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Contact me with your stories!

Shining the Light - Women and Girls' Cricket in Yorkshire

Hello and welcome to the cricket season! It's so good to get outdoors and back to training and playing again. I am delighted to have taken on the new role of 'Women and Girls Club and League Development Manager for West Yorkshire'. I join Dean Smith who covers W&G in the South, and Rob Johnson in the East and North. We work with clubs every day to support the growth of women and girls' cricket, and we hope to bring you many great stories of success over the coming weeks and months. Positive stories around women and girls' cricket are everywhere, but we don't always get to hear or read about them. The aim of this new blog is simple - to celebrate the achievements of women and girls at clubs and in communities throughout the county.



Young Umpire

Fleur Orford has just turned 17 and is cricket mad. She joined Sheffield Collegiate Cricket Club in 2018 after playing for her school team, and is now going from strength to strength in the women's softball and hardball teams. Like many, she desperately missed her cricket during lockdown and wanted to fill the gap. So the opportunity to do the umpire stage 2 qualification online came at just the right time

"It just seemed like a really good chance to broaden my knowledge of cricket, and obviously because the club offered it to us, it seemed like something I should try and get a new skill."

Fleur is full of praise for the mentors on the course who made the sessions very interactive. She said it really opened her eyes

"You learn the laws of cricket in a lot of detail, it's just amazing how one word will change everything, for example just the word 'wilful' will change the whole decision. It makes me realise how skilled the higher level umpires really are!"

Although Fleur says she is the youngest 'by quite a way', she has been warmly welcomed within the umpire networks. She is now keen to get some match experience, and will initially be offering her services for Yorkshire U11s and U13s girls matches.

Good luck Fleur!

Great Horton Park Chapel launch women's softball training



Starting a women's softball section from scratch isn't easy. Even when the desire is there, volunteers running the clubs have doubts and fears; "Will we really be able to attract the numbers?" "Who will coach them?" "How will we find the space at our ground for the training and matches?" are just a few questions to pop up for Nick Speight, welfare officer and coach at Great Horton Park Chapel in Bradford. However, after months of planning and talking about it, it finally happened. On Thursday 15th April, a group of women of all ages, some who were picking up a cricket bat for the first time, arrived at the ground feeling nervous about their fitness and ability. The nerves soon disappeared. They were met by the friendly faces of coaches Shivanie

Patel and Kirsty Gavillet from Bradford Park Avenue Ladies, who made the session fun and accessible.

Sabina Speight has been wanting to try cricket for a while:

"I'm always watching the men, and just thought why shouldn't we have a go? It might be a good laugh and I really need to get fit too!"

Nick Speight has supported the women all the way:

"It's just been great to see the smiles and laughter on the women's faces. I'm so interested to see how my wife gets on. She needs something like this. I'm hoping she'll go a bit easier on me when she sees me make mistakes in my matches!"

Scottish call up for University of Sheffield student

Katherine's talent for cricket saw her playing for Wiltshire's women's team age just 13 and captaining the team at 18. Now she's 21 and about to play for Scotland against the Northern Rep team in Lancashire. Her Scottish roots come from her mother, who is from Clyde Bank, just outside Glasgow. There's no doubt Katherine (nicknamed 'Brunt') is driven and determined to perform at the best level she can, but she is unbelievably modest. Her response to the question of how she got scouted by Scotland:

"To be totally honest I don't know how or why they picked me. I just had an email out of the blue. They must have known I had roots in Scotland!"



The timing has been unfortunate. After training with the squad during the winters of 2018 and 2019, COVID struck, so she hasn't had many opportunities to play for them, but she can't wait to get involved this coming weekend in the T20 against Cumbria and Yorkshire.

"The Scotland girls are so welcoming. I've only played one A-team match but they've never made me feel singled out. I have occasionally trained for Yorkshire, so it will feel strange if I play against them, but my Mum is delighted that I'm representing Scotland and I want to make her proud!"

Juggling her cricket commitments is no mean feat; Katherine travels to Scotland for training on alternate weekends, captains her University cricket team and plays for Sheffield Collegiate women. Oh, and then there's the small matter of studying for a degree in medicine!

"It can be tricky fitting it all in. I make a lot of lists and do a lot of planning!"

Northern Diamonds Academy

Six of Yorkshire's rising cricket stars have been selected for the 15-strong squad Northern Diamonds Academy, which pulls in players from Durham, Northumberland and Yorkshire. Massive congratulations to:

Grace Hall, Lucy Lindley, Emma Marlow, Ellie Nightingale, Phoebe Turner and Jessica Woolston.

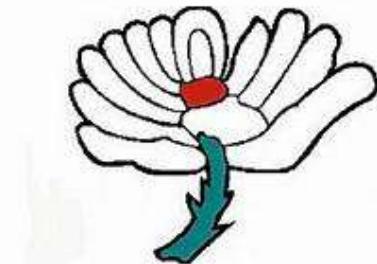


The Academy is led by Senior Regional Talent Manager, Courtney Winfield-Hill, who has had the challenging task of narrowing down a strong field of 37 players aged between 15-19 for the squad.

The players will be entering a professional environment, with access to sports psychologists as well as top level strength and conditioning, physio and nutrition. Courtney describes her own coaching style as honest and blunt, but alongside the high expectations comes a high level of support.

A fantastic achievement for all the girls selected, and a big step forward for women and girls' cricket.

County Age Group update



Firstly, massive thanks to Rachel Hildreth and Lizzie Dillam who have supported the Yorkshire girls through the winter via zoom - the sessions were a great success!

U18s – The ECB have expanded the age group from U17s to U18s this year, to give girls at the older end more opportunities after having their season wiped out last year because of COVID-19. I'm delighted to be managing the U18s team this season, I'm really looking forward to working with the girls and with the coach Mark Harrison. Observation and training days are still taking place, the squad will be selected in time for the first fixture on the 8th June against Cheshire. Thank you to Wrenthorpe Ladies and Girls CC for offering to sponsor our first matchday programme. If you'd like details on how to get involved with sponsorship, please let me know. Clubs hosting matches include Clifton Alliance, Woodlands, Dringhouses, Scarborough CC (tbc) and Scarborough College.

U15s – Manager Lizzie Dillam has been really impressed with the standard of cricket:

"It's been great to see the sheer amount of talent on display throughout the observation process."

The squad will be selected in time for their first training session on the 5th May. The U15s will play in a Royal London 40-over competition and a Vitality T20 competition, fixtures from June-August. Lizzie is working with coach Andy Staley. Home game venues include Copley, Bradford Park Avenue, Harrogate, Church Fenton, Heworth, and Richmond. Away fixtures against Notts, Durham, Northumberland, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Warwickshire. Please note that playing and training opportunities will still be on offer for those not selected in the squad of 15, including fixtures against Cumbria.

U13s and U11s – CAG lead Kevin Gresham and coach Rob Johnson have a busy season ahead. They will be working with 30 players in each of these age groups. The girls will play intra-squad matches (along with general training) regularly through the summer, interspersed with games against other counties. There will be a 3-day U11 festival at Scarborough College in late August with Lancashire and Durham joining us. There will also be a match at Terrington Hall School for U11s with Kent travelling up. It's also fantastic to note that they will be using young female coaches who have

come through the system, for example Eleanor Smith and Adrianna Darlow, acting as great models for the young girls coming through.

Games and training for both age groups will take place around the county and will include Bradford Park Avenue, Harrogate, Terrington Hall School, Scarborough CC, York CC amongst others. Away games include Notts, Durham, Northumberland and Lancashire.

DYNAMOS IS A BIG HIT FOR GIRLS!



Drum roll please... we have 250 GIRLS signed up for our Dynamos programme in clubs across Yorkshire!! The ECB-designed sessions for girls and boys between 9-11 will be fun, fast-paced, inclusive and will develop the children's cricket-playing skills. Club volunteers are busy getting trained up as activators, and the courses will be launched over the next few weeks. Well done to all clubs involved, it has been a busy time of preparations. Watch this space... it will be just the start for some of these girls as they fall in love with cricket, follow a pathway and go on to great things just like

all the women and girls featured in this blog. Exciting times!

Viking Cricket



Finally, a big thank you to Viking Cricket, who are official partners of Yorkshire Cricket Board and are supporting Girls County Age Group Cricket this year. They specialise in women's cricket equipment and provide bats to a number of professional female cricket players.

vikingcricket.co.uk