

# All six SWPL fixtures to have female match officials



This Sunday, for the first time, all six Scottish Women's Premier League matches will have female match officials.

Emma Hingant, who'll be in charge of the match between Hutchison Vale and Hearts in Edinburgh, is one of those six referees, and she is both excited and proud to play her part this weekend.

Hingant – who outside of refereeing is a Venue Data Coordinator for UEFA, as well as a contributor for the French version of Manchester United's website – said to the Scottish FA website:

"I'm very excited about this weekend, and I'm really proud to be a part of it. It's great because it shows now we have at least six referees who are at the right level to officiate in the SWPL, a league which has also grown a lot in the last five years."

Participation in female refereeing in Scotland has grown at a considerable pace since 2011, with participation rates growing from 2.1% four years ago to 5.2% in 2015. The quality of female referees has also matched the growth of the league; 50% of SWPL fixtures are now officiated by females, compared to just 17.4% in 2011.

"The players are more focused and professional than ever, so they need referees who are at the same level as them," Hingant explained.

"The players, I think, like having female officials too. They can see that there is an interest in improving all aspects of

women's football in Scotland by having the best female referees in the women's game and not just in men's football."

Opportunities for women in refereeing have grown since Hingant started officiating in 2010, with Scottish referees such as Morag Pirie and Kylie McMullan reaching to the level of European competition and the Scottish Premiership in recent seasons.

There's never been a better time for women to get involved in refereeing, but Hingant believes that the heights that Pirie and McMullan have reached do not come without sacrifice.

She said: "The opportunities for women in refereeing have grown massively in recent years. If you look at someone like Kylie McMullan, who has gone from a beginner to an assistant referee in the Scottish Premiership and in European competition, it really shows that if you have the determination you can really go far."

"It does involve a lot of commitment – we train together once a week, along with our own personal fitness training on the side – and we meet quarterly collective for video analysis and study."

For Emma, whose work revolves around football, the commitment that it requires is most definitely worth it.

"I work in football, and in the weekend I referee. On a Saturday I'm on the touchline in the men's game and on Sunday I referee in the women's game. When I go on holiday and try and go and try catch a game!

"I first got involved in refereeing in late 2010. I was playing in the SWFL Second Division for Spartans, and I was interested in finding out how I could get involved, and since then I've loved it."