

## Bristol City Women VS Manchester City Women

Playing for Bristol City in the Quarter Finals of the FA Cup is something I had been dreaming about doing but being there was one of the most surreal events of my life.

I remember standing in the changing room and telling myself to breathe.

Just breathe.

It was nearly kick off and the atmosphere in the changing room was tense. Everyone was buzzing with the usual pre-match nerves and adrenalin was rushing through my veins. Questions were bouncing around my head, did we practise enough? How good are they?

I knew already that they had the world player of the year in their side, that we were the underdogs and not expected to win. In a strange way that took a little bit of pressure off.

My cruciate ligament injury that kept me out of the team last year was starting to aggravate me. After being out of the team for a whole season I was just really glad to be playing, there were times during my recovery when I didn't know if this day would come again. But will my knee stand up to a full ninety minutes?

I was apprehensive to start and even though I knew I was ready to get out there and play I still made sure that I had time to do my pre match ritual. It may seem a little superstitious but I always have to put my right shoe on last, and after listen to my favourite song to calm my nerves as this

helps put me in the right frame of mind before the match starts.

Haley Ladd, our team captain, had run through some warm ups to get our bodies active and ready to play. First we kicked the ball in pairs slowly getting further apart and then when Haley shouted 'swap' we changed partners. Meanwhile other players on the team were shooting to Caitlin Leach, our goalkeeper.

By now the stadium had started to fill up and I remember hearing the crowd chant songs for the team, perhaps it seemed louder because it was the quarter final. Were there more people out there? I always loved the atmosphere when I would go and see matches as a kid but now, when they are singing to me it's seems unreal; like I'm dreaming. As it was a home game the crowd went wild for Bristol City. That always encourages me to try to do my absolute best as it's not just me and the team I'm playing for but all the fans as well. I was really proud of the whole team as if it wasn't for our dedication to winning we wouldn't of got this far.

Our manager Willie Kirk gave us a motivational speech like usual before the referee, Richard Hulme, knocked on our door and told us to go and stand in the tunnel.

We waited in the tunnel for what seemed like hours but was in reality only a few seconds and my heart felt like it was going to burst. I took another deep breath and walked out onto the pitch...