

## The Brazilian women using football to escape the favelas

*For decades, women's football was banned in Brazil. Now ex-drug traffickers are tackling prejudice in the game by training future soccer stars from the favelas*

**Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text**

**ridden:** *excessively full*

**stray:** *not in the right place; separated from the group or target*

**dodge:** *avoid (someone or something) by a sudden quick movement*

**impoverish:** *make (a person or area) poor*

**shootouts:** *a decisive gun battle*

**lack:** *the state of being without or not having enough of something*

**council estate:** *area of houses built and rented out to tenants by a local council*

**to cope:** *(of a person) deal effectively with something difficult*



The Astroturf on the football pitch in Rio de Janeiro's Penha favela complex is torn and covered with litter, while graffiti on the **bullet-ridden** walls vows "death to the police".

"**Stray** bullets are part of my life here," says Jessica, a 17-year-old football coach. "Sometimes you have to jump into a house to **dodge** them."

The conditions for the girls playing football in this favela in northern Rio could not be more different to those facing Brazil's national men's team. Yet the coaching that goes on here is perhaps just as important for Brazil's future generations. Favela Street, is a project that trains ex-drug traffickers to coach football to youngsters at risk from the drugs trade.

There is a high risk for some girls who grow up in **impoverished** favelas and see joining the drugs trade or becoming the girlfriend of a drug dealer as the only way to earn money or prestige in communities where educational provision is often erratic or interrupted by **shootouts**.

Jessica started living on the streets after receiving death threats from the drug traffickers she worked for. She returned to Penha only after the Ibiss

foundation, the non-profit organisation that funds the Favela Street soccer schools among other projects, negotiated her return with the drugs lords.

Despite the national passion for football and success of the men's team, the women's game has been slow to establish itself in Brazil. Between 1941 and 1979, a law – originally imposed by the then-ruling military dictator – prohibited girls and women from playing football as it was considered "incompatible with the female form". Women's teams have **lacked** sponsorship, support and media attention.

However, Favela Street is helping to change perceptions about the young women involved, as well as building up their self-esteem.

Arsenal and England footballer Alex Scott was invited to visit the Brazilian girls' team in Rio. It is a long way from Penha to east London, where Scott grew up, but for girls in the favelas and those from Scott's **council estate**, similar experiences could still be shared. "I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't got into football," says Scott. Being picked up by Arsenal aged eight gave her a lifelong sense of direction and confidence.

Whether in London or in Rio, the Arsenal defender believes the sport can offer ways **to cope** with living in tough urban environments. "Football helps you because you have to learn how to channel your aggression. If you let it overwhelm you, you risk letting down the whole team. Developing that discipline helps you in the rest of your life."

*adapted from: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/feb/17/brazilian-women-football-escape-favelas>*

*"Let's chat about that!"*

*Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach!*

- *How do you think football can help these girls from the favelas?*
- *Do you really believe they have a chance to better their lives?*
- *What emotions do you think these girls feel everyday?*
- *Do you know any inspirational story about a woman from very humble beginnings who became highly successful?*
- *Are women's sports well supported in your country?*



## FOOTBALL IDIOMS YOU CAN USE AT WORK

### To keep one's eye on the ball

To give your complete attention to a particular activity or environment.  
E.g. "Keep your eye on the ball if you want to succeed at work."

### To move the goalposts

To unfairly change the rules or conditions of a process during its course.  
E.g. "I'm quitting if they keep moving the goalposts in regards to my promotion!"

### To get the ball rolling

To start something off.  
E.g. "I need £100,000 to get the ball rolling on my new business project."

### To be on the ball

To be alert and aware of what is going on around you.  
E.g. "I have so much energy, I feel really on the ball today."

### To score an own goal

To unintentionally harm your own interests.  
E.g. "Sarah really scored an own goal by not applying for that job."

### A game changer

A new idea or event that creates a significant shift to the current way of doing or thinking about something.  
E.g. "The new funding will be a game changer for us."



### A game plan

A planned strategy.  
E.g. "Have a game plan ready before you go into the meeting."

### To get a kick out of something

To enjoy an activity or event very much.  
E.g. "He gets a kick out of cycling on the motorway."

### To know the score

To be aware of the essential facts of a situation.  
E.g. "I don't have to explain my problem to her, she knows the score."

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