



#BBFA21FOR21

## GEMMA WHITCHURCH

CLUB: NORTHAMPTON TOWN LADIES,  
THIS GIRL KICKS U18

### *How long have you been involved in Football for?*

Since the age of 7 when I was going into year 3 at primary school. I have played every year since then (I am now in my 10<sup>th</sup> year of playing football).

### *Who is your Inspiration/Role Model and Why?*

I don't have any specific role models but there are a number of players that I enjoy watching playing.

### *What do you most enjoy about playing football?*

(Playing) It has given me the opportunities to go to places such as New York that I might not have been able to before. I have also played at some great venues and is something that I enjoy.

### *What have been your biggest achievements since the programme began?*

Being successful at getting into the England Schoolgirls U15 team in December 2019 and playing in matches for them against the ISFA, Wales, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland and local teams in Holland. Playing in the first ever Women's academy football match for Milton Keynes College in September 2021. Being invited to join TGK in October 2021—they do not hold trials, so you have to be invited to play. The team is made up of players from many different counties in England and also from Wales. Being selected to play for TGK against the ISFA at St George's Park in December 2021. I have not been there before, and it was a great experience. Being awarded the Supporters Player of the Month for December for TGK in 2021. Signing with SRUSA in the summer of 2021 in order to obtain a student athlete scholarship to America in 2023. I have already received one verbal offer and have a few other colleges/universities interested.

### *What challenges have you experienced since the programme began and how did you overcome them?*

Covid – it was hard to suddenly have to stop playing football and not knowing for how long. The ESFA also stopped suddenly in March 2020 just before an Easter tournament against the home nations. Fortunately, two more games were scheduled for 2021 once Covid allowed – against Wales and then Scotland. Another challenge was being invited to

go out on loan on a dual contract with the MKDons and AFC Dunstable in January 2022. This was a new initiative between the 2 clubs and I did not know any of the Dunstable players or coaches whilst I had known and played with some of the Dons players for nearly 7 years. However, at my first training session for Dunstable I was made to feel very welcome and I have since played in 3 league matches with them.

### *What are your aspirations/targets for the next year? How do you hope to get there?*

I would like to continue to play at a high level of football. I also need to keep working hard both on and off the pitch in preparation of going to America. I am going on a football tour to New York in September 2022 and hopefully to the Gothia Cup in Sweden in July 2022 – both with TGK which I am very much looking forward to. I would also like to continue playing for TGK and going on any other football tours that become available.

### *What has been the most useful support you have accessed through the programme? (i.e., Equipment, Funding for Qualifications/Reg Fees)*

Registration fees over the 2 years and then the equipment funding for 2022.

### *How have you found the programme, including support from the BBFA?*

Very helpful and it has been good being able to promote girls and women's football.

### *Which WEuros games are you most looking forward to? Have you got tickets for any games?*

The England ones! No, I don't have any tickets at the moment as I have a lot of commitments at present so not sure yet which ones I would be able to attend.