

Football

Girls': U16

Zara Barnes (Year 12)

An amazing year for U16 Girls' Football kicked off with everyone attending training every other Friday afternoon. From having nobody, to having a full squad is quite an achievement!

This year we entered the Danske Bank Regional tournament at the Dub, Queen's University Belfast. A squad of twelve was selected and every girl played their very best. We were entered into the Belfast tournament, which was going to be a challenge as many schools in that area have had a girls' football team set up for years - but this did not stop us from only going and winning it!

In the first game we were beaten, however nobody dropped their heads. We brought many positives from it into our second game. With Zara Barnes getting injured early into this game, it left us with no subs. However,

the girls did not show any signs of tiredness and hard work at training was showcased as Kristen Ginniff, Mollie Murray and Rebekah Graham all scored, winning us the match. We then went on to win and draw our last two games. From Aimee Gilmore making saves that secured points to Lauren McCallister making last man tackles, the defence was unbelievable. Not to mention Katie McFarland and Ellie Carson who were both solid at the back, but also fed beautiful passes through the channels. Olivia McDowell's speed was able to catch many wingers down the line and Frances Waddington frequently won the ball back and passed into space for strikers to run onto. Rebekah and Mollie played amazingly as usual, taking players on with confidence and creating chances and goals. Zara kept the midfield composed and made successful split passes through the defence to put teammates through on goal. Annie-May Henning's work

rate was unmatched and rapidly closed down our opponents, forcing them to make mistakes that allowed us to win the ball back. Kristen and Megan McDowell were superb, creating one touch passing patterns through the midfield and Kristen bagging herself a goal.

Winning this tournament put us through to the national finals which we unfortunately didn't win, but it was nevertheless an amazing experience for the girls. On behalf of the squad, I'd like to thank Mr Cordner for all his time and effort with us. Without him we wouldn't have ever been able to play football in school. Secondly, I'd like to thank Ryan Gourley who trained us every week and took us to the matches. He is so enthusiastic and an amazing coach, whom we are so grateful to have. We also really appreciated Mr Duffin, Miss Greenlee and Mrs Hoy's attendance at training.



Girls': Year 8

Emma Rankin (captain)

The year started off strongly with around twelve Year 8s attending training every other Friday afternoon. After a few months, the first tournament came about taking place at Valley Leisure Centre on 20th October 2023. There were two mixed teams of Years 8 and 9 participating in a really competitive tournament. Both teams took on schools such as Belfast Model, giving them tough games and getting some good results. Although the team didn't have a proper goalkeeper, Heidi and Georgia stepped in at different times, along with Lucy Sterrit, giving the team safety in the net and conceding minimal goals.

In one team were Mollie Murray (Yr9), Lilly Woods (Yr9), Emma Rankin (Yr8), Heidi Meeke (Yr8), Lucy Skelly (Yr8), Lucy Sterrit (Yr8), Alyssa Curry (Yr8), Sarah Greer (Yr8), Lauren McCallister (Yr9) and Ava Robson (Yr9). This team won, drew, and lost different games, putting in some brilliant performances, along the way beating schools with scores such as 3-0. Lilly and

Emma played upfront providing multiple goals whilst Mollie, Ava and Lauren provided strength in midfield and at the back. Lucy Skelly played wing and was very skilful. Lucy Sterrit performed brilliantly in nets and Heidi stepped in at times, providing some superb saves. Alyssa and Sarah played amazingly in different positions such as defence and midfield, giving the team strength and contributing to many different goals and goal scoring opportunities.

In another team Georgia Somerville (Yr8), Lucy King (Yr8), Meghan Fitzpatrick (Yr8), Lucy Jennings (Yr8), Maggie Suffern (Yr8), Abby McCann (Yr8), Ava McGrath (Yr9), Addison Hylands (Yr9) and Heidi Hanson (Yr9) played brilliantly. Georgia played in nets and let in minimum goals whilst Lucy Jennings, Addison, Ava and Heidi played in defence giving the team solidity at the back and putting in so many crucial tackles. Ava and Heidi played superbly and contributed to many offensive and defensive moves. Heidi,

Lucy, Maggie, and Abby played brilliantly in midfield and showed so much passing composure. Meghan and Abby scored a few goals and were a powerful attacking force.

Training went on for a few weeks and soon there was a match. So, on a Monday morning the team went to play Clounagh JHS at Havelock Park. It was a very resilient performance and although the team lost 2-1, they didn't give up which resulted in a late goal and a frantic last few minutes. Maggie scored the goal, which had been turned over because of the Banbridge Academy press and crossed beautifully into the box. There was a slight deflection off the Clounagh defender, which Maggie latched onto and finished bottom right-hand corner.

The season finished well with a couple more training sessions, during which girls such as Izzy and Isobella joined. This shows the ever-increasing demand for Girls' Football and was an encouraging sign going into next season.