

Bending it like Beckham - for no pay

England soccer captain Angela Banks tells Children's Express why she thinks it's time for women to take a more prominent role in the sport.

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Young reporters from Children's Express talk to Arsenal and England star footballer Angela Banks. I think people will soon be fed up with men's football because it's getting very money orientated.

Angela Banks is one of England's top female footballers. But unlike her male counterparts, she can travel anywhere in the world practically unrecognised.

She has been playing for the Arsenal ladies since 1999 and has also captained the England women's team. Last season she was the third highest scorer in women's football and last year she was the first female to win Four Four Two magazine's award for the top scorer in all domestic championship football.

With so much under her belt, you'd think Angela would be raking in the money - but she doesn't earn a penny from playing football. And as if that wasn't tough enough, she still has to fit her training in around her day job.

Banks first got involved in football when she was 11, after a friend told her about a women's team, Whitehawk, in her hometown of Brighton. If it hadn't been that Banks says she'd never have known that there was a women's football team in the area.

While playing for Whitehawk, she was spotted by the manager of Arsenal ladies and was immediately signed up.

Despite the difficulties of juggling a full time job with the demands of playing for both Arsenal and England, Banks is lucky enough to have a job working for Arsenal as development officer for women's football. It means her bosses are more understanding when it comes to having time off for training and matches.

Even so, it doesn't take away the frustration of seeing male footballers' salaries rise to astonishing heights.

"I think the men are getting paid way over the top," she says. "I think people will soon be fed up with men's football because it's getting very money orientated."

Banks admits that part of the problem is attitudes towards women's football can still be a bit old fashioned.

"I was at Highbury the other day and there was a guy there with two young boys and the security guy turned round and said 'oh you're in the company of an England International'. They looked round and said 'Where is he?' and he said 'It's that girl there. She's Angela Banks, she plays for Arsenal and England'. And they laughed and said 'Girls don't play football'. These boys were only about six or seven and already they've got the notion that girls can't play football and it's very hard to change that".

But in spite of the negative attitudes Angela remains positive women footballers can prove the doubters wrong.

"A lot of people come to the games and they expect to have a laugh," says Banks, "but they leave really impressed by the skill level and the way we play."

So it seems the future is looking bright for Banks and her Arsenal team mates. They will hopefully be going semi-pro next year, which means they'll get paid per game.

The FA has also promised that there will be a professional league for women by 2003 and Banks hopes this will be a good incentive for young girls who want to get into playing football:

"A lot of girls drop out of football because there's not a step from 16 year olds to a professional league. We've just got to keep young girls focused on the fact that there might be a professional league soon.

"I've spoken to a lot of young girls on football courses and asked what they want to do when they're older and now they're actually turning round and saying 'I'm going to be a professional footballer'."

About the team

This story was produced by Emma Dennis-Edwards, 14, Carmen Kalnars, 13 and Danyel Edwards, 16. It was published in the [Highbury & Islington Express](#).

1 comment

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womenfootballer are just as good as men i am 12 years old and football is my life! we should be payed as much!

Emma , 30 December 1899 00:00

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