

FIFPRO: WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

World Rugby Medical Commission Conference 16/09/2025

DR FRANKIE BROWN
HEAD OF STRATEGY AND RESEARCH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



AGENDA



WHO ARE WE



POST PARTUM RETURN TO PLAY



PLAYER WORKLOAD MONITORING TOOL



PROJECT ACL

FIFPRO START-POINT TO PLAYER RIGHTS: OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD OF WORK OF PLAYERS



STRATEGIC RELATIONS IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

FIFA



- All of the stakeholders have a Women's Football Department, who are the direct stakeholder counterparts of the FIFPRO Women's Football Policy team



Women's Football Policy

NEW INDUSTRY PARTNERS & NON-TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS



- New outreach to FIFPRO in Women's Football
- Completely detached from traditional governance spaces
- New leverage opportunity through alignment of values and vision (and players) – leading to project integration (ACL & Nike)



POST PARTUM RETURN TO PLAY GUIDE

START POINT : Problem raised by players/industry

FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) in 2021 for maternity regulation means more players will inevitably have a family...

But through reviewing existing scientific research and via player feedback, it was clear no guidance existed for players to support them



The PPOTP guide was developed by players for players and has been led by a task force who have experienced their own postpartum return to football. This personal guidance has been supported by the existing scientific literature and advice from a team of medical experts, specialising in areas that are most relevant to the postpartum journey.



PLAYER TASKFORCE

THE PLAYER TASK FORCE



**SARA BJÖRK
GUNNARSDÓTTIR**

Sara Björk Gunnarsdóttir currently plays as a midfielder for Juventus in the Serie A Femminile and retired from international football in 2023 - having accrued 145 caps for Iceland. The 2019/20 UEFA Women's Champions League winner gave birth to her son in November 2021, returning to the pitch four months later.



**CRYSTAL
DUNN**

Crystal Dunn alternates as a winger for Gotham FC in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and a left-back for the US Women's National Team, with whom she lifted the FIFA Women's World Cup trophy in 2019. In May 2022 she welcomed her first child into the world, returning to training 112 days later.



**CHEYNA
MATTHEWS**

Mother of three Cheyenne Matthews recently retired from both club and international football, having balanced motherhood and her professional career for five years. She most recently played for the Chicago Red Stars in the NWSL and the Jamaica Women's National Team - playing in her country's FIFA Women's World Cup debut in 2019.



**ALMUTH
SCHULT**

Almuth Schult is a German international goalkeeper, who has played for clubs in both Germany and the USA. The 2016 Olympic Gold Medallist gave birth to twins in 2020, and a third child in August of 2023. Almuth recently signed a new contract with Hamburger SV in the 2. Bundesliga.

Player focus groups on specific elements of the PPRTP journey



THE POSTPARTUM RETURN TO PLAY GUIDE



This framework is an opportunity to change perceptions for future pregnant footballers.

All players

It takes time to be 100% again and being able to gradually return helps both physically and mentally. No coach should be expecting a player coming back to be 100% right away.

Crystal Dunn

NEW PROVISIONS IN THE RSTP'S REGARDING FEMALE PLAYERS (2024)

AC0

OVERVIEW:

- I. Extending the existing rights and protection to adoptive parents as well as non-biological mothers
- II. Rights of the player in case of pregnancy
- III. Developing a plan to support the player postpartum
- IV. Breastfeeding
- V. Menstrual health
- VI. Extending the rights to female coaches
- VII. Ensuring implementation of the rules on national level
- VIII. Encouraging associations to facilitate attachment and emotional balance for female players and their families while on international duty with their national teams.



Slide 9

AC0 This wasn't a result but more gaps emerged as a consequence
Alex Culvin, 2025-02-21T13:42:29.294

FB0 0 Great, that looks good. I was just trying to show this as a good example of where the "findings/results" lead to further gaps or questions.
Frankie Brown, 2025-02-24T17:22:58.119

AC0 1 Got ya! Leave it as is then. Makes sense :)
Alex Culvin, 2025-02-24T19:09:27.594



PLAYER WORKLOAD MONITORING TOOL

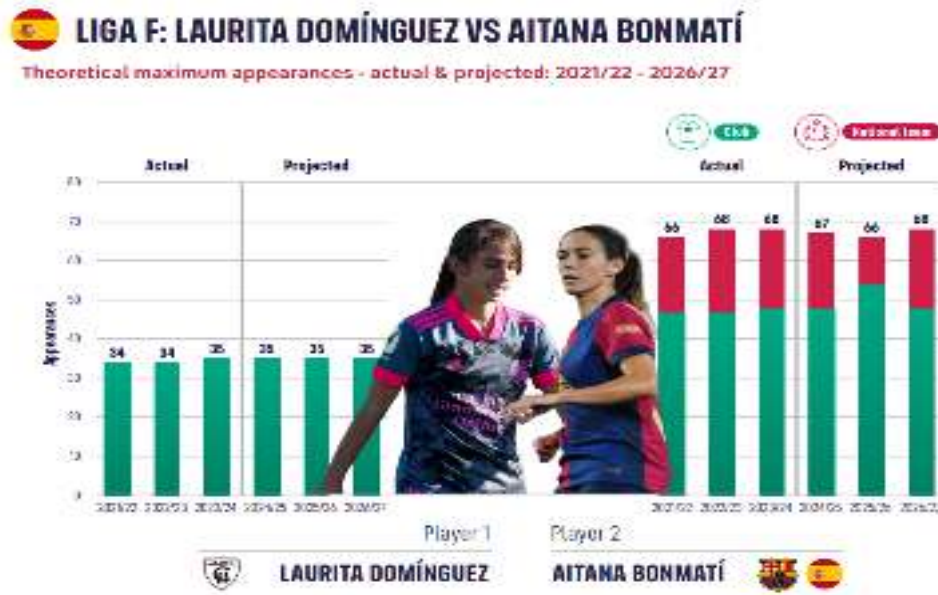
**2024 FROM HIGH-USAGE TO UNDERLOAD:
A TALE OF TWO INDUSTRIES**
FIFPRO PLAYER WORKLOAD MONITORING Women's Football Report



... PLAYER WORKLOAD MONITORING

- **Lack of competitive matches and uneven scheduling**
 - Average of fewer than 33 matches per season.
 - Overall, match calendar does not distribute matches evenly across a season
- **High-usage players are squeezed by the calendar**
 - There are players who accumulate double of the number of matches over the season than the average.
- **Uneven growth and development of competitions**
 - Many women's leagues have far fewer teams competing e.g. 12 in most European Leagues, 14 in NWSL (during analysed period), 16 the highest in Spain. Comparative men's leagues have 20 and 27 respectively.
 - New competitions are being developed in some regions but not at the same rate globally, meaning a mismatch in growth of the game
- **Competitive (im)balance exists across competitions**
 - Jeopardy is a key driver in interest in professional sport.

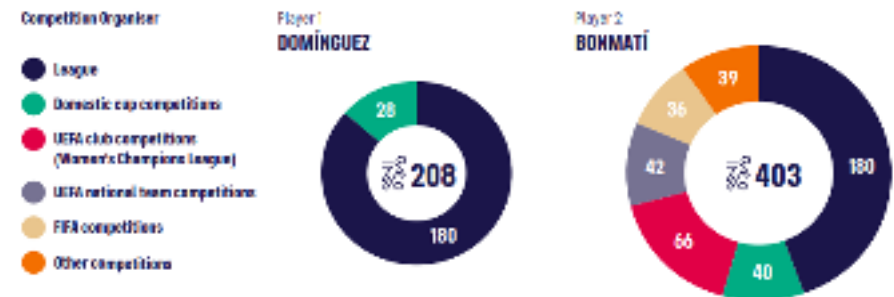
- Scheduling and expansion/growth a topic everywhere. Player-to-player comparisons illustrate this well:



Huge variations in theoretical maximums



Total theoretical maximum appearances by competition organiser (2021/22 - 2026/27, six-season total)



Hugely variance in playing opportunities

ELLIE CARPENTER

Analysed period:
First August 2023 – 10th August 2024



DOB: 26/04/1993 / Height:
167cm

Right-
Back

Carpenter has a significant role for the England national team and the Australian club side AS Roma. In the 2023/24 season, she has been a key player in England's campaign at the 2024 Paris Olympics, helping the club reach the UEFA final.

Match load

Total appearances
in period

45

Total minutes
played in period

3,849

Percentage of back-to-back
games in period

44%

Travel load

In the 2023/24 season, Carpenter has a total of 10 days of travel, with 70% of her travel time spent on international travel.



Post-Olympic return to club

In the first full game of the 2024/25 season, Carpenter played 90 minutes for AS Roma in the UEFA Europa League. She played 90 minutes in the first game of the 2024/25 season.



Number of back-to-back appearances by month

Ellie Carpenter has played 10 back-to-back appearances in the 2023/24 season, with 70% of her appearances being back-to-back.

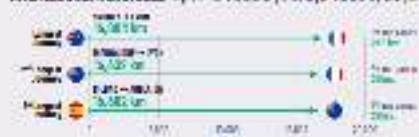


Overview of the last three full seasons (minutes)

Ellie Carpenter has played 10 back-to-back appearances in the 2023/24 season, with 70% of her appearances being back-to-back. This is a significant increase from her previous seasons, where she played 10 back-to-back appearances in the 2022/23 season and 10 back-to-back appearances in the 2021/22 season.



International travel load (top 10 players in terms of appearances)



An important insight that can be drawn from the data is that Ellie Carpenter has played 10 back-to-back appearances in the 2023/24 season, which is a significant increase from her previous seasons. This is due to her increased role in the England national team and the AS Roma club side.

MOEKA MINAMI

Analysed period:
10th September 2023 – 10th August 2024



DOB: 02/12/1998 / Centre
Back

Minami has had an integral role for her club and national team sides. Her 2023/24 campaign ended with a quarter-final exit against the USA at the 2024 Paris Olympics. At club level for AS Roma, Minami played 37 games, which included 36 appearances in the starting line-up.

Match load

Total appearances
in period

52

Total minutes
played in period

5,029

Percentage of back-to-back
games in period

52%

Travel load

Over the 2023/24 season (including the 2024 Paris Olympics), Minami accumulated over 100 hours of international travel time with most of it coming from national team duty.



Post-Olympic return to club

Minami had only 10 days between her last game of the 2023/24 season and her reporting back date to AS Roma pre-season training.



Number of back-to-back appearances by month

Minami's heavy workload was heightened by her November 2023 fixtures when she played 9 back-to-back matches for Roma and Japan, consisting of league, domestic cup, Women's Champions League, Olympic qualifying and national team exhibition matches.



Overview of the last three full seasons (minutes)

Minami's last two seasons were quintessential cases of a player being more heavily relied upon by their club and national team across a number of competitions. This heavy workload comes off the back of her move to AS Roma at the beginning of the 2022/23 season from Urawa Red Diamonds in addition to featuring more often for the Japanese national team. The increased workload is highlighted by the steep increase in appearances from 2021/22 (27) to 2022/23 (34), as well.



Japan's Olympic squad - 2023/24 total appearances and minutes



Between the end of the 2023 Women's World Cup and prior to the start of the 2024 Olympic Games, Minami accumulated the most minutes (4,700) and 2nd most appearances (49) among all members of Japan's Olympic squad.

PROJECT ACL



Professional
Footballers
Association



U.S. SOCCER
THE NATIONAL
FOOTBALL TEAM

Problem raised by players : ACL – Where is the research?

ACL injuries in women's football: Why is there a greater risk and how can they be prevented?



'It felt like somebody had hit a hammer through my knee': the crisis of ACL injuries in women's football

Tackling the ACL injury crisis that haunts women's football



England sweat on Keira Walsh fitness amid avalanche of ACL injuries impacting Women's World Cup

OVERVIEW



Increase player health/availability by
reducing ACL injury risk



Develop effective ACL injury risk reduction strategies

- Create minimum (and gold) working standards



Identify ACL injury risk factors

- Qualitative approach
 - Focus group interviews with multidisciplinary team (MDT) members (e.g., S&C coaches, physios)
 - 1-on-1 interviews with players
- Quantitative approach
 - Questionnaire for MDT members
 - Prospective study tracking player injury and workload



Understand the existing landscape

- Collate and examine literature in professional women's football
 - Systematic review on ACL injury risk reduction strategies
 - Scoping review on working conditions

Project ACL launched 30th May 2024

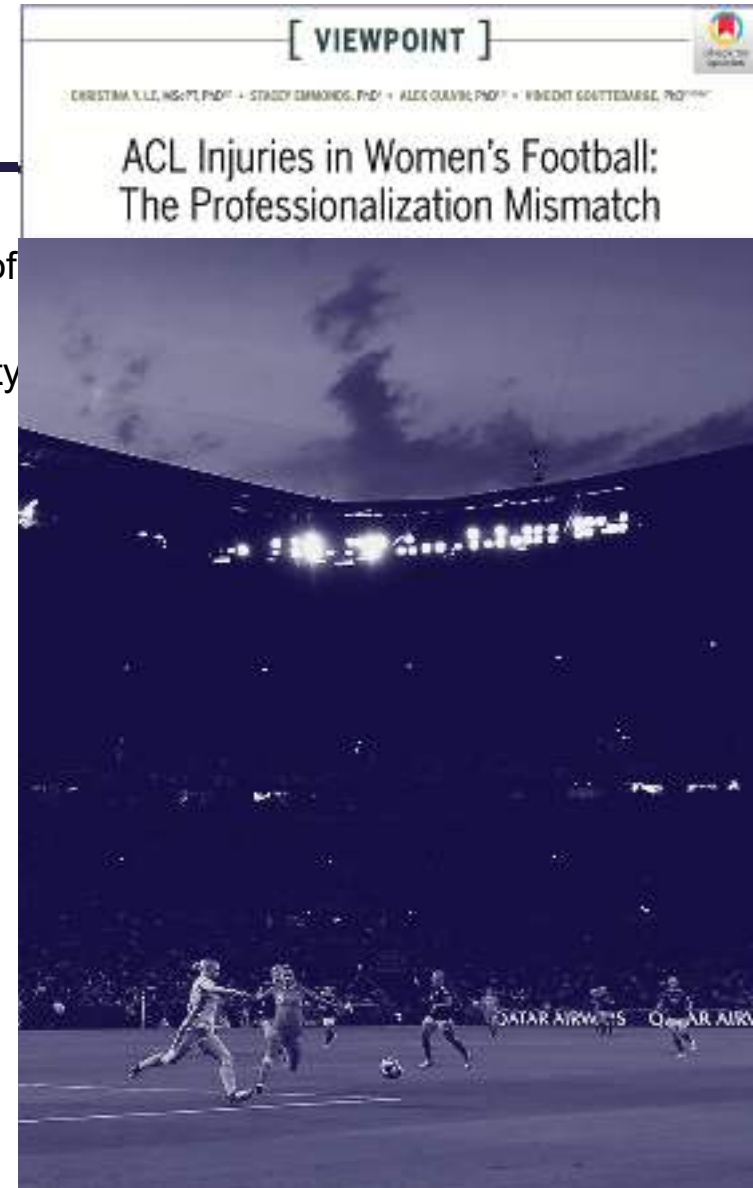
- With a commitment to increasing player availability through the reduction of ACL injury in professional women's football
- Project partners: FIFPRO, PFA England, Nike and Leeds Beckett University
- Pilot study underway in the Women's Super League in England
- Project ACL centralises the voice of players to better understand their experiences

One year on:

- 1 published research article
- Survey responses from all clubs in the Women's Super League in England
- Interviews with multidisciplinary teams are underway
- The next phase is player interviews which will take later this year

Our ambition:

- Minimum standards that focuses on work environments



THANK YOU!

ANY QUESTIONS?

