

A Quiet Revolution at Port Talbot Town Cricket Club



Port Talbot Girls softball team 2019

As a junior section we have always prided ourselves on being inclusive of all children. Over the last 10 years we have seen five girls represent Wales at age groups levels and their pictures hang proudly on the clubhouse wall. Alex Griffiths who represented Western Storm in their successful 2019 Kia Super League campaign is one of our first products and everyone at the club watches her success with great pride.

While girls representing our club with distinction hasn't been uncommon this has traditionally been one or two girls playing amongst the boys but we have never been able to field and all girls side of any age group until the last couple of years. In 2018 and 2019 we were able to field girls softball sides for some festivals and friendlies which is something the club is very proud of. Quite quickly we have gone from having one or two girls in a team to some fixtures last year where the numbers of girls on the team outnumbered the boys.

So, what caused this change? I wish I could write that this revolution is a result of a club master plan to increase the numbers of girls playing cricket hatched in a corner of the clubhouse one committee meeting but the truth is this all happened organically. A large part of our recruitment has always been families visiting the club to have a drink in the sun. They would see the children playing on the outfield on training nights and then send their sons to join in while despite our best efforts the girls would choose to play in the park.

However about four years ago we had a few young girls who were daughters of club members start training on a Friday night playing softball on the outfield. Now when the girls looked on from the side they didn't just see a field filled with boys they saw other girls and thought maybe this is also for us.

Girls would walk over to coaches and ask to join in. The next week they would come back but this time they would come with a friend from school or a cousin and before we knew it within weeks we went from having three girls training to having 20.

This increase in numbers at the under 9s age coincided with the good work being done by Cricket Wales around the girls game and through their winter hubs which we were high referrers to and it has created a bit of a perfect storm. The hubs provided high quality training in an all-girls environment through the winter and support their transition into hardball cricket allowing them more playing opportunities. A number of these girls now play Under 10s, Under 11s and Under 13s hardball cricket for the club and some have been selected for regional boys squads at various age groups and on the verge of selection into the Girls Welsh squads.



Port Talbot Girls at the Cricket Wales winter hub



Elizabeth, Katie and Ava before an U10s match

2020 would have seen the inaugural South Wales Junior League hardball girls league and would have provided a great opportunity for our girls to play against other teams of girls in competitive hardball cricket. Let's hope things improve and we can still get some cricket in for the girls this year because while playing alongside the boys is great for their development we understand that for some girls especially as they get older playing in an all-girls environment will be important to keep them in the game long-term and enhance their enjoyment.

The key for our club now is to not allow this organic revolution to disappear as quickly as it arrived and we do now have a strategy for the development of girls cricket involving schools and others sports clubs. The club would love to have a senior women's team in the near future along with hardball and softball girls teams. We are determined to capitalise on this success and ensure that we continue to see young girls gravitate to the outfield rather than staying in the park and hope to have many more take up our wonderful game and maybe even produce another Alex Griffiths.



Mila Joseph batting for Wales U13s



Alex Griffiths who started at Port Talbot aged 8



Port Talbot Junior Girls with England captain Heather Knight



Waiting to bat U10s



Katie Graham batting for Port Talbot U10s



9-year-old Elizabeth Cox Keeping for Port Talbot U11s

