

Women's football- Blast or a banter?

You work hard for equal rights if you're a feminist. You work towards breaking gender stereotypes because you're a feminist. You prove that the work a woman does is equal to the work a man does, because you're a feminist.

☒ And you will watch these remarkable women play out on the field because they're brilliant football players.

The world went on shuffling channels as the entertainment was bountiful ever since Götze put the cherry on top of Germany's cake. Mourinho showed us why he remains the best while Guardiola stumbled a bit, Arsenal gunned their way till the FA cup, the Old Italian lady got gold twice and PSG had the time of their lives. The 2014-15 season came to an end with the Catalans dethroning Real Madrid as Europe's best. You were a spectator because you either shared the hopes and dreams of your club or you sought mere entertainment. Regardless, you were a football fan and now it's time to live up to the bill. The international season has already kicked off with the Euro qualifiers and Chile hosting some fierce South American action. But why should boys have all the fun?

FIFA picked the Great North to host this year's stellar world cup for women, but sadly half the world to this day remains oblivious to the existence of any such tournament, and quite a lot of that half are yet to hear about women playing the beautiful game. As football fans, what do we want? We want good football and that's about all you can ask for. Admittedly, the games are played at a much slower tempo with much less physicality involved. Some might also say that this is a different sport altogether. The audience can choose not to support the sport, or to think of it the same way as men's because they would rather spend their time watching a better

standard of football. TRP has never been the real issue in women's football, although Sep Blatter had a wildly unpolished take on the same. When asked about boosting viewership, the ex FIFA president asked the players to wear shorter shorts and that's where the relevance to feminism ends. These hardworking women have loved the game as much as Maradona and Cruyff ever did, and a comment such as this, besides being grossly sexist, also insults the game as it is. Of course, for many people, any sort of men's sport would rank above the women's sport, but that, again, is an issue of popularizing. The girls are least bothered about that and they are as fantastic as their male counterparts. That is all what remains to realize.

The Second World War saw women foster the beautiful game for the first time. They had to fill in men's position in factories and during lunch break the wives would kick around a ball every day. War continued, but sparks flew when the girls played the game and eventually they decided to form their own teams. Like most social revolutions that evolved into the fight for women's rights, such as the movement to wear pants or the one which caused hemlines to drastically rise all over the world, women's football began to fill that void caused by the absence of men's football. They weathered several challenges, such as concerns that 'the game of football is considered unsuitable for women and ought not to be encouraged' and the usual mildly sexist opposition that tends to rise when women do just about anything. Despite all that, the first football association of women was formed in December, 1921. The first recorded game ever played was in London, on the twenty third of March, 1985, between teams from North and South London. The players played in long skirts, and over ten thousand people were in attendance. After the war ended, it was a lot harder for women to play football. Most girls were summoned back to their household duties and as is somewhat the case today, women's football stopped turning heads as men resumed playing the game which eventually shaped into the most watched sport ever. The problem lies elsewhere.

With a little over 130 caps, the most capped player in English history is no Lampard or Gerrard. Fara Williams, the central midfielder for Women's Super League club Liverpool Ladies, who was homeless for six years during the virgin stages of her football calling, has achieved something millions can only dream of. In this patriarchal society, the odds of bagging such an accomplishment without attracting misogynistic spleen are rather low. The responses on England's twitter handle varied from congratulations to cries that claimed "women's football is shite". Does reality check hold that the mere fact of a woman being graced with the highest of footballing honors is nothing but a threat to them? Are people so blind in pride that they remain oblivious to the greater gain of football and sulk in disappointment? How dare a woman, notwithstanding her talents rise above herself and accept an honor which belongs in the trophy cabinet of a real footballer? A male footballer.



Real football needs twenty two players, two goal posts and a ball where the aim remains to put it at the back of the net and stop the opposition from doing the same. The onlookers watch in awe the technique and skill of those before them, not stopping to wonder at the reproductive organs their body is home to. Yes, the reputation of women's football has increased in the past decade, but sexism is taking a toll every time these beautiful women kick off. Today women's football gets more coverage and publicity than ever before with a much diverse fan following but is sexism decreasing in the game at an appropriate rate?

A year ago we saw Daily Record happily spouting Tam Cowan's column which was sexist beyond contempt, before passing it off as banter. The Premier League witnessed Richard Scudamore's sexism case being scrapped off to make way for his promotion. The broadcasts of last year's FIFA world cup had cameras zooming into women in the crowd and objectifying them only before the tournament's swansong was sung by some article

comparing the sex quotient of those football fans.

The groundbreaking survey of 2014 saw that two thirds of the players in the industry of women's football had to face sexist rants in their workplace. But when Williams, a rousing footballer broke into the record of the most capped player in a country's history, the world found it disrespectful. Agreed, a big part of the lack of popularity of women's football can be accredited to sexism. But to say that one should watch women of the likes of or Marta Viera da Silva play just because you're a feminist?

That's not just wrong, that's insulting.

This year's World Cup is another dawn and with the only difference of fewer shirtless players, footballing action remains the same, and as long as hardworking and determined players keep the ball in their feet, the beautiful game will remain beautiful.

While new precedents may be set, it is far from over.