

# Netball in a Nutshell

**Mrs Lawther**

We have had a very exciting but manic season!

Covid had curtailed all netball school competitions for the year so to try and paint a positive picture of the challenges we would face, we spent a lot of time doing both fitness and training - all with the mitigations and advice given to us by Netball NI.

Further changes to the game included rule changes to help with social distancing and a strict, no spectator policy. Our teams adapted quickly though and happily continued, whilst using precautionary measures such as constant hand and ball sanitising. This became the norm, with the smell of hand sanitizer becoming our new skin care regime!

There were also administrative changes to the school committee at Netball NI. This allowed a working committee (who were committed to school competitions) to help move school girls netball forward during this challenging time. In addition, it was decided that there would only be a League competition so no Cup, Plate, Bowl or Shield competitions for the year ahead.

All of this took time to get up and running. Thankfully school sports halls soon became available once again for netball activities with most schools agreeing to return to competitions. This knock on effect meant that, whilst this year saw a very welcome return to netball, it was albeit a much later start than normal. This meant that what would normally be an eight month season for training and competition, was now down to only three or four months!

For this shortened season, Banbridge Academy were thankfully able to enter two Minor, Junior and Senior teams each, and one Intermediate team. It did prove to be a bit of the unknown. Schools did not enter as many teams compared to previous years, mainly due to the risks of Covid transmission and following individual school protocols and practices.

Please appreciate that during this time we were all still constantly washing hands and wearing masks!

As a result there were fewer schools entered into the Intermediate competition (possibly due to schools concentrating on preparing pupils for GCSE, given the challenges of homeschooling).

Each Academy team had an area assigned to them. Some age groups had 6 areas each with 6-7 schools competing in that area. So a good healthy return to netball indeed!

Another bonus was that our Academy pupils got to play a number of schools that we hadn't previously competed with, such as Rockport, Regent House, St Columbanus, Glenlola, Assumption, and Acquina.

Now came the real challenge of finding enough days in the week to get all the matches played and completed by the deadlines!

In addition, Netball NI had appointed a Schools' Officer, Lisa Bowman, who became exceptionally busy during lockdown by offering zoom training to try and keep Netball skills as "live" as possible. Now Lisa had a challenge ahead - half the normal time to get

schools' Leagues and Finals Day up and running throughout the Province!

As you will read by the articles written by our pupils, Banbridge Academy fully entered into the spirit of things by continuing to commit to training after school, whilst being coached by Nicole Beggs and then successfully attaining their place at the school finals.

School Finals Day was a real highlight and an absolute high point for the Academy girls who had worked hard all year. Our Minor B and Junior A teams competed on Thursday 12 May at the Lisburn Rackets venue, with the Minor B team being crowned overall winners after heavily defeating Regent House. The Junior A team were deemed runners-up after losing to a very strong St Ronan's College team. So well done to both sets of Academy girls!

As a bonus, this event finally allowed spectators to be present and what a real spectacle this was!

The Lisburn Rackets halls were alive with the sound of netball activity, as each school competed for the various titles. A real celebration of the game of netball ensued and it was wonderful to witness it once again.

Other achievements which celebrated pupil successes included the following selected to the Future Performance Academy Squad:

U15  
Samantha Burns-Atkins  
Alex King  
Lucy Megaw  
Lassara Magennis

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U13  
Tara Kennedy  
Casey Cousins

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Mrs Beggs for her continued coaching and training with our netball pupils at Banbridge

Academy. Post-Covid, we can hopefully have a return to netball and school competitions as we know it.

I would also like to thank our Academy pupils who continue to give up their time and commitment to both training and matches, and yet who

still manage, somehow, to get their homework/coursework completed on time! So thank you to them!

It is great to see netball back in action with our Academy pupils buzzing once again both on and off the court!

## Senior 'A' & 'B' Netball

### Katie Baxter

The 2021/22 season finally got going again in February of this year, after a very delayed start due to the disruptions caused by covid. Nonetheless, the girls were ready to get playing and Mrs Beggs was ready to get us in playing form again after a two-year long break from any netball!

This year the girls only had three very tough matches to play: first we met Strathearn and after putting up 21 fantastic goals, the girls narrowly lost out to a very strong side. Evie McKinney received 'player of the match' after a fantastic game on her part, as she played a major role in setting up crucial scores.

We returned after half term to travel to Regent House, with the score line again not going our way, but Oliveen O'Rourke picked up player of the match after a fantastic performance in her first game playing for the senior A team.

With our final match of the year, the girls were excited to play as a team for one last time. As most of the team has stayed the same since Year 8, we were ready to just enjoy the game. We walked onto the home court together for the last time and as the final whistle blew, Glenlola were the team to come out victorious. Katie Baxter



and Alex Finney played an unbelievable game in the centre court, and they both shared the 'player of the match' award as a result of their impressive performances.

them for a lifetime!

### Team

Katie Baxter (C)  
Zara Ginnif (VC)  
Nadia Radcliffe  
Evie McKinney  
Zeta Gley  
Erin Colgan  
Annie Robinson  
Alex Finney  
Emily Johnson  
Oliveen O'Rourke  
Selena Cunningham

We want to thank Mrs Lawther and Mrs Beggs for their continued effort in organising matches, training, and supporting us this season and with the majority of our team being Year 14, we wish them all the best in their futures and hope that their fond memories and friendships formed in Banbridge Academy Netball will remain with

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### Senior 'B' Netball

The Senior B team also had a delayed start due to covid disruptions, but we were eager to get going as most of us hadn't played netball since Year 11. When we heard the season was starting up, we were excited to form the team again.

Our first match was at home to Sacred Heart and after a very defensive game we did not walk away with the win, however Ellie Lindsay and Oliveen O'Rourke were recognised for their tremendous efforts on the court with Ellie in GA and Oliveen in GD. We then played a friendly match to get us prepared for up and coming games, where we met Portadown College on our home court. After leading for the first three quarters, Portadown managed to secure a narrow win in the final minutes. After learning many lessons from the Portadown game, we

went on to play St Malachy's and after a lot of hard work from the full team we finished the game with a victory of 31-16. This match really showed the hard work that had been put in from the entire team and coaches paying off, with Sasha Herron and Katie Mulligan being named players of the match for their excellent attacking skills, which proved crucial in securing our win.

We went on to play our final match of the year against St Paul's; it was a tough match against a very strong side and unfortunately (after the four quarters) the girls were narrowly beaten. Their hard work prevented a major score difference, with Georgia Frazer and Katie Mulligan playing a great game to be named players of the match. At the end of the season we only walked away with one win, however we learnt many lessons in

the sport and created many lasting friendships and memories. I would also like to thank Mrs Beggs and Mrs Lawther for their continued effort in developing our team, and supporting us through the years.

Catherine Black (C)  
Oliveen O'Rourke (VC)  
Lois Ginniff  
Ellie Lindsay  
Zara Moore  
Lara Crothers  
Sasha Herron  
Brooke Gilliland  
Katie Mulligan  
Katherine Otley  
Georgia Frazer  
Eve Fitzimmons



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## Minor 'A' Netball

Our netball minor 'A' team has played very well throughout the whole season, always trying their hardest and playing their best. Some parts of this season were harder than others, but everyone kept playing to their full potential. We won 2/3 of our matches this season, which is an incredible achievement for everyone on the team.

The year didn't start off in our favour with many things being restricted from us due to covid, which also slowed down the process of the teams being chosen. However even though our team didn't get as much time to practise with just one another before the tournament started, everyone got stuck straight into training.

We won our first match of the season against Sacred Heart with a final score of 10 - 9. It was a tough game, especially up until the end of the first half, however our team made a great comeback in the 3rd quarter with our amazing GS, Lexie Kerr scoring an outstanding 4 goals with the help of



our very good GA, Abigail Walker. Our 'players of the match' were Lexie Kerr and Tasja Sneddon, who helped to defend our end of the court incredibly.

Our second match was another win, this time against St Joseph's, resulting in a final score of 15 - 9. The match was very tight the whole way through but we were able to make a slight breakthrough during the last quarter, bringing us up 5 extra goals. This team played slightly more aggressively and harshly than our team was used to, but we tried our best not to let it scare us off. Lexie Kerr got another well deserved player of the match, this time along with Emma Newell.

Our final match was against a very strong St Ronan's team in which we unfortunately lost 28 - 9. This was a big loss for us but we didn't let it dampen our spirits. The game didn't start off badly, with us finishing the first quarter in a 6 - 6 draw. However we got let down in the second quarter with St Ronan's scoring 11 goals! We ended the first half of this match with a score of 17 - 6 to St Ronan's. We scored another 3 goals in the second half of our match, but St Ronan's also were able to grab 11 more altogether. This match was a bit disappointing for us all but we continued to hope for a place in the finals.

Once we got through to the finals we found out we would be playing St Ronan's again, but this time we all went in with high hopes and good spirits but also we were also able to prepare ourselves ahead looking back on the previous match. This match was again very tough, but overall I think we had improved from our other match against St Ronan's. Everyone got stuck



in and played to their absolute best, but unfortunately we just couldn't play well enough to beat them. We ended this match and the season with a 16 - 3 loss against a very strong St Ronan's team. Our player of the match was our very talented WA Cliodhna who made some very good steals and passes!

We would like to thank the whole netball team for their impressive commitment and hard work this season and we hope that we can only improve from here.

Many thanks to our Minor A team players: Emma Newell, Ella Bell, Ellie Walker, Izzie Taylor, Abigail McConville, Grace Mussen, Rebekah Matthews, Tasja Sneddon, Christina Bickerstaff, Abigail Walker, Lexie Kerr and Cliodhna McGrath!

## Minor 'B' Netball

### **First Match - Regent House (away)**

Our first match this season on the 23rd February 2022 was against Regent House, a superb team to play. They were a great team to play against and we excitedly enjoyed every minute of our first match together. Each player tried her very best on court and we strived to succeed each time.

As we played, Ruby (GK), Gracie (GD) and Mia (GK - third and fourth quarter) were amazing at saving goals and defending our net against the super Regent team and in no time we were scoring points with the help of Evie (GA), Tara (GS) and Charlotte (WA), while Leona (C) and Samantha (C - third and fourth quarter) stayed in the centre third to intercept balls and help with attacking. The match ended in a wonderful score of 10 - 0 to Banbridge Academy. Well done Regent and we hope to be able to play again next time! Congratulations to our player of the match Mya Jess!

### **Second Match - Shimna (home)**

On 7th of March 2022, we played against a wonderful school, Shimna. The match was great and the girls were very excited throughout. The girls were brilliant and were an overall strong team, demonstrating phenomenal teamwork. Alongside this, the girls showed great determination and it certainly paid off in the end.

The team went into the match much more confidently as it was our second match of the season, so we weren't as nervous as before. When playing, each and every team member strived to succeed as we did once before and continued to do as the season continued.

All team members were superb and all of them played an important role in the game. However, the ones who really helped when earning the victory of the game were the players of the match: Tara Kennedy (GA and GS) and Gracie Johnstone (GD).

In the first quarter we won with the score 4-0 and then succeeded once again in the second quarter with the score 8-1. Then throughout the match we continued until the score was 14-2 in the third quarter. Finally, we really came together as a team and came out of the match victorious with the score 25-3.

Last but not least, a big thank you to Shimna who were a wonderful team throughout the match and we hope that we will be able to play again sometime in the future.

### **Third Match - Down High School (home)**

Our third match this year, on the 28th March 2022, was against the strong Down High School team. As a result of the previous victorious matches the Minor B team had enjoyed, we had more confidence entering this match against the superb Down High School.

The match started with tension as the whistle blew and straight away the two teams sprang into action with dedicated defence and advanced attackers on the ball.

Each player made a good effort on court as we played on for each quarter of the match and, with the help of Evie (GA) and Tara (GS), we scored and managed to take the lead with Down High School receiving a point later on in the match. With an amazing amount

of effort applied, we ended up with a final score of 22 - 1 to Banbridge Academy!

And lastly, we'd like to thank Down High School for an amazing match played and we wish them success in their future matches ahead!

### **Fourth match - Finals (away)**

Our fourth and final match was against Regent House, which was a lovely surprise for our team. The previous three matches had strengthened our Banbridge Academy team in confidence and in skill. With extreme excitement, we headed off into the massive court and after an hour, headed on court to warm up and play.

Our skilled players rolled onto the team and we started with Regent passing the first strong centre pass of the match. Our defence sprang into immediate action and quickly intercepted and passed the ball back down the court, where Tara (GS) scored our first point of the match.

Minutes later Samantha (C) had leapt into the circle ready to pass the ball to a talented player and they started the next round. With the help of Evie (GA) and Tara (GS) we managed to score plenty of points in no time and soon we were in the lead with 11 points after the first half.

The second half started with gusto as the players were more determined than before. Regent (GA) almost shot the ball in but just missed the hoop, and they tried to pick it back up, but it was too late. The ball had already shot across the court with the help of three players, Gracie (GD), Mya (WD) and Evie (GA) and finally, Tara scored the point

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for us.

As the match went on, Regent kept trying to defend against us, but it was no use; at the end of the match, Banbridge Academy had won with a final score of 20 - 0!

And lastly, well done again to Regent House and we wish every success in the future!

We enjoyed the finals day best, as we were so pleased that we had been able to get in.

**The Minor B team members are:**

Leona Lin, Samantha Burns-Atkin, Mia Graham, Mya Jess, Gracie Johnstone, Ruby Johnston, Caitlin McErlean, Evie Macauley, Charlotte Hampton, Tara Kennedy and Lola Brown.



## Junior 'A' Netball

To begin, on behalf of the whole Junior A team, we would like to say thank you to Mrs Beggs and Mrs Lawther for all of their hard work and dedication this season.

Our first match was against Aquinas, which we lost 22-17, and the player of the match was Lucy Megaw.

The second match was versus Regent House and we lost 11-2, as we just struggled to find the net. The player of the match was Lucy Megaw.

For our third match, we were against Assumption. In this close match, we lost 15-11 and the player of the match was Jessica McCullough.

The next match was versus Lagan College, where we were defensively very strong and the player of the match was Lassara Magennis. We lost narrowly 17-12.

Our penultimate game was against Belfast Royal Academy, during which our attack played excellently and we consequently got our first win of the



season, 14-15. The player of the match was Alex King.

For our final match, we had a home game against Rockport. We also came out with a win (9-18), thanks to our defence who were crucial to the win. The player of the match was Kristin

Ginniff.

The most improved player of this season has been Sarah Cairns. Well done to all of the players this season! Keep working hard over the summer to get ready for next season!



## Junior 'B' Team Netball

The season for the Junior B team was played overall very well, considering that these were the first matches played since Covid. The players are developing well and there has been great improvement amongst all the players. In total there were 4 matches played, the first of which was an away game, played against St Mary's, Newry on the 25th March. This was a great first match played with the Academy winning 9-1 and the players of the match being Sienna Scullion (GS) and Rachel Moore (WA).

The second match played was another away game against Our Lady's on the 1st April, where we lost 24-7. Although this did not result in a victory, it was a great match to figure out where improvement needed to be made; the players of this match were Rachel Greer (GD) and Aimee Gilmore (GA).

The third match played was at home against St Malachy's on the 5th April, which was won 13-3 ;this was our best match of the season and was very well played with the players of the match being Sienna Scullion (GS) and Lucy Hodgson (GK).

The final match was played at home against St Paul's on the 6th April, which was unfortunately lost 28-7. It was a very competitive match and although not won, it was a great end to the season and everyone on the team had improved significantly and the experience was brilliant. The players of that match were Kathrine Graham (GS) and Arianne Bell (C).

The team met after school every Tuesday with the Junior A team and the Intermediate team to train with Mrs Beggs. Being with the other teams helped everyone to improve, as we all



could learn from each other. Everyone worked equally hard at the practices and their skills are much better than at the beginning of the year.

The most improved player over the course of the year would have to be Sienna Scullion (GS), as she has constantly worked hard to develop her skills and has shown determination throughout the year.

The best goal scorer is Kathrine Graham (GS); she has scored the majority of goals in all the matches, and she has worked well together with the Goal Attack.

The season player is Rachel Moore (WD); she has shown brilliant skills throughout the season and has been a great asset to the team, displaying impressive enthusiasm during all the matches and training.

The whole team this year has been great and have worked very well as a team. It has been a fantastic experience for everyone and has been well enjoyed. This couldn't have been achieved without Mrs Beggs and Mrs Lawther training and organising matches, so a big thanks must go to them.