

Football Round-Up

Late Extra!

by Gordon Craigie



Image courtesy of Dundee United FC



Back in the August issue, iScot Magazine brought you the story of the incredible rise of Dundee United Women's Football Club (DUWFC). In their inaugural season, in 2016, the team had achieved a league and cup double with a remarkable 100% record en route to winning the SWFL2 title and gaining promotion. They then followed up that outstanding season by finishing 2nd in SWFL1 in 2017, despite only losing twice. When our August issue was published, just as the second half of the 2018 season was about to commence following the summer break, United were three points behind SWFL1 league leaders East Fife. But, having played one game less, DUWFC were still on course for another memorable season that would, hopefully, end with a league title and promotion to SWPL2. Well, it's always good to be able to update on positive stories and, happily, this is one of those occasions...



Goal number two for DUWFC v Cove Rangers. Credit - APP Photography



The victorious squad with Dundee United Men's Head Coach Robbie Nelson (back left). Credit - APP Photography

ON OCTOBER 21st United went into their final game against Cove Rangers requiring only a draw to win the league. As it was the last game of the season, the fixture was scheduled for Tannadice Park instead of the team's usual venue across the street at the GA Arena. Fittingly, in front of a crowd of around 450, United relished their grander surroundings and made absolutely certain of the title by winning the game comfortably 7-2. That meant they finished the season with a not-too-shabby record of: Played 22, Won 18, Drawn 3, Lost 1, Goal Difference +95, Points 57. That impressive record was enough to see off the challenge of East Fife, who finished the season as runners-up, four points behind, and thus secure the second championship title in three seasons for DUWFC.

The steady progress of the team has also seen international recognition for a number of the younger players. Goalkeeper Aaliyah-Jay Meach and midfielder Philippa McCallum both played in all three recent UEFA qualifiers for Scotland U17, with 15-year old forward Neve Guthrie selected for the U16 squad too.

Justine Mitchell, who had the initial vision for DUWFC when she was on the board of Dundee United, now keeps a watchful eye on proceedings purely as a fan. She declared herself "very proud" after the title clinching game, while Head Coach Gavin Beith said he was happy with the way his team handled the occasion. He reflected, "We've only lost three league games in

three years, and the single defeat this season was when we had to play with only 10 players due to holiday commitments! The girls have done exceptionally well and are a credit to themselves and the club."

That impressive record was enough to see off the challenge of East Fife





"That's what we've won!"
Credit - APP Photography



Pre-match line-up. Credit - Angela Valente



So, after a great day of celebration at Tannadice Park for all connected with DUWFC, thoughts have already turned to the challenges of the coming season in a higher division against more experienced opponents. Gavin Beith acknowledges that, having reached the Premier League, it's now time for phase two of the club's development. "We may need a wee bit more experience for next season, but this is a good squad. This is a huge club, and the badge is a big attraction especially now we'll be playing at a higher level again. We always need to get better, but these girls work so hard every day to improve. Our young players are our future and we will continue to play them and allow them to develop." The way DUWFC has risen to the challenges before them in the last three years it would be foolish to discount their chances of progressing further. As far as women's football in Dundee is concerned, the future is bright... the future is tangerine!

And, as a final postscript to our August football feature... we also highlighted that the Scottish Women's National Team was in second place in their qualifying group for the 2019 World Cup Finals with only two games remaining. Well, in case you missed it, they won both those games - beating Switzerland 2-1 at home then Albania 2-1 away - thereby winning their group and qualifying for the World Cup Finals for



Just a wee bit excited!
Credit - APP Photography

the first time ever. This piece of history-making follows hot on the heels of the squad's 2017 appearance at their first ever major finals, the European Championships, and further demonstrates the incredible growth and development of girls' and women's football in Scotland. Ironically, next year's World Cup Finals will be held in France - 21 years after the Scottish men's team last appeared in the World Cup Finals... in France! The Scottish Government has provided an £80,000 bursary to allow the non-professional players in the squad to

France 2019 promises to be an exciting time for the Scottish Women's National Team

prepare full-time from January until the tournament, which kicks off on June 7th 2019. Scotland's women, who are currently ranked 19th in the world, will discover their group stage opponents when the draw is held in Paris on December 8th. France 2019 promises to be an exciting time for the Scottish Women's National Team - Vive l'Écosse!



SWNT celebrate qualification for France 2019