

MONDAY  
Politics

TUESDAY  
Sustainability

WEDNESDAY  
Sport

THURSDAY  
Science

FRIDAY  
Culture

THE DAY  
Build a better world



# NEWS DETECTIVES

## TODAY'S BIG STORY

### Soccer girls fighting for women's freedom

Does sport hold the key to happiness? Today, women's sport is taking off in South Asia. Now, coaches say it is helping to improve girls' lives off the pitch too.

On a dusty, dry field in the middle of **Nepal**, a group of girls are ready to inspire a **generation** of women. In bare feet, they send the ball soaring through the air. By the goal cones, others watch and cheer.

In many **South Asian** countries, there are **barriers** stopping girls taking part in sports. For lots of women, their role from an early age is to take care of their family and marry.

Sarah Van Vooren and Mashreeb Aryal



Goal: "We want to show that women can work, be successful, play sport," says Van Vooren.

### THE STORY SO FAR

For centuries, women have been left out of many sports traditionally played by men. Now, women around the world are fighting to be included and enjoy the benefits of sport.

want to change this. They founded the charity **Atoot** to provide an "**empowering space**" for girls in **Kapilvastu**.

The area is **diverse** and has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Nepal.

Atoot uses football to empower girls in the area. They also run classes and life-skills workshops.

"Our programme is a safe space; and the football ground is the safest space for these girls," says Van Vooren. They believe their success on the sports fields shows the girls they can **achieve** things they never before thought possible. "Women can travel the world; play sport; they can be successful on their own."

## KEY WORDS

**Nepal:** A country in South Asia

**Generation:** People born at same time

**South Asian:** Part of the continent

**Barriers:** Something in the way

**Empowering:** giving someone power

**Kapilvastu:** An area in Nepal

**Diverse:** mixed

**Achieve:** Reach a goal



## YOU DECIDE

### Does sport hold the key to happiness?

**YES.** Sport frees you from the stresses of life and lets you be yourself. It shows you what you can achieve.

**NO.** You can be happy without sports in your life. There are lots of other hobbies out there that bring joy.resolve the issues.



# THE DETECTIVE ZONE

## SPOT THE FAKE

One of these three news stories is fake. Which one?

**Scammers make fake cricket league**

World Cup star plays for pub team

**Olympic swimmer beats seal in race**

## Picture Puzzle

Can you guess what this is?



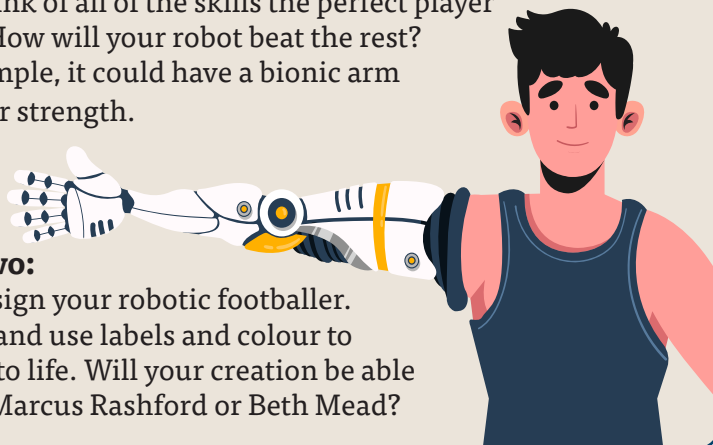
- Red pepper
- Cola bottle
- Theatre mask

## TIME TO DESIGN

The girls from Nepal are on a mission. In this challenge, you will take on your own mission to create a robotic footballer to beat the world's best players.

### Step one:

First, think of all of the skills the perfect player needs. How will your robot beat the rest? For example, it could have a bionic arm for super strength.



### Step two:

Now design your robotic footballer. Draw it and use labels and colour to bring it to life. Will your creation be able to beat Marcus Rashford or Beth Mead?

## Teatime talk

Surfers took part in the Olympics for the first time at Tokyo 2020. Which sport do you think should be added to the games next?

## Tell the family

Women's football was banned in the UK in 1921 and only allowed to return 50 years later. Keira Walsh is the most expensive female player ever. She cost Barcelona £400,000.

# FURTHER READING

## Football changing girls lives

**In Nepal the barriers for girls to participate in sport, let alone football, are great. For the majority, their role from an early age is to take care of their family and marry.**

**S**arah Van Vooren is well placed to understand these issues. Alongside Mashreeb Aryal she founded Atoot to provide an “empowering space” for girls in the Kapilvastu district on the southern border with India. Kapilvastu contains a diverse population and has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Nepal. Atoot uses football as a tool to teach girls in the region, alongside education classes and life-skills workshops.

“We are not here to make the best footballers,” says Van Vooren. “Our programme is literally a safe space; and the football ground is the safest space for these girls. There’s so many things they don’t learn until these daily sessions. Then it becomes ingrained within their mindset. We also do community engagement every day as that is the most important aspect.”

Van Vooren and Aryal have seen an increase in the number of young girls wanting to take part. After a break due



**Reaching the top:** More than 15,000 people watched Bangladesh beat Nepal in Kathmandu.

to Covid they restarted the programme in September 2021 with around 50 young girls. A year later they have 150 taking part daily.

Van Vooren has seen a clear impact. The girls have begun to support themselves and those around them. They have also grown in confidence, engaging with others who come from around the world to work on the programme.

“They used to be so scared of everything. We realised how much trust they have in us that the people we’re bringing now, they think they’re them,” she said.

As well as empowering young girls, Atoot also wants to develop and reward their staff. The recent SAFF Championship provided the perfect occasion as

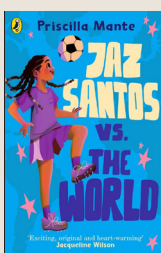
they travelled to Kathmandu to watch the games. “A lot of them had never been to a professional women’s national team match before,” Van Vooren continues.

“They’re cheering, they’re screaming. I’m so happy that they got to have this opportunity because they’ve never had anything like that before. To see women dominate on the pitch, and a whole sold-out stadium cheering for that.”

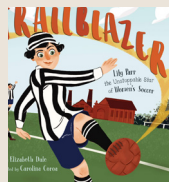
Women’s football is developing across the region and projects such as Atoot will continue to play a key role in breaking down barriers and empowering young girls to take part. ■

This is an edited version of a story from © The Guardian 28/09/2022

### Now read the book



**Jaz Santos vs The World** by Priscilla Mante, Puffin  
£6.79



**Trailblazer: Lily Parr, the Unstoppable Star of Women's Soccer** by Elizabeth Dale, Maverick Arts  
£12.71

### Answers to puzzles

**Picture this**  
Cola bottle

**Spot the fake**  
“Olympic swimmer beats seal in race”