



THE GAMEPLAN FOR GROWTH

THE FA'S STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL: 2017-2020





The FA's Vision and Mission

Vision:
Unite the game. Inspire the nation.
Mission:
Rebuild The FA as a world-class organisation

The FA's strategy for women's and girls' football: 2017-2020

- **DOUBLE PARTICIPATION**
- **DOUBLE FANS**
- **CONSISTENT SUCCESS ON THE WORLD STAGE**

GOAL	TARGET
Double participation	Increase number of registered teams from 6,000 to 12,000
Double fans	Increase attendances: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International matches 11,000 to 22,000• FA WSL average 1,047 to 2,020 Increase peak viewing - FA WSL 46,000 to 92,000
Consistent success on the world stage	Within top three countries across all age groups Potential to win 2023 FIFA World Cup

Source FA strategic plan 2016



‘Let’s set a new football benchmark’



Women’s football is the biggest single opportunity for us to grow our game. This strategy will ensure we grasp that opportunity. By doubling the reach of women’s football, from the grassroots to the elite, we will transform an emerging sport, and we will embed it alongside men’s football in the heart and mind of our nation’s favourite game.

The global game of football had its genesis on these islands. The original Laws of the Game were codified here. Since then, the infrastructure around the game in England has become the blueprint for many football governing bodies, national and international. For the vast majority of the last 150 years, the focus has been almost exclusively on the men’s game. But times, societies and attitudes move on and we have been too slow to react. Whilst competitor nations, like the USA and Germany, led the way in investing in and supporting women’s football, we watched on. But we are no longer spectators to the global growth of the women’s game.

I am proud that on the back of well-targeted investment and capacity-building in recent years, women’s football in England now stands comparison with the world’s best. But I am also determined that we can achieve more than parity – I believe the time is right to take it to a higher level – to set a new football benchmark.

This strategy sets out how we intend to do that, and as we have done in the men’s game over the years, we also want to play our role to the full on the international stage, helping promote the sport everywhere, as inclusive for everyone. Where we can, we would love to lend our experience to other countries just starting on this exciting journey. A rising global tide for the development of a global women’s game.

One key way of fulfilling this pledge is to host a major international women’s tournament in the next few years. We are currently looking at the feasibility of doing just that as we have no doubt it would be a truly inspiring moment for

tomorrow’s generation of girls to take up the game, here and overseas.

In the meantime, whatever your role or remit in football, we’d love you on board as we seek to create a diverse, sustainable and successful women’s game for today and the future. Doubling its reach, transforming women’s football in England, setting a new football benchmark, will not be easy. It is, though, an opportunity worth grasping.

Greg Clarke
Chairman, The Football Association

‘Time to realise our potential’



This is the time to build on all the great work done by the women’s football pioneers and move the game to the next level.

So much has been achieved at the grassroots and international levels through the determination, courage and commitment of individuals but so much more can be done if we all work together as one team with one clear overarching plan.

We need to change perceptions and social barriers to participation, create a strong, inclusive and engaging brand and raise the profile of the game for the serious player and the casual participant. We want to welcome every girl and woman in to the game regardless of ability, background or age. There has never been a more important time for football to play its part in supporting girls and women to become physically active and to lead and administer the game.

Our ambition is to double participation by 2020 which will only be possible if we

get schools, clubs, Further Education, Higher Education, community organisations and our County FAs to work together to drive change.

We know that girls have many motivations to play – fun, friendship, fitness and family – and we need to ensure the way we promote and deliver our programmes embraces these differences. This increase in opportunities will only be possible if we grow the quality and quantity of men and women from all backgrounds who wish to coach and referee the girls and women’s game at community level. But we also need to ensure that women with the aspiration and desire to work at the top of the game get the development, placements and support that will help them fulfil their potential.

All of this work will be underpinned by our commitment to supporting fun and safe participation at every level. Finally, we want to build a world-leading, high-performance system that provides all talented young people

with a clear pathway to the very top of the game and enables our best players to excel on a world stage, as well as have a parallel education programme to support their wellbeing and ensure they also achieve in life.

Our third place finish in the last FIFA World Cup was a remarkable achievement but we are setting an even more ambitious target for 2023. To achieve this we will be working tirelessly with the clubs in The FA Women’s Super League to create a vision for the women’s game that is mutually-supportive and will be the envy of the world.

The time is right and the time is NOW!

Baroness Sue Campbell
Head of Women’s Football,
The Football Association



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The vision for the women's and girls' game:

Whether competitively or recreationally, to be the **no.1** team sport of choice for every girl and woman in England



How the women's game will demonstrate The FA's values:

Progressive: We believe it is time for the women's game in this country to realise its full potential.

Respectful: We want to build on the success of the many people across the country working hard for the women's game. In doing so, we will harness their experience, listen to their views and provide solutions to drive the game forward.

Inclusive: We believe football should be fun, safe and accessible for every girl and woman, embracing our multi-faceted society with its range of cultures, faiths and abilities. That's whether they wish to participate, compete, coach, referee or play their part on boards at club, county and national levels, whether in a voluntary or paid capacity.

Determined: We believe that with the right vision and strong determination we can overcome all challenges.

Excellent: We will work together to ensure all players have an excellent experience. We will support those with the aspiration to achieve their potential to realise their dreams, represent their country and compete successfully with the best in the world.

This strategy document sets out how we plan to exhibit these values through the priority areas we have identified.

Our eight priorities

To create a World Cup-winning England senior team and double the player and fan bases, eight priority areas of work have been set:

These priorities provide tangible focus for everyone working in the women and girls' football sector at The FA – and the game's wider football workforce.

It means everyone knows their individual work is part of a collective drive. Everyone's contribution – no matter how small – really matters.

- Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system
- Build a world-class talent pipeline
- Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels
- Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure
- Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following
- Enhance the profile of the England team and players
- Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow
- Improve the commercial prospects in women's football

The FA in numbers

2016 - 2017 season



¹ Source: AMS group - BARB viewing figures March 2016

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system

The elite level of the women's game has developed rapidly over the last few years.

The FA Women's Super League (The FA WSL) has been established. Full-time England coaches have been appointed at senior and youth levels. There is greater broadcast coverage and central contracts have been introduced. The senior England women's team was outstanding at the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, finishing third.

The challenge is to build on these foundations. We need to create a world-leading, high-performance system for the women's game with the player at the heart of it.

A new focus for existing resources and some additional funding will be required to create the world-class system required to achieve our ambitions.



WORLD CLASS

'The senior England women's team was outstanding at the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, finishing third.'

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Appoint a Head of Performance, to:**
 - Build the entire system, encompassing the FA WSL1 and FA WSL2.
- **Create a well-rounded 'England experience', by:**
 - Providing players in the England senior team and all age-group teams with world-class coaching, sports science and sports medicine services, as well as individual lifestyle and wellbeing support.
- **Develop a 'winning edge' at the game's elite level, by:**
 - Establishing a high-performance multi-sport technical group.
- **Review the competition pyramid and define the role and purpose of each level (from The FA WSL to the County Leagues), by:**
 - Agreeing each level's remit and responsibilities in relation to player development and/or recreational participation.
- **Develop strong partnerships with FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 clubs, by:**
 - Renewing FA WSL licences with FAWSL clubs that meet the criteria and supporting those who join through promotion;
 - Drawing up tailored partnership-funding agreements which ensure effective management, improved marketing and high-quality player development. The agreements will also deliver centralised professional development to support club personnel.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Build a world-class talent pipeline

Right now, the England women's senior team is occupying its highest-ranking to date in world football: no.5.¹ This is a great achievement but we want to build on this and improve our ranking at every age group.

This will require a seamless talent pathway to allow our diverse and talented players to be developed and nurtured every step of the way. This talent pipeline will be supported by the best coaches, sports science and sports medicine. We will also ensure that the highest standards of welfare and safeguarding are in place for every player.

Alongside our provision for the development of our talent we want to build a comprehensive education programme to ensure that no young person has to abandon their education to achieve their dream. This dual career of football and education/work will be key to the health of our game.

We want to develop the confidence of younger players to play at international level and embed a playing style that is common to all sides. This means transition to the next age group – and ultimately to the senior side – holds no surprises. Players can slot into a winning formula that runs throughout our international teams.

SEAMLESS PATHWAY

¹ Source: FIFA December 2016



‘England women’s senior team is occupying its highest-ranking to date in world football: no.5.’

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Ensure every talented player in England has access to the talent pathway, and the opportunity to develop within it, by:**
 - Providing high-quality coaching and performance support at every pathway level;
 - Ensuring every player can access a dual career pathway alongside football.
- **Establish a comprehensive competition structure to support player development, by:**
 - Providing clear profiles for players and coaches, whilst exploring talent transfer.
- **Create 10 FA Women’s High-Performance Centres to support player and coach development, by:**
 - Inviting universities to apply for selection as one of these Centres;
 - Ensuring a nationwide spread that captures players from all communities;
 - Providing ongoing quality assurance.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels

Effective leadership is imperative to deliver meaningful strategic change.

We must encourage and support more women from all backgrounds, to enter coaching, refereeing and wider leadership roles within the game. Coaching and refereeing in the women's game should be a prized and rewarding experience for men and women.

The governance of the game at every level will benefit considerably from the inclusion of more women on boards. Over the past 15 years business research has consistently demonstrated that competent diverse boards create better, more successful businesses¹.



MORE BETTER

‘We must encourage and support more women from all backgrounds’

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Develop our coach development structure, by:**
 - Appointing a Head of Women's Coach Development to lead the recruitment, retention and deployment of more women coaches across all levels of the game;
 - Appointing 10 Coach Development Officers based in The FA Women's High-Performance Centres to work in collaboration with the County FAs, FA WSL clubs, FA Charter Standard clubs, colleges and schools. The aim is to recruit, train and mentor more women and men to work in grassroots girls and women's programmes;
 - Developing a foundation qualification for 'football activators' to encourage more people to lead and volunteer in grassroots girls' and women's football.
- **Develop our refereeing structure, by:**
 - Appointing a Women's Refereeing Manager. They will develop a supportive pathway to recruit, train, deploy and mentor more women and men to referee at every level of the women's game;
 - Providing a comprehensive education and training programme for all referees (male and female) to ensure that the officiating of the women's game is of the highest standard.
- **Encourage more women to administer or serve as board members, by:**
 - Harnessing The FA's 'State of Play' equality monitoring tool to:
 - Identify strategic actions, (e.g. the creation of leadership programmes) to ensure board members are effective and board-ready;
 - Identify diverse talented women, who can add competence and different perspectives at board level.

¹ Women Matter: Gender Diversity, A Corporate Performance Driver, P.3, McKinsey & Co. 2007
And: <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure

Over the years, The FA has developed many participation-based initiatives and programmes in schools, colleges, universities and the community.

To increase the take-up of the game by girls and women, we need one coherent strategy that maximises the impact of all this work. The central aim must be to ensure every young girl has the opportunity to experience our great game.

Some will need a sign-posted pathway from their first taste of the game through to the highest competitive level. Others will prefer a more recreational opportunity to play with friends, have fun or simply keep fit.

This can only be achieved through programmes based on individual player needs and motivations. It requires linked opportunities in education and the community for as wide a range of participants as possible.

MAXIMISE IMPACT

‘To increase the take-up of the game by girls and women, we need one coherent strategy that maximises the impact of all this work.’

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Develop localised women’s football strategies, by:**
 - Requesting a localised CFA-developed inclusive workforce plan to support more girls and women to volunteer, coach, referee and administer women’s football;
 - Creating a club toolkit for all clubs and other providers to ensure a safe, girl/women-friendly environment.
 - Providing appropriate training and support for people working with female players.
- **Create a national network of programmes for girls to take up and continue to play football, by:**
 - Working with the CFAs to identify partner organisations equipped to develop customised, local, safe and girl-friendly football programmes for primary-school age girls;
 - Establishing clear criteria around the operation and leadership of these activities – focused on friends, fun, fitness and family;
 - Ensuring clear exit routes into ‘girl-friendly’ clubs for a) those who wish to play more competitive football and b) suitable recreational opportunities for those who want to play for fun, fitness and friendship.
- **Launch an introductory programme for voluntary organisations and create start-up clubs in areas of deprivation, by:**
 - Introducing a fun, entry-level programme of resources, equipment and training for voluntary organisations to motivate and inspire girls to play football for the first time;
 - Creating an incentive-fund to encourage the development of sustainable new clubs in targeted areas of deprivation. These clubs are to attract new participants into the game working, in partnership with community groups;
 - Launching a ‘football activator’ qualification for leaders to support them in the organisation, planning and delivery of inclusive football sessions for novice players;
- **Create new programmes for primary and secondary schools, by:**
 - Developing playground-fun activity resources for primary schools to complement the Premier League ‘Primary Stars’ curriculum initiative;
 - Introducing a schools based programme to support the
- **Invest in Further and Higher Education, by:**
 - Supporting Further and Higher Education ‘football activators’ to provide innovative strategies to reach a more diverse audience and encourage greater participation in different football formats;
 - Developing more female student leaders, apprentices, coaches and referees to work in student sport and in the wider community;
 - Develop a research programme across The FA Women’s High-Performance Centres to inform and investigate innovative solutions to the challenges we face.
- **increase of girls transitioning from school into community provision;**
 - Launching a new curriculum-based football programme to be embedded in PE lessons – focused on the importance of teamwork and character development;
 - Introducing a ‘Football Youth Sport Award’ for secondary-school pupils. The Award will encourage participation, leadership development and community volunteering.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following

Stereotypes are hard to break. Particularly ones embedded over generations.

That's why it's taken a long time for women's football to gain the acceptance level it currently enjoys. But there is so much more to do.

If we are to achieve our aims to get more women and girls playing the game – and more people watching it – we need to continue to challenge perceptions. We'll do this by presenting the reality of women's and girls' football.

It's fun, it's easy to play, it keeps you fit – and is a great way of making new friends, as well as learning teamwork and communications skills.

We also need to highlight the personal stories of our elite players – and use the power of influencers via social media to talk to girls in ways that make sense.

But it's not just girls to whom we need to appeal. Crucially, it's their parents, carers and teachers, many of whom may still operate by the stereotypes we need to dispel. To effect this cultural change, we are employing a dedicated Head of Marketing and Commercial (women's football), with support from around the organisation.

CULTURE SHIFT



‘We need to continue to challenge perceptions. We'll do this by presenting the reality of women's and girls' football.’

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Create an engaging brand proposition and narrative to attract young girls to football, by:**
 - Using research and insights to develop and create distinct brands for girls' and women's specific programmes;
 - Supporting the girls' participation programmes with appropriate marketing collateral for communication to girls, their parents, carers and teachers from all backgrounds;
 - Raising the profile of the Lionesses and FAWSL players to create diverse role models who inspire girls to play football.
- **Co-ordinate messaging and promotions across existing and new partners and stakeholders, by:**
 - Encouraging all stakeholders to consider looking at football 'through a women's lens';
 - Working with commercial partners to amplify the narrative of women's and girls' football across the variety of audiences and channels;
 - Securing new and innovative commercial partnerships for women's and girls' football.
- **Use influencers and advocates to change perceptions, by:**
 - Building a diverse team of girls' football advocates and influencers;
 - Developing inclusive content to challenge perceptions;
 - Accessing mainstream celebrities through new commercial partnerships;
 - Using social media to develop messaging to reach younger audiences.
- **Make the women's game affordable and accessible for families, by:**
 - Promoting The FAWSL as the affordable/accessible entry point for families into football;
 - Building the SSE Women's FA Cup and particularly the Final as the ultimate event ticket in the women's domestic calendar;
 - Positioning women's matches as friendly and sociable with good player accessibility.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Increase profile of the England team and players

The history of sport – any sport – shows that players at the elite level are uniquely positioned to positively influence the game at every level below them.

They can be inspirational role models – and become spokespeople for the sport they love. Just look at how other sports have developed female participation and a following by ensuring those at the top are diverse, accessible, friendly and inspirational. And crucially, how they've remained engaged with the grassroots levels of their sport.

In the case of the women's game in this country, the apex of the sport is the senior England team – the Lionesses.

We want to build the Lioness brand into one of the iconic national team brands.

We must, therefore, ensure the Lionesses are connected to their fans and grass roots players – and not separated from the game. We must also seek relevant and active commercial partnerships, that can help transmit key positive messages around the women's game.

POSITIVE MESSAGES



‘Players at elite level are uniquely positioned to be inspirational role models’

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Build the Lioness brand into one of the iconic national team brands, by:**
 - Creating an integrated marketing, digital and communications plan to build profile and awareness;
 - Developing a distinctive ‘Lionesses’ brand identity;
 - Producing toolkits and assets to support the Lionesses’ narrative.
- **Engage and encourage commercial partners and broadcasters to activate the women’s game, by:**
 - Developing assets for commercial partners to utilise;
 - Ensuring all new commercial partnerships include marketing value in kind;
 - Working with key rights holding broadcasters to raise profile of Lionesses.
- **Improve engagement with elite players and build relationships, by:**
 - Improving elite player support and liaison through a dedicated Player Partnerships Manager;
 - Supporting the lifestyle-training programme, specifically in the growing areas of social and digital media;
 - Proactively communicating in the critical pre- and post-event periods.
- **Ensure we tap into the experience and profile of former England players, by:**
 - Creating an England ‘legends programme’, with defined benefits for former international players;
 - Encouraging former players to become ambassadors and spokespeople for the game.
- **Develop an engaging and interactive Lionesses’ Supporters Programme, by:**
 - Creating a dedicated membership club with content, behind-the-scenes access and exclusive experiences and competitions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow

Getting to a desired destination needs accurate and relevant signposting. If we are to fulfil the ambitions of the women's and girls' game in England, we have to make it clear how to take the first steps into the game, how to take up a role in football – and how and where to watch women's football in action.

This will require a lot of collaborative working – particularly with partners – commercial and non-commercial – who share our aspirations.

But there's another important point about signposting. The destination has got to be worth the effort. So once we've engaged participants and fans, we need to deliver top-quality experiences that encourage repeat visits – whether that's to weekly training sessions or to watch matches.

We must also ensure that we provide defined upward routes for those already in the game who want to progress. For example, to take the next level coaching or refereeing qualification.



EXCITING EXPERIENCES

'Once we've engaged participants and fans, we need to deliver top-quality experiences that encourage repeat visits'

To achieve this priority, we will:

- **Develop a clear season long narrative for the women's game, by:**
 - Re-launching the FA WSL season in autumn 2017 in order to have a strong regular schedule and accompanying competition narrative
 - Ensuring regular listings to promote all fixtures at national, regional and local levels;
 - Maximising use of social and digital media on relevant channels to reach the appropriate audiences.
- **Deliver relevant content at relevant times on relevant platforms for target audiences, by:**
 - Reviewing all women's social and digital channels, and live-streaming games and content that are not on traditional broadcast media, providing a dedicated content series and production;
 - Developing new lifestyle and short-form content specifically around the Lionesses and FA WSL clubs and players.
- **Create exciting, affordable, accessible, quality, family-friendly football experiences, by:**
 - Working alongside commercial partners to improve the match day experience with a range of different activities for different age groups;
 - Developing and extending the existing FA WSL Sister Club programme into more clubs and schools;
 - Exploring new and innovative event formats that drive new and more diverse audiences to the game;
 - Reviewing the potential to bid to host major international events.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Improve the commercial prospects in women's football

Every successful enterprise needs a steady income flow – to maintain 'business as usual' and crucially, to grow.

The women and girls' game in this country is no different. Financial fuel is key to driving the game forward.

To achieve this, we will create separate commercial programmes for the men's and women's national teams, even though some sponsors may operate across both.

Our partnerships with sponsors to girls' and women's football will include specific marketing support on both sides to achieve our goals.

We will develop concepts and programmes to show women's football as exciting, skilful and unpredictable – all the attractions which have made the men's game the world's dominant team sport.



POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

To achieve this priority, we will:

'The women and girls' game in this country is no different. Financial fuel is key to driving the game forwards and sustaining it.'

- **Create a dedicated women's commercial programme, with separation of men's and women's international rights, by:**
 - Creating a distinct and separate brand identity for the Lionesses;
 - Re-engineering the current usage of rights by partners with a view to create new assets and opportunities;
 - Evaluating the commercial structure of FA WSL assets to support clubs and deliver more value to new and existing partners.
- **Create innovative broadcast and event propositions, by:**
 - Working with all broadcasters to introduce new and innovative formats using social media influencers and short-form content to reach younger audiences and deliver commercial value for sponsors;
 - Working with clubs to provide regular and consistent fixtures for the domestic competitions;
 - Reviewing the format and timings of competitions and events to maximise commercial opportunities.

Key partners to the women's and girls' game

We would like to thank all the partners to the women's and girls' game. Their input is vital to grow and sustain the game.

Such organisations include 'internal' partners to the game such as all the clubs and Community Trusts in the game's current structure – as well as the pivotal role played by County FAs.

'External' non-commercial partners include educational bodies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels – and of course, the various government departments and agencies, whose remit the girls' and women's game can help fulfil.

Commercial partners



Broadcast partners



Non-commercial partners



WINNING EDGE



Bringing it all together

A one-stop look at the priorities and key activities that will create a World Cup-winning England Senior team and double the player and fan base.

Strategic priorities	To achieve each of the priorities, we will:				
Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system	Appoint a Head of Performance	Create a well-rounded 'England experience'	Develop a 'winning edge' at the game's elite level	Review the competition pyramid and define the role and purpose of each level	Develop strong partnerships with FA WSL 1 & 2 clubs
Build a world-class talent pipeline	Ensure every talented player in England has access to the talent pathway, and the opportunity to develop within it	Establish a comprehensive competition structure to support player development	Create 10 FA Women's High-Performance Centres to support player and coach development		
Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels	Develop our coach development structure	Develop our refereeing structure	Encourage more women from all backgrounds to administer or serve as board members		
Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure	Develop localised inclusive women's football strategies	Create a national network of programmes for girls to take up and continue to play football	Launch an introductory programme for voluntary organisations and create start-up clubs in areas of deprivation	Create new programmes for primary and secondary schools	Invest in Further and Higher Education
Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following	Create an engaging brand proposition and narrative to attract diverse young girls to football	Co-ordinate messaging and promotions across partners and stakeholders	Use diverse influencers and advocates to change perceptions	Make the women's game affordable and accessible for families	
Increase profile of the England team and players	Build the Lioness brand into one of the iconic national team brands	Improve engagement with elite players and build relationships	Engage and encourage commercial partners and broadcasters to activate the women's game	Develop an engaging and interactive Lionesses' Supporters Programme	Ensure we tap into the experience and profile of England players
Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow	Develop a clear season-long narrative for the women's game	Deliver relevant content at relevant times on relevant platforms for target audiences	Create exciting, affordable, accessible, quality, family-friendly football experiences		
Improve the commercial prospects in women's football	Create a dedicated women's commercial programme, with separation of men's and women's international rights	Create innovative broadcast and event propositions			



For more information

If you or your organisation wants to know more about how to get involved in the women's and girls' game in this country, please contact your local County FA Lead Officer for women's and girls' football.

A list of the Officers can be found at:

<http://www.TheFA.com/womens-girls-football/get-involved/development-officers>

If you need to contact someone at The FA then please email:

womens.football@TheFA.com The person most relevant to your enquiry will then respond.

UNFOLD
THE FUTURE



FOR ALL



FOR ALL

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