**Referee Georgia Rooney chats with Marta and Olivia**

Referee Georgia Rooney talks to Marta and Olivia about what inspired her to become a referee and the challenges and joy it brings.

**Georgia –**

When you have a good match, being a referee is like having the best seat in the entire stadium as you get to see some amazing football and be a part of something that is really special.

**Young person –** Is it goal power or girl power? Hello everybody, welcome to Goal Power!

**Georgia –**

My name is Georgia Rooney. I’m a referee (whistle noise) and I am a FA Referee Developer, which means that I train other referees.

**Marta –**

Why do you referee?

**Georgia –**

I have no idea…[laughter]. I referee because I wanted to be a part of the growth of the women’s game. I wanted to be close to it and I felt too old and thought I’d get injured so I thought I can’t play at any decent level. But as a referee I might be able to make it to quite a decent level and get to see some amazing football so when you have a good match, being a referee is like having the best seat in the entire stadium as you get to see some amazing football and be a part of something that is really special.

I’ve played on and off throughout my entire life, but it was in 2019 when I went to the World Cup in France to see the Lionesses, the England women’s team play Argentina and the buzz at the tournament was so amazing that I said to myself, how can I get involved in women’s football again? And I looked at the match officials around the pitch and I was like, ah all women, I wonder if I can do that.

So, came home, googled it, had no idea basically how you become a referee and managed to get in touch with Sussex County FA and the guy that answered my call is called Paul Jeffrey. He is a referee development officer in the county. He was like, ‘you’ve come to the right place’ because they had loads of cash to get women into refereeing, so it was like perfect timing, so I got to do my course, they paid for me to do it and I was the only woman on the course amongst, like, there were about 20 fifteen-year-old boys and 2 grown men and me. And that was the beginning of my journey of being involved with football, again.

**Olivia –**

What was it like when you played, compared to now?

**Georgia –**

When I was younger, at school, football was just for boys. But they would let me join in because I was quite good. When I went to secondary school, I went to an all-girls grammar school, football wasn’t even an option. We could play netball, or we could play lacrosse. So, I played outside of school with friends. So, I always wonder, because I was good when I was little, if there was anyone around who was focused on women and girls’ football and they’d have seen me play and thought, she could go on a team, it might have just fostered my interest a little bit and helped me go somewhere with it. I just wonder what a difference that would have made, because no one paid any attention because no one thought football was really for girls.

**Marta –**

Who is the best linesperson you’ve worked with?

**Georgia –**

I know, and I am connected to a very brilliant assistant referee/linesperson called Emily Carney and she is actually at FIFA level. So, she focuses purely on being an assistant, she doesn’t want to be in the middle anymore, she is excellent, she is absolutely brilliant. Actually, I should also add my refereeing role model and hero, Rebecca Welch. She is from the North-East and is now refereeing at FIFA level as well. And has gone really high up in the men’s game as well as the women’s game. She’s a fantastic referee.

**Olivia –**

Where do you want to be in 5 years’ time?

**Georgia –**

In 5 years’ time I would like to be in a position where I am looking back and thinking, wow, I’ve refereed in the Championship, I’ve refereed in the WSL, and potentially having refereed in some international fixtures. That’s my goal.

**Marta –**

What is your favourite team who you have reffed?

**Georgia –**

My favourite team I have reffed? That’s a good one. Erm. Recently I have been a first assistant referee for a couple of matches that Southampton Women played in. And as a first assistant, you are running the line, and obviously you are keeping an eye on the defensive back line and then obviously in the second half you see the same team, but you see their attackers, because that’s what you are covering. And Southampton Women are really good. I think they are going to be, in a few years, in the WSL. It was just really amazing to watch them, they were fantastic.

**Marta –**

Am I right in thinking that you have donated some things to the exhibition?

**Georgia –**

You are correct.

**Marta –**

And what have you donated and why have you donated them?

**Georgia –**

I’ve donated my first pair of black football boots that I got for refereeing. Obviously as a referee you generally need to wear all black, so I have donated my boots because I needed to get some new ones that are a bit more comfortable. I’ve donated by notebook from when I did my referee course. Because obviously I was learning, and I was taking a lot of notes, and it’s quite funny looking back on it because I was making notes like, make sure you see what’s happening, recognise what it is, and THINK, what are you going to do, and ACT, pull out a yellow card or whatever the action is. I’ve donated my notebook just so people can see the kinds of things that you have to think about as a referee. And I have also donated one of my first whistles. Also, for every match that we do we have a little slip where we put who the teams are, how many goals there are, if there have been any disciplinaries, like yellow or red cards. And I’ve got loads of them from all matches I’ve done so I’ve donated a little wad of these match slips from the early games that I refereed.

**Marta –**

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed by us.

**Georgia –**

You’re welcome, thank you for having me. That was really good.