraiser, left the club. The club would like to thank **Stuart** for his dedication over the years and we wish him well for the future

Kelly Moss and **Nicolle Robinson** have joined the club as the new management team for the women's section. A huge welcome to both...you'll hear more about them later 😊

Paul Dean, who has been a coach and committee member for many years, is stepping down. We'd like to thank **Paul** and his wife **Karen**, who have done a huge amount for the club. **Karen** has put in many hours getting **Hitchin Belles** stories in the **Comet**.

Jemma Fairey will be replacing **Paul** as coach of next season's **U15 Blues**. **Jemma** used to be a player at the club having been in our **U17s** team 7 years ago. It's great for this generation of girls to have former players come back as coaches 😊

Fundraising

Many thanks to all those who supported the tuck shop, Beat the Goalie, Football 100 draw and HBFC water bottle sales at Presentation Day. We raised just over £660 for the club!

Football 100 Winners:

1st Place £40 prizes - **Cambridge Utd** - **Ben Mynott** (dad of **Kiera U14s**) & **Nathan Pask** (dad of **Eva**, incoming **U8s**)

2nd Place £15 prizes - **Bournemouth** - **Tom Short** (dad of **Sofia U8 Blues**) & **Freya Taylor** (player in next year's **U14 whites**)



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Committee update

Finances & subs

We held our club AGM in early June. One topic discussed was the club's finances. Last season was ok for the club, but overall we did overspend slightly compared to our income. While there were some good reasons for this, it has led us to review our subs. We want these to be as low as possible, to keep the club as accessible as possible for all, but we have had to increase for next season for all age groups. This is with the aim of keeping the club as sustainable as possible, with as low as possible reliance on grants and fundraising.

Registration for next season is live now, so please do get this done early – it really helps our admin and getting the teams confirmed with the league if we have the girls signed up early. Thanks for your support in this! If you need information on how to register, please speak to your team manager.

Committee member news:

We'd like to thank Stephen Haynes for stepping into the role as development officer for the U14s and upwards. It's important to us as a club to think about not just individual teams but age groups as a whole, and how girls can progress through the age groups and Steve's support will be invaluable to help us do this.

Vacancies:

We do have some vacant roles on the Committee. Key vacancies are:

- Media liaison – with Karen's departure we need help keeping up the recognition of the club in the local press. Karen has set up a great system and contacts, so with relatively little effort someone could step in and pick up this role.
- Fundraising co-ordinator – while we try and keep the club self-sustaining from subs, fundraising helps us do that little bit extra, like GK training, or help cover unexpected items (you don't want to know how much we spent on goal locks last year!). Even if you can just help with one event that would be a huge help to take the burden of our team managers.

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
Chair
07804 635569

Jason Slade
Secretary
07976 671631

Lisa Tollervey
Welfare Officer
07884 261475

John Martin
Newsletter Editor
07591 571498

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Meet the volunteer



Name: Kelly Moss

Club role: Women's Co-Manager with Nicolle

Why did you volunteer? When I decided to stop playing, I wanted to remain in football in some capacity. I'd done my refereeing but decided I'd get less grief being a coach! I settled with a team and took some of them from U12's through to adult football. Always wanted to be a part of developing people both on and off the pitch. I was fortunate that Nicolle stepped in to help and manage the team with me from U14's and we have been coaching together since then.

Favourite football moment: When mine and Nicolle's U16's won the County Cup. I'd played in two County Cup finals as a player, always being the bridesmaid and never the bride! It was like a fairy tale ending to youth football for the team.

Worst footballing moment: Punching the ball into my net after only being subbed on 5 minutes ago for the team Nicolle and I coached. Don't think the players will ever let me live it down!

What are you outside of the Belles? A Business Change Lead for a hospitality company, working on a large project.



Name: Nicolle Robinson

Club role: Women's Co-Manager with Kelly

Why did you volunteer? Been coaching for over 7 years or so now with Kelly Moss. We used to play Eastern Region football together for a team but injury forced me to retire early so that brought me into coaching. I began my badges supporting Kelly with her team, which were then U14 girls.

Favourite football moment: Hard to pick so either mine and Kelly's U16s winning the County Cup, or our women's team at Dunstable winning the League Cup last season.

Worst footballing moment: Ligament injury to my ankle in a County Cup semi-final, or more annoyingly for me an own goal past Kelly who was in goal in a County Cup final (a great yet unfortunate header from a defensive corner).

What are you outside of the Belles?

A Contract Manager for a Property maintenance and services company but more importantly a proud dog mum 🐶

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Season summaries

In this section we have some brief summaries of the season so far from some of our teams.

U16 Blues



The U16 Blues had a really successful season, finishing third in Division 3. The final position was a slight disappointment as the Blues did beat both of the top two finishers (Ruislip and Sandy) but comfortably third in the Division was great. In fact, all three teams had an identical record until the Blues had a mini collapse and drew away to a last minute goal at Berkhamsted and lost the following week at Toddington. Apart from that, the top three were neck and neck for weeks.

The Blues success was built on a solid defence, and regular goals from Hannah Baynham and Aria Clarke. Highlight of the season was the great win at Ruislip and the Blues were at the time the only team to have beaten them in the season but the run of victories in September and October was fantastic.

In the Cup, the Blues came through huge drama in the mini-league by winning successive penalty shoot-outs against Toddington and St Albans. The calmness with

which they took the spot kicks was extraordinary, with Lola Mellor and Chloe Davis-Garcia scoring the winning kicks in the respective games. The Blues finished second in the table and qualified for a semi-final against Watford, who played the season in the division above. The semi-final was really tight but Watford sneaked a goal in injury time in the first half and the Blues couldn't turn it around, losing 3-0 in the end.

A great season, lots of victories, great performances, drama, excitement, even the disappointment in some games provided experience. Competitive in every single game, gave some shocks to higher division teams and played with passion and commitment throughout. A pleasure to coach and each player is a lovely person to have around the team. Go Belles!

U16 Whites



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2021-2022 has been a challenging and rewarding season for U16 Whites, the league decided again to break the season up in to two separate competitions, first a traditional league format followed by a mini cup competition.

The season started with the introduction of five new players from the U15's and U18's, this obviously meant changes had to be made. At first this was a bit of a challenge for both players and coaches alike. However, it wasn't long before the new players started to integrate well into the squad and apart from Terry continually getting everyone's name wrong it was a success.

The season started slowly with some close games and a mixture of results, by November the new players had settled in and our match fitness was starting to show with five straight wins leading up to Christmas. Unfortunately we came back after the break and struggled to pick up where we left off and finished the league with only one win in our final three games resulting in us finishing 2nd in the division.

Considering the results at the beginning and end of the league section and all the changes to the team 2nd is a great result. Next up was the cup, we started well with a 6-0 win over a 1st division side, then a loss against the dreaded Royston who finished top in the League. We bounced back with two further wins, one that was settled by five great penalties all buried in the bottom corner ensuring Whites finished top of the group. We went on to play a 1st division side in the knockout round which was to be our final game, however it was an exciting match, the final score was 4-7 against Garston Ladies after we came back from 1-3 down to 4-4, honestly we deserved more but it wasn't

meant to be. All in all a great season with some deserved silverware for our league position so well done everyone, very proud of all the effort and commitment shown this season. COYB

U14 Whites



The U14 Whites finished 2nd in their division and capped off a tremendous season with a cup final victory in the league shield. The Whites were created by mixing the previous U13 Whites and Reds sides as we moved to 11 a side football. We would always take time to settle and fully integrate, but once we did, the football clicked and the Whites went from strength to strength.

A stat that stands out - in March, having paused the league for the shield group games, we told the players that if they played to their potential then they had a chance of finishing in the top 3. The team's response was to rack up 8 wins and 1 draw in the final 9 games of the season, scoring 29 and conceding just 4, and capping it all off with that cup final victory. The management team couldn't be prouder!

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U14 Sapphires



U14 Sapphires had a fantastic season, winning Division 3, Senior Shield, and reached the Quarter Finals of the County Cup, all whilst playing up an age group. They took to 11-a-side very well. Well done to the players.

Next season they drop back to their own age group, repeating U14s and will reform as U14 Blues. They say goodbye to their Goalkeeper Maelie who joins Watford Ladies permanently after a season of dual signing and we wish her all the best. Emily joins the Whites as a dual signed player and the team signed Olivia, a striker from Stotfold.

U13 Whites



The U13 Whites had a really enjoyable and successful season. A rejig of the teams in the age group saw the team start the season with 5 new players, adding 2 more from Shillington half way through the season. Despite this, the girls quickly formed a great bond and this has rubbed off on pitch. A runners up place in Division 3 was fine reward for their efforts, scoring over 90 goals for the season, with the one disappointment being a Quarter Final defeat in the Cup to Stevenage Starlets.

Highlights for the season included a dominant performance to beat the eventual league champions, Meninas, who up to that point had won all their games. Off the pitch the girls enjoyed trips to both the delayed 2021 and 2022 Women's FA cup finals at Wembley, plus a weekend away together at the Norwich residential trip.

The season has ended on a sad note, as we say goodbye to our much loved goalie Hannah, but we're also excited to welcome three new players as we move to 11 aside next season – Emily from the U14 Sapphires and Amelia and Roo joining us from Stotfold.

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U12 Blues



After a strong season at U11 the U12 Blues started their first competitive season of 9-a-side in Division 1 of the league. This was always going to be tough, changing format and moving up but the girls were fantastic throughout. Despite a couple of heavy defeats to the top teams in the league they still turned up with a smile on their faces and continued to put into place everything we worked on. They didn't always get the results their effort and play deserved but always gave 100% pushing the eventual league winners very close in their 2 matches.

The second half of the season was a completely different story playing against some new teams (including one from USA) and continuing to play some great football but this time getting the rewards for it. The summer tournaments have also been great fun with the team picking up the winner's trophy at Flitwick!

We have sadly said goodbye to a couple of long standing members of the team, Alethea and Esme, but the good news is they continue to play with Belles in other teams. With players moving to other teams and going up to 9-a-side we also added Charlotte, Flo, Regan & Olivia who have all fitted in well with

the group and we have gained some skills and great personalities.

I'd like to thank all the parents for their support this season. I'm sure there are more appealing places to be at 9:30 on a Saturday morning but without them there would be no team! After the extended season due to COVID I'm sure everyone is looking forward to a summer break and we will see everyone back in August to do it all again!

U12 Whites



The U12 Whites girls have had a much brighter end to the 2021-22 season. The girls have grown in confidence and skill and have settled in to the 9 a-side format. Some wins in the Shield Cup qualifying rounds and a win at the Biggleswade Tournament in mid-May were a welcome boost to morale. There was more fun in the sun at the Letchworth and Royston tournaments, picking up another tournament victory at the latter! We are now looking forward to a welcome summer break to recharge before the start of the new season.

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U11 Blues



21/22 was the first full season for this team, and what a season they had! The development has been phenomenal; every week they seemed to get better and better. It's not only their football ability that's been so impressive, but they're overall teamwork and conduct. They play the game in a lovely spirit and their attitude towards each other and the support they provide for each other is lovely to watch.

As we've added new players, we've set ourselves up to be quite a decent 9-a-side team. Friendlies in this new format have been very successful and the girls have taken well to the larger pitch, beating teams from higher divisions and actually not being caught offside too much!!

We capped off a great year by winning the shield trophy at the Wormley summer tournament, and after a much needed rest, we all can't wait to compete in a higher division next season.

U10 Blues



The U10 Blues had a really enjoyable season and showed great development. Just about all our games were close with many wins. A fantastic end to the season losing a semi-final after extra time at the St Albans tournament. Bring on next season.

U10 Whites



This was the first season for the new U10 Whites team and for their coaches, but despite the steep learning curve the girls have simply been outstanding in their efforts and attitude.

It took four league games to get the first goal, and they did not look back. They have played in some end to end games losing by narrow

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margins finding resilience in all positions, but have never been disappointed and remained upbeat as a team.

I think it summarises their hard work and development, that we lost our first game to Potters Bar 9-0, then beat the same team 1-0 at the end of the season.

In training and on match days they are incredibly supportive of each other and have a great sense of humour...which has helped me find my feet as a coach!! Myself and Dave are very proud of all of them and we are already looking forward to next season.

U9 Blues



Our U9s Blues have seen fantastic progress over the past months. We regrouped at the beginning of the season with revisiting core skills during training which formed the basis of the squad's development in the early part as well as players increasing adaptability to all positions across the field.

Despite a mixed bunch of match results at the beginning, the girls confidence grew, and finished the season strongly with playing some excellent football, great team work and position play.

We look forward to the start of next season with the step up to U10s and playing 7 aside for which the players appear already comfortable having played a few friendlies at this level.

U8 Yellows



Ten U8 Yellows started the season way back in September 2021. Most of the players were brand new to football and had so much to learn, but none of them as much as the coaches! Over the season we have all got to know each other so well, learning names, understanding each others' personalities and gradually becoming good friends.

It has been lovely to see everyone's confidence increasing so much. In recent weeks we have progressed to playing friendlies and were very impressed with the spirit of our players, but also the encouragement of opposition players and coaches. After a season of training and playing in our little bubble it was great to see how we are doing and see how the girls responded to various challenges like perseverance despite conceding several goals, extra physicality and bobbly grass pitches.

Mostly though it has been great to see the little sparkles of happiness and growing confidence – hopefully this will be the start of a lifetime of involvement in sport. Roll on next season 😊