







# Albion









DARIO VIDOSIC

Good afternoon and welcome back to the Broadfield Stadium for our opening game of the new WSL season.

This is always the most exciting time of the season. We've had a very good pre-season, but there is always a sense of anticipation ahead of the first game. You get to see how the work you've done in the last few weeks translates on the pitch, and assess the other teams as well.

We had two very good league games with Aston Villa last season, winning one apiece. We know they are a dangerous team up front who are quite direct and aggressive when they don't have the ball. So it's going to be a tough start to the season, but if we get into our rhythm and play our football it is definitely a game we can win, especially at home in front of our fans.

As always there have been a lot of comings and goings in the squad and I'd like to welcome our new arrivals, the most recent being Fuka Tsunoda who joined us on deadline day. Unfortunately, Manuela Vanegas and Maelys Mpome are still in rehab and hopefully it won't be too long before they are available, but I feel we have a strong squad that can be competitive against any opponent in the WSL.

We also have a new captain in Maisie Symonds. It wasn't long after I came to the club last summer that I identified Maisie's leadership potential. She has the respect of the staff and her teammates and although she is still young in WSL and football terms she is very experienced and will have help from Jelena Cankovic, Fran Kirby and Marisa Olislagers in particular as she settles in her role. She will help everyone and everyone will help her.

Of all the signings we made the one which attracted the biggest interest was the return of Michelle Agyemang on loan from Arsenal. It doesn't feel like a new signing to be honest. Michelle was with us last season and slotted back in straight away. Obviously during the summer she had a wonderful experience with England at the Euros where she showcased the talent we know she has with some explosive performances and goals. There's going to a lot of attention on Michelle, but she is so focused on her football and is determined to kick on this season, with the help of her teammates and coaching staff.

It was great to meet so many of our fans at the forum on Tuesday. These are exciting times for the club with the potential of a new purpose-built stadium for the women's team and the WSL growing year on year. Our focus is on the here and now. We made the Broadfield Stadium a tough place for opposing teams to visit last season and the support we got from you in the stands was a big part of that.

We're going to need you again today and going forward and hopefully if we give the best version of ourselves on the pitch we can start the season the right way.

Dario







## Fuka signs on!

Midfielder Fuka Tsunoda became our final signing of the summer transfer window when she arrived earlier this week from Japanese outfit Urawa Reds, the club we signed Kiko Seike from a year ago.

Head coach Dario Vidosic said, "We're delighted to bring Fuka to the club. She has got good experience in a competitive league in Japan and has been playing regularly for Urawa this season. She will improve our midfield options and we're looking forward to working with her.

"She's a very technical player, and a defensive midfielder. She will need some time to get used to things and to learn English, but she has two Japanese internationals alongside her who can help in that process. She's an exciting young talent who is very determined, and wants to do well in the WSL environment."

Fuka has played more than 30 games for Urawa since her debut in 2022 and won four domestic honours including two league titles. The 20-year-old has represented Japan at under-16, under-19 and under-20 level.



### Experience Kissimmee back on board

We're delighted to announce that our sleeve partner Experience Kissimmee will be subsidising coach travel for all Barclays Women's Super League away fixtures.

This initiative means supporters can follow Albion on the road at a reduced cost, underlining our shared commitment to growing away support and creating unforgettable matchday experiences for fans.

Experience Kissimmee, the official travel authority of Osceola County Florida, are proud partners of the club, bringing together sport, tourism and entertainment in a landmark collaboration.

Our first away trip takes us to Manchester City at the Joie Stadium on Friday 12 September, 7.30pm kick-off. Departure times: Amex Coach Park at 11.30am, Broadfield Stadium (A23 layby) at 12.00pm. Return: Joie Stadium, 15 minutes after full time.

Book through the ticket portal on www. brightonandhovealbion.com



## Leicester City game at the Amex

We are delighted to announce that we will play our Women's Super League fixture against Leicester City at the American Express Stadium.

The game will take place on Sunday 16 November, kick-off 12 noon, subject to broadcast selection.

We played three games at the Amex last season, drawing 1-1 against Manchester United, beating West Ham 3-2 and losing to Liverpool.

Ticket information for the game will be announced shortly.



#### New additions to coaching staff

Dario Vidosic has announced two additions to his women's first-team coaching staff.

Arthur Brammer has joined as assistant coach, having been with the club since 2021, working initially with the men's under-15s before three seasons with the men's under-18s.

Goalkeeping coach Ben Morella worked with Dario at his previous club Melbourne City. They join assistant head coach Chris Roberts and Nikita Runnacles in his coaching team for this season and beyond.

Dario said: "Both bring key expertise that will be fundamental in developing our coaching structure. Arthur has several years' experience in academy football and a deep understanding of the club, having worked at Brighton for a few years across multiple academy positions.

"I've had the pleasure of working with Ben at Melbourne City, and he's a talented young goalkeeping coach. We're looking forward to seeing the partnership he builds with Nikita as they work together to strengthen our goalkeeping department."



#### Today's mascots

A warm welcome to Freyja Poole, Becca Moore, Arabella Alexander, Elsie Price, Ava Perkins, Coral Felton, Tanisha Bhimjiani, Holly Ransley, Imogen Oliver Mia Afamovic, Beatrice Griffith.



#### **Programme production**

Head of media: Paul Camillin Editor: Bruce Talbot Contributors: Luke Nicoli Photography: James Boardman, Paul Hazlewood Design: Scott Reed @ Alchemy



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INTERVIEW

# LEADING FROMTHE FRONT

#### Maisie Symonds is Albion's longestserving player at 22. And this season she's wearing the captain's armband

Maisie Symonds, Albion's longest-serving women's player, is ready to play a leading role in the next stage of the team's development.

At 22, the midfielder is the longest-serving player in the squad, having been with the club since making her debut in 2020. And while the team were on their training camp in Spain last month she was voted captain by her teammates.

It's been quite a journey for Maisie. Three years ago, during Albion's pre-season training camp in Germany, she didn't kick a ball with what turned out to be glandular fever, which confined her to bed for most of the trip. So it's to her credit that as Albion stepped up preparations for the new season it was her that her teammates decided would lead them on the pitch going forward.

"Yes, I remember that [Germany] trip. I barely made it out of bed and then for most of the following season I was at home watching games on TV." she said. "That was tough, so I'm quite proud of myself for the progress I have made in the last couple of years."

Last season, Symonds' consistent form, as Albion finished a record fifth in the WSL, earned her a call-up to the England senior squad for the first time. But just

as importantly in the last two years she has played 47 games for her club and established herself as Dario Vidosic's first-choice No6.

"That was just as important to me as England recognition because that's what I've been searching for in the last few seasons – just to be on the pitch helping the team," she added. "Last year was the first season that I really started to get my rhythm and when that happens the other things start falling in your favour as well, like getting in the England squad."

With Vicky Losada and Nikita Parris departing in the summer other players need to step up to provide experience around the squad and Symonds is happy to help with that.

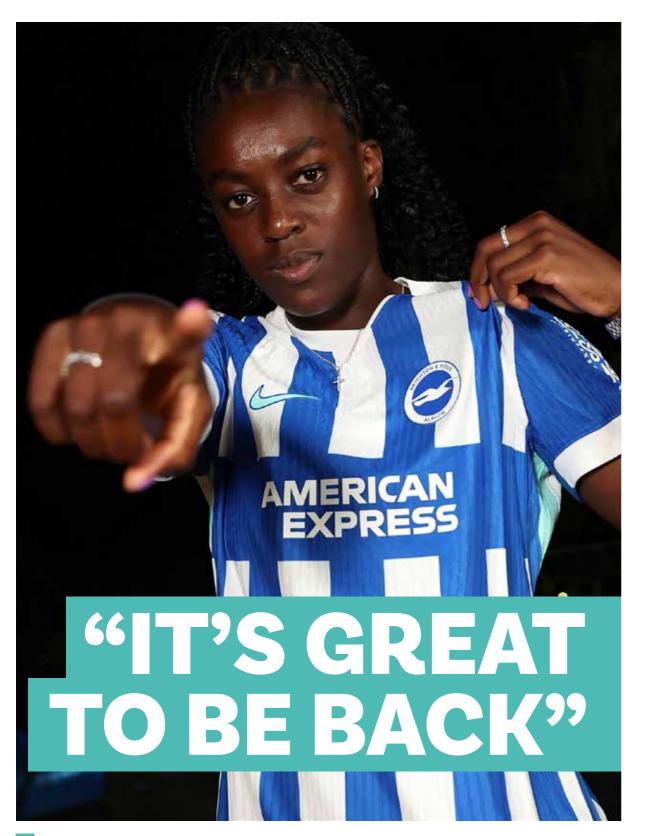
"I'm comfortable that I can be a leader within the team, but there's definitely times that I massively lean on the other experienced girls in the squad," she added. "Someone worked out that with the new girls this summer there are 13 different nationalities in the squad and I see part of my role as someone who has been here a while to get to know everyone and try and bring the group together. But there are a lot of leaders in this group and that is going to help us massively this season."











#### **Euros hero Michelle Agyemang** is aiming high after returning to Albion

Michelle Agyemang's return to Albion on a season-long loan has been met with much excitement and anticipation by her teammates and Albion fans.

The 19-year-old, who scored five goals in 22 appearances last season, got the warmest of welcomes from her teammates when she arrived in Spain to link up with them at their training camp a fortnight ago.

While the medical protocols were completed, her return to training was delayed, but the forward was back on the grass the following day and then got minutes under her belt in the friendly against Levante, scoring in Albion's 8-0 win.

"It feels great to be back," she said. "I've missed seeing the girls for the last couple of months, so it's nice to be back in a familiar environment and catch up with everyone.

"Coming back to Brighton was quite an easy decision. I think I developed well here last season and had a lot of support from the girls, so I'm happy to be back. Coming in to see everyone when I got out to Spain so happy was lovely and I'm really pleased that I'm part of a team that values me as well."

Her return to Albion came at the end of an unbelievable summer for Michelle, after she helped England defend their Euros title in Switzerland, scoring crucial goals in the knockout stages against Sweden and Italy, having taken just 41 seconds to score her first international goal against Belgium in April when she came on as a substitute in the second half.

"I learned so much from playing at the Euros," she added. "The experience was invaluable, and I can't wait to bring what I've learned back to Brighton. I'm more determined than ever to help the team achieve our goals.

"The tournament was so great for all of us, and I think that reflected around the rest of the country as well. They were all behind us and I'm so grateful to have been a part of that and I thank God for the opportunity and the privilege to have experienced it."

Agyemang believes her experiences at the Euros can help her as she aims to make a similar impact this season. In her first year with Albion she started six games and came off the bench 16 times, scoring five times. With Nikita Parris joining London City Lionesses, Michelle will be wearing the No9 shirt. As well as her goal against Levante, she was also on target last Saturday when Albion beat West Ham 2-0 behind closed doors at the Broadfield Stadium.

"There was a lot of learning last season playing different positions, trying to adapt to a new system with Dario (Vidosic). But going into the tournament in the summer, you could see that I had progressed as well throughout the season. I think I learned a lot last season, both as a player and a person, and I want to keep improving this season and working hard to help the team.

"We have a high ceiling and I know we can achieve so much this season. We achieved a lot as a team coming fifth and I'm excited to see what we have to offer this season. We had a lot of quality and I can see that we've increased that with the new signings."

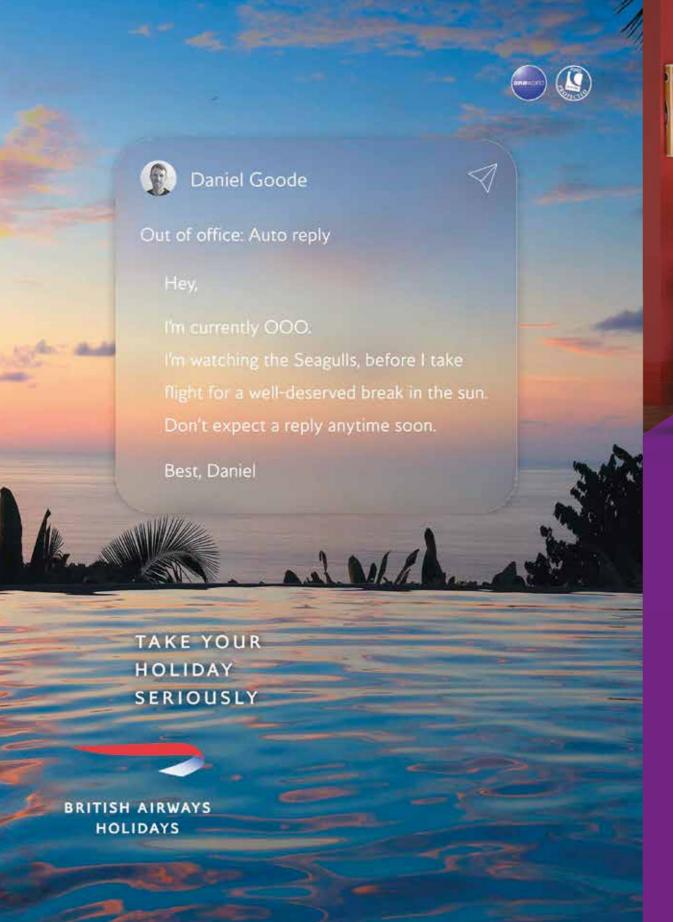
#### **Euros impact** no surprise

Head coach Dario Vidosic wasn't surprised at the impact Michelle Agyemang made at the Euros - and is confident she can make just as big an impression in the WSL as she starts her second season on loan at

"I wasn't too surprised to be honest," he said. "When she came on in games last season we saw she had the quality to make an impact. The difference this season is that she's been with us for three weeks. whereas last year she came to us guite late in the transfer window. She knew she needed to work a lot and as a young player there is always stuff that you can improve. She took time to understand how we played and had to develop physically.

"She had opportunities coming off the bench and with young players there are always ups and downs and learning how to react to different scenarios. By the end of the season she was ready to play 90 minutes and now she's hungry to achieve even more this season. She's integrated back into the group really easily and has been terrific with the other girls. She's obviously had a lot of attention on her this summer, but the best thing is that as a person she hasn't changed, she's the same Michelle."







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# High hopes

Aston Villa enter the new season with renewed hope after ending the 2024/25 campaign strongly

Under Robert de Pauw's tenure, the Villans spent an extended period of time flirting with relegation - and it wasn't until Natalia Arroyo's arrival in January that the side found its true form.

Indeed, the former Real Sociedad boss led her troops to a comfortable sixth-placed finish, which included an eye-catching five-game unbeaten run at the end of the season. During that time the side scored 16 goals, which included a 5-2 defeat of Arsenal and a final-day 3-1 win against the Albion.

Arroyo was busy in the transfer market this summer, signing goalkeeper Ellie Roebuck from Barcelona, Lynn Wilms from Wolfsburg, Oceane Deslandes (Montpellier), Lucia Kendall (Southampton) and Maya Hijikata (Tokyo Verdy Beleza), while Jill Baijings has signed from Bayern Munich, having impressed on loan last season.

The arrival of the Netherlands midfielder Baijings is seen as something of a coup, given her dominant displays, and she stood in as captain in the absence of Rachel Daly on a number of occasions.

The former England international, another important member of the side, has signed a contract extension, while Villa have also kept the likes of Anna Patten, Kirsty Hanson and Lucy Parker in their ranks.

There have, inevitably, been some departures with Jordan Nobbs, Danielle Turner and Rachel Corsie all leaving the club - with the impetus seemingly more on youth and dynamism this season as Arroyo continues to implement her highpressing style.

Villa will certainly be heading to Sussex in a confident frame of mind following an impressive pre-season campaign. A 2-0 defeat at Manchester United was followed by a

5-1 victory over Liverpool and an impressive 1-1 draw against Paris Saint-Germain in France. Another 1-1 draw followed against Leicester City before a final warm-up game saw Union Berlin defeated 1-0 last Saturday, thanks to a first-half Daly goal.

"We feel that we are ready; we are in a good position to start the league after completing preseason," reflected Arroyo, who, having signed a three-and-a-half-year deal in January, certainly has the backing to mould Villa into what the fans hope will be a competitive outfit in the WSL.

Her record to this point suggests that she has every chance. Aside from Villa's improvement since her arrival, the former Barcelona player led Real Sociedad to second place in Liga F in 2021/22, behind Barca, and runners-up to the Catalan giants in the Copa de la Reina de Futbol in 2023/24.

"Hopefully we can see a team that wants to have the ball, that has clear intentions with the ball, and to score as many goals as possible. And when we don't have the ball to press as aggressive and as high as possible," said the 39-year-old when asked about her coaching ethos.

"I want my teams to not be predictable. I don't want us to be reliant on one goalscorer or method. It's very good for a coach to have different ways to create chances, different goalscorers both in the team and coming off the bench to make an impact, and hopefully we can build a team that plays with passion and with energy.

"We are step-by-step, with good results, building our identity and that is important; to work as hard as possible to bring Villa where we want to be – and that after the game the fans are telling other people to come to the next game."

#### **ONE TO WATCH**

#### **Lynn Wilms**

Arriving this summer from Wolfsburg, the experienced Netherlands international has the versatility to play at centre-half or right-back.

Starting her senior career with FC Twente – where she won two Eredivisie titles – Wilms moved to Germany in 2021, winning the Frauen-Bundesliga title in her first season, three German domestic cups and a Champions League runners-up medal in 2023

In total, she made over 100 appearances across four seasons, cementing her place in the Dutch national team in the process.

Wilms made her international debut, aged 18, against Turkey in a European Championship qualifier in 2019, and has gone on to make 55 appearances, scoring once.

She became Villa's first signing of the summer window, having appeared at the European Championships, and was delighted to put pen to paper.

"I'm super excited, it's a big club," she said. "It's always been a dream for me to go to the Super League – I think this is now the biggest stage in women's football."





#### PREVIOUS MEETING

#### Albion 4 Aston Villa 2 Saturday 5 October, 2024

Nikita Parris scored on her full league debut as the Seagulls won a six-goal thriller at Broadfield Stadium.

The visitors had taken a 13th-minute lead through skipper Rachel Daly but the goal was cancelled out just 75 seconds later by ex-Manchester United striker Parris, who fired home following a Poppy Pattinson assist.

Parris then turned provider on the stroke of half-time, teeing up Pauline Bremer, but the visitors levelled shortly after the break when Daly converted from the penalty spot.

A grandstand finish saw Paula Tomas handed a straight red card for a foul on Kiko Seike, with Fran Kirby converting the resulting penalty with 11 minutes remaining.

Arsenal loanee Michelle Agyemang added a fourth deep into stoppage time with a superb individual goal – which came shortly after Pattinson had been handed a red card for a second caution.

The victory put Albion second in the table, level on points with Chelsea and Manchester United, while Villa remained winless from their three matches.

"Even in those times where it was tough we still looked to play and be brave, so I really have to commend the team on how good they were," said Dario Vidosic. "After two home games, we've scored eight goals (having also beaten Everton 4-0 on the opening day), so that's really, really positive."











# Postcards from Spain

The squad spent a packed week in Spain preparing for the new season. As well as training, they played two games, beating Levante 8-0 and CF Alhama 2-1 – and welcomed a familiar face back to the squad!

Photos: Paul Hazlewood







Representative example

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 – 2nd sub – 3rd sub 4th sub 1st sub 5th sub

DATE OPPOSITION

#### **SEPTEMBER**

7	Aston Villa	12.00noon
12	Manchester City	7.30pm
21	West Ham United	12.00noon
24	Portsmouth (LC)	7.00pm
28	Everton	12.00noon

#### **OCTOBER**

5	Tottenham Hotspur	11.55am	
8	West Ham United (LC	C) 7.00pm	
12	Arsenal	2.30pm	
19	Southampton (LC)	2.00pm	

#### **NOVEMBER**

2	Manchester United	2.00pm			
9	Liverpool	2.00pm			
12	Charlton Athletic (LC)	7.00pm			
16	Leicester City	12.00noon			

#### **DECEMBER**

7	London City Lionesses	2.00pr
14	Chelsea	2.00pr

#### **JANUARY**

11	ASION VIIIA	≥.00pm
18	FAC4	
25	Everton	2.00pm

#### **FEBRUARY**

1 London City Lionesses 2.00pm						
8	West Ham United	12.00noon				
15	Arsenal	2.00pm				

#### **MARCH**

15	Chelsea	2.00pm
22	Liverpool	2.00pm
29	Leicester City	3.00pm

#### **APRIL** 26 Chelsea

MA	Y	
3	Manchester United	2.00pm

17 Tottenham Hotspur 2.00pm

2.00pm































#### WSL final table 2024/25

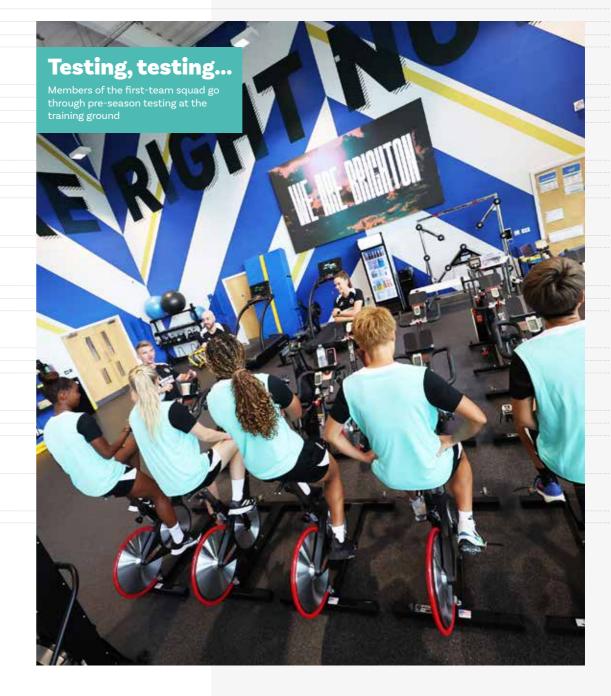
		- Р	W	ע		- 1	A	+/-	Pts	
1	Chelsea	22	19	3	0	56	13	43	60	
2	Arsenal	22	15	3	4	62	26	36	48	
3	Manchester United	22	13	5	4	41	16	25	44	
4	Manchester City	22	13	4	5	49	28	21	43	
	Brighton & Hove Albion	22			10		41		28	
6	Aston Villa	22	7	4	11	32	44	-12	25	
7	Liverpool	22	7	4	11	22	37	-15	25	
8	Everton	22	6	6	10	24	32	-8	24	
9	West Ham United	22	6	5	11	36	41	-5	23	
10	Leicester City	22	5	5	12	21	37	-16	20	
11	Tottenham Hotspur	22	5	5	12	26	44	-18	20	
12	Crystal Palace	22	2	4	16	20	65	-45	10	

#### Today's other fixtures

Liverpool v Everton Man United v Leicester City Spurs v West Ham

#### Albion statistics 2025/26

				LC		4C		FC
Name		Gls	Apps	Gls	Apps	Gls	Apps	Gls
Chiamaka Nnadozi	e -							
Manuela Vanegas								
Moeka Minami								
Maelys Mpome								
Rosa Kafaji								
Aisha Masaka							0+2	
Maisie Symonds							31+43	2
Michelle Agyemana	ξ -						9+16	5
Jelena Cankovic							13+6	3
Kiko Seike							14+7	6
Fran Kirby							1-6+2	8
Nadine Noordam							9	
Jorelyn Carabali							27+10	1
Bex Rayner							2+3	
Caitlin Hayes							2+3	
Marisa Olislagers							20+5	2
Madison Haley							23+14	2
Carla Camacho								
Marit Auee							1+0	
Hannah Poulter								
Rachel McLauchlar	1 -						9+6	2
Fuka Tsunoda								
Sophie Baggaley							35	
Charlie Rule							5+9	2
Evie Milner							0+1	
Mia Balmer							0+1	
Olivia Johnson							0+2	
	Chiamaka Nnadozi Manuela Vanegas Moeka Minami Maelys Mpome Rosa Kafaji Aisha Masaka Maisie Symonds Michelle Agyemang Jelena Cankovic Kiko Seike Fran Kirby Nadine Noordam Jorelyn Carabali Bex Rayner Caitlin Hayes Marisa Olislagers Marisa Olislagers Madison Haley Carla Camacho Marit Auee Hannah Poulter Rachel McLauchlar Fuka Tsunoda Sophie Baggaley Charlie Rule Evie Milner Mia Balmer	Chiamaka Nnadozie - Manuela Vanegas - Moeka Minami - Maelys Mpome - Rosa Kafaji - Aisha Masaka - Maisie Symonds - Michelle Agyemang - Jelena Cankovic - Kiko Seike - Fran Kirby - Nadine Noordam - Jorelyn Carabali - Bex Rayner - Caitlin Hayes - Marisa Olislagers - Madison Haley - Carla Camacho - Marit Auee - Hannah Poulter - Rachel McLauchlan - Fuka Tsunoda - Sophie Baggaley - Charlie Rule - Evie Milner - Mia Balmer - Rosa Kasinami - Rula Balmer - Rosa Kafaji - Rosa Kanama - Rula Tsunoda - Sophie Baggaley - Charlie Rule - Evie Milner - Mia Balmer - Rosa Kafaji - Rosa Kafa	Chiamaka Nnadozie         -	Chiamaka Nnadozie         -				





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## SEPTEMBER FIXTURES

Upcoming Albion fixtures at Broadfield Stadium



Sun 21 Sep **12pm KO** 



Sun 28 Sep 12pm KO



\*Terms & Conditions apply. Fixtures subject to change



#### **Albion**

- 1 Chiamaka Nnadozie
- 2 Manuela Vanegas
- 3 Moeka Minami
- 5 Maelys Mpome
- 6 Rosa Kafaji
- 7 Aisha Masaka
- 8 Maisie Symonds
- 9 Michelle Agyemang
- 10 Jelena Cankovic
- 11 Kiko Seike
- 14 Fran Kirby
- 15 Nadine Noordam
- 16 Jorelyn Carabali
- 17 Bex Rayner
- 18 Caitlin Hayes
- 19 Marisa Olislagers
- 21 Madison Haley
- 22 Carla Camacho
- 23 Marit Auee
- 25 Hannah Poulter
- 27 Rachel McLauchlan
- 29 Fuka Tsunoda
- 32 Sophie Baggaley
- 33 Charlie Rule
- 64 Emilie Gay

# AVFC

#### **Aston Villa**

- 1 Sabrina D'Angelo
- 2 Sarah Mayling
- 3 Paula Tomás
- 4 Anna Patten
- 5 Lucy Staniforth
- 7 Missy **Bo Kearns**
- 8 Jill Baijings
- 9 Rachel Daly
- 10 Gabi Nunes
- 13 Maya Hijikata
- 14 Lynn Wilms
- 15 Lucy Parker
- 16 Noelle Maritz
- 17 Ebony Salmon
- 18 Georgia Mullett
- 20 Kirsty Hanson
- 21 Lucia Kendall
- 22 Lydia **Sallaway**
- 23 Chasity Grant
- 24 Océane Deslandes
- 25 Miri Taylor
- 26 Ellie Roebuck
- 38 Rachel Maltby
- 40 Soffia Kelly

#### Match officials

Referee: Ryan Atkin Assistant Referees:

Nicoleta Bria & Bhupinder Singh Gill

Fourth Official: Lisa Benn

#### Next at the Amex



**West Ham United** WSL

Sunday 21 September Kick-off 12 noon

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