

The growth of women's sport continues at a decent pace. Not so long ago the only real coverage of women playing some form of sport was Wimbledon or during the Olympics. Not that it was unimportant; I remember watching some great female tennis stars and sprinters as a kid. There just weren't enough perhaps.

A lot has changed in 30 years, helped in many respects by the proliferation of TV channels which allow for more diverse programming but also by a significant change in attitude towards girls who find sport interesting and want to get involved.

I was asked after Lady Thatcher passed away what she meant to me and I told this story in response: when I was 8 or so I declared I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I don't know why at that particular moment that was my ambition, and nor did it last, but the reaction was "you can't because you are a woman". I was too young to understand discrimination but what went through my head was how can we have a female Prime Minister but I can't fly a fighter jet?

The desire to fly planes was short lived but the memory of the conversation has remained for the one simple reason that when we talk about prominent women and their influence on young girls it is sometimes nothing more profound than giving them the ability to ask "if she can why not me".

As the England women's football team bask in the glory of their most successful campaign ever, and all televised by the BBC, the effect on girls across our area is immense. Take a wander down to Cobdown in Ditton when they have a tournament on and you'll be amazed at the number of girls participating. And it is growing. Any one of those girls could end up one day playing for their country, if they have the right support around them. Or they could end up running the country. Well why not?