



COLLECTIVE
ENCOUNTERS



Football: A Woman's Game by San George.

Growing up in a time when football was dominated by Men, it wasn't easy. People would say, *"you can't play football, it's a man's game!"* *"Do you want to be a man?"* All the classics. *"Are you all lesbians?"* Not knowing my sexuality at a young age, it was very confusing. I would think to myself, *"do these two things have to go hand in hand?"*

I started playing football for a women's team aged 13. I was very slim and still growing. There were no junior teams at that time, so I had to play against grown women. I held my own, and I played with pride and passion. In the women's game there were a few brave women who pioneered for the woman's game.

Player, coach, manager and tireless promoter of women's football, who scored the first official goal for England

The one woman who I looked up to was Sylvia Gore MBE. Sylvia was a local legend, born in Prescot. She scored the first goal in England Women's football team's first ever match. She was tenacious in her pursuit of equality in and for the women's game. Whenever I felt like giving up, Sylvia would say, *"don't give up, one*

day women's football will be professional, and when it does, you can reflect in great satisfaction on the small part you played in doing so." She was correct. Just look at women's football today.

Sylvia Gore with fellow Hall Of Fame inductees Patrick Vieira, Alan Shearer, Trevor Francis, Roger Hunt, Sir Bobby Charlton, Sir Trevor Brooking, Jimmy McIlroy, Michael Owen and Head of the PFA Gordon Taylor.

<https://nationalfootballmuseum.com/halloffame/sylvia-gore/>



As a youngster, Sylvia was encouraged by her family to play football, but was prevented from joining the boys' team at

school and had to look elsewhere to participate. Starting with Manchester Corinthians at the age of 12, Sylvia later played for Fodens, helping them to a shock win over Southampton in the

1974 Women's FA Cup final. Known as the 'Denis Law' of women's football, she once scored 134 goals in a season.

When my playing days came to an end, junior teams were in play. I coached the junior girls' team with great pride and satisfaction until I could no longer kick a ball.



Me, during my playing years



Sylvia Gore in England training kit

After my football days were behind me, I struggled to find something that would give me the same feeling of satisfaction that football did, until I found my creative side in comedy and drama, I joined an improv troupe, and then I found Collective Encounters. These two gave me the same feeling of togetherness and team spirit as football once did, all the while, in my mind, the words echoing from Sylvia Gore, ***"Please, don't give up."***



Collective Encounters' Women in Action perform at Sahir House's Access Pride, The Brink '24.



Community Chronicles by Collective Encounters' Adult Theatre For Social Change '25.