

THREE DADS TAKE ON 46-MILE WALK TO BRIGHTON FOR CANCER CHARITY Page 9

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CHELSEA WOMEN AIMING FOR THE QUADRUPLE Page 12



'A LOT OF US ARE SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING THAT IS NOT REAL': WE HEAR FROM LAURA HEALTH, THE PARAMEDIC WHO TURNED HER EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE TROLLING INTO A POSITIVE - PAGE 8

BAME MPs: Pandemic shows 'evidence of systemic racism'

By Olly Murphy

A number of London MPs from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have criticised the government for 'failing to respond' to the "life or death consequences of structural racism."

Speaking to SWLondoner, former shadow home secretary, Diane Abbott, shadow women and equalities minister, Marsha De Cordova, and Labour MP for Streatham, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, expressed concern at what they described as 'attempts' to 'downplay issues around race'.

Their comments come amid the publication of a review by Doreen Lawrence, which concluded that structural racism was responsible for the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on BAME com-



Marsha De Cordova, pictured, is one of a number of MPs warning of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on BAME communities

munities.

The report, commissioned by the Labour Party, found that BAME people had been 'overlooked' during the first wave of the pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities was laid bare last year when research from the London Assembly's Health Committee found that more ethnically diverse boroughs were connected to a higher number of

deaths from the virus.

According to its data, in six boroughs where rates of deaths from COVID-19 were statistically higher than the London average last year, three were also higher in terms of ethnic diversity.

Brent and Ealing recorded some of the highest mortality rates in the capital, compared to boroughs with a lower percentage of BAME residents.

Labour's shadow

women and equalities minister, Marsha De Cordova, said: "The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated structural inequalities.

"We know that Black, Asian and ethnic minority people have suffered the worst fatal and financial consequences.

"Overcrowded housing, precarious work, low pay, inadequate sick pay and huge health inequalities have cost Black, Asian and ethnic minority people their

lives."

Analysis from the Greater London Authority's economic fairness data has revealed that white Londoners earned one and a half times as much per hour compared to those from a Black African, Caribbean or Bangladeshi background in 2018.

According to Diane Abbott, the government "refuses" to acknowledge the link between structural racism and the impacts of the pandemic on the BAME community.

The former shadow home secretary was referring to the controversial findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published in March, which noted that while there was anecdotal evidence of racism, no 'proof' existed that it was structural.

"The report takes us backwards by suggesting there's

nothing wrong with the system itself, but rather some individuals who are behaving badly," Abbott added.

"If you don't accept there are problems with the system, it's very hard to combat racism."

Established by Downing Street to investigate racial disparities in the UK, the 258-page report concluded that it no longer saw "a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities."

According to De Cordova the report marked a "departure" from the "overwhelming body of evidence of structural racism."

She added: "The Commission had an opportunity to meaningfully engage with institutional and structural racism in the UK.

"Instead, they published divisive and offensive material

which has been met by criticism from experts and contributors alike."

Meanwhile, the current mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, told SWL he was 'incredulous' at the 'so-called' findings of the report.

He said: "The idea that our society does not have serious issues with structural racism is insulting to all who have been confronted by it and whose lives have been blighted by it."

The publication of

the Commission's report came less than a month before the 28th anniversary of the death of Stephen Lawrence, who was brutally murdered in an unprovoked racist attack in 1993.

According to the Labour MP for Streatham, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, the anniversary of Stephen's murder is particularly significant this year, because it "teaches us that structural racism very much exists."

"It comes at a very

good time for those of us who want to stay the course to end institutional racism instead of pretending it doesn't exist," she said.

"And it probably comes at a very bad time for the government, so soon after its report."

More than four years after his death, in 1997, an official inquiry was established by then Home Secretary Jack Straw following the dropping of charges against two youths.

The 350-page report written by retired High Court judge, Sir William Macpherson concluded that the investigation into the murder had been "marred by a combination of professional incompetence,

institutional racism and a failure of leadership" within the Metropolitan Police.

Labour is now calling on the government to "reject" the "disingenuous" findings from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

It is urging for the implementation of over 253 recommendations of the long-standing Timpson, Williams, Angolini and Lammy Reviews – all of which focus on the treatment of, and outcomes, for BAME individuals in different areas.

Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, has also committed to introducing a Race Equality Act to "tackle structural racial inequality at source."

De Cordova has claimed that without intervention the report will instill further mistrust in Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

"It downplays the role of institutional and structural racism, glorifies slavery by saying there is a 'new story' to be told and blames Black, Asian and ethnic minority people for their own disadvantage."



Diane Abbott, pictured, has said the government's race report makes it 'harder' to combat racism

Research shows reality TV is not 'harmless entertainment'

By Honor Cockroft

Whilst reality TV is one of the largest sectors in the television industry, its behavioural effects are largely unknown.

However, reality programmes that show toxic behaviour such as Jersey Shore and The Real Housewives franchise can increase aggression, manipulation and narcissism in viewers.

Researchers from Central Michigan University found that people were more aggressive following exposure to an episode of reality TV that contained verbal and relational aggression.

After watching the programme, study participants received an "ego-threat" in the form of a competitive time-task, and their subsequent level of aggression was measured by the intensity and duration of a noise they

administered to an ostensible opponent.

Researcher, Bryan Gibson PhD, said: "Unpleasant interpersonal behaviours which we were able to show led to viewers increasing the amount of aggression they were willing to direct towards somebody else."

The study also found that participants who watched episodes depicting relational aggression were more aggressive than those exposed to family-friendly reality shows such as Little People Big World or violent crime dramas such as US show Dexter.

Gibson, who teaches psychology at Central Michigan University, said that a possible explanation for this finding is that surveillance shows are marketed as reality: "The behaviour documented is also seen as true behaviour, real unscripted things that



TOXIC VIEWING: Research shows that reality TV can increase aggression, manipulation and narcissism in viewers

the participants are engaging in.

"That could potentially have a greater effect on their own behaviour as opposed to watching what they know to be fiction."

Meanwhile, a survey of 145 students from the University of Wisconsin concluded that viewers

of reality TV believed "argumentative and conniving" behaviours portrayed on shows are "normal".

This phenomenon is known as the 'Cultivation Theory', a sociological framework that suggests people exposed to a form of media for long periods of time are more likely to perceive so-

cial realities as they are presented.

According to data published by One Poll in 2016, 42% of 25-34-year-olds believe reality TV dramas are true, with 60% also believing on-screen romances to be genuine.

But in 2012 The Bachelor creator Mike Fleiss told the

Today show that: "70-80% of reality TV is scripted," highlighting the methods of manipulation some show producers use to create more drama, and subsequently attract more viewers.

According to Gibson, age could also be a variable in behavioural changes

caused by media, adding: "The effects can be more powerful for children because they have less capacity to separate entertainment for reality, so it is in the realm of possibility that the effects could be stronger in younger people."

As young people are both the target demographic and largest viewing sector of reality TV, the consumption of scripted reality that promotes negative mentalities, aggressive conflict and dysfunctional relationships has the potential to be extremely damaging.

Nonetheless, the behavioural effects of reality TV largely remain undiscussed, with conversation veering towards the mental health of participants and self-esteem problems shows can inflict on viewers.

For example, the Mental Health Foun-

dation's study found that shows such as ITV's Love Island fuel body anxiety in young people, with almost 1 in 4 confirming reality TV makes them worry about body image.

In a survey conducted by SWL of a group of 16-24-year-olds with varying levels of reality TV consumption, 50% confirmed reality shows affected their body image, whilst more than 55% said they were unaware of potential psychological effects.

The survey also revealed that whilst 40% said they do not notice any behavioural changes in themselves after watching reality TV, 60% said they do notice others being 'more aggressive', 'more argumentative', 'more irritable', 'more self-centred' and 'more anxious'.

Another study by Gibson's team of researchers at Cen-

tral Michigan University found that people who spend more time watching reality TV shows, are more emotionally invested in them or even identify with characters more closely, tend to be more narcissistic.

However, as Gibson pointed out: "It could be simply that more narcissistic people are drawn to those shows, or that greater exposure over a length of time leads to increased narcissism."

"It is also possible that longer term exposure might intensify the effects."

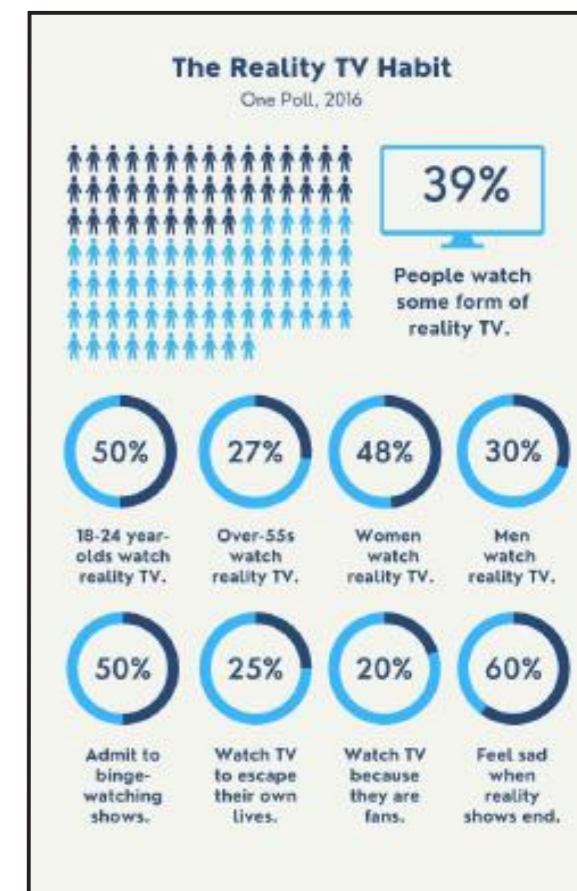
This open question draws attention to

the reasons why people are attracted to reality TV shows.

The 'Social Comparison Theory' suggests that watching reality TV makes people feel better about themselves and their own lives.

With reality TV existing as one of the most popular and profitable sectors of the television industry, with nearly 4 in 10 people watching some form of it, it's here to stay.

Gibson hopes that his research will draw attention to the ways in which toxic behaviour seen in shows might affect viewers.



The big reveal: Polka Theatre to open its doors after £8.5m renovation project

By Lily Jobson

After a year of uncertainty, Polka Theatre can finally say it is reopening its doors later this year.

It has been a rocky road for theatres, with government coronavirus restrictions causing severe damage.

Now it has been given the green light to get performances back up and running, it's full steam ahead for Polka Theatre.

The theatre has undergone a major modernisation project after 40 years of being open.

CEO and artistic director, Peter Glanville, said: "After 40 years, it was just getting a bit old around the theatre, especially with 100,000 kids running and jumping around.

"The new redevelopment that we have is just outstanding, it's completely new so we can't wait to

bring audiences back as it is an extraordinary place around the borough".

Before the coronavirus pandemic hit, Polka Theatre closed its doors in February 2019 to start the major re-development programme, which has involved an £8.5million refurbishment.

The new renovation is an 'outstanding' project that Polka Theatre has taken on board.

With new rehearsal rooms, play areas, studios and much more, Polka Theatre expressed how thrilled they are to get back up and running.

Polka Theatre was granted a generous amount of funding from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund, Arts Council England, London Borough of Merton and many other vital funders.

Glanville, 58, said: "It's been incredibly



TRANSFORMATION: External picture of Polka Theatre that has taken over a year to build. The now newly renovated building has undergone a major re-development project to celebrate the theatre's 40th anniversary

difficult for theatres across the country.

"We have all been re-scheduling and re-planning every three months because of restrictions constantly changing but we are in the position where we feel the most positive.

"Everyone just has

their fingers crossed.

"Our biggest concern has been for our audiences because we put on productions, creative learning activities and a range of community events every year reaching hundreds of thousands of children in schools and

families. "It's more than just the quality of a production, it's the experience the children get. "Polka theatre helps to support children's well-being, confidence, their language and emotional development and so-

cial interaction as it's a major part of their development.

Having been closed for so long, Polka Theatre turned to online programmes to continue engaging with children in schools or at home.

Glanville added: "We had a literacy

programme, a free

falling group for children for those in difficult situations at home or at schools and an amazing choir of all mixed ages.

"The online programme has allowed children to still have the opportunity to be part of a group with

other children. "We have learnt how to carry on running a business remotely to provide creative activities digitally.

"Some of our remote activities have reached people in France and Bath so it is something we really hope to continue even when we're open." Polka opened its doors in 1979 as the first theatre dedicated exclusively to children.

Having been opened over four decades, it has inspired and entertained 3.5 million visitors and continues to be the place where the theatre begins.

As part of the new redevelopment, the theatre created the 'FUTURE Polka appeal' to help give a final push to open the doors in Spring.

Glanville added: "We needed to raise a lot of money to move

forward with the redevelopment that we have created.

"We created the FUTURE Polka programme to reach out to families.

"It has been really successful, lot's of families have come forward to donate and support it."

Glanville explained how the theatre industry has been affected in terms of future planning for productions as well as staffing issues during the pandemic.

He said: "I think some of the people who have been most affected are the art-

ists. 70% of people who work in the theatre are freelance and all the work suddenly just dried up.

"It's not just for the actors on stage but it's the designers, the stage management team, the technical and costume departments that all support the production as well.

"It has just been extremely tough for the people who work at Polka.

"It is great now we are in the position to get back in the rehearsal room as there has just been no work."



ENTERTAIN: Children enjoying Jan Blake's In the Winter Wood performance at Polka Theatre

Paramedic faces fears to fight trolls

By Lily Jobson

During the pandemic, people have turned to social media to reach out to those they are unable to see.

While many have enjoyed staying in the loop on social media, studies have shown that excessive use can fuel feelings of anxiety and depression.

During Mental Health Awareness Month this May, it is more important than ever to seek support.

Paramedic Laura Health, explained how social media has been a 'blessing and a curse at the same time'.

Laura grew a large following after being trolled for a photo she posted of her at work back in March 2020.

She received a lot of coverage for being 'the paramedic who received hateful comments for wearing makeup to



FACE YOUR FEARS: Laura on her charity skydive for Cybersmile UK ahead of World Mental Health Awareness month in March 2020

work'.

The 25-year-old from Staffordshire, said: "I can remember waking up and sitting on the sofa crying uncontrollably.

"I went into such a dark place where I didn't even want to get up out of bed.

"I always say social media is like a blessing and a curse at the same time, especially during the pandemic.

"There is an extremely toxic side to social media and

it can quite easily consume you.

After her ordeal, Laura got in contact with Cybersmile UK to tackle the problem around trolling and online bullying.

The Cybersmile Foundation is an award-winning organisation that is committed to digital wellbeing and tackling all forms of bullying and abuse.

Laura took part in a charity skydive to mark World Mental Health Day in 2020,

raising more than £2,500.

She added: "I wanted to raise money for a charity that deals with online harassment and bullying as Cybersmile helped me."

Laura now uses her platform as a mental health advocate helping to reduce stigma by sharing her personal experiences.

She said: "I think personally from my experience is to try and not get so fix-

ated on the world of social media because it can look a lot like reality.

"A lot of us are searching for something which is not real, causing a massive impact on our mental health."

Laura now works with other mental health charities and has set up a blog to help reduce the stigma of the topic.

A spokesperson for Wimbledon Wednesday group, offering support for mental health, said: "It takes a long time for someone to come to a group and get to that stage where they feel comfortable.

"If somebody can talk and somebody can listen, it is so important.

"People should listen to understand instead of listening to respond.

"It's important to sit down and not be dismissive of what somebody is going through."

The extra mile: A walk for cancer

By Jazmyne McGavin

Three South West London fathers are embarking on a 46 mile walk to Brighton to raise money on behalf of the Children with Cancer charity.

On April 14, Carl Boyd, 28, from Twickenham shared to facebook that on 29 May, he and Charlie Burch, 28, from Kingston, and their friend Jimmy Downham, 33, will be beginning a 16 hour long walk from Kingston Town Centre to Brighton Pier.

The inspiration to do this came after the story about Azaylia Cain and her battle with Leukaemia became viral.

Carl, dad of 1, said: "It all started with the Azalyia Cain story- we were following her story to the last days of her being alive.

"There's nothing



STANDING FIRM: Carl (right) and Charlie together holding a poster that is promoting the 46 mile walk that they will be doing. The poster also pays tribute to Azaylia

we could have really done to help Azalyia, but now we want to try and help children and families who are in the same kind of situation as Azaylia."

He added: "We are all parents, so we could feel some of the pain that Ashley Cain was going through with his daughter."

The three men have raised a total of £1,090 of their £1,000 goal on their

GoFundMe page, and the money they raised will go to the Children with Cancer UK charity.

In surpassing their goal of £1,000, the men said that doing so pushed them a lot more.

Carl said: "We'd still do it if we had only £200, but we know now that the £1,000 we've raised will help at least one person."

In just a week and a half, the three men said that they were

able to raise £600 and were shocked to see that GoFundMe contributed £400 to their donations - "we didn't know they could do that." Said Carl

"We woke up one morning and we were at £1,000, I said to Charlie "we've reached our target!"

In deciding the course of their walk, Charlie, dad of 5, stated that the three men were going to walk from Kingston

to Central London.

"I thought - let's take it an extra 46 miles and let's walk to Brighton," Charlie said.

"A lot of people cycle to places like Brighton, but I've never known of anyone walking there."

Children with Cancer UK is a United Kingdom-based charity that is dedicated to raising money for research and providing care for children with cancer, it aims to understand what causes children to get cancer and to develop improved treatments.

Carl and his friends are dedicated to improving the quality of life of children who are sick, around the festive periods and holidays such as Easter, they donate advent calendars and easter eggs to the children's ward at West Middlesex Hospital.

Domestic violence referrals more than double in Croydon

By Olly Murphy

The number of referrals for victims of domestic violence in Croydon has surged by more than double in the last four years, SWLondoner can reveal.

According to a response to a Freedom of Information request made by SWL, referrals to Croydon's FJC (formerly Family Justice Centre) rose from 980 in March 2017 to 2,076 in April 2021, an increase of 111.8%.

The FJC is a Croydon-based charity offering services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, aiming to offer a 'safe place' where victims and their children can access support in one location.

Between April 2017 and March 2018, it recorded a total of 1,720 referrals, increasing to 1,817 between April 2018 and March 2019.

The biggest spike took place between April 2017 and March 2018, with 1,720 referrals lodged, compared to 980 between April 2016 and March 2017, amounting to an increase of 75.5%.

In a report on domestic abuse and sexual violence published in 2017, the majority of clients seen at the FJC tend to be referred by the Police, Access Croydon, and those who present of their own accord.

There was, however, a 3% decline in referrals last year, with 1,751 made to the charity in the year up to March 2020.

Figures also show a significant spike during the pandemic, with 2,076 referrals received between April 2020 and April 2021.

According to domestic abuse charity, Hestia, which operates services in Croydon, the pandemic



'DEVASTATING' IMPACT: Data from Croydon Council shows a significant spike in the number of referrals during the pandemic

played a significant role in the increase in domestic violence cases.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "Over the last three years, raising awareness of domestic abuse has become more prominent and the recent lockdown made domestic abuse a talking point for

the nation as cases surged and demand for support was at an all-time high.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on victims of domestic abuse, with abuse escalating and support networks cut off overnight.

"The rise of incidents is directly exacerbat-

ed by perpetrators and victims often spending lockdown in the same space.

"During the latest lockdown, we experienced a 30% increase in demand compared to the first lockdown and as lockdown restrictions continue to ease, we anticipate an increase in demand."

The revelation comes

less than four months after data from the Metropolitan Police's Crime Dashboard recorded a rise in the number of reported cases of domestic violence in Croydon during the festive season in 2020.

In January, SWL reported that the number of these incidents involving injury in

the borough rose from 94 in November to 111 in December last year, up by 18.08%. This is compared to a 0.87% increase between the same months in 2019.

A number of other boroughs also saw spikes, including Kingston upon Thames which saw

23 cases reported in November to 31 in December, a growth of 34.7%.

Meanwhile, data from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) showed that in the five months after the government introduced the first COVID-19 restrictions, the number of incidents of domestic abuse in Croydon rose by 27.9%, from 648 in March to 829 in August 2020.

In the capital, data from the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee uncovered that domestic abuse offences in the month of December have risen by a third over the past decade.

In December 2019, 2,031 domestic abuse incidents with injury were reported in London, compared to 1,554 in December 2010.

In a report, it called on the Mayor's Office to support the

London Assembly's campaign in lobbying for the introduction of a Domestic Abusers Register and to 'consider' the piloting options in the capital.

Writing in April 2019, the chair of the Committee, Unmesh Desai AM, said: "During our investigation, we heard from domestic abuse services and victims that the numbers of those suffering from domestic abuse are at epidemic levels.

"Once the immediate COVID-19 crisis has ended, the Met and MOPAC need to ensure that the domestic abuse services that are in place provide quality London-wide support for victims and bring people to justice for

these crimes." Meanwhile, Croydon Council announced it had launched a campaign that will see its 123 primary and secondary schools display posters to raise awareness for victims of domestic abuse seeking help.

The posters aim to highlight that schools are a safe space where victims are able to talk to members of staff and make a call to the Croydon FJC for support.

Croydon Council has been approached for comment.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse and need help you can contact the free 24-hour national domestic abuse helpline on 0808 2000 247.

WE ARE TAKING A STAND AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE

This is a safe space
You can get help here
Please talk to a member of staff

You can also contact Croydon FJC for support
Call 020 8688 0100

Or call the 24hr National Domestic Abuse Hotline
0808 2000 247

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'SAFE SPACE': An information poster from Croydon Council designed to raise awareness for victims of domestic abuse seeking help

'Inspired' Chelsea FC Women en route for historic quadruple

By Honor Cockroft

Chelsea FC Women are on course to become the second club ever to achieve a four-trophy haul.

Following on from their 6-0 win over Bristol City in the Women's League Cup final, the club is in the running to win the FA Women's Cup, Champions League and Women's Super League (WSL).

Star midfielder Sophie Ingle said: "That's the standards that we live by each day; coming to this football club that's what Chelsea want to achieve, they want to get as many trophies as they can each year."

"To potentially do a quadruple, it's amazing that we're in the position to do that."

"It's something that the club has always inspired - to be at the best - and now we have a great

group here that can do just that."

The impressive sporting feat has only been achieved once before by an English club, Arsenal Ladies in 2007, under Emma Hayes' coaching.

Now the former coach of US professional football sides is leading the south west London team to new heights of soccer success as manager.

Ingle, who also captains the Welsh National Team, said: "Since Hayes arrived 9 years ago, she has been pushing every single season for this moment."

"Obviously it takes many years to do that in the women's game and she is an amazing ambassador for the game and a role model for everyone."

Following on from Chelsea Women's success in the Champions League semi-final against Bayern Munich at King's meadow on Sunday,



DEFENDING CHAMPIONS: The South West London club is on track to retain the WSL, as well as their first Champions League title. Credit: Katie Chan

the side have ended Britain's 14-year wait for a women's finalist in Europe.

On Sunday 16 May, captained by Swedish defender Magdalena Eriksson, Chelsea will face Barcelona at Gothenburg in their debut UEFA Women's Champions League final.

Hayes, speaking of

the achievement to BT Sport, said: "I'm so proud of those players, they delivered, they're resilient and everyone did everything they can."

"Someone described us as 'mentality monsters', and we're the best. We're in the position we deserve to be in."

"I've learned over

the years that, of course I want to win the final, but I am going to acknowledge the achievement of making history getting there.

"I think it's important for English football that we made it."

"Getting to the final shuts up Europe in terms of what we're doing"

As defending champions of the WSL, Chelsea's draw with Manchester City in their recent top-of-the-table match also put them in good stead to win the championship.

With 51 points, the London side is only one point behind Gareth Taylor's City who face West Ham

in their final fixture on Sunday.

But for Chelsea, with a game in hand, the women's equivalent of the premier league is within their reach.

With the WSL title and the chance of a four-trophy haul hanging in the balance, the team face Tottenham Hotspur

tonight.

Ingle, who wears shirt number 5, said ahead of the game: "The Champions League semi-final was an insane game with a lot of emotions."

"It was great to finally get that win and I think we fully deserved it."

"To the neutral fan and from what I've heard, everyone said it was one of the best female games they've watched in the Champions League so credit to both sides."

"Straight after the game you have a little celebration, but then Monday morning you've got to park that emotion and start focusing on the Spurs game which is a massive league game for us."

Striving on a win rate of 67% this season, the team are even on track to win the FA Cup following their 5-0 win over London City



Lionesses, taking on Everton in the fifth round on Thursday 20 May.

While only four more wins are needed to win the FA Cup, pandemic postponement means that the competition will be completed next season, delaying the potential quadruple.

Winning the WSL and the FA Cup would also result in Chelsea

competing for the Community Shield, granting them an opportunity to bring it home for the second consecutive year in a row.

While their London rivals made history in 2007, Chelsea are on course to show the world that in south west London, Europe and beyond: women's football is blue.



LEAGUE CHAMPIONS: Chelsea celebrate their win over Arsenal in the 2020 League Cup Final. Credit: Katie Chan

Robbo: Truly revolutionary for AFC Wimbledon's resurgence

By Tom Large

With League One football guaranteed at Plough Lane for next season, Mark Robison has done what a lot of Wimbledon fans thought was impossible.

After his arrival as interim manager at the end of January, Robison was the fans' choice to take the full-time role.

The Wimbledon faithful have not looked back since, with a brand-new style of football, that is pleasing for the neutral and gives the Dons a real edge to their attacking game.

The transformation of the team has not been an easy process however.

The Wimbledon head coach said: "Changing the culture and the learning environment has been key in giving the players a purpose behind what they are doing and getting the players

to believe in themselves.

"They were all very low in confidence, I didn't have much time to do many sessions because we were playing every Saturday and Tuesday."

Robison, known to the Wimbledon fans as 'Robbo', emphasised the 'processes' that he has implemented into the team, to get the results that have propelled the Dons away from the relegation zone and earn himself a nomination for Sky Bet League One manager of the month for April.

For most managers securing safety for their club is a moment of pure elation but Robbo explained the focus is on improving further

He said: "I don't think that sunk in until a few days later, I don't take too much time to sit and think about those kinds of things, my mind is



CALM AND COLLECTED: Head coach Mark Robison (right) speaks to striker Kwesi Appiah (left) before an away fixture against Peterborough United last season

always on what's next and how we are going to get better.

"Even after the game against Portsmouth, I didn't feel too much emotion.

"I was frustrated that we had lost but when the messages came in from fans and other people I

then felt immensely proud, privileged and excited about the future."

Robison does not want the club to just focus on safety like it has done for the past few League One campaigns.

"I don't understand that kind of outlook,

for me I just think it is a small club mentality to celebrate survival, although I am massively pleased for the club and the fans because it was needed," he said.

"As a fan, the last thing you want to do is wake up and think that the manager and

the players think we can't do it. We just have to work really hard to find ways to punch above our weight," he added

It is just unfortunate that there have been no fans to witness the latest run of form unfold under

the floodlights of Plough Lane.

This is something that Robison wishes fans could have seen. He explained: "There have been some games that would have been so exciting for the fans, even from the beginning.

"There have been

so many games that have had late, last minute winners, there weren't many games that were mundane and having fans in the ground would have been crazy and maybe even a couple of pitch invasions, those kinds of moments are what football is all about."

He is hoping to emulate those kinds of performances when the fans can experience Plough Lane for the first-time next season.

With fans only able to watch games on streaming service iFollow, AFC Wimbledon's performances have not been fully appreciated yet, a fresh style of football, positive attitudes to the way they play and more importantly it is exciting to watch.

When asked about the future, Robison explained: "I want the players to produce a brand of football that can grow

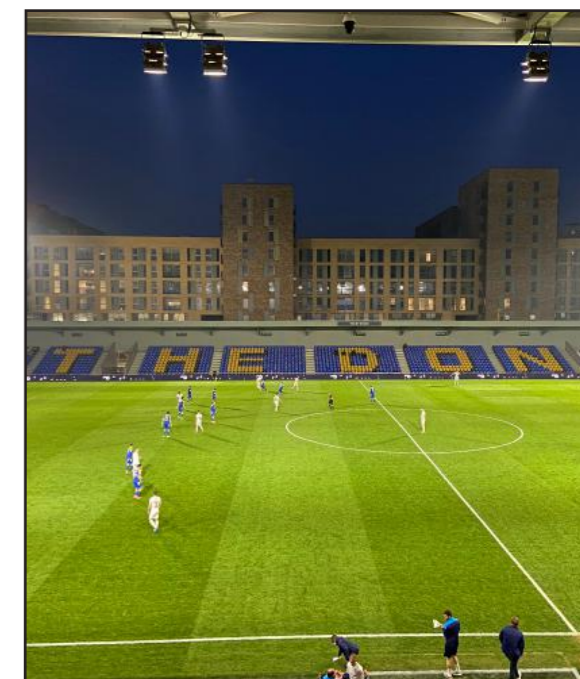


IN THE DUGOUT: Mark Robison managing an AFC Wimbledon youth team during a trip to Newcastle's St James Park for an FA Youth Cup tie

the club.

"From what people are saying, we should fill it for the first game but that worries me. I want people to be queuing up

outside Plough Lane for every game. I want us to be putting in performances that mean people bring friends that stay and come back for more."



BACK TO PLOUGH LANE: AFC Wimbledon have returned to their spiritual home which it is yet to welcome fans

Let it tee! Golf is back in full swing

By Tom Large

For sport lovers across the country, amateur or professional, their place to escape was taken away due to the pandemic.

Last March, when the country went into lockdown, many left the pitches, courses and gyms for the last time for a length of time that no one could predict.

Golf, which is socially distanced in its nature, was one of the first to return.

This meant a lot of people who were unable to play their usual sports took to golf to get their sporting fix.

For an insight into the world of golf and to see what effect the pandemic has had, SWL spoke to Olivia Horsford, an 18 year-old amateur golfer who represents England at youth level.

She said: "I was



DRIVING FORCE: Olivia Horsford preparing to drive the ball down the fairway during a round of golf

unable to get out to a driving range or golf course, so I have had to practice with a net in my garden, but it is nothing like getting out onto the actual golf course.

"The first lockdown took out the majority of the competitions last year, so the summer was ruled out

for everyone."

As golf was one of the first sports to come back, people did find themselves able to get out on to the course even when the tier restrictions were brought in.

It was only recreational golf to return however. Horsford explained that the competitions she

usually competes in could no longer take place and as a result missed out on a whole year of competing.

"For competitive golf, it has heavily affected a lot of the amateur golfers who are looking to take the sport up professionally in the future. They have been unable

to compete making progression very difficult," she said.

The following winter lockdowns stopped a lot of technical work and strength work that usually takes place during the off season in the gym, meaning that when golfers arrived back to their golf courses, there was still work to be done and form to rediscover.

Golf as a whole has fared well during the pandemic, as Horsford explained, there has been a large increase in the number of players coming down and taking a real interest in the sport.

Due to the game's social distancing possibilities and collective social aspects, golf has been a lifeline for those who have been stuck inside to socialise and regain a sense of normality that everyone has been missing.