



THE NOT-SO-SECRET DIARY OF A FOOTBALLER



A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK
INTO THE LIFE
OF A
LIONESSE!

ELLA
TOONE

THE NOT-SO-SECRET DIARY OF A FOOTBALLER

Ella Toone is an English professional footballer who plays as an attacking midfielder for Women's Super League club Manchester United and the England national team. Born in Tyldesley in Manchester, Ella joined Manchester United's youth academy at 8 years old and has been playing ever since. She became a European champion with the Lionesses in 2022 and scored a crucial quarter-final equalizer against Spain as well as a goal to open the scoring in the final against Germany. Ella's first children's book was *Three Lionesses*, which she wrote with teammates Nikita Parris and Georgia Stanway. It was a bestseller in children's non-fiction.

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Written with Kay Woodward



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This book is dedicated to my Dad, Nick Toone x



THE BIT AT THE BEGINNING WHERE I EXPLAIN EVERYTHING

Don't panic! I'm not going to explain ABSOLUTELY everything here. If you're hoping for a mind-blowing discussion about how the universe began or what the point of algebra actually is or why grown-ups get quite so obsessed about bin day, then you definitely *haven't* come to the right place. Instead, what I AM going to do is explain why I'm writing this diary.

You see, the Lionesses are heading into a big football tournament right now. And when I say big, I mean **BIG**. I'm stupidly excited, but I'm nervous too. So the England manager came up



with a sick idea – she reckons that keeping a diary is the perfect way to settle my nerves. According to her, writing stuff down is a great way of de-stressing, and it'll help me to be totally zen on the pitch.

I LOVE this idea. ♡

But while I know that normally a diary is meant to be totally top secret, what I think is an even better plan is to share my scribbles with YOU. I know just how incredibly lucky I am to be an actual Lioness, and so, rather than keep it all to myself, I'd like to let you know what it's really like to be a footballer. (*Psst* – you might even be inspired to become a player yourself in the not-too-distant future!)

So, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to write

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down EXACTLY what goes down behind the scenes. I'll talk about all the feels I get in the build-up to a match and a tournament, and what it was like to WIN THE EUROS. I'll squeeze in a load of flashbacks because I have too many amazing memories to keep them to myself, and it's good to share. And I'll tell you about all the hilarious stuff that happens off the pitch – in the changing rooms, at training camps and SO MUCH MORE. It'll ALL be there – the highs, the lows and the funny bits in between that don't make the headlines. And goals. Don't forget about the **goooooooooooooooooals!**

So whether you're an aspiring footballer who gets covered in mud every Saturday morning, or you love cheering your favourite team on from the stands (it'd better be Manchester United or the Lionesses!), or you're just starting to discover how

ELLA TOONE

fun football can be, this is for you. Get ready to
find out what really happens behind the scenes
AND on the world stage in my not-so-secret diary.

Tooney





ME, ME, ME

Training for the tournament kicks off (see what I did there?) in a couple of weeks, so before the mayhem starts, I'm going to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about myself. I mean, let's be honest – if you've seen the name on the cover of this lovely shiny book, picked it up, bought it AND reached page 5, the chances are that you probably know who I am already, but you might not know the WHOLE backstory. So here goes.

I'm Ella Toone. I'm a professional footballer with Manchester United FC AND I'm one of the Lionesses.

There, I said it. I still can't believe how ridiculous that sounds. I'd pinch myself if it didn't hurt. The fact that I play professional football for ACTUAL Manchester United in the ACTUAL Women's



Super League, and I'm one of (deeeeeeeep breath) the ACTUAL England squad, which makes me an ACTUAL Lioness, still hasn't properly sunk in, even though it's been quite a while now. But it is true!

My family calls me Ella, because that's my name. And my mum calls me Ella-Bella, which I love. (I'm NEVER Tooney at home. Think about it – when loads of us share the same surname, it would get MEGA confusing if we all had the same nickname.) But when it comes to football, EVERYONE calls me Tooney. Maybe because it sounds a bit cooler when it's yelled at a gazillion decibels across a football pitch. Like this:

TOOOOONEY!

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See?

When I was much younger, I played for Astley & Tyldesley FC, then Manchester United (whoop!). Blackburn Rovers FC was next, before Manchester City FC and then it was just a short hop across town, back to my beloved Manchester United. At the same time, I was going through the ranks with England, playing for them as an under-17, under-19 and under-21 before hitting the big time in the senior squad.

ELLA TOONE

Here are some stats and facts about me!

	MANCHESTER UNITED	THE LIONESSES
Position	Midfielder	Midfielder
Debut	19 August 2018	23 February 2021
Jersey number	7	10

That's the same
number jersey
that Cristiano
Ronaldo wore
when he played
for Manchester
United. And David
Beckham. Just
saying.

My legacy
number is 216,
which means
that I'm the 216th
player to be
called up to join
the Lionesses.

Three guesses
what my
favourite
position is ...?



Is being a footballer the best gig in the whole world? I can answer that in less time than it takes to chip in an equalizer. YES. Yes, it is. Football is so much more than a few people just kicking a ball around – it's a game filled with skill, speed, agility, thrilling passes, near misses and raw emotion. (It's obviously filled with quite a lot more, but there are over 200 pages in this diary, so I'd better save SOME of the good stuff for later on.) Football might be awesome to watch, but I can exclusively reveal that being part of it is nothing short of INCREDIBLE. Don't get me wrong; it's hard work too. But without the graft, you wouldn't get the magic, would you?

There's one more thing that I love about football: it's a game that you play WITH YOUR BEST FRIENDS. And believe me, it doesn't get better than that.



MY FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD

I banged on enough about myself yesterday, so today let me tell you about my hometown. Ahhhhh, Tyldesley . . . It's tricky to spell, a bit of a mouthful to say and has far too many consonants for its own good. If you know it, you'll likely call it *Til-slee* instead, which is WAY easier.

Tyldesley is quaint and small. It's in the north-west of England very near Manchester (otherwise known as Manchestahhhh), which I'm reasonably sure you WILL have heard of. Tyldesley is where my family is. It's where my friends live. I love it. I love everything about it. I can't see myself living anywhere else. If I ever moved, I'd always come back to Tyldesley because it's just HOME.

Now, on to Manchester. As well as being a totally cool city with a massive club scene and red-brick backstreets where they film a LOT of TV dramas, Manchester is famous for its two world-class football clubs – Manchester City and Manchester United – as well as a bunch of other local teams. As a result, I've been surrounded by football for ever. It's basically in my blood.

GOING BACK TO MY GRASSROOTS

This morning, I drove past Astley & Tyldesley. That's the first club I EVER played for. You know that feeling you get when you see a place and it reminds you of a really special and happy time

in your life? Maybe it's a park that you spent long summer days playing in when you were younger. Or a relative's house that's filled with memories of noisy family meals and building pillow forts between the sofas. That's what Astley & Tyldesley does for me. When I saw the grounds today, SO many unforgettable memories flooded back.

Perhaps my number-one memory is being scouted. This is basically when football experts spot players who they believe have the potential to go on to become professional players and then fast-track them on to a training programme. Players don't have to be brilliant already to be scouted. They just have to play as if, with proper training, they could be

AWESOME. 



One of my coaches, Lee Povah (who I now owe BIG TIME), spotted that I could kick a ball reasonably well. So when I was about seven, he asked a scout called Kat Beaver to come down to Astley & Tyldesley to see how I played. Kat (who I also have SO MUCH to thank for) did, and must have thought that I showed promise. And because she knew someone who worked at Manchester United, I got the chance to try out at the Manchester United Centre of Excellence*. I went for a six-week trial and, after two weeks, they wanted to sign me. The rest – as they say – is history!

My mum always says, 'Never forget where you're from, Ella.' And I don't. I was four or five when I

* This is a brilliant youth academy that helps younger players to be the best they can be. They have such a cool programme: intensive training, fitness tests, the chance to play against other great teams, you name it.



joined the Astley & Tyldesley Girls team. And if it wasn't for them, well . . . I wouldn't be where I am today. My very first club has an incredibly special place in my heart.

I'm so grateful to all the teams I've played for, who have done SO much for me. And that's why I wanted to do something to give back to my local community. In 2024, I launched the ET7 Academy to give girls a chance to kickstart their own footballing dreams and learn important skills both on and off the pitch. Just think, there might be future England players just waiting to be discovered, who start out at the ET7 Academy . . .

MY DREAM TEAM (THAT'S MANCHESTER UNITED, IN CASE YOU'VE JUST ARRIVED FROM MARS)



I. Am. So. Lucky.

I've just told myself this in the bathroom mirror, and it's something I remind myself of about a bazillion times a day because it's true. Let's take a look at the facts:

1. I grew up supporting Manchester United, watching the team play with my family.
2. Now I'm playing for Manchester United MYSELF in their first-ever women's team.