

Women's Sport Spotlight

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Welcome back to the Women's Sport Spotlight – your go-to source for the latest stories and key developments in women's sport. Each edition, we highlight the moments, movements, and milestones shaping the future of women's sport.

Let's dive into this edition's highlights.

Government collaborates with experts in a new task force to 'supercharge' women's sport

The UK government has launched a Women's Sport Task Force to turn the momentum of the Lionesses' historic summer and the Red Roses' successful Rugby World Cup campaign into lasting change before the 2035 FIFA Women's World Cup. The group met for the first time in Brighton ahead of England's Rugby World Cup match against Australia.

Chaired by Sports Minister Stephanie Peacock, the group brings together leaders from sport and government, including Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Sport England chair Chris Boardman, and UK Sport chief executive Sally Munday. National governing bodies for football, rugby, cricket, tennis, and netball are represented, alongside data firm Signify Group, which is advising on digital safety and tackling online abuse.

The Task Force's priorities are practical: widen access to play and facilities, invest in athlete health research and safeguarding, raise the profile of female role models, build a sustainable pipeline for talent, and hosting major international events, including the Women's T20 Cricket World Cup (2026), Tour de France Femmes (2027), and potentially the Women's Football World Cup (2035) – positioning Britain as a leading platform for women's sport.

The government has committed £400 million to grassroots facilities and £500 million to elite events. Flagship programmes such as Sport England's "This Girl Can" and the Rugby World Cup's Impact 25 legacy initiative underpin efforts to grow participation and community impact. Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy emphasised that success on the pitch must be matched by action off of it. With over 400,000 Women's Rugby World Cup tickets sold, the demand for women's sports is clear. The Task Force now has to turn that momentum into tangible progress - inclusive facilities, safer digital spaces, and a talent pathway that helps girls and women progress all the way from playgrounds to international podiums.

BBC Sport Secures UEFA Women's Champions League Broadcast Rights Until 2030

In last month's Women's Sport Spotlight, we covered Disney's deal with UEFA to broadcast the UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL), which you can find [here](#). But Disney are not alone, as this month the BBC has announced its own agreement to broadcast the UWCL until 2030, further demonstrating its support for the growth and visibility of women's football. The deal includes live coverage of up to seven matches each season, including the final—won last season by Arsenal, who became the only English club to lift the trophy twice.

Coverage kicks off with two standout fixtures: Manchester United vs Paris Saint-Germain on 12 November, followed by Chelsea vs FC Barcelona on 20 November. Fans can expect to see top Lionesses like Hannah Hampton, Lucy Bronze, and Lauren James in action, alongside Barcelona's star-studded line-up led by Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmatí.

In addition to live broadcasts on BBC TV and iPlayer, the BBC will offer extensive digital coverage. Weekly highlights will be shared across BBC Sport's social media channels, including a new TikTok account dedicated to women's football. Match highlights and key moments will also be available on the BBC Sport website and app—even for games not shown on TV. BBC Radio 5 Live will continue to provide live commentary for major fixtures. BBC Sport Director Alex Kay-Jelski described the deal as a game-changer, highlighting the BBC's multi-platform approach to making the competition more accessible and engaging. This partnership marks a significant step in growing the profile of women's football, helping to bring the game to a wider audience across the UK and reinforcing the BBC's commitment to showcasing the talent and excitement of the sport.

Gallagher signs a three year principal partner deal with Premiership Women's Rugby

After an existing eight-year relationship with Premiership Rugby, Gallagher has stepped up as principal partner of Premiership Women's Rugby to build on the momentum of women's rugby and support growth through leadership coaching and community development. Though the commercialisation of female Rugby has seen a rapid increase in the last five years, female rugby is still hugely under-supported and under-developed in comparison to men's rugby. This support is key to support a future generation of players and sustain female spirit. Sarah Hunter, England's most capped player, said that 'Gallagher can keep inspiring the next generation to dream big and believe that anything is possible'.

Gallagher's partnership aims to actively increase and encourage the number of young female rugby players stepping forward onto the field and continue the legacy created by the Red Roses this summer.

Women's Sport Sees Unprecedented Growth in UK Viewership and Engagement

The Women's Sport Trust's latest Visibility Report reveals a landmark summer for women's sport in the UK, with record-breaking female viewership across both broadcast and digital platforms. The report, supported by broadcast analysis from GSIQ, highlights a significant cultural shift, positioning women's sport as a central part of the national sporting conversation.

Key tournaments such as the UEFA Women's EURO and the Rugby World Cup (RWC) saw female audiences reach historic highs. Women made up 44% of the EURO audience and 43% of the RWC audience, with finals attracting even higher proportions - 48% and 47% respectively. These figures mark the highest female viewership ever recorded for both competitions.

Total viewing hours for women's sport from January to September 2025 hit 357 million across free-to-air and pay-TV, surpassing the previous record of 339 million in 2023. The Lionesses' matches dominated UK television, with the EURO final against Spain drawing a peak audience of 16.22 million and the semi-final against Italy reaching 9.88 million. Average viewing time also increased, reaching nine hours and 45 minutes—up from 2023's record of nine hours and 29 minutes.

Key findings include:

- Broadcast viewership skews older, with 70% of the RWC audience and 60% of the EURO audience aged 55+, compared to 55% and 49% respectively for the men's equivalents.
- Digital platforms are engaging younger fans. BBC iPlayer and BBC Sport recorded 15.5 million streams for the EURO and 10.5 million for the RWC, with 20% of EURO streams coming from viewers aged 16–35.
- Digital consumption of women's sports is growing faster than men's equivalents.
- Over half of the EURO audience in July had previously watched women's sport earlier in the year.
- Netball Super League viewing hours surged by over 300%.
- Women's Hundred matches saw a 26% increase in average audience.
- Sky Sports' coverage of the AIG Open saw an 18% rise in live audience.
- Star athletes like Ilona Maher and Leah Williamson saw Instagram engagement rates of 41% and 32% respectively among females aged 13–34, far surpassing official tournament accounts.
- England's teams led in digital engagement, with the Red Roses and Lionesses topping Instagram and TikTok metrics.

Apple and WSL Football Launch Tech Partnership to Elevate the Women's Game

Apple has entered into its first formal partnership in women's football, teaming up with WSL Football to provide cutting-edge technology across the Barclays WSL and Women's Super League 2. Every club and match official will receive a suite of Apple products - including MacBook Pros, iPads, iPhones, and AirPods - to support performance analysis, coaching, and matchday operations. For example, devices such as the iPhone and iPad can be used by sideline staff to review footage provided by analysts working in other venue areas.

The initiative, to be rolled out ahead of the 2025-26 season, is designed to modernise the game, advance player development and create more equitable access to high-performance tools. Coaches and analysts will use Apple's ecosystem to capture and review match footage, while officials will streamline administrative tasks using digital team sheets and reporting tools.

WSL Football's Chief Revenue Officer, Zarah Al-Kudcy, described the collaboration as a "shared ambition to drive meaningful transformation". Apple's Worldwide Product Marketing Manager Scott Brodrick echoed this, noting provision of Apple products helping "every player, coach, analyst, and official evaluate their game", and stating the company's excitement to support innovation both on and off the pitch.

This partnership reflects a broader strategy to raise standards across women's football and signals growing investment from major tech players in the sport's future.

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