



1996 - 2000



Clockwise from top left: Kaz Walker (Belles) is chased by Carol Harwood (Wembley); All conquering Croydon WFC in 1996; Hope Powell fires past Clare Taylor in the 1996 cup final (Gavin Ellis); Wembley captain Carol Harwood with League Cup; England team in the USA for a friendly in 1997 (Julian Lillington); On the Ball sellers at a game; 14 year old Katie Chapman (Millwall) with Louise Thomas (Everton).

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# JUST AFTER KICK OFF

**T**he magazine's story began in late 1996 but mine in relation to the mag kicked off in 1998. My first major task was to head to Hope Powell's flat in London where she was giving one of her first interviews as the new England coach. I was nervous but she was very welcoming, made me a cup of tea, did the dishes as we chatted and generously packed me away with a gift (a boot bag from a recent game in Italy). Powell - after she had settled in and won a few battles - probably had an unflinching vision that given the chance and support as well as the right commitment and resources she could help push the game forward and realise some of England's latent potential, well into the future. We were taking one magazine at a time. Women's football had been on Channel 4 in 1989/90, with Women's FA Cup coverage and some England stuff too (Ch 4 claimed 2.4 million watched England v Scotland), there'd been the odd documentary in the 1990s, the WFA and then FA posted out weekly newsletters but unless you were involved in a club, knew

someone who played for a club, or stumbled across a game in a park on a Sunday afternoon, then you probably didn't know women played football. It was invisible and parochial. Many of the players featured in this mag didn't even know England had a team until they were on the verge of being selected for it. I got asked on radio shows and by print journalists direct or slightly varying versions of the same question, "Why do women play or want to play football?" Hard to imagine now isn't it? So we tried to change that by sharing news and results and telling people about the talented players and games going on. Finding images was hard (prints or negatives had to be posted to us and then scanned in), in fact we'd sometimes choose interviews based on what photos we had. We found players teams, we printed tables in the mag, we posted out fixtures and results in the mail on a Monday to readers and then started a website. It was arduous sometimes but fun as a small team working together. It wasn't perfect but we did what we could - after all, like everyone in the women's game itself at the time, we were just kicking off...



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Images: Action Images/FA via Getty Images



Clockwise from top left: Karen Burke and Sian Williams in the 1999 League Cup; Captains Pauline MacDonald and Debbie Bampton in England v Scotland friendly at Sheffield United; (Gavin Ellis) Scorers in the 1998 FA Cup Final: Spacey, Yankey and Few (Gavin Ellis); USA no.9 and Nike sponsored worldwide star Mia Hamm (Phil Stevens); Gill Coulter with her special silver cap for making 100 England appearances; Scotland's Julie Fleeting tackles Alex Cottier in Sheffield friendly; the 1999 Women's World Cup winners, the USA (Phil Stevens).

**Here's two simple snippets from two decades ago to show you how things have changed...**

*The England coach Ted Copeland, passing out instructions, in his flat cap. (OtB1)*



## ON THE BALL classifieds

Rates: Box ads £50. Personal "For Sale" ads £10 for 30 words. call Yai on 0191 420 8383 for details.

PLAYERS NEEDED	Risborough Ladies FC
<p><b>Lyon Ladies FC, France.</b></p> <p>Champions of France in 1991, 95 and 95 and winners of the France Cup is seeking to recruit players for the 97/98 season. Players of high ability are being sought to play in defence (No.5), attack (No. 10) and a centre forward (No. 9).</p> <p>Please contact Jacques Monique, Club President, on 00 4 72 36 07 76 or by fax on 00 4 72 50 12 52.</p>	<p>Risborough Rangers Ladies is a new team in Buckinghamshire and they are looking to recruit players. With the support of Risborough Rangers FC the new team has been elected into the Southern League and are looking to make a name for themselves in Princes Park which is located in Wycombe and</p> <p>Interested contact: qualified to Greece, on 0191 420 8383</p>

*The club that became the now Champions League winners Lyon were advertising for players in 1997. (OtB7)*

