



# Leicestershire Women's Football News Stories 1978-79

## **SQUEEZED OUT . . .**

**GOAL difference cost Nuneaton Wanderers B a place in the first Midland Women's six-a-side soccer tournament final at Leamington's Edmondscote Stadium.**

**They went out when they could only draw 1-1 with Droitwich Saints, who went on to lose 2-0 to Solihull in the final.**

**In earlier matches, Wanderers beat Northampton Town and County (1-0), Coventry Bantams (1-0) and Solihull B (4-2) but could only draw 0-0 with Leicester Emgals.**

**Bantams turned in a fine performance to rout Solihull B 6-0 but lost 3-1 to Town and County and finished in the bottom of the group.**

Coventry Evening Telegraph - Thursday 12 July 1979

## **Emgals event draws teams**

A record 16 teams compete in the seventh annual Emgals one day women's soccer tournament in Leicester tomorrow.

This highest ever entry confirms the tournament's standing as one of the premier events in the Women's F.A. valendar, having again attracted crack French side U.S. Montfaucon from the Nantes area, and Queen's Park Rangers who narrowly beat Emgals in last year's final.

Willesden and newcomers Chelsea are the other London clubs competing alongside BYC Trgyle and Rangers of Nottingham, Coventry Bantams, Kilnhurst (Sheffield), Watford, Macclesfield, St. Helen's, Doncaster, Lowestoft and Luton Daytels, plus the two Emgals teams.

Play starts on the Emgas sports ground Aylestone Road at 11 a.m. with the sides drawn into four leagues to play 30 minute matches with the top team in each group going through to the finals.

Leicester Daily Mercury - Saturday 12 August 1978

## Emgals lose in final

FOR the second successive year Leicester Emgals lost 2-1 in the final of their own Women's Soccer Tournament, the trophy going to shock winners St. Helen's, Lancashire.

A record 16 teams entered the annual contest held at Emgas sports ground, Aylestone Road, Leicester. Apart from the hosts, none of the more fancied teams, including holders Queen's Park Rangers and the French girls US

Montfaucon from Nantes, won through their groups to the finals.

In the semis, Emgals, who had not previously conceded a goal, only got past Lowestoft by 5-3 on penalties after a 0-0 draw. But in the final they were 0-2 down before halftime to consistent St. Helen's. Although England international Debbie Day pulled one back five minutes from time it was too late.

*Leicester Daily Mercury - 17 August 1978*

Soccer? That's for the birds... or so Joan Stephens found when she talked to Mary Meachem

# It's the love of my life, says soccer star Mary

ANYONE watching the children constantly kicking a football about on Netherhal's Rayleigh Green 10 years ago would have picked out one youngster who ran rings round the rest.



Mary Meachem, ace women's soccer star, pictured with her fast growing collection of trophies.

He might even have predicted that the little lad would one day play football for England. He would have been right — except that the "lad" was a lass — Mary Meachem, now 19, and an England women's soccer international.

"Having the green to play on right outside the front door helped, so did the fact that my older brothers have always been keen footballers. Mind you, we're sport mad in this house", Mary admitted, adding that she began kicking a ball about almost as soon as she was out of nappies.

By the time she left junior school, the fact that she was often taken for a boy had begun to rankle. "I remember going to the shops with Mum in a new jacket she'd just bought me. I thought I looked very feminine, but someone referred to me as 'your little lad' and I came home and cried."

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As a pupil at Evington Hall Convent, Mary played hockey and tennis, but not football. She also became self-conscious about playing on the green. "So I rang the Information Bureau and asked about local women's soccer teams.

"Leicester City Supporters' Ladies' Club said I was too young at 15, and I came home and cried about that! Then I tried again and was put in touch with Emgals. To my delight they accepted me at once. They still take a lot of young girls, which is just what the game needs. It's a great pity more clubs don't follow their example."

After three seasons with Emgals, and having helped them to achieve a treble in 1978, when they won three trophies in the Midlands Women's League, Mary left to play last season for Coventry Bantams, but is considering returning to the Leicester side next season.

Last June, she was one of eight Midlands players selected to go for England trials, and two weeks ago heard that she'd been selected for the English women's team to play Italy on July 19.

"There are so many good players in the squad, I really didn't expect to be selected", she told me. "Being a natural ball player I prefer to play

skilled football rather than an aggressive game.

"I'm thrilled to bits about being in the side. I'm training hard and I want to go out there and do really well."

Since selection, she has stepped up her training routine to include a daily four-mile run, sessions at Saffron Lane stadium, and sprints in the back garden. She also recently left her job as a Post Office clerical worker for one as a sales representative. "I prefer the freedom and the travelling," she said.

Mary watches her diet, partly because she likes nice clothes and wants to keep down to a size 10, and partly because at 5ft. 3ins. tall, she reckons she can't afford to look plump. "Besides, extra weight slows you down — and I can't afford that either."

To the lads who haven't seen her play soccer and who often refuse to believe that such an attractive girl can really boot a ball about, she has the extra advantage of being able to talk intelligently about their favourite subject — football.

"They get a bit discouraged, though, when I beat them at squash or golf, and even at bar billiards" she says with a grin.

"Like most people, the lads

I meet can't seem to take women's football seriously. It's a totally different game from men's soccer, neither so fast nor so skilful, but it's a good game in its own right, and deserves more recognition and more sponsorship from people like sports equipment manufacturers."

As a natural ball player who would probably have reached the top in any sport to which she chose to devote all her energies and considerable talent, why, I asked, go for one in which women have to struggle to be recognised?

The answer is simplicity itself. "Because it's my game — I just love football."

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# Emgals for Germany

LEICESTER EMGALS, one of the most successful women's football teams in the country, are off to play on the Continent for the second time this year.

Following their recent visit to France, Emgals are going to Germany where they will play three invitation games against local sides in the Lohr area, near Frankfurt, between Friday, July 27 and Friday, August 3.

And on Sunday, August 26 they will play host to some of Britain's top women soccer teams in a national competition at the Emgas Aylestone Road sports ground.

The event involves 16 teams, including one from Lohr, and follows the World Cup format. The sides are put into four groups and the winner of each section takes part in a knock-out to decide the finalists.