Oh Yes They Do!

Student: Oh yes they do!

*Tutor: No they don’t.*

Yes, they do.

*Well I’ve never seen any.*

Maybe you need to get out a bit more!

*What do you mean?*

Well, there’s a lot of it about.

*Women’s football?*

Yes. Women’s football.

*Is there?*

Yes!

*Oh.*

Women are people too, you know.

*Suppose so.*

And they like their football.

*Well, maybe some do.*

What?

*Lots of women don’t like football.*

Lots of men don’t either.

*Maybe.*

Lots of them.

*Nobody watches women’s football, though.*

Yes they do!

*It’s not as good as proper football.*

Women play “proper football”.

*Just not as well as men do.*

How would you know?

*What do you mean?*

You’ve never seen any!

*No, but…*

You’ve never seen any!

*No.*

So how would you know?

*Well, everyone knows.*

Oh, don’t be so silly!

*They just do.*

Shall I tell you something?

*Mmmm…*

Have you heard of the Puskás award?

*The Puskás award?*

Yes.

*No.*

See! You should get out a bit more!

*Well, what is the Puskás award?*

It’s the FIFA award for the most beautiful goal of the year.

*And?*

Well a woman almost won it in 2014.

*Really?*

The second most beautiful goal in 2014 was scored by a woman.

*The second most beautiful goal in 2014?*

That’s right.

*Who?*

Stephanie Roche.

*Oh.*

You can see it on U tube.

*Oh.*

It’s a wonderful goal.

*Oh.*

She played for a French club.

*OK.*

Then for an American club.

*For money?*

Oh yes, she’s a professional.

*You mean there are women’s teams playing for professional clubs?*

Of course there are!

*Which clubs?*

Loads of clubs have a women’s team.

*Like?*

Man City do.

*And?*

Liverpool, Arsenal, Everton, Chelsea, Spurs.

*Some of the very big clubs!*

Yes.

*I never knew!*

Well, now you do.

*How long have women been playing football?*

Hundreds of years.

*How do you know?*

Well, for one thing there’s a lovely poem.

*From how long ago?*

1580.

*That’s years ago!*

More than 400.

*How does it go?*

“A tyme there is for all, my mother often sayes,  When she, with skirts tuckt very hy, with girles at football playes.”

*I like the idea of Mum playing “with girls at football”.*

Tucking her skirts up “very hy”.

*Racing down the pitch.*

Collecting the pass.

*And scoring!*

It’s there!

*It’s in the net!*

Good for Mum.

*Funny spelling, though.*

Mmmm…?

*Funny spelling.*

What spelling?

*In the poem.*

Oh yes.

*That’s how they did it, in those days, I suppose.*

Yes. That’s right.

*Spelling was different long ago, I suppose.*

They didn’t bother about it so much.

*Really?*

You could spell how you liked.

*Really?*

No problem, in those days.

*Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne then.*

I think so.

*Do you think she played football?*

I don’t think anybody knows.

*You can’t really imagine it, can you?*

Elizabeth the First “tucking her skirts very high”.

*Running down the touchline.*

Sending in a cross.

*Floating it in from the wing.*

Right to the striker’s head.

*You can’t really imagine that.*

Mary, Queen of Scots played.

*Football?*

Yes.

*How do we know that?*

She wrote about it.

*Did she?*

In her diaries.

*Oh.*

And they found the oldest football in her rooms.

*What do you mean, the oldest football?*

The oldest football that still exists.

*Really?*

Yes.

*And it belonged to Mary, Queen of Scots?*

Yes.

*What is it made of?*

Leather.

*Like they all used to be?*

Well, a little bit smaller.

*Really?*

Yes.

*Oh.*

In 1881 there was a match between English and Scottish ladies.

*Queen Victoria was on the throne, then.*

She was.

*Did she watch the match?*

You must be joking!

*She probably didn’t approve.*

No. She didn’t.

*Too unladylike, maybe.*

She thought it was disgraceful.

*Did many people come to watch the match?*

5,000 people.

*That’s a good crowd!*

Yes.

*Was it a good match?*

There was a riot.

*How do mean, there was a riot?*

People invaded the pitch.

*So the match was called off?*

Yes.

*Why?*

Well, the pitch had been invaded!

*No. I mean why was the pitch invaded in the first place?*

Well, some people didn’t like women to play football.

*Why was that?*

I suppose they thought it wasn’t feminine.

*Was it the clothes they wore?*

Well, partly, I suppose.

*What did they wear?*

Probably plus fours.

*Plus fours?*

Yes. Trousers which come just below the knee.

*And long socks.*

Yes.

*Probably long sleeves, too.*

Oh yes. All very proper.

*But maybe some people just didn’t like the idea.*

Of women playing football?

*Yes.*

No.

*Maybe they just thought women shouldn’t do it.*

No.

*Run about and get muddy.*

Not very ladylike, I suppose.

*Well, ladies wore very long dresses then.*

Tight waists.

*High necks.*

Huge hats.

*Long gloves.*

All that stuff.

*So football was a big step away from all that.*

Suppose so…

*Mmmm*

There were two women especially.

*Pardon?*

Two women especially.

*Two women especially who did what?*

Promoted women’s football.

*Who were they?*

Well, one called herself “Nettie Honeyball”.

*Mmmm…*

And one called herself “Mrs Graham”.

*Why do you say they “called themselves” these names?*

They weren’t their real names.

*Oh. Why not?*

It wasn’t safe.

*Not safe?*

No.

*Why?*

Because so many people hated women playing football.

*So they might have been attacked?*

Yes.

*What were their real names?*

“Mrs Graham” was really Helen Graham Matthews.

*Oh.*

She was captain of Scotland.

*Right. And “Nettie Honeyball”?*

She was really Mary Hutson.

*Right.*

Captain of England.

*Oh.*

In Scotland, it was banned.

*They banned women’s football?*

Yes.

*Oh.*

But Nettie Honeyball founded the BLFC.

*Is that the British Ladies Football Club?*

That’s right.

*Did “Mrs Graham” play?*

She did.

*And did “Nettie” play?*

Yes. She was captain.

*And gradually women’s clubs formed, did they?*

Yes.

*Did people come to watch?*

Well, the BLFC drew a bigger crowd to one game than the men’s team did.

*Did they?*

In 1895.

*Queen Victoria was still on the throne.*

Yes.

*Mmmm…*

In 1920 another ladies club filled Goodison Park.

*Everton’s ground?*

Yes.

*They filled it, you said.*

53,000 people.

*Big crowd!*

Yes.

*So women’s football went from strength to strength, did it?*

Well, it wasn’t quite like that.

*Oh?*

No.

*What happened?*

In 1921 the FA banned women’s football.

*Banned women’s football?*

Yes*.*

*Why?*

They said it damaged women’s bodies.

*Playing football?*

Yes.

*No more than men’s, surely?*

No.

*That’s nonsense, isn’t it?*

Well, yes.

*The FA was run by men, I suppose.*

You said it.

*That must have been bad for women’s football.*

Banning it?

*Yes.*

Well, yes, it was.

*So what happened?*

Nothing much.

*How do you mean?*

Women’s football almost died.

*Oh.*

But then the WFA was formed.

*The Women’s Football Association I suppose.*

That’s right.

*England had just won the World Cup.*

Yes.

In 1966.

*At Wembley.*

*So everyone was dead keen on football.*

Yes. I suppose so.

*And the FA lifted its ban on women playing.*

Right.

*So what happened next?*

Well, the FA Women’s Cup was created.

*And a women’s football league?*

Yes.

*Oh.*

Which became the Women’s Premier League in 1992.

*And you said most clubs have a women’s team now.*

Yes.

*OK.*

And there’s a Women’s Super League.

*For the best teams?*

Yes. The best 8 teams.

*Are there women’s football leagues below the premier league?*

Oh yes.

*Like?*

There’s a combination league.

*OK.*

With different divisions.

*Like?*

Oxford LFC is in the South West division, for example.

*Oxford Ladies Football Club?*

That’s it.

*I never even knew Oxford had a women’s team.*

You do need to get out a bit more!

*Is there international competition?*

Yes. There’s a UEFA women’s championship.

*Oh.*

There are teams all over Europe.

*Is there a Women’s World Cup?*

Yes.

*I never knew that!*

The first was in 1991.

*Oh. Has England ever won it?*

No.

*Oh.*

Germany has.

*Oh.*

Twice.

*Oh.*

So has the US.

*Twice?*

Three times.

*They won in 2015, didn’t they?*

For the third time, yes.

*But England never has?*

No.

*Oh.*

Maybe next time?

*Yes. Maybe next time!*