

As many readers know I manage a local girls football team, Meridian under 15s. This coming Sunday they play in the League Cup final at Cobdown Sports Ground, Ditton in the presence of both the Men's and Ladies' Champion League Trophies, and already I'm feeling nervous and excited in equal measure.

I've been with them since they were under 10s and stayed with the same team in the six seasons that have followed. Not only have I seen them grow from young girls into beautiful young women, but I have seen them grow into the game. They've gone from chasing a ball around like puppies in a park to understanding their own roles within a team. More significantly however, since I joined Meridian Girls the girls and women's game has developed massively.

When I was young I wasn't allowed to play football at school. It wasn't until I went to University that I played my first competitive game. Today's grassroots support is totally different. Girls are encouraged to play all sorts of sports and on the whole there are local teams there to support and develop them.

There is more to be done and in Parliament I work with colleagues from all parties to help improve the coverage, reporting and development of women's football. Our girls still see few female sporting role models on our television screens but this will hopefully change.

On Sunday as I pace up and down the sideline hoping all the training throughout the year, come rain or shine, culminates in Cup success I will remind myself not only how far the girls have come but how far the game has come. What would make it special is if along with the parents, others with a love for football come and watch what will hopefully be a great cup final!