

# GDFC MAG



ISSUE #3 | DECEMBER 2020

# EDITOR'S NOTE



EMMA MAGNUS  
@EMMAFMAGNUS

Ever since I joined Goal Diggers in 2015, pitch space has been a problem – the spectre in the corner, breathing down our necks as we play. In late August, the club's five-year campaign for a pitch finally came to an end. GDFC had earned the motherlode: prime time access to Haggerston Park's football pitches. It was only right that we celebrate this milestone with an issue of GDFC Mag.

Pitch, as we will see in this issue, is inherently political. Talking about pitches raises questions of space and representation – in football and beyond. And since Goal Diggers got the keys to Haggerston Park, a lot has happened –the US election; two successive lockdowns— which brings these issues sharply into focus.

Back in March, the first lockdown felt like space to me, in spite of its restrictions. The days were long and warm. Football pitches that cost hundreds of pounds per hour to hire were suddenly a free-for-all (more on this in Ciara Robinson's article). But now, two lockdowns later, it feels like space is shrinking again.

In lockdown 2, Coach Josh Pugh and I were kicked off the empty football pitches in Alexandra Palace at 9am on a Saturday because we were using cones – and cones, famously, are a symbol of organised football. We could play alone, we were told, or we could kick a ball aimlessly, but the groundskeeper drew the line at the cones. To me, it felt unspeakably cruel. In the first lockdown we had waltzed onto Whittington Park like kings. Now, we were scrabbling for space in a muddy public park.

Space –of all kinds—is more important than ever. And this, reader, is what's inside the mag. From lamenting the absence of football to queer theory, to exploring inequalities of pitch space, there is plenty in here to wet your whistle. We bring you your old favourites –Top Trumps, recipes, Crush, Horoscopes and Agony Aunts— and we invite you to sit back, reflect and enjoy. Welcome to the third and final issue of 2020.

*Many thanks to the GDFC Mag team, our talented contributors and to Izzy Holton and Fleur Cousens for their helping hands.*

## CONTENTS

- 03 GDFC Articles
- 09 Football Features
- 21 Writing About Gender
- 29 Food Focus
- 33 Advice and Romance

# MAG TEAM



**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
**EMMA MAGNUS @EMMAFMAGNUS**

Emma established GDFC Mag and is the publication's editor. She commissions and curates material for the magazine as well as contributing herself. Emma is doing an MA in Interactive Journalism at City, University of London, having previously worked in theatre. She joined GDFC in 2015.



**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
**ANASTASIA KUCHTA @ANASTASIAKUCHTA**

Anastasia is responsible for the design and layout of the magazine. She works to commission illustrations, as well as illustrating parts of the magazine herself. Anastasia works as a Graphic Designer, and has a MA in Magazine Publishing from University of the Arts London. She joined GDFC in 2018.



**CONTENT DIRECTOR**  
**CIARA ROBINSON @CIARA\_SHAY**

Ciara helps commission, curate and write content for the magazine. She works as a social/psychological researcher in the criminal justice system having completed an MSc in Urbanisation, Complex Emergencies and International Development. Ciara used to chair political debates at youth conferences across the EU and previously helped run events at the School of Life. Fresh faced and eager to become the next Rapinoe, she joined GDFC in 2019.



**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
**JESS KEATING @JESSLKEATING**

Jess writes, edits and supplies photos for the magazine. She is responsible for promoting GDFC Mag via social media. She joined Goal Diggers in 2018 and works in Higher Education communications.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GABY PIMENTEL @PIMALIM92

## ABOUT THE COVER



Anastasia Kuchta illustrated the cover, which features two Diggers putting up the nets, a well known image to anyone who plays on Clapham Common.

The nets are built by the words, "We belong on the pitch. We belong in this space." The image represents the GDFC ethos of helping each other to create a fairer football for everyone. We believe this starts with a better pitch booking system, which is one of the major themes explored in this issue.

# GOAL DIGGERS FC: A CHEQUERED PITCHTORY

WORDS BY EMMA MAGNUS @EMMAFMAGNUS

“The full pitch is booked by Goal Diggers FC” reads GDFC’s sign outside Haggerston Park football pitches. We love to see it.

It’s 7pm on a Wednesday (pre-Tier 4), the player bubbles are forming, and training is kicking off. The 3G underfoot is buttery soft, the pitch illuminated corner to corner in the middle of the dark park, like a fish tank in a darkened room. Occasionally, people stop to watch.

Coach Josh is wearing his manager’s jacket. Silky trails of steam snake through the cold air as we players talk. The sound of chatter, the satisfying thunk of the leathery connection of boot and ball and the occasional ringing of the metal fence as it is struck by balls pierce through the otherwise still, black night. This, reader, is a scene of community.

With 60 Goals on the pitch —and that’s with social distancing— Wednesday night training is a well-oiled machine. This picture is the culmination of a successful 5-year long pitch campaign with none other than Club Founder Fleur Cousens at its helm.

Goal Diggers has come a long way, and nothing symbolises this better than the evolution of its pitch space. Today, we’ll meet some of the key pitches from GDFC’s past – and hear what they have to say for themselves.

## WHITECHAPEL

**Dates:** September 2015

**CV:** Warm self-starter who enjoys life in a fast-paced working environment. Cheerful, energetic and dynamic worker who performs well under pressure.

**Preferred email sign off:** Thanks

**What we say about the pitch:** Not many Goals will remember Goal Diggers’ short inaugural stint at Whitechapel Sports Centre. But neglected by the history books, these bright walls were home to the club’s humble beginnings.

**Memory from a member:** ‘When I think of our Whitechapel pitch, I think of colour, chaos and calor – as *BLIMEY* it was hot. Our pitch was inside a brightly coloured, indoor football centre with heaps of pitches, heaps of activity and heaps of noise. It was, however, a wonderful first pitch for us Goals. Though it was sweaty and spenny, it set a very joyful tone. It was also across the road from a fantastic pub – ever since day one us Goals Just Wanna Have Fun.’ Fleur Cousens

## KING’S CROSS COMMUNITY PITCH

**Dates:** Nov 2015 – March 2017

**CV:** Ambitious, down-to-earth community netball court with its heart in the right place. Punctual and easy to access. New to the game, with a positive attitude and the ability to think outside of the (floodlit) box.

**Preferred email sign off:** All best wishes

**What we say about the pitch:** Journeys to and from this community pitch at King’s Cross were marked by the long, dark walk from King’s Cross station down York Way. Past Granary Square; past the big Waitrose, past the Star of Kings, until there! Down by the side of the road, the viewer would perceive a small, fenced concrete pitch —actually, a netball court— next to a car park.

These were the club’s fateful beginnings. As numbers grew, we spilled out into the dark car park, stumbling over potholes and navigating around puddles. This was, above all, hazardous. But we owe this pitch everything. With that sweet price tag (free), this centrally located pitch put the wind in the club’s sails. Looking back, it may seem treacherous, but back then, we were proud to call it home.

**Memory from a member:** ‘I remember my first session – turning up and vaguely knowing a few faces. It was cold and damp and we were on a concrete netball court next to a block of flats and a building site. This was back when Josh





King's Cross Community Pitch



King's Cross Indoor Sports Hall



Whitechapel



King's Cross Community Pitch



King's Cross Indoor Sports Hall

*was attempting to get us all fit and so we'd start with a run around the court for 5 minutes.*

*We used to play matches inside the court under lights and also outside the court which was pitch black and sometimes icy. Coach Ruby would have to shout if we got too close to the ice. One time I fell over and I scraped both knees completely open on the concrete and I was bleeding all over the place. After practice (or training as Josh used to tell me to call it) I hobbled back to the Tube. My knees were covered in gravel and a nice man gave me some water to rinse them off there on the platform because they looked so manky.'* Anna Gray

## KING'S CROSS INDOOR SPORTS HALL

**Dates:** March - April 2017

**CV:** Qualified, state-of-the-art facility that enjoys working closely with others. Safe and well-lit, with the ability to work under pressure and as part of a close-knit team.

**Preferred email sign off:** Kind regards

**What we say about the pitch:** Arriving at what looked like an office in the heart of King's Cross, with glassy double doors and its own concierge, this was the last place you'd expect to find a football pitch. Clean, modern and situated in the bowels of a block of flats, this was the kind of pitch that heats up as you play, the squeaky floor becoming slippery with sweat and the layers peeled quickly off.

Inside, it was like a squash court: you could boot the ball at the walls and watch it come bounding back like a

golden retriever. While we couldn't all fit onto the pitch for matches at the end, there was a nice viewing gallery which allowed us to spectate from above.

These days were bittersweet. We were relieved to have somewhere to play after our concrete pitch closed, but we knew it wouldn't last. The threat of eviction loomed perpetually over us, and, like the orchestra on the Titanic, we played, clouded by shadows of doubt.

**Memory from a member:** *'It's the beginning of 2017 and we're training in the sweatiest sports hall in London. Location: King's Cross. Toilets: non-existent.*

*One step into the King's Cross indoor pitch and all your pores dry out and the sweet smell of Tuesday training was upon you. It was a unique choice as the audio in the sports hall was terrible and we had to use the next door cinema's toilet, BUT the viewing balcony made it all worth it. As we cheered on our fellow Goals from above, we knew better times were to follow.'* Amy Lester

## SHOREDITCH PARK

**Dates:** April - May 2017

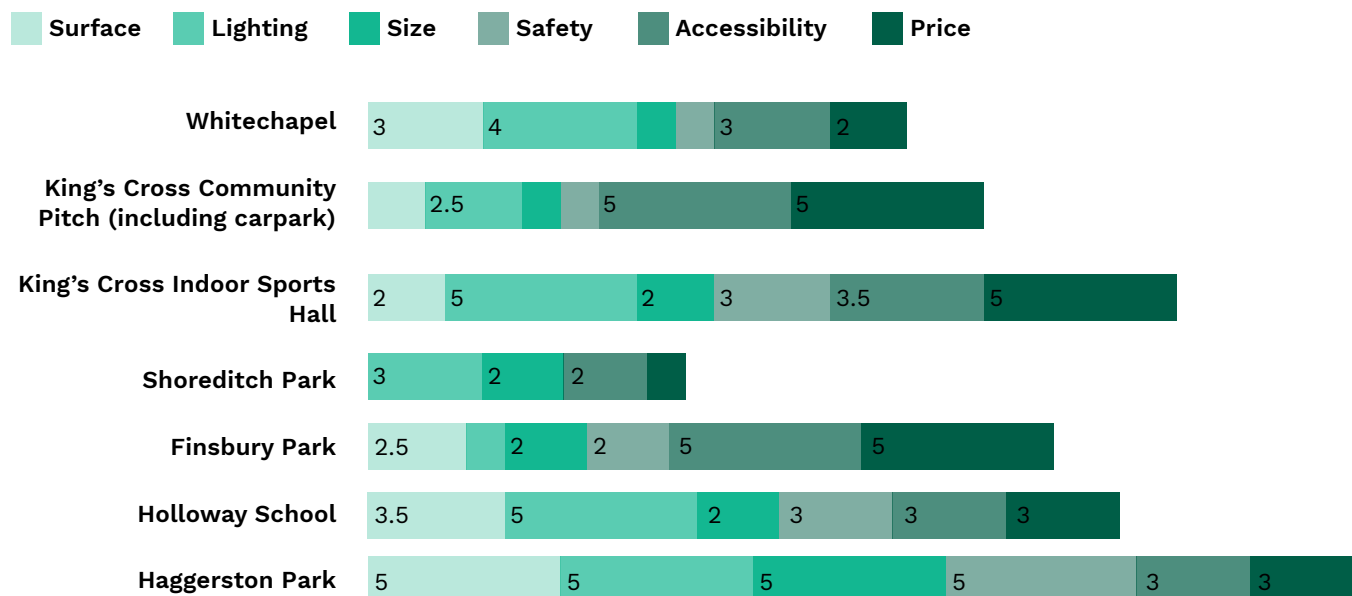
**CV:** I am a versatil pitch you can also use me as tennis court. Don't worry i am not dangerus please give me a job I will do anything you like no problem

**Preferred email sign off:** None

**What we say about the pitch:** This pitch was not worth the dirt it was made of. The gravelly land was cratered and even the smallest slip of foot could prove lethal. We

## KEY PITCHES COMPARED

GDFC'S PREVIOUS PITCHES GO HEAD TO HEAD (RANKED OUT OF 5)



saw clothes torn after training session; skin lesioned and bloodied. And a pitch where you are too afraid to run is not a pitch at all.

**Memory from a member:** 'I remember having to convince someone who worked in the building that it was our equipment in storage. He wouldn't let me take the balls.

We had to do 11v11 on basically a tennis court once. I'll be honest, I've tried to clear my mind of that era.' Coach Josh Pugh

### FINSBURY PARK

**Dates:** May - August 2017

**CV:** Cheerful, down to earth public space that is capable of learning quickly and adapting to different tasks. Versatile and creative worker who enjoys working closely with colleagues and is willing to pitch in when the going gets tough.

**Preferred email sign off:** Cheers

**What we say about the pitch:** This interim pitch over the summer of 2017 helped Goal Diggers out of a tricky situation - having no pitch to call home. Despite the tough competition from tag rugby teams, we set up week by week in Finsbury Park, alongside Seven Sisters Road.

There were some unexpected benefits to playing in a public park: each week curious women of all ages stopped and asked about the club, revealing vast numbers of secret footballers and reiterating yet again the importance of spaces like GDFC.

**Memory from a member:** 'It was the summer of 2017, shortly after Coach Ruby left, and I arrived at our training ground, Finsbury Park, unaware that the course of Digger history was, for two reasons, about to change forever.

The first reason is that it was the last time I remember wearing a really lush t-shirt that disappeared soon after. Gutting. But the second, and arguably most important reason, is that it was the debut of the mighty...Coach Ciara!! At least, it maaaay have been her debut, it could also have just been the first time I met her. But I'm sure we'd both agree that that's when things really started to kick off. Either way, a hugely special day, which I remember marking with a pint of Guinness - an exceedingly bold choice of bev for a scorching hot July evening. Guess I was trying to show off to the new coach?' Georgia Bruce

### HOLLOWAY SCHOOL

**Dates:** Aug 2017 - Aug 2020

**CV:** Results-driven pitch in an educational setting; able to take previous experience forward into this new and exciting role. Enthusiastic and highly organised, with good storage provision and an AstroTurf surface.

**Preferred email sign off:** Best wishes

**What we say about the pitch:** Having moved from rock hard surface to rock hard surface, this firm AstroTurf pitch felt like paradise for our knees. Accessing the pitch meant walking through the whole school, past parents watching their children swimming and students' artwork on the walls.





Shoreditch Park



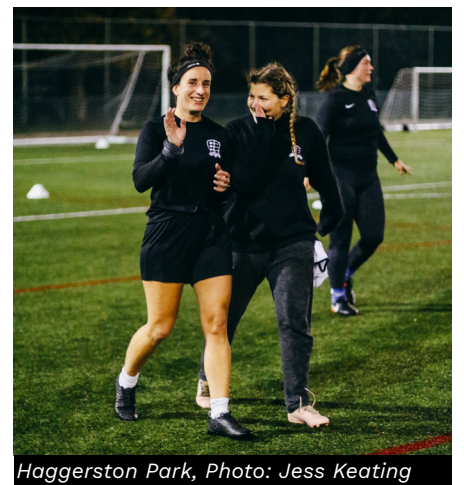
Finsbury Park



Haggerston Park



Holloway School, Photo: James Deavin



Haggerston Park, Photo: Jess Keating

At this point, Goal Diggers was booming, but limits on the amount of space meant that, for the first time, the club had to implement a cap on the number of members at each training session. Competition for a spot at training became intense and the closing 5-a-side games were played in such tight conditions that we all improved our close control. We'd warm up outside the pitch, 60 Goals flooding on when 14 men walked off. At the end, on the stroke of 9.30pm, we would be plunged into darkness as the floodlights were turned off, like Cinderella at the ball.

**Memory from a member:** *'It is a chilly autumn evening in a pre-Covid world (2019 BC). Practice has finished; MVPs awarded; unnecessarily long announcements made. With sand residue in the darkest of places and scuffed knees from the less than pleasant surface, the Goals retire to the pub.'*

*Meanwhile, an anonymous committee member carries the ball bag to the storeroom by the side of the pool at Holloway School. Told many times to take her sandy shoes off before entering, she has put on a pair of random, oversized flip flops. Carrying one too many pieces of training equipment, she slips on the wet floor, soaking her tuchus in a puddle of chlorine residue from the pool. With a suspicious-looking wet patch, a bruised ego and keen to get to the pub, she bangs on any changing room door open, only to realise she has no change of clothes.*

*The choice remains: go pintless or own the wet patch. You know what she did Goals. Persevered, bought her cheap, well-earned pint and warmed her bum in the plush seats of the Prince Edward dreaming of a 3G pitch that does not ruin your knees or bruise your tuchus.'* Ciara Robinson

## HAGGERSTON PARK

**Dates:** Aug 2020 – present

This brings us to the present. In the words of Fleur Cousens:

*'We dug oh so deep for 5 years to get this space. After being told no so many times it still feels surreal every time I set foot on the pitch. The fact that it's the whole 11-a-side pitch, the fact that it's for two hours, the fact it's a prime-time booking, the fact it's OUR training home... it's unbelievable.'*

*The visibility of us on this space is so powerful and (in a non-Covid world) I can't wait to fit as many Goals as possible on each blade of 3G. Haggerston really is pitch perfect.'*

The rest, as they say, is pitchtory.

# GDFC TOP TRUMPS

WORDS BY CIARA ROBINSON @CIARA\_SHAY AND JOSH PUGH @JOSHPUGH.UK, ILLUSTRATIONS BY LILY GRANT @LILYROSEGRANT

THE GDFC MAG TEAM INTRODUCES TOP TRUMPS: A BLAST FROM THE PAST WITH A POLITICALLY DISASTROUS NAME. EACH ISSUE, WE WILL INCLUDE A SERIES OF CARDS DETAILING YOUR UNIQUE SELLING POINTS AS PLAYERS AND PEOPLE.

As the collection grows, we encourage you to put together your squads and battle it out for the best starting 11 (on or off the pitch). Get psyched for the maddest collectibles around town. Want to end up on one of these fine cards? Email [mag@goaldiggersfootballclub.com](mailto:mag@goaldiggersfootballclub.com) for the chance to be featured in the next issue.



**STRENGTH** "WE GO AGAIN"  
**WEAKNESS** "WE GO AGAIN"  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** "WE GO AGAIN"  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** "WE GO AGAIN"

**BELLA "CAPTAIN" BORG**



**STRENGTH** FEMINIST ICON  
**WEAKNESS** TIGHT LEGGINGS  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** ENTHUSIASM  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** ENTHUSIASM

**JOSH "NIKE" PUGH**



**STRENGTH** CAN DEADLIFT TWO PEOPLE  
**WEAKNESS** KNOWS VERY LITTLE ABOUT CRISPS  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** OVERLAPS  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** PRESSING

**EMMA "SQUAT" MAGNUS**



**STRENGTH** GDFC RIDE OR DIE  
**WEAKNESS** IDEOLOGICALLY OPPOSED TO SWEEPER  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** LONG RANGE SHOTS  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** WINS HER DUELS

**LEAH "MACRAME" KAHN**



**STRENGTH** GRAPHIC DESIGNER EXTRAORDINAIRE  
**WEAKNESS** AMERICAN (ALSO FLORIDIAN)  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** THROUGH BALLS  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** MARKING 1-VS-1

**ANASTASIA "I CAN DO ANYTHING" KUCHTA**



**STRENGTH** INSTA FAMOUS  
**WEAKNESS** LIKES OWN TWEETS  
**ATTACKING ATTRIBUTE** FORWARD PASSING  
**DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTE** GREAT COMMUNICATOR

**JESS "WILLIAMSON" KEATING**



POETRY

---

# P.I.T.C.H

WORDS BY VIVIENNE JEFFERS @VIVVY\_J, ILLUSTRATION BY ELLA LAMBIO @ELLA.LAMBIO

My own experience of finding a football pitch space  
Highlights the many obstacles that women's football teams face  
When it comes to ladies' football and getting a pitch  
You'll be lucky to be given a space that's bigger than a ditch  
Whether you're looking for pitch to play a game  
Or even just a space to train  
The amount of fighting becomes a pain

We have been offered the unwanted hours and days  
That at times we are forced to just say 'okay'  
With the men's football teams always given preference over us  
They wonder why we make such a fuss  
We deserve to be seen and not only heard  
And given a space where we can play undeterred

It isn't fair  
And we feel that nobody cares  
About the pitch space  
We are given to face  
At times so small  
That you can't even run with the ball

All we want is to be given the same chances  
To run on a pitch big enough to do extravagant goal celebration dances.



# THE HISTORY BENEATH OUR FOOTBALL BOOTS: PARKS, HYBRID PLASTIC, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND A 50-YEAR BAN

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY CAITLIN CLARK @CAITLIN.IVY.CLARK

If a fan from 1863, the year the Football Association was first established, were to turn up to a Premier League fixture this weekend, all they would recognise is the corner flags, goalposts and maybe that the pitch is green.

The markings of a football pitch are ingrained in every fan, player and coach's mind as clearly as the silhouette of the Eiffel Tower. With additions including multi-purpose surfaces and Video Assistant Referee (VAR), the whole notion of a 'football pitch' has changed significantly. It doesn't take the OGs of the game to recognise that.

Football is an ever-evolving game and the very ancestry of the 'football pitch' goes way back. The main markings we see today were established between 1863 to 1902. It was not until 1875 that the crossbar was introduced and in 1902 came the halfway line, penalty spot and penalty box.

Initially, the game was played in local parks, fields or on scraps of grass. The pitch consisted of two goal frames facing one another but no clear touchline. In 1963, The Football Association stipulated that pitches should be 183m by 91m, a huge surface relative to today (100-105m long and 64-68m wide). As the game grew in popularity, and in turn advanced, matches began to be played in stadiums with purpose-built surfaces.

Undersoil heating? Drainage systems? Multi-purpose turf with a rollable NFL surface beneath?

The game has capitalised on growing spectatorship requiring stadium infrastructure and pitch maintenance. It wasn't until the 1960s

that the game matured beyond surfaces other than grass and evolved from a pig sty to hybrid plastic and a lot of science!

The pitch itself is a tapestry and spectacle for bystanders. A groundsperson must have a thorough understanding of horticulture, business, engineering, technology and meteorology. Ever wondered how the pitch has different shades of green to differentiate the areas? Each blade has a different texture on each side of its small body. One being matte, the other glossy. In the constant strive for perfection, a groundsperson will either cut the grass in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction allowing different patterns to formulate on the surface.

Sounds like a work of art, but in reality, how many people actually get to play on a surface like that? And of the few that do, how many are women?

Let's go back to a time when women ruled the pitch. During WWI, women's football was huge. As men went off to fight in the war, women took on roles in factories. The friendships built at work spilled over to kickarounds during breaks. As these forms of entertainment grew, factory teams became more formalised and played in charity matches.

According to The National Football Museum, the Dick, Kerr Ladies, founded in 1917, remain the most successful women's team of all time - a huge statement considering the trophy cabinets of the best Women's Super League teams. In 1920, the Dick, Kerr Ladies drew a crowd of 53,000 spectators at Everton's Goodison Park





stadium for a Boxing Day fixture. At the time, it was believed to be the largest crowd at any football match in England ever recorded.

The evolution of the women's football pitch, however, was brought to a complete standstill in 1921. The FA banned women's football and it wasn't until 1971 that the FA lifted that ban. After a 50-year wait, the women's game was reinstated and began to play catch up in a man's world.

Women's football was forced to inherit a space defined by men. Like a hand-me-down top from an older sibling, women players have been forced to make it fit, accept it and just get on with it. Today's pitches, for example, are built for men. The goal frame and pitch length are the same for men and women, despite clear differences in heights between the two. The average goalkeeper in the Premier League sizes about 6ft 3in, juxtaposing the 5ft 8in in the Women's Super League.

During the 1971 Mexico Women's World Cup (a tournament organised by the federation of Independent European

---

## SOUNDS LIKE A WORK OF ART, BUT IN REALITY, HOW MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY GET TO PLAY ON A SURFACE LIKE THAT? AND OF THE FEW THAT DO, HOW MANY ARE WOMEN?

Female Football twenty years before the first official FIFA Women's World Cup) goal frames were painted in pink and white hoops. This was an appeal to attract women spectators and add a feminine touch. I'm glad this feature didn't stick. As done in sports like athletics and basketball, couldn't they have adapted football pitches to a woman's physique instead?

Pitch standards are very different in the men's and women's game. Many of the clubs in the WSL represent very wealthy football teams. The need to fund drainage systems or pitch heaters for the grounds of their women's





## WHILST MOST PEOPLE WOULD SAY THE GRASS IS GREENER, I'D SAY IT'S ARTIFICIALLY GREENER AND NOT SOMETHING WE SHOULD ENTIRELY STRIVE TOWARDS.

team shouldn't be such an ask. This was something implemented for the men's game back in the 1960s. Liverpool Women, the sister team of the current Premier League champions, had two games called off at Prenton Park and a fixture against Arsenal moved to Chester (26 miles from Anfield) because of poor pitch conditions.

Moreover, the women's teams often play some distance from the club's official stadiums. Arsenal Women are situated at Borehamwood, 12.2 miles from the Emirates, and Chelsea are located at Kingsmeadow, 7.3 miles from Stamford Bridge. In other words, fans have to travel to the outskirts of London to cheer their team on. When the token games at club stadiums have happened, fans showed up in their numbers and proved the popularity of the women's game, just like the 1920 fixture at Goodison Park. Let's not make the same mistake again. Understand the fans and go with the tide.

VAR is ubiquitous in the men's game. But for women, it vanished into thin air after being used in the 2019 Women's

World Cup. Unlike for men, it is not used in elite football like the WSL. The addition of VAR to the WSL 'pitches' remains far off, and in all honesty, there are quite a few 'pitch' battles to be had before even reaching that hurdle.

Ultimately, between a 50-year ban and a game of catch up, women's pitches are far behind. As the professionalism of the women's game accelerates, clubs must invest in quality, nearby pitches and let women define their own notions of a 'football pitch' - something we were so heavily denied in 1921.

Whilst most people would say the grass is greener, I'd say it's artificially greener and not something we should entirely strive towards. There is a lot to celebrate in women's football, especially the modest stage it is played on. I love the community feel after a match, actually getting to meet the players and engage in conversation. You don't get that in the men's game. The pitch is just a red carpet. In order to level the playing field (pun aside), women need to be given the funding, resources and ability to not simply catch up, but instead define the very own history beneath their boots. If a woman from WWI was to drop into a modern women's game today, would she be astounded by how far we have come, or saddened by our need to redefine history?



PODCAST

---

# DESERT ISLAND KICKS

PODCAST BY MAY ROBSON @DESERTISLANDKICKS, ILLUSTRATION BY LILY GRANT @LILYROSEGRANT



## FOUR TRACKS, A BOOK AND A LUXURY: WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE TO A DESERT ISLAND?

Desert Island Kicks is back.

While the famous footballers cast away on Radio 4 are all men, in this podcast we hear from the great women and non-binary footballers in London.

Our castaway this week is the brilliant Georgia Bruce. According to Twitter, they have 'kind eyes, a firm handshake and a competitive spirit.' Tune in to hear us discuss why Dolly Parton is womxn's football, as well as some silver linings of lockdown.

Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/desertislandkicks/georgiabruce>.

# FOOTBALL IS FOR ANY BODY

WORDS BY JESS KEATING @JESSLKEATING, PHOTO BY KATE MCSHANE @KATELOUISEMCSHANE

I am fat and I am a footballer. It is much easier to be proud of the latter part of that sentence, but I am working on the former. There is a subsection of society that seem to think that the two cannot co-exist. This absolutely played a big part in me leaving the game in my early teenage years and keeping me away until my early 20s. Football is now a significant part of my life: I play it, I volunteer with Goal Diggers FC to manage their social media and their fundraising club night Murder On Zidane's Floor. I follow women's football and I advocate for its growth and support. I can't imagine my life without football, something that seems crazy to say now considering I had almost a decade away from it. I'm not trying to evoke sympathy, but to help people to understand some of the challenges fat people face in and around the world of football.

'Just Do It.' Most —if not all of us— will recognise the motto of the world's biggest sports brand, Nike. Goal Diggers FC, like the England Lionesses, currently play in Nike kits. But it's hard to take the slogan's advice when you can't find a pair of shorts in your size. There is only one pair of women's shorts that I could buy on Nike's website to wear to play for GDFC – and they're advertised as everyday wear, not sportswear.

I usually resort to tracksuits. I find a comfortable pair that fits and will religiously buy them until they are no longer available and I have to begin my search again. I vividly remember the moment I got my first Goal Diggers kit in summer 2019. I collected it from training and while others were trying on their new gold tops excitedly, I put mine into my bag and took it home to try on alone. I was so worried that none of it would fit and that I wouldn't be able to play football. Just kitting myself out can be a challenge and a cause of stress. There is often additional work and expense that fat people have to put in to get ready to head to the pitch. My request to you, dear reader? Call for sportswear brands to improve their offerings. Challenge your favourite brands, and if there is not size inclusivity, then consider spending your money elsewhere. Money talks.

In March, I posted a video on TikTok of me scoring two beautiful goals in a 5-a-side tournament. I was excited by the goals themselves: as a defender, they're quite rare! Lucy Bronze even

## SO MUCH OF THE NARRATIVE AROUND FAT PEOPLE ENGAGING IN EXERCISE CENTRES NOT AROUND ENJOYMENT, BUT WEIGHT LOSS.

liked the video, which was quite a moment. However, my excitement was quickly dampened by the abusive comments I started receiving – not about my footballing skills, but about my body. Someone even duetted the video, donning a makeshift fat suit and mocking me. There were, of course, positive comments and real support that came from the video, but the negative experiences will always linger deeper and longer in my mind.

If I could go back a decade and tell my younger self to continue playing football, I would. I can still see myself sitting at the kitchen table having tea and telling my mum that I wanted to quit football. Back then I couldn't articulate the reason behind wanting to quit. I just had to. Looking back, I spent too much of my teenage years concerned about how people would react to me being on a football pitch that I removed that possibility completely. In doing so, I can see how much I deprived myself of. I feel glad to have discovered Goal Diggers FC and reclaimed my space on the football pitch and within the football world. Life's too short. I don't intend to allow what other people may think of me shape my life like that again.

In preparing to write this piece, I wanted to try and read some testimonials from other fat womxn who play sports. So much of the narrative around fat people engaging in exercise centres not around enjoyment, but weight loss. That's not what I'm here for, and not what I want to read about. I'm not interested in before and after images. I want to celebrate how womxn's bodies shape their sporting performance, not how sport shapes womxn's bodies.

A few months ago, Fiona Tomas wrote an article in the Telegraph about an "alarming trend of disordered eating and fat-shaming within the Women's Super League." This showed how it can be, and is, a struggle at all levels of the women's game. Players have even revealed the existence of 'fat clubs' where players are colour coded based on their body fat. If they fell into the 'red'



zone, they were asked to train more to lose weight. This really shocked me, and highlighted the ways in which a culture of fat-shaming is embedded even in the highest levels of women's football in England. Importantly, we need to remember that exercise and sport will not lead to one particular body shape. Athletic is not a body type. All bodies are different, and all bodies are welcome on the football pitch.

Here's the thing. You can't identify the myriad ways a person can influence a football match by looking at their body. The way they read the game. The way they motivate their team, even

through brutal losses. The way they feel after playing football, endorphins pumping through their body. In many ways, I feel like I've won. I (re)discovered a sport that I love; I have been able to surround myself with others who love football as much as me and who find a similar release and joy in playing it. When I have a ball at my feet, I feel invincible. And when I share the pitch with Goal Diggers FC, I see powerful, motivated, strong, driven (and often sweaty) football players. It's a beautiful and empowering experience.

Football is for any body.



# I'D RATHER BE ON THE PITCH...

## REFLECTIONS ON LOCKDOWN 2

WORDS BY ANNA GRAY @ANNAOGRAY, PHOTOS BY JESS KEATING @JESSLKEATING

It's 5 November. Another lockdown: a whole month without GDFC. Not again! It's dark and it's cold and we have to face even more weeks without a kickaround.

7:25 on Monday evening. My phone buzzes and my heart leaps – must sign up for training! Then it hits – lockdown. No football for me. I sink back on the sofa, deflated, to watch yet another episode of MasterChef Professionals –

I'd rather be on the pitch\*.

The sun remembers it exists and beams in through my bedroom window. I drag myself out of my flat to test a new exercise app. Zombies chase me through my headphones – a gargled growl in my ear, and it actually works: I'm scared into running. It's pretty fun; I manage a whole lap, but it's nothing on Saturday 11s –

I'd rather be on the pitch.

Craving competition, I suggest a game of Articulate. For a few brief moments I think victory might be within my grasp, but I fall behind after a dodgy 'People' round. No adrenaline here, no endorphins –

I'd rather be on the pitch.

Virtual MOZF makes my heart leap. Goal Diggers having fun, modelling crocs, throwing shapes. We even dig out our bibs! Faces smile back at me on the screen, but laughing in person is better –

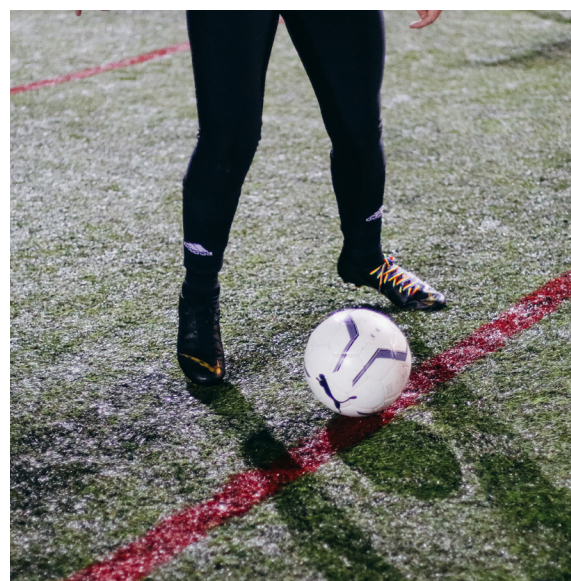
I'd rather be on the pitch.

Pinch, punch, first second of the month. Finally, the end of lockdown and I feel bouncy and light. Football is back and I am thrilled! The work day drags. I keep checking the time; I can't cycle fast enough, will I be late?! Phew, I make it. Haggerston Park is in sight.

It feels so good to be back on the pitch.

*\*This is really saying something because I bloody love MasterChef Professionals.*

Editor's note: This was written before Tier 4 was announced. We can only assume that Anna would still rather be on the pitch.



## OPINION

# ANARCHY, ACCESSIBILITY AND ACTIVISM

WORDS BY MAT CHES, PHOTO BY JESS KEATING @JESSLKEATING

## LOCKDOWN 1.0

It's a hot June day. A sports bra and Birkenstocks kind of day. I've cycled over to Mabley Green for a sunset kickaround. The Digger crew are already setting up. There are two options for entering our pitch of summer glory. Duck under the peeled back section of stiff fence or scale the high wire hole cut open by the heroes of Homerton? Still recovering from last week's high wire impalement, I stick to the former. Stepping onto the pitch, I soak up the scene around me.

The low summer sun is warming two large 11-aside pitches filled with footballers using every available inch of space. A 5-aside pitch that usually costs upwards of 80 quid per hour is teeming with men and boys from all walks of life. Though us Diggers are amongst very few womxn, we carve out our space and play with the same intensity as the rest of Mabley. It's odd to reflect on those times, times I may never see again. There was a sense of playful anarchy across many London football turfs. Pitches that are sometimes unused and price out many local people were filled to the very margins. Groups arrived earlier and earlier to secure their spots. Some would spend the entire day perfecting technique. I'd arrive for a morning session and return for an evening session to see the same committed faces. Occasionally, I'd get a nod of acknowledgement (and perhaps mutual respect) as I walked past those sitting for a Lucozade break. The truth is: our playing time was no longer dictated by the rules of who pays more, who has more power, or who owns what. The gates to a common good had been torn down and in purely numerical terms, Mabley Green had never seen such efficient use of each square of astroturf. Whilst not uncomplicated by the new politics this anarchy brought, it was undoubtedly a beautiful time.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, our Mabley microcosm reproduced some of the same power-laden football politics from time before Covid. Very

TOWARDS THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN,  
DIGGERS WON A LENGTHY BATTLE TO ACQUIRE  
A PRIME-TIME PITCH SPOT WITH SUFFICIENT  
SPACE. BRING ON HAGGERSTON - THE FIELD OF  
DREAMS!

few womxn were present on these pitches. Moreover, when space was tight or large groups of men arrived, we were the first to be pushed aside or asked to move. I remember being told, "It's nothing to do with your gender but we simply have more players than you do." If the logic of that unimaginative statement was used for all decisions, the rights of every marginalised group would always be deprioritised. The fact is - yes, there were fewer of us but that didn't make our stake any less important. We were there first and had a right to play for a given time. Frankly, the only way more womxn play football and increase those numbers is by making space for them to do so. Having to explain that over and over was a rollercoaster of patience, frustration, anger and apathy. In those moments, no matter how bright the sun shone, my idyllic image was always a little tainted. I was witnessing a reclamation of space that challenged the uneven distribution and gatekeeping of a public good.

Unfortunately, this reclamation was not equally inclusive for womxn. I think it is important to clarify at this point, that the scene was not one of simplicity. It was more nuanced than them versus us. There were those who watched with genuine interest and celebrated our skillful play. You could argue this was patronising and in some cases, it may well have been. In reality, it's not often that women's football is particularly visible to those not already looking for it. At the very least, men watching and



impressed by our footballing ability implied a baseline engagement and even excitement that is not the norm. Beyond spectators, some men asked if they could join or if we would like to join them. Mixed games of football tennis at Mabley Green formed temporary bonds of solidarity and friendship. We may have parted ways but the point is, we all played, we all became unnecessarily competitive and most of us were terrible losers.

## A PITCH OF OUR OWN

Towards the beginning of autumn, Diggers won a lengthy battle to acquire a prime-time pitch spot with sufficient space. Bring on Haggerston - the field of dreams! This was the next step to making accessible football a reality and grow the game beyond the inherited norms of a history dominated by men. As is life, the acquisition of Haggerston brought new complications. In the aftermath of lockdown, many were still using the pitches free of charge. Despite pitch management and bookings, a lot of men refused to leave the space.

During our first training at Haggerston, I spent most of the two hours convincing groups of boys and men to leave the pitch or refrain from getting on it early. Armed with the booking receipt in one hand and Covid regulations in the other, negotiation began. Many did not believe we had managed to book the pitch. Others simply argued that they should be able to continue playing whilst we trained. Though not unreasonable, I took a firm approach given the numbers of men refusing to leave. I gave different groups time to collect their things, but repeatedly had to return to ask them to leave.

Covid rules aside and despite multiple explanations, many of the men I spoke to did not understand the concept of a safe space. They couldn't fathom why their presence, their encroaching use of the pitch or vocal comments on the women's game would not be conducive to creating a safe, accessible space. Though some were understanding, many could not make the connection between a history of marginalisation and a need to reclaim the space free from the discomfort of microaggressions.

And yet, looking at the 60 excitable Goals around me, I also remember feeling torn. I was frustrated at the men's annoyance and unwillingness to engage but my own reservations nagged at me. What was it that left me feeling uncertain about some of those interactions?

Firstly, I hated the fact I had to use proof of payment (in other words access to money/

resources) as justification. We had all enjoyed the fruits of accessible pitches, free of cost, used more by the local community more than ever. It felt contradictory and perhaps even a betrayal to use the "legitimacy" of the same power structures I resented (with their extortionate prices) as grounds for removal.

Secondly, I was not overtly rude but without a doubt, there were moments where I could have used a more engaging tone, or thought more consciously about my body language. And this was my biggest regret. Though frustrating, that nagging feeling of discomfort really stemmed from the reality that some of the groups I was asking to leave were largely young, black boys. Forget the men who turn up at 8.30 and try to come on the pitch whilst we play our games. I'm talking about the teenagers who come to practise on the sides of the pitch. It's pretty obvious to say football can be great for mental health. For some of these groups of boys, playing football at Haggerston is undoubtedly a safe outlet in a world full of complication, struggle and politics. So, as kids and as locals, why shouldn't they be allowed to play?

To a certain extent, GDFC is a local club. Yet, its members are predominantly white and many come from Greater London and beyond. Yes - womxn are the minority in football. And yet, when a group of largely white womxn tell a group of young, black boys that they can't even play in the margins, you can see why that situation is filled with contention. Covid may be one reason but it's not the one we will use when limits on pitch numbers are over. So - what do we represent? Don't these boys also suffer from some of the same political dynamics that reduce accessibility to the local community through extortionate prices and caged pitches? Aren't these the same practices that mirror the privilege of wealth for the few over the need for secure housing, public space, free school meals and universal basic income?

The above is not to say that our reasons for occupying the pitch as we do are without legitimacy. Our pitch campaign was a huge win for a marginalised group and creating a safe football space is important. However, some of the people we ask to leave also lose out to the same systems we are trying to hold accountable. Though our battles are not synonymous, there is solidarity to be shown here too. More than that, we are not just bystanders but enactors of other forms of privilege and politics. It is for this reason, I felt discomfort. And it is for this reason that the nuances of how we respond or engage with these groups are really important. What do I and what does Goal Diggers represent in those first interactions?



A great example for me was Ellen Robertson, Goal Diggers' Social Secretary. I remember Ellen chatting with one young boy who refused to leave. Stubbornly, he had decided he would watch from the gate for the whole session making comments to his friend and venting his frustrations. Instead of repeating the explanations I had given, Ellen asked the young boy his name. Chatting away in her casual, inquisitive style, she began a conversation about who he was, what team he played for and if he was from around here. The boy began to soften. You could see his body release some of the tension. Chatting away in those minutes, Ellen made herself approachable. She communicated the values of the club subtly, she was neither prescriptive nor preachy. By the end, we had all shared a laugh or two. His friend even complimented some "top bins". Though not entirely a convert, the boy in question left early and told us both to enjoy our evenings.

These recollections draw together the complicated realities that come with "progress". Interestingly, when lockdown 2.0 occurred, the pitches hired security to actively police Mabley and Haggerston. What seemed like a healthy use of space during a global pandemic had come to an end. For Goal Diggers, a club with

clear values of inclusivity and diversity, it's important to reflect on what we represent in different scenarios. Haggerston pitch is a huge win for us and womxn in football. Creating a safe space, beyond COVID, is part of our mission. But new challenges will always rear their heads. We must remember that we share elements of solidarity with different groups. It's not the young boys playing on the edge of the pitch who are responsible for a history of marginalisation or extortionate pricing and block booking systems.

Didn't someone, somewhere, in a very average comic book say, "With great power, comes great responsibility." How we choose to work with certain groups is fundamental. De-escalating situations and authentically engaging men (especially young boys) will be part of our recipe for an accessible and enjoyable space. Instead of remembering GDFC as an obstacle to their football, perhaps they will remember positive interactions and the football we played. We can still be firm, claim our ground and also help them to question what role they want to play in our journey.

# 7 REASONS WHY FOOTBALL AND QUEER THEORY ARE A MATCH MADE IN HAGGERSTON HEAVEN

WORDS BY EMILY COUSENS @COUSENSE, ILLUSTRATION BY LILY GRANT @LILYROSEGRANT

*We're queer, we're here and we like to play football. Emily Cousens explores how lived examples of queer theory can be found on the football pitch. Challenging gender norms, reclaiming space and embracing all things odd, enjoy Emily's deviant queering of football.*

1. Anal Sex, BDSM... If there's one thing queer theory likes, it's getting dirrrty. What could be more up its street than a Saturday morning of muddy knees and sweaty pits after an exhilarating rough and tumble at Clapham Common.

2. Unlike heteronormativity which is firmly on the side of even numbers (the couple form, the nuclear family), queer likes to champion all things odd. 5-a-side, 7's, 11's- the pitch is the perfect place to queer kinship structures!

3. Being anti-capitalist, anti-productivity, and anti 'reproductive futurism', queer theory loves all things transient, fun but ultimately futile. Whilst it doesn't always seem like it in the moment, the best thing about football is that it doesn't really matter. Neither reproductive (going to produce or raise children) or productive (sadly we don't get paid), we ultimately play for fun. Queer theory loves that!

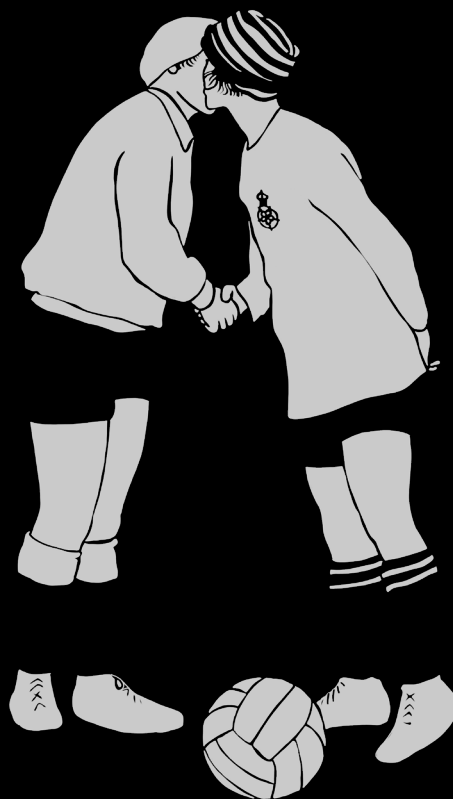
4. Queer theory came out of the reclaiming of the slur 'queer' by AIDS activists in the early 1990s. It's all about embracing marginalised groups and communities, and as a result is firmly on the side of the underdogs. So too

is football! Whether it's Leicester winning the League or a division 2 side persevering towards an FA cup win, both love to back an underdog!

5. Football's biggest superstar Gary Lineker did a poo on the pitch. He then went on to have a follow-up career as the face of crisps. Nothing says queer more.

6. Queer theory is anti-norms, which basically means it hates rules. Yes, on the face of it football's full of rules. But who's everyone's biggest enemy? The referee. As long as queer theory doesn't bring Jeff and/or Norm into it, the two would get on like a house of fire in their ganging up against the rule enforcing ref!

7. 'Cruel Optimism' means you keep pursuing something even though you know it won't deliver the happiness you hope for. What could be a more apt expression for the feeling of being a football fan?





# BUT, YOU'RE A GIRL: FOOTBALL AS RESISTANCE

WORDS BY MAGGIE HAYES @MAGGIEANNEHAYES

**Y**ou can't play football – you're a girl.

This was a statement I repeatedly heard, regarding my ability. This was also a statement denying me permission to share the space – the school playground – with the boys.

I've described playing football as a great joy. A game that takes me to a place of lightness and fun. A place for forgetting the heavier stuff. Football has been a joy from a very young age.

But as a girl and as a woman in a man's world, playing football has also become an act of resistance, a political act.

The joy of playing football does not mean it hasn't also been, at times, painful. As the only nine year-old girl playing football, I was told I could no longer join in. At high school, I was told there was no team because there wasn't any interest. In that case, there was interest, and we proved it – we got names, we got sign-ups and a football team for girls at our high school was established. The jibes – both fuelled by sexism and homophobia – stay with me to this day. Unfortunately, this wasn't only around as a kid.

I do wonder how many girls have not found such joy as playing football because it's 'not girly', or they didn't have people around to play with. Perhaps they didn't have a local team full of supportive girls and parents. It was because of these networks that we had hours of muddy fun, learning the love of the game – wins, losses and everything else.

As an adult – lots of my friends had never played football, and I found it hard to find teams that prioritised playing over competing. I also had experiences of violent, threatening misogyny. A few years ago, a coach at a pitch I went to with other women would repeatedly hang around and talk degradingly about women, what he's done to them and will do to them. He did this in front of his players – a group of young men who looked up to him. One week, I asked him to leave it. This prompted a tirade of violent,

---

**AND THAT'S IT – TAKING UP SPACE THAT ISN'T MEANT OR DESIRED TO BE FOR US... THAT'S THE POLITICAL ACT. AND WE LONG, HOPE, AND FIGHT FOR THAT SPACE THAT'S COMPLETELY FREE FROM PREJUDICE AND ABUSE. WHERE WE CAN KICK A BALL AROUND, HAVE FUN, AND HAVE A SENSE OF FREEING ACCEPTANCE.**

misogynistic, and homophobic threats in return. Should I have stayed quiet? Some might say so but I feel strongly that I should be able to share a safe space to play football – a space where I am respected, not violated.

On that day – I felt alone as if I had no one to help me. No teammates, no coach. I left shaken and scared. I never went back.

Thankfully, I've since found joy, safety and a giving community. Goal Diggers prioritises availability over ability, and with them, I know people will have my back. I take a ball and kick it around whenever I can, and sometimes I join in with others. But sometimes I still feel I am carrying a load, a load that didn't allow me safe entry to those spaces.

And that's it – taking up space that isn't meant or desired to be for us... that's the political act. And we long, hope, and fight for that space that's completely free from prejudice and abuse. Where we can kick a ball around, have fun, and have a sense of freeing acceptance. Freedom: that's the goal. Doing something we love that brings joy. And doing so – that's winning.

# PITCHING FOR SPACE AT THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY BELINDA SCARLETT @BG\_SCARLETT, CURATOR OF WOMEN IN FOOTBALL @FOOTBALLMUSEUM

In 2019 the National Football Museum in Manchester made a pledge to increase its representation of women in football to 50% across its collections and exhibitions. It seems amazing that we need to make this statement at all, surely all spaces, particularly public spaces like museums and galleries should be 50% female. But it is, we believe, the first time a museum has made such a pledge. I would like women to reflect on my experiences at the Museum, of working towards this 50% pledge and the process of pitching for space for women's football material. What can it tell us about the challenges we face when we fight for equal space and representation?

Representation goes beyond visibility, but it is an important part of the fight for equality that women's football is simply given more space to be seen. It is very difficult to understand the position of the women's game today without understanding its past, which makes access to space at the museum even more important. As a curator it is my responsibility to create these spaces. I try to tell the stories of the people who have shaped the narrative of the women's game, in partnership with the football community. This is the first time that this role has existed at the museum. In my view this is a very important step forward.

My work so far has focused on rebalancing our collection, making sure that we have the material in it that adequately reflects women's experiences and football. But increasingly it is and will be about putting this material on display, taking up space that had previously been dedicated almost exclusively to men's football. Our galleries are not being made bigger to accommodate these new objects and stories; something needs to be removed to allow them to be displayed.

The 50% pledge is non-negotiable but how does this work in practice? People working to improve representation in any organisation are often asked to justify their place in the room before they make their case. It is often the inevitability of the questions that get asked that is so tiring

and difficult to fight against: 'why', 'no one wants to see it', 'no one is interested in it', 'women don't make up 50 per cent of the history of the game'. When someone complains that Lily Parr is being given 'five times more space than any other player' as a result of the exhibition I am curating about her and her legacy, what is going on here? How do I challenge this? The apparently innocuous nature of some of this questioning is what makes it so hard to challenge. Why is an object that represents the story of a famous, successful male player accepted for display without question while I need to justify, often repeatedly, the inclusion of an object or story from the women's game?

I have been making a case for a new approach to interpreting women's football in our galleries, using evidence from my work with the women's football community as a way of overcoming some of these challenges. The basis of this approach is that our women's football content will celebrate personal stories, female contribution and experiences and challenge perceptions and stereotypes, whilst also recognizing the continued challenges facing women and non-binary people who play.

I argue that the museum's displays should not force women's football into the interpretive themes of the men's game. Its history is often more nuanced and more reflective of wider shifts in society. It is often collective, rather than about the achievements of 'great' individuals and it needs a different approach to display. The strength of the objects and stories from the women's game are not the same as the star items of the men's game. The objects and stories I have been collecting encourage reflection and provide inspiration. Their strength is in the meaning they have for women, girls and non-binary people playing football today, and their communities. This has as much, if not more value in my opinion, than many of the men's football stories we tell.

To do this right it is essential that I work with the communities whose stories the museum wants to tell, opening up our spaces and our collections





Dick Kerr Ladies v Yorkshire Champions 1921



England cap awarded to Liz Deighan 1974



England shirt worn by Fara Williams in the 2007 WWC



Pennant from Femina Sport Paris 1921

to them. Making sure that this doesn't become dominated by the stories of white, cis, straight women, who already have better access to my work and the sector. This will be a real challenge, and again by working closely with the women's football community I hope to be able to achieve this. The response from the groups I have worked with so far are overwhelmingly supportive and generous, a sign, I hope, that the work the museum is doing has relevance and meaning.

Even when working within a museum as progressive and supportive as the National Football Museum, it is important to reflect on the challenges of working to improve representation. Without acknowledging these challenges, entrenched views about women and their place in football will not change. I am aware that as I pitch for space for exhibitions that give a voice to marginalised communities in football, I also work in a visitor attraction that is battling the financial uncertainty caused by Covid and, like many in the sector, the constant accusation of pushing a liberal agenda. But I believe many underestimate our audience and those who love football. I believe more than ever people want to be challenged

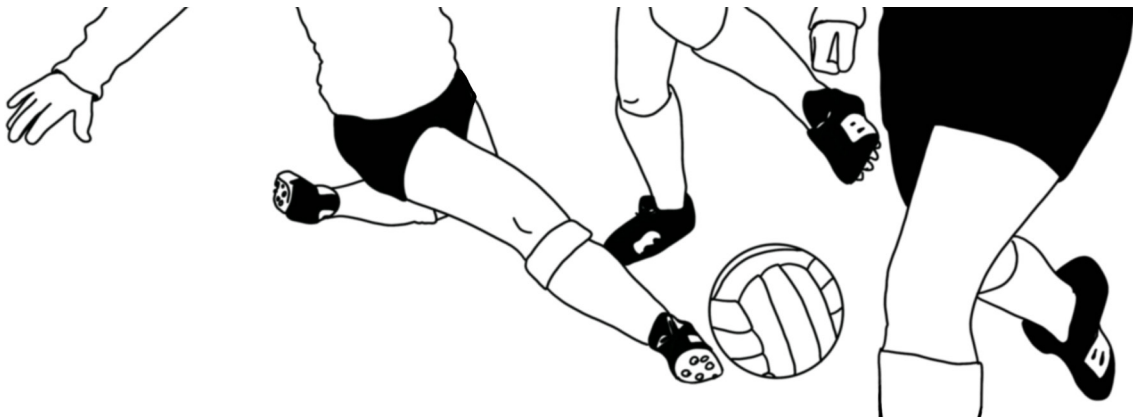
**ITS HISTORY IS OFTEN MORE NUANCED AND MORE REFLECTIVE OF WIDER SHIFTS IN SOCIETY. IT IS OFTEN COLLECTIVE, RATHER THAN ABOUT THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF 'GREAT' INDIVIDUALS AND IT NEEDS A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO DISPLAY.**

and see content that has meaning beyond what they can see replicated across the mainstream sports media. The National Football Museum is a cultural space that belongs to everyone and it is the right place to challenge how space is used to embed inequality.

*The National Football Museum is based in Manchester. Find out more at [www.nationalfootballmuseum.com](http://www.nationalfootballmuseum.com).*

# WHEN LESBIANISM WAS ALMOST CRIMINALISED

WORDS BY GEORGIA BRUCE @GEORGIAFBUCE, ILLUSTRATIONS BY LILY GRANT @LILYROSEGRANT



Goal Diggers isn't officially a queer club but, by any accounts, it's pretty fuckin' gay. Of course, this is hardly surprising given a) football's long-standing position as a "man's game" (heavy quotations), and b) queer people's long-standing position on not giving a shit. But it occurred to me as I considered the fettered history of women's football, that we could probably connect it with the equally fettered history of women's sexuality and, in particular, to lesbianism.

In 1921, the same year that the FA imposed its ban on women's football, an interesting piece of legislature made its way to the House of Commons. It was one which, had it passed, might have changed the course of lesbian history entirely.

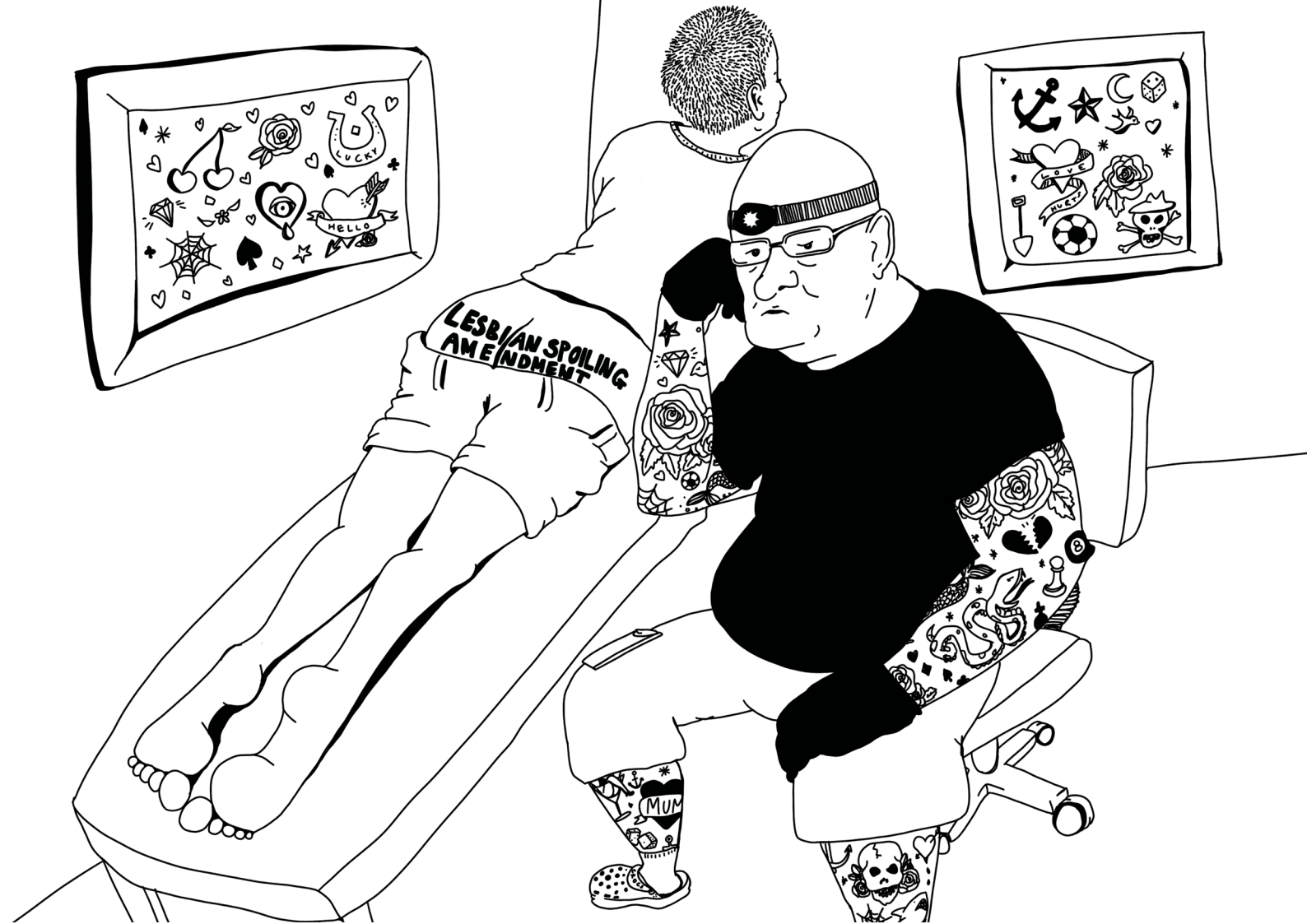
To track back a bit. Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 1885 was the piece of legislature under which Oscar Wilde, Alan Turing and countless other men became classified criminals. It was the legislation that forbade "gross indecency between males" and rendered male homosexuality illegal (rather than just the act of sodomy which had been criminalised since the Buggery Act of 1533). Initially, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was proposed as a bill to increase the age of consent for women; it was "An Act to make further provision for the Protection of Women and Girls and the suppression

of brothels". Section 11, also known as the Labouchere Amendment, was a clause added by MP Henry Labouchere at the last moment and which had only a tenuous connection to the original bill. The criminalisation of homosexuality crept through Parliament like a parasitic tick clinging to the underbelly of women's liberation.

It's been well noted that in this legislation there is a conspicuous absence of any reference to female homosexuality. One fairly well-known myth identifies the cause of this absence as a refusal on the part of Queen Victoria to believe that lesbianism even existed. Perhaps not entirely untrue, it was more likely the absence is a symptom of the broader reluctance of the Victorian age to conceive of any sort of sexual autonomy in women. This disbelief in female sexuality was not an accidental occurrence. It was the consequence of a deliberate strategy of silencing.

Remember how Labouchere had added his clause last minute in 1885? Fast forward to 1921 (the year of the FA ban on women's football) and something similar occurs. The work of a number of feminist organisations seeking to enhance the age of consent law for the protection of young girls led to another Criminal Law Amendment Bill. This 1921 bill faced a lot of criticism, often anti-feminist in tone, and, at the last minute, an amendment creating an offence of 'gross





indecent between females' was introduced by the bill's male opponents. The amendment was a direct imitation of the 1885 Labouchere Amendment, this time aiming to criminalise female homosexuality. But, unlike in 1885, this amendment did not pass and, not only that, it led to the bill's ultimate failure – precisely the spoiling effect it was designed to have.

Why the differing outcomes? Well, have a peek at what Lieutenant Colonel Moore-Brabazon, Conservative MP, said when he stood up in Parliament and addressed the bill, outlining three options for dealing with lesbians: "The first is the death sentence. That has been tried in old times, and, though drastic, it does do what is required – that is, stamp them out. The second is to look upon them frankly as lunatics, and lock them up for the rest of their lives. That is a very satisfactory way also. It gets rid of them. The third way is to leave them entirely alone, not notice them, not advertise them. That is the method that has been adopted in England for many hundred years."

For the male MPs discussing the bill, lesbianism constituted a kind of well-kept secret. It was a secret they themselves knew, but which the respectable British woman ought not to be made aware. To reference it in legislation would be to publicise its existence and

**SO: LONG LIVE WOMEN'S FOOTIE, LONG LIVE LESBIANS, AND LONG LIVE PEOPLE OF EVERY GENDER PUBLICLY ENACTING ALL THOSE THINGS THAT ARE "QUITE UNSUITABLE FOR FEMALES".**

necessitate the type of overt regulation that nobody wanted. Lesbianism becomes a strange piece of elite male knowledge that was publicly unspeakable. Women's agency, of course, was paid no heed.

It's no coincidence that the FA ban came into effect in the same year that this lesbian spoiling amendment was raised in Parliament (brb just getting 'lesbian spoiling amendment' tattooed across my ass). The history of women's football – of erasure, of silencing, of avoidance – is part of a broader trend which saw female aberration from sexual and gendered norms erased, silenced and avoided. So: long live women's footie, long live lesbians, and long live people of every gender publicly enacting all those things that are "quite unsuitable for females".

OPINION

# FA'S LOCKDOWN BAN AND THE GENDER DIVIDE

WORDS BY ESTHER JONES RUSSELL @ESTHERJONESRUSSELL, PHOTO BY JAMES DEAVIN @JAMES.DEAVIN

It is a truth universally acknowledged that female athletes cannot compete at the same high level as their male counterparts. After all, female tennis players can't even last the same number of sets as men. Only as one-off spectacles could female footballers attract an audience to a man-sized stadium like the Wanda Metropolitano. Frankly, it's laughable to imagine a female competing against Usain Bolt, much less beating his 100m record.

And please note my intentional use of the word 'female', because that is what the world of sport boils down to: a binary division of men vs women, strong vs weak, competitive vs passive.

Sport, particularly at a professional level, is first and foremost about competition; aiming to be the best. It is the competition between participants that pushes a sport forward. When the Netherlands' men's team developed Total Football, other countries had to adapt their own game to combat it. The recent physical transformation of Bryson DeChambeau has ignited an impassioned debate about tactics in golf (or as impassioned as anything golf-related can be). The point is - DeChambeau bulking up has given him an edge over his competitors and will no doubt influence golfers in the future.

Competition breeds progress, and competitive sport demands this progress in order to distinguish between participants. This holds true regardless of - in spite of! - the competitor's gender. And yet there is an implicit limit imposed on the physical achievements women can reach.

The athlete Caster Semenya has borne this trial most publicly. How on Earth could a mere woman achieve Semenya's fantastic and boundary-pushing results? If we try to ignore the humiliation and degradation of testing Semenya's testosterone levels, an act which the UN has openly condemned and is clearly rooted in both racist and transphobic attitudes, it's also just plain nonsensical. Competitive sport, to a very large extent, is a genetic lottery. In essence,

sporting authorities have decided Semenya is too good to be a woman.

In my life, there are two sports I really love: football and figure skating. There's not many things that unite the two, but the imposed restrictions on women's development is unfortunately one.

For background, figure skating is judged through a convoluted points system scoring a skater as they perform their programme (a predetermined list of technical elements set to music). At each competition, skaters perform a short programme and a long programme (this is relevant, I promise). The focus of women's figure skating has always been on the artistry, with an explicit limit on their technical content. According to international skating rules, in their long programmes both men and women can include a maximum of seven jumps, with no further specificity. However, the rules state that in their short programme women are permitted to jump triples (jumps with three in-air rotations). They are not allowed quads (jumps with four in-air rotations). Men, on the other hand, are.

Yet as the points difference between skaters at the top gets tighter and tighter (there was 1.31 between women's gold and silver at the 2018 Winter Olympics), skaters have to push themselves to stand out from the pack. This is why just last year Kazakhstan's Elizabet Tursynbaeva became the first woman to land a quad Salchow jump during her long programme in senior international competition. To put that into context, the first quad Salchow landed by a man, Timothy Goebels, was in 1999, 20 years earlier.

What I find most frustrating is this expectation that women cannot and will not be able to rotate as many times in the air as men. Such a predetermined limit on what a woman's body can do ends up becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the limits of what we can achieve really existed, eventually everyone would catch up. The playing field (or ice rink) would be level and the reason





for competing would be lost. But as it's proven time and again in sport, as soon as one competitor is able to do a more difficult and higher-scoring element, others have no choice but to follow. Since Tursynbaeva's quad Salchow, more and more quad jumps have been attempted and landed across women's figure skating.

While the constraints for women in figure skating are written into the sport's laws in black and white, the patronisation of women in football is slightly more subtle. We continue to be forced into trite discussions about whether football goals need to be made smaller for our inadequately sized bodies, or whether our feeble frames can handle a ball being kicked at it.

The low expectations imposed on women athletes are damaging. They slow down progress, and they reflect and encourage a wider narrative infantilising women and painting us as weak; the 'fairer sex'. And this ultimately leads to our very place on the pitch being called into question.

A former colleague of mine tells a story of when she was accused, aged 12, of being a boy smuggled into the local girls' team to give them a competitive edge because of her short cut hair and mean goal scoring abilities. Meanwhile, the English FA's recent suspension of girls' football academies during Lockdown 2.0 while boys' were allowed to continue as 'elite' facilities is a stark and uncomfortable reminder that we still have a long way to go to be considered equals.

While clearing out my things during a recent move, I came across an old "When Saturday Comes" from 2017 in which Mark Hodgkinson comments on the changing shape of footballers [their maleness inferred] since the early 1980s. Hodgkinson comments on how modern-day footballers are now 'built more like wrestlers' as the game's physicality has evolved over time. He notes that 'clearly, footballers have developed their physiques to maximise this leniency to brutal physicality.'

Spoiler alert! Athletes adapt to the changing environment and standards around them. If an opponent develops a new skill, others have no choice but to follow. So why do we not afford this luxury of time and progress to women?

---

## INSTEAD OF OBSESSING OVER SOMEONE'S GENDER, WHY NOT PERMIT MIXED-GENDER TRAINING AND PLAYING AT ALL LEVELS OF FOOTBALL?

After being banned by the FA for 50 years, women's football is still making up for lost time. A lack of resources, coverage and respect still plagues the sport. Instead of questioning whether we need smaller goals or softer balls, why not focus energy on providing us with the same access to pitch space and training facilities as our male counterparts?

Current FA policy prohibits mixed-gender football after the age of 18 for fear that 'the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex could put them at a disadvantage compared to average persons of the other sex as competitors in a football match'.

And yet – despite the FA's seeming concern about safety – its conditions for guaranteeing equal competition do not go beyond age and gender categories. There are no requirements for men to prove similar fitness levels or weight prior to playing against one another.

The assumption here that sex is the sole defining feature not only perpetuates the idea of girls and women as being inherently weaker, but also paves the way for harmful misconceptions about transgender players and their presumed physical advantage.

Instead of obsessing over someone's gender, why not permit mixed-gender training and playing at all levels of football? Change may be slow, but it is one step towards providing equal conditions and opportunities for all players and promoting the message that others are capable of competing at the dizzy heights of cisgender men.

RECIPES

# PITCH UP YOUR TENT

WORDS BY IZZY HOLTON @\_IZZYG, ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANASTASIA KUCHTA @ANASTASIAKUCHTA

## PITCH UP YOUR TENT AND TUCK INTO THESE THREE DELICIOUS CAMPFIRE RECIPES

We're in Tier 4, we've Brexited and we're going to be in the worst economic slump for over 300 years. I think it's safe to say that our holidays from now on will involve a lot more camping. At the very least, al fresco dining is now a year-round thing. Luckily for you, here are some delicious holiday recipes to really fill the time with.

For these recipes you will need some sort of fire pit, campfire contraption, and either a gas stove for cooking, or a cast iron skillet on a grill over your fire pit. You'll need a sharp knife, a chopping board, two plates and a bowl. I'd always advise bringing harissa and tahini camping.

### CHARRED AUBERGINE WITH POACHED EGG

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 large aubergines
- 2 tbsp tahini
- juice of a lemon
- 2 eggs
- handful of parsley, chopped
- red chili, finely chopped (optional)
- sumac (if it happens to be part of your standard camping kitchen...)
- salt & pepper
- olive oil

#### METHOD

1. Place your aubergines in separate squares of foil that are big enough to wrap around each one snugly. Pierce the aubergine skin all over with a sharp knife and drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Wrap the aubergines up and place in the embers of your campfire. Be careful to place somewhere that's hot enough for it to cook but not so hot that the skin and flesh burn through the foil before cooking.
2. Have a beer and maybe play a small card game. Between rounds, turn your aubergines round in the fire to ensure even cooking.
3. After 30 minutes carefully remove the aubergines from the fire and take a sneaky peek to see how they're doing. You're looking for soft, soft flesh that your knife will easily cut straight through. If not quite done then adjust where they're sitting in the fire – perhaps they're not sitting somewhere hot enough, or maybe they need a little longer but in a less intense heat.
4. When you're satisfied with your aubergines, keep them in the heat as you prepare the rest of your delicious meal. Pop a pot of water onto boil over your stove and when at a low boil crack your eggs in to poach. After a couple of minutes, carefully check the eggs by lifting out with a spoon and poking the white around the yolk. Everyone likes their eggs differently, so keep going until you're happy with what's going on in there. I personally like a soft, soft yolk and a well-cooked white, but hey, you do you.
5. Remove the aubergines from the fire and plate up, removing all foil. Slit open down the middle and drizzle with olive oil, add salt and mash a little with your fork. Drizzle tahini and lemon juice inside and place your poached egg in the middle. Sprinkle with parsley, chili and sumac if you like, and tuck right in.



## EMBER-BAKED SWEET POTATO WITH BUTTERY CHARRED ASPARAGUS

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 sweet potatoes
- asparagus
- large knob of butter
- 1 heaped tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 tsp honey
- couple of handfuls of rocket
- salt & pepper
- more butter

### METHOD

1. Wrap your sweet potatoes in foil and nestle into the embers of your fire. These are less delicate vegetables than the sweet aub, and so can take the direct heat a little better.
2. Sit back and resume that card game from the previous night; watch that sunset. Perhaps use this time to set up the perfect selfie – you, your fire, a GDFC cap, that gorgeous sunset and maybe even the wooden mallet from pitching your tent casually strewn in the background. I'd check the potatoes around the half hour mark and keep going. They can take around an hour and you want to make sure that flesh is soft, soft, soft.
3. When you think your potatoes are nearly done get going on the asparagus. You can keep your potatoes in the embers while you finish preparing as they will only get softer and more delicious.
4. Over your camp stove boil some water. When ready, drop your asparagus spears in and boil for approximately 3 minutes or so, until just tender. If the sun hasn't set yet, despite you determinedly watching it in step 2, you will see them turn a bright green. You want to get them out of that water ASAP when they turn that bright green, or perhaps even just as they're in the process of turning, as no one wants an overcooked, soggy asparagus.
5. Heat a frying pan on your camp stove, or if you're lucky enough to be camping with a cast iron skillet, heat this on a grill rack over your fire. When hot add your asparagus and allow to char for a minute or so, occasionally moving them around. Add lots of butter, lemon juice, honey and mustard, season and allow everything to melt and bubble through.
6. Open up your jacket potatoes, butter the insides before nestling in the asparagus and topping with a handful of rocket. Drizzle the remaining buttery sauce over the top.



## WHOLE-BAKED HALLOUMI BURGERS

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 halloumi block
- 2 tbsp rose harissa
- juice of a lime
- 1 tbsp honey
- 2 red peppers
- 1 avocado
- 2 handfuls of rocket
- 2 burger buns of your choice (I'm partial to a brioche bap myself, or even a ciabatta roll)
- salt & pepper
- olive oil

### METHOD

1. Lightly oil a square of foil big enough to wrap round the halloumi and place the halloumi in the middle.
2. Mix together the harissa, lime and honey and spoon it over the halloumi encasing the tops and sides as best you can. Wrap the foil up and place in the embers. The tricky one here is cooking so that the halloumi doesn't burn

but also gets soft, soft all the way through the middle. I would say long and slow and not in the hottest part of the fire, but a good idea to check it a couple of times as it's going just to ensure something is happening in there, but it's not all happening at once, ya know? Overall should take about half an hour.

3. After ten minutes throw your peppers directly on to the fire. You want these to char so let them rest in there but turn them with tongs, especially if they're actually on fire. When charred all over (about ten minutes), with collapsing flesh, remove them and let them cool a little. The charred skin should be easy to flake off when cool and with any luck you'll have delicious peppers inside. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle salt and pepper and leave near the fire to stay warm until the halloumi is ready.
4. Smash your avocado in a bowl until guac consistency and season.
5. When your halloumi is cooked all the way through, half an hour at most, time to get it in your burger buns. The order of avocado, halloumi and red pepper is up to you, but I would recommend rocket as the top layer within the burger, for structural reasons.



THE VENTRILOCRISP

# GEFEN SEA SALT POPPED CORN CHIPS

WORDS BY THE VENTRILOCRISP @VENTRILOCRISP, ILLUSTRATION BY ANASTASIA KUCHTA @ANASTASIAKUCHTA



To the best of the Ventrilocrisp's knowledge, this time in a normal year is described as 'the party season'. For the Ventrilocrisp, this is a problematic time – and not only because of its unpleasant character. Here's the rub: in a crowded environment – a 'party' or a pub, per se – the Ventrilocrisp's voice cannot be heard. It is not for want of trying. It speaks as loud as it can, straining desperately. And yet its voice remains a whisper.

A few years ago, the penny dropped. This wasn't a question of volume – it was one of pitch. The Ventrilocrisp's voice is the same pitch as background noise. It was faced with an existential decision – one that lies at the heart of its crisp reviews. What did it want for itself? Would it allow itself to sink wordlessly into the background, or would it fight for something more?

The Gefen Sea Salt Pop Corners' dull packet answers this question for the crisp: they are content with life in the shadows. The bag looks like something from the Dust Bowl: its drab, pinstriped background, fusty logo and miserable pale blue borders give it the cheerless appearance of hard times. Sainsbury's, moreover, was practically giving the Gefens away. 20p! A Christmas miracle, or a mark of desperation?

Unfortunately, this is a very bland crisp. As the Ventrilocrisp joylessly chewed the chips, it worried that it had contracted COVID-19, such was the lack of taste and smell. The flavourless crisp borrows elements of a simple corncake in its design. But whereas the texture – soft and pillowy – is passable for a corncake, it is unacceptable for a crisp.

The crisps – if they can even be described as this – are unspeakably dry, crying out loud for some dip; a little sauce, perhaps, to wash them down. Worming their way into the molars, the bitter taste of disappointment lingers miserably. Sadly, Gefen have wrongly assumed that a dietary requirement means an aversion to flavour. Think again, Gefen.

There is just one thing to say in the snacks' favour: they are not trying to be something they're not. The ugly bag openly signposts a disappointing crisp; the slight portion is evident before opening the bag. What you see is what you get. This bag might be content with a life behind the scenes, but most crisps – and the Ventrilocrisp (God love it) – have bigger aspirations. What it has learned is this: we don't need to shout to be heard. Instead, we must strike a different pitch.

# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS: PITCHING PANDEMICS

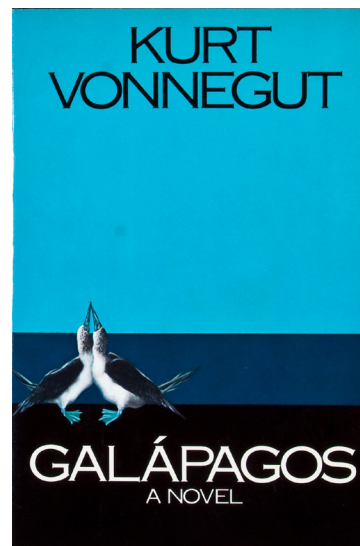
WORDS BY ANASTASIA KUCHTA @ANASTASIAKUCHTA

Sick of the current pandemic and want to escape into someone else's? Many author's have pitched pandemic scenarios and penned reflections on past pandemics. Escape corona through cholera and more with these 2020-esque novels.

## 1 GALÁPAGOS BY KURT VONNEGUT

**"It pains me even now, even a million years later, to write about such human misbehaviour. A million years later, I feel like apologizing for the human race. That's all I can say."**

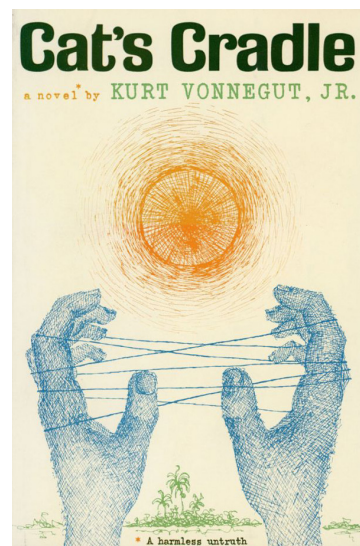
The novel follows the stories of a hodge-podge group, who while on the "nature cruise of the century", become shipwrecked in the Galápagos Islands shortly after a global financial crisis devastates the world and disease renders humankind infertile –with the exception of our group. The story looks on the group and their descendants over the next million years as humankind evolves into furry sea-lionesque creatures.



## 2 CAT'S CRADLE BY KURT VONNEGUT

**"Anyone unable to understand how useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either."**

Yes more Vonnegut. No one does the annihilation of the human race quite the same. Cat's Cradle is less disease wipes out humanity, and more the arm's race wipes out humanity – giving you another group of "survivors" in a bunker as the world ends. This novel uses the end of the world to reflect on free will, religion and human's relationship with technology in Vonnegut's typical satirical postmodern style.

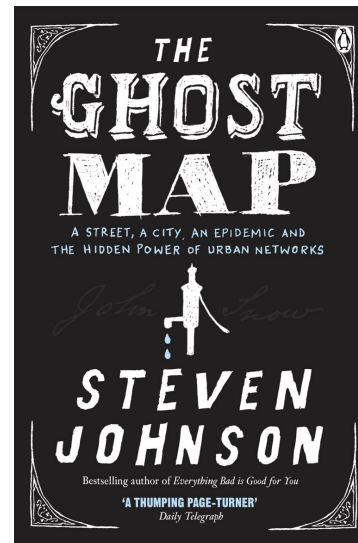


### 3 THE GHOST MAP

BY STEVEN JOHNSON

**“This is how great intellectual breakthroughs usually happen in practice. It is rarely the isolated genius having a eureka moment alone in the lab. Nor is it merely a question of building on precedent, of standing on the shoulders of giants, in Newton’s famous phrase.”**

For the nonfiction fan, I give you *The Ghost Map* which explores the cholera epidemic that swept London throughout the 19th century. This novel focuses on The 1854 Broad Street cholera outbreak, and the efforts of Dr. John Snow and Rev. Henry Whitehead who worked to find the source and cause of the outbreak. An interesting read that covers history, epidemiology, city planning, data analysis and more. After picking this up, you won’t look at Soho the same.

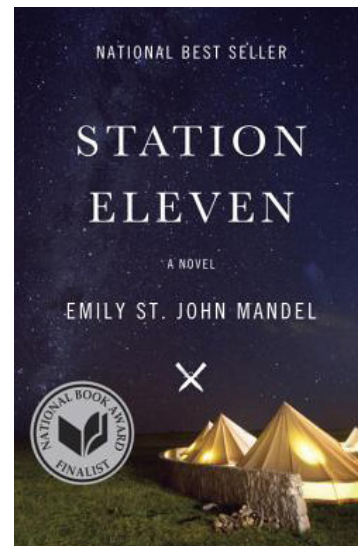


### 4 STATION 11

BY EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL

**“No more Internet. No more social media, no more scrolling through litanies of dreams and nervous hopes and photographs of lunches, cries for help and expressions of contentment and relationship-status updates with heart icons whole or broken, plans to meet up later, pleas, complaints, desires, pictures of babies dressed as bears or peppers for Halloween. No more reading and commenting on the lives of others, and in so doing, feeling slightly less alone in the room. No more avatars.”**

This novel takes place in the Great Lakes region before and after a fictional flu pandemic, known as “Georgian Flu”, has killed most of the world’s population. The story focuses on Kirsten Raymonde, who is eight when the pandemic starts and watches the flu destroy her world. The story follows civilisation trying to rebuild post-pandemic. Published in 2014, the novel received praise from critics at the time. Today the messages are even more poignant, with the world created in the book far more conceivable.

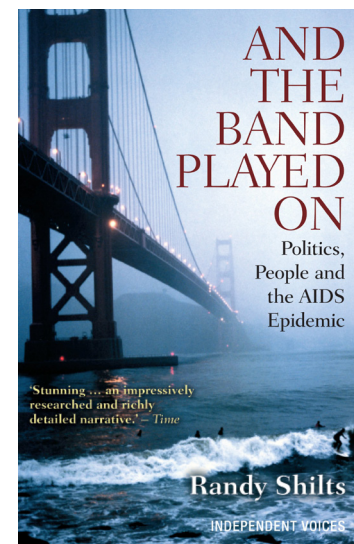


### 5 AND THE BAND PLAYED ON

BY RANDY SHILTS

**“Any good reporter could have done this story, but I think the reason I did it, and no one else did, is because I am gay. It was happening to people I cared about and loved.”**

This novel is an extensive piece of investigative journalism focusing on the discovery and spread HIV/AIDS, specifically in the United States. The work focuses on the government’s apathy towards the disease, dubbed a “gay disease”. The book presents factual summaries of events that shaped the epidemic in a sequential order – whilst examining the impacts and politics of the disease in regards to individuals in gay, medical and political spheres.





# GDFC CRUSH

ILLUSTRATION BY LILY GRANT @LILYROSEGRANT



**To Katy Cov/The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,**

You stole my heart at Christmas with your glorious roleplay. I promise cancelling dinner with yourself will be worth it for me, Maybe we can even start some roleplay for ourselves...

**Yeşilırmak,**

I stare at you across the pitch, but you cannot see my longing gaze. If only you popped in a pair of contacts or modelled some sports goggles, you just might spot my desire.

**Emma Magnus,**

Deadlift me slowly because you are progressively overloading my heart.

**Edi Whitehead,**

I lilac you and your new hair a lot.

**K8,**

Wow –this goal is so g8  
I'd love to take her on a d8  
and become more than a m8  
because this feels like f8!

**Coach Josh,**

I've missed seeing that beautiful tuchus under the floodlights of Haggerston Pitch. I wander past, dreaming of past October Wednesdays with you. Maybe I should book a 1-on-1 training session...

# AGONY AUNT

ADVICE BY ELENA HOLMES @ELOUHOLMES AND ELLEN ROBERTSON @FOOTIEFANG9

**M**y friend was dating this girl but not seriously. She's now moved on and has a girlfriend. However I have a crush on the old girl. What do I do? Can I ask her out?

A friend, huh? Well you're a very good friend ;) to reach out to aunt on their behalf...

Well friend, this is Girl Code 101 and in the words of Gretchen Weiner, "Ex-boyfriends are just, like, off limits to friends". However, the moral of Mean Girls actually appears to be that breaking "girl code" can ultimately result in happily ever after (if your perfect ending involves joining the mathletes, watching your sworn enemy get hit by a bus, and gaining high school acclaim by realising the limit does not exist).

Heart-warming though that tale is (and great PR for maths, which actually sponsored the film), this leaves us no further forward. Does "girl code" apply at all, or only in heteronormative relationships? Where does gender come into it? Is this important? Well dear readers, as we all know, girls are great and codes can be surprisingly useful. However, in this context it's probably time to say goodbye to an outdated system that regulates womxn's behaviour, and stick with the better gxrl code, aka intersectional feminism.

Now we've sorted that out, let's take a look at your situation. Friendships are beautiful things. As everyone's favourite anthropomorphic teddy bear – Winnie the Pooh – so wisely says, "A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey left inside."

So your Agony Aunt would say, don't forget about that honey, hunny, and be open with your friend about how you're feeling. See how they'd feel about you embarking on anything with Old Girl, and double check it won't lead them down a path of burn books, Swedish nutrition bars and people getting called Fugly Sluts.

Then, if all is rosy, go forth and may your romance bear bountiful fruit in this barren pandemic. You could be like Taylor Swift and Gigi Hadid, who both dated Joe Jonas. I don't mean that one of you will write two hit breakup songs and then Joe will leave you to go procreate with a Game of Thrones actress (but never rule it out eh). What I'm really trying to say is that they managed to share some very good-looking double dates and put the past behind them in the name of romance. Perhaps you can too!

**I'm stuck in iso but I really want to see my boo one last time before Christmas. We've both tested negative. Is this booty call a worthwhile adventure or am I thinking with my heart and not my head?**

Hello anonymous and thanks for writing in. It's a tough query! Not least because I've got to be careful here lest I encourage you to do something illegal. Not that I'm not a badass. I'm intrigued to know the nature of the relationship between you and boo. If it's just, as you say, a booty call, I think go for it. Given you've both tested negative, what would be the harm, besides the law? Who among us will look back at the end of our tawdry little lives and wish we'd had fewer orgasms?

If this is something more serious--if there are, as you write, 'hearts' involved and not merely genitalia--perhaps you and boo will benefit from a little time apart. After all, absence famously toughens the atria. Spending time alone need not be lonely, and passion can rise to a fever pitch if it finds itself forcibly repressed. If you are in isolation and can't go out, you could ask a good pal to drop off a sweet festive gift to your boo's residence to let them know you're thinking of them. Even better, just pen and then post them a desperate and longing missive? You guys could be like lesbians in period dramas: endless forbidden glances and deciphering code through ink blots and yearning. Hot!

Basically, despite negative test results, if you think there could be a Covid risk involved in an IRL hangout, regrettably I should advise you to: hope for a quick vaccine rollout, think of your grandparents, and have some great Zoom sex while you wait (not all at once, please). I bet there are fun sex things you can do on Zoom that you can't even do in person? 'Accidentally' invite one of your bosses and have a virtual threesome? Set your background to somewhere wild like the summit of Mount Everest? The possibilities with remote sex are endless, and if you don't fancy pillow talk afterwards just cite 'technical difficulties' and skip out. You're welcome.

Editor's note: Please note that this advice was helpfully supplied before Tier 4 was announced. Readers should take new Coronavirus guidance into account.

# HOROSCOPES WITH SERAPHIC STASI

WORDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANASTASIA KUCHTA @ANASTASIAKUCHTA



## ARIES

2020 forced you to dive deeply inward, and rid yourself of what you can no longer tolerate. 2021 will allow for honest review of where you want to direct your energy. On February 17, a square will form between Saturn and Uranus in your neighbouring sign of Taurus. This will put direct emphasis on your self-worth, helping you to choose the path that is best for you.



## TAURUS

Saturn opens the year strongly, situated in Aquarius. You may find yourself in a continual crossroads throughout 2021. The year's lunar cycles will help self-acceptance and spiritual growth. Jupiter and Uranus add romantic friction to your chart in January and February. Focusing on friendships may serve you better than seeking out a soulmate.



## GEMINI

2021 is a highly stimulating year for your creative sign. Mid-February will cause chaotic waves in the world as Saturn's transit through Aquarius squares Uranus in Taurus. As Jupiter transits through the sign of Aquarius (from January through mid-May) there's a strong chance for abundance, especially through major financial windfalls.



## CANCER

2020 had many ups and downs that felt more traumatic than normal. 2021 is a year where you can really step into your own independence and gain a little emotional space from the judgments of others. The first Saturn-Uranus square (February 17) is trying to break you of a karmic cycle, which will have lasting effects on your psyche.



## LEO

2021 begins with a square between Jupiter in Aquarius and Uranus in Taurus, creating challenging energy in your chart. This isn't the easiest of configurations to deal with, requiring extreme self-care in most circumstances. This cosmic influence through mid-February, will bring internal and external friction, but it is best to just go with the flow.



## VIRGO

With the north node's position in Gemini, your personal career zone is getting a major polar shift in your life. January's Mercury retrograde gives you more alignment with your personal need for organization. Trusting your intuition is where you will find the most empowering results. 2021 is great for starting your own business or a new career.





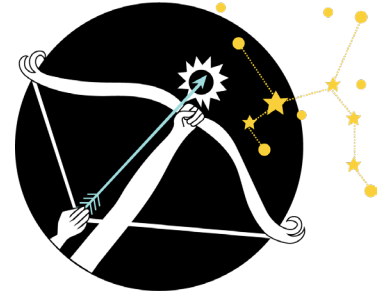
### LIBRA

The north node's transit through Gemini directs you towards continued education and spiritual expansion. The Aquarian retrograde in January and February asks you all to investigate things more deeply, and connects you to causes that you feel most passionate about. You may also face some career competition and lessons in mid- February.



### SCORPIO

2021 is an extremely important year for Scorpions. Several transits tug and pull at major points in your personal chart. The square between Saturn in Aquarius and Uranus in Taurus may bring radical change in mid-February. This astrological energy may cause unplanned events that ultimately decide your fate and affect your home and career situations.



### SAGITTARIUS

An ongoing square between career-obsessed Saturn in Aquarius and chaotic Uranus in Taurus is going to strongly come into play through much of your business and financial affairs this year. This will be most powerful on February 14. A romance from the past may poke their ugly head, but do not revisit mistakes of the past, rather deal with old wounds head on.



### CAPRICORN

The square between Saturn in Aquarius and Uranus in Taurus (mid-February) tasks you to be a little more radical and step out of your comfort zone. This square will test your self-esteem, but that is meant to cleanse your second chakra of creativity. If you are a single Capricorn tired of dating apps, try asking friends to set you up.



### AQUARIUS

Mercury's retrograde cycle enters shadow in the sign of Aquarius on January 15, and moves to retrograde on January 30. This may lead to many innovation and creativity. You may feel that time is either moving extremely fast or slowed down to a glacial pace, especially around February 14 during the square between Saturn in Aquarius and Uranus in Taurus.



### PISCES

As Uranus continues to break boundaries in Taurus, meeting a conflicting square with Saturn in Aquarius, your sign will face extremes in mid-February. You will have an easier time if you embrace your intuitive nature. 2021 is marked by continual shifts and changes, turn to those you trust to help keep you motivated and moving forward.



PUBLISHED BY GOAL DIGGERS FC @GOALDIGGERS\_FC

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SUBMIT A PIECE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE,  
EMAIL [MAG@GOALDIGGERSFOOTBALLCLUB.COM](mailto:MAG@GOALDIGGERSFOOTBALLCLUB.COM)