THE 2018/19 PFA W-LEAGUE REPORT
Congratulations to all players on another successful W-League season. It was a fascinating and thrilling campaign until the final whistle, as Sydney FC dethroned three-time Champions Melbourne City, while Melbourne Victory secured a maiden Premiers Plate after a dominant season. There were twists and turns throughout and a commitment from the players to produce entertaining football.

With the 2018/19 season – and the inaugural W-League Collective Bargaining Agreement – concluded, it’s important to take a moment to reflect on the foundations that have been established for our competition, which is now entering its 12th season.

This W-League Report allows us to do exactly that. It provides the opportunity to review progress, while projecting forward, ensuring we chart an even stronger path for players and their careers.

As well as recording key trends from season 11 of the W-League, the outcomes highlighted in this Report are inextricably linked to the improvements established through the PFA’s foundational W-League CBA.

That CBA delivered player remuneration at a higher level, secured minimum standards, improved exposure of the League and players through a significantly enhanced broadcast partnership and delivered integration of W-League teams into club programs.

Players continue to demonstrate an unwavering desire to enhance all aspects of the W-League and a willingness to make personal compromises to grow the game.

The extension of the W-League CBA in 2019 is a testament to this. The new deal includes:

- gender equality embedded into the conditions and standards for our players in all competitions
- an increase in investment in female programs at all W-League clubs
- W-League minimum remuneration anchored to that of the A-League
- a commitment to ensuring the Player Development Program is resourced at the required level, allowing for all members to be serviced adequately

Utilising this platform for progress, players now have representation on the newly-established FFA Women’s Football Council and on the New Leagues Working Group.

Player representation will guarantee players are central to decisions around the transition to the independent W-League and ensuring gender equality sits at the heart of all footballing decisions.

We should take time to reflect and be proud of the impressive progress made. But we all know how quickly football moves and it remains essential that the players continue to push for career longevity through an extended and balanced competition.

A key focus for players will be establishing a full home and away W-League season and achieving strategic alignment with the National Women’s Soccer League, while protecting the integrity of both competitions.

Lastly, thank you for taking the time to complete the 2018/19 PFA W-League end of season survey. Direct player feedback allows us to create vital tools to provide our organisation, and the broader industry, with the ability to track critical areas of the league’s progress and players’ livelihoods.

Warm regards,

KATHRYN GILL
Deputy Chief Executive
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The survey covered a broad range of areas impacting a player’s career, from their contract, to work and study outside of football, transition-readiness, assessments of their club, the W-League, Collective Bargaining and the PFA.

Where this symbol appears, you will see data and quotes from our major annual survey of W-League players. Every W-League player was sent a link to the online survey at the conclusion of the 2018/19 season. Between late February and late March, 101 players responded to the survey, although not every player completed every question.
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

It is impossible to measure the progress of women’s football by a single metric. It is the sum of forward steps ranging from economic to symbolic. It does not grow in a vacuum but in parallel with social advancement for women generally, which drives and is driven by women’s football. For this reason, progress is not linear through time or uniform across countries.

All this considered, it seems clear that women’s football is on the cusp of a boom, led by countries with the most rapidly shifting attitudes towards women’s sport and female empowerment. Milestones have become larger and more frequent, from record attendances and landmark sponsorship deals to intangible gains such as the first Women’s Ballon d’Or, and a stadium being named after Spanish star Verónica Boquete.

In March, Atletico Madrid set a new world record for a women’s club match of 60,739 at the Wanda Metropolitano as Atletico hosted Barcelona. Days later, Juventus attracted 39,000 to their first women’s match held at the Allianz Stadium in Turin, nearly triple the previous club record in Italy.

Research undertaken by Nielsen has shown that women’s sport is associated with more positive values than men’s sport, and brands are sensing the opportunity to tap into this goodwill. Visa and Adidas have recently announced equal spending on women’s and men’s football. Barclays has committed more than £10 million to the UK’s Women’s Super League over three years, a deal called “the biggest ever investment in UK women’s sport by a brand”. As a result, from next season, the WSL will award £500,000 of prize money.

Locally, AFLW continues to gain traction on the back of heavy promotion and supportive media. Rugby league is launching a series of new national women’s competitions and marquee matches in 2019, sponsored by Holden and Harvey Norman. Rugby union experienced a 20% increase in women’s participation after the inaugural Super W season last year. Netball and cricket keep raising and re-raising the bar for minimum salaries.

This is the context in which the W-League must be tracked and assessed, in which this report should be consumed. To stand still in this environment is to go backwards. Targets are fluid. What feel like revolutionary leaps forward are quickly superseded by new benchmarks.

At the heart lie players who experience conditions which are simultaneously unprecedented for female footballers and inadequate going forward. They benefit from the legacy of those selfless pioneers who came before, while blazing their own trail towards gender equality.
Until now, the W-League has enjoyed a convenient reciprocal relationship with the National Women’s Soccer League where the season window in each country has allowed elite players to create a full calendar of professional football by migrating between the two. But as the two leagues naturally expand, the current dovetail could become an unacceptable overlap. This would benefit players who only play in one league, but could actually reduce playing (and earning) opportunities for those who currently feature in both, including many of the Matildas.

This dynamic is representative of an impending challenge for the W-League. As global leagues rise in stature and quality, we must soon decide whether to go head to head with the rest and become a world class league capable of attracting the best Australian and global talent, or concede that ground to others. The move to independent leagues broadens the horizon of possibilities for a competition which has shown exciting potential, but which needs investment to go to the next level.

In the short term, a strategic partnership with the NWSL with bespoke contracting arrangements may ease the transition until the W-League can provide satisfactory opportunities in its own right.

This question will not be answered in this report, but nor can it be ignored. The report shows that W-League players are already availed fewer match minutes than players in competitor leagues, so expansion is critical to ensure the next generation of Matildas are as competitive as today’s. But we can’t afford to allow the game time for our current stars to drop off a cliff, or risk losing them from our shores, by failing to proactively manage the coming breakdown of the current dynamic.
EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK
SNAPSHOT

$365,431
The average spent on total player payments per club
(up 48%)

88%
Players who intend to stay at their current club next season

41%
Players surveyed who received more than W-League minimum wage
(down 2%)

32
Players aged 17 or under who saw game time
(up 146%)

45.3%
Players who were in their first year at their current club

40
Foreign players in the 2018/19 W-League
(up 7)
Total Player Payments rose 48% to an average of $365,431 per club, up from $246,665 last season. The average exceeds the salary cap because of significant marquee and guest player spend this season, but the overall growth driven from the bottom up, with the minimum salary rising from $10,000 to $12,287 in the second and final year of the inaugural W-League Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The minimum salary comparison shows that the growth in W-League payments is not unique in the world of women's sporting leagues. The tide is rising across the board. Of course, the comparison is not like for like because different sports have different season lengths and central contracting arrangements, but as of 2018/19, the W-League lags behind most other Australian women's leagues for minimum salary.
PLAYER ANALYSIS

Total players contracted: 183
Total players used: 181

Percentage of players in the first year at their club:
- 2018/19: 45%
- 2017/18: 46%
- 2016/17: 40%

Club by Club breakdown

If you could play in any league in the world, rank the following leagues in order of preference (weighted score out of 5):

- W-League: 3.4
- NWSL: 4.2
- Other European WSL: 3.2
- Other Global: 1.3

Do you intend to play for your current W-League club next season?
- Yes: 88%
- No: 12%

Employment Framework
This season was the most cosmopolitan in the W-League’s history. Forty players from 12 different countries filled out all four foreign spots on each roster, plus four additional guest and non-visa foreigners. Twenty-five American players featured this season, in addition to two players from each of Japan, Iceland, South Africa and England.

This reflects that the W-League is currently a league of choice. Around eight out of nine players surveyed intend to return to their W-League club next season, including 15 of the 17 foreign players who responded. Given that clubs continue to turn over just under half their squads each season, we see that the level of player movement occurring is driven much more by the club side than by players looking to move.

In addition, the players ranked the W-League as their second most preferred global league behind the NWSL, which was clear out in front. Again, these rankings were largely consistent for Australian players and foreign players. The PFA will continue to track this ranking in future seasons.

It is hard to identify which factors correlated with team success this season because so little separated the top seven or eight teams. However, Melbourne Victory stand out as keeping the second most stable squad despite finishing 7th in 2017/18, and using the equal fewest players, on their way to the Premiership.
Last season it appeared there was a trend towards improved career longevity, with playing opportunities shifting towards older players at the expense of younger ones. This season the pendulum swung back somewhat, with the number of players aged 17 or under at the start of the season who saw game time more than doubling to 32. The number of W-League players in their thirties decreased from 22 to 15 this season but the minutes they played actually increased slightly.

Some of this movement may be explained by injury rates rather than labour market trends. The injury section of this report reveals that there was a significant increase in injuries this season, which could explain why more Under 17 players were called upon.

The one consistent trend is that the largest segment, the 18-24-year-olds, is steadily losing its share of playing opportunities to both younger and older players. Older players have likely been able to prolong their careers due to gains made in the inaugural W-League CBA, which covered the past two seasons.

Note: Regular season only.
Premiers Melbourne Victory benefited from the most stable squad this season. They used the fewest players in the regular season and had nine players almost ever-present in the team.
The W-League remains behind other leagues for the playing opportunities it affords both the overall playing cohort and individual players. Currently the synergy between W-League and NWSL is serving some players well but long term we need a roadmap to create sustainable careers in the W-League solely.
LEAGUE ASSESSMENT
SNAPSHOT

Average atmosphere score in ‘minor’ stadia, compared with 2.52 in ‘major’ stadia

Average pitch rating in ‘major’ stadia, compared with 3.12 in ‘minor’ stadia

Points separating 2nd and 6th place

Matches broadcast or streamed live, for the first time

Out of 5

4.17

Out of 5

3.06

Combined attendance for Finals Series

18,997

Combined TV audience for the Grand Final

83,822
Competitive balance has continued to improve in the W-League as the clubs increase investment across the board. Western Sydney Wanderers were an outlier this season, but the race for the top four was closer than ever with two points separating second through sixth.

The fact that the team which came third last (Newcastle) won just two matches fewer than the Premiers (Victory) shows the need for a longer season to enhance the competition’s sporting integrity. Put simply, a larger sample of games need to be played to sort out the best from the rest.

This point is enhanced by the fact that once again, the Champions (Sydney FC) finished outside the top two in the regular season, the sixth time in seven W-League seasons this has occurred.

Matches are getting tighter as well. The average number of goals per game dropped to 3.2 this season, down from 3.4 last season and 3.5 the season before. While everyone loves goals, this trend represents a move towards the average goals per game seen in more developed women’s leagues and men’s leagues, probably reflecting increased fitness and professionalism in the W-League.
How satisfied are you with the broadcast of the W-League this season?

- NOT AT ALL SATISFIED: 8%
- SLIGHTLY SATISFIED: 52%
- VERY SATISFIED: 34%
- EXTREMELY SATISFIED: 6%

Highest Rating Matches (combined Fox and SBS)

1. 83,822
   Sydney FC v Perth Glory
   Grand Final (Saturday 4:30pm)

2. 43,876
   Melbourne Victory v Perth Glory
   Semi Final (Sunday 2:00pm)

3. 34,348
   Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory
   Round 4 (Sunday 2:30pm)

4. 33,147
   Brisbane Roar v Perth Glory
   Round 7 (Sunday 2:30pm)

5. 29,913
   Western Sydney v Melbourne City
   Round 9 (Tuesday 5:20pm) (January 1st)

How satisfied are you with the fixtureing of the W-League this season? (Stand-alone games, double headers, kick-off times)

- NOT AT ALL SATISFIED: 5%
- SLIGHTLY SATISFIED: 54%
- VERY SATISFIED: 40%
- EXTREMELY SATISFIED: 1%

This was the first season when every W-League match was broadcast or streamed live, through a combination of Fox Sports, SBS and the My Football Live app. The data shown does not include figures for My Football Live, or Kayo or Fox Sports digital, making the picture incomplete.

The growth and fragmentation of coverage makes it difficult to compare figures season-to-season, but this expansion should be celebrated in its own right. Fox Sports’ “Hersday” night initiative was positive, attracting an average of 11,462 viewers in a standalone, midweek timeslot.

Other reasons which make comparison difficult are independent of the W-League’s appeal. For example, matches leading into highly viewed A-League games rate disproportionately well. And, like the A-League, the W-League’s Fox Sports viewership is beholden to Foxtel’s ability to attract football-loving subscribers in the face of competition from Optus Sport (which has the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2019) and other OTT services.

The W-League was broadcast by ESPN+ in North America, BT Sport in Europe, Sky Sport in New Zealand, Pasifika TV in Pacific Islands and YouTube in all other territories.
As with broadcast, it is difficult to directly compare attendance figures season-on-season because of the influence of double headers and which clubs host them. This season the number of double headers was reduced from 24 to 14, largely due to the introduction of the Thursday night fixtures. The last time the league featured 14 double headers was 2015/16, so despite the slight drop off in actual attendees this season, it is fair to say that crowds have continued to grow in ‘real’ terms.
The PFA W-League Pitch Ratings are voted on by selected away team players at the end of each match. Players rate the pitch on four measures: pace, hardness, smoothness and overall quality. Pace and hardness are measured on a scale where the ideal or “goldilocks” score is in the middle, while smoothness and overall quality are simply scored out of five.

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<td>Dolphins Stadium</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lions Stadium</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>McKellar Park</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAMI Park</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>C8 Smith Reserve</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAMI Park</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Epping Stadium</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lakeside Stadium</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latrobe City Stadium</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald Jones Stadium</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>No.2 Sports Ground</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBF Park</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Dorrrien Gardens</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leichhardt Oval</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seymour Shaw</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cromer Park</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jubilee Stadium</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Win Stadium</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZ Stadium</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Marconi Stadium</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotless Stadium</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, the players’ post-match surveys highlighted the trade-off between playing in smaller suburban venues or in the A-League team’s larger stadium.

In smaller venues, crowds were packed in tighter and seated closer to the action. Players rated the atmosphere at smaller venues 3.06 out of 5 compared to 2.52 in the larger venues. The Melbourne clubs bucked this trend, with their AAMI Park double header matches generating better atmospheres than their suburban fixtures.

However, the players rated the overall quality of pitches in larger venues on average 4.17 out of 5, far higher than the 3.12 in smaller venues. This gap would have been even larger if we categorised some of Sydney FC’s grounds, the relatively established Leichhardt Oval, Jubilee Stadium and WIN Stadium, as major venues instead of minor ones. One venue, Epping Stadium in Melbourne’s far north, was highlighted by the players and the PFA during the season as a threat to player safety. It was rated with the slowest, softest, bumpiest and worst scores available on the survey.

As it stands, one aspect or another of the matchday experience is suffering depending on which venues are used.
The players indicated some increased satisfaction in the way W-League programs are integrated in their clubs – but there’s still a lot of room for improvement. The club-by-club breakdown shows that some have more work to do than others.

One club continued to stand apart as the best performer in this regard. Of the four players who were extremely satisfied with their club’s integration of its teams, three came from Newcastle Jets. Newcastle was similarly well-regarded last season.

This is an important measure of progress for players because gender equality does not only mean equal pay, but includes the way they are treated and respected in their environments. There exists a strong incentive for underperforming clubs to improve in this regard because player satisfaction can be greatly increased for free – only changing attitudes and behaviours.
This section identifies on-field trends for the 2018/19 W-League season by benchmarking the W-League against the NWSL and WSL using Opta data. For the first time, data from the previous seasons of all three leagues will be used to show the evolution of each. Data from finals are not included.

The overarching takeaway is that the W-League has become more like the other two leagues this season by almost all statistical measures. Given that the NWSL and WSL both feature older players and some of the world’s best talent, this convergence is likely a positive reflection of the quality and style of play in the W-League.

For example, the W-League featured 837 passes per match this season, up from 791 in 2017/18. The rapidly improving WSL jumped from 681 to 830, and the more mature NWSL rose from 815 to 863. All leagues are becoming faster paced and flowing. The fact that the leagues are more similar in style (at least statistically) also bodes well for Australian players looking to make the leap to the NWSL or the WSL, and vice versa.

All that said, the W-League continues to feature significantly more goals and shots per match than the other two leagues. This point of difference is shared by the A-League when compared to other men’s leagues.

In last year’s report, we wrote that “the W-League presents as having an entertaining style of play but with room to improve technically compared to the NWSL”. This evidence suggests the gap might have closed technically without compromising on entertainment.

As with last season, the WSL features two dominant teams which topped both the possession charts and the league table, whereas the W-League and NWSL were more balanced in terms of game style across teams, with the exception of Melbourne City, who kept the highest share of possession (64%) of teams from across all three leagues.
Goals per game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of goalless draws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring breakdown

- 0-15: 10%
- 16-30: 15%
- 31-HT: 20%
- HT-60: 25%
- 61-75: 30%
- 76-FT: 35%
CREATION

**Percentage of shots converted**

- **W-League:** 11.18%
- **NWSL:** 9.03%
- **WSL:** 11.50%

**Percentage of shots on target**

- **W-League:** 42.89%
- **NWSL:** 45.59%
- **WSL:** 50.19%

**Total shots per game**

- **W-League:** 28.81
- **NWSL:** 27.68
- **WSL:** 26.09

**Percentage of shots from outside the area**

- **W-League:** 43.06%
- **NWSL:** 38.64%
- **WSL:** 41.32%

**Percentage of shots from set pieces**

- **W-League:** 26.44%
- **NWSL:** 27.70%
- **WSL:** 25.32%

**Crosses per match**

- **W-League:** 25.98
- **NWSL:** 23.60
- **WSL:** 20.30

**Through balls per match**

- **W-League:** 0.74
- **NWSL:** 1.43
- **WSL:** 0.69

**Offsides per match**

- **W-League:** 4.50
- **NWSL:** 4.25
- **WSL:** 5.67

**Dribbles per match**

- **W-League:** 30.94
- **NWSL:** 35.79
- **WSL:** 27.54

**% of dribbles successful**

- **W-League:** 44.8%
- **NWSL:** 48.4%
- **WSL:** 45.7%
PASSING

Passes per match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>836.8</td>
<td>829.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>862.7</td>
<td>862.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>829.6</td>
<td>829.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of passes forward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>41.47%</td>
<td>40.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>40.70%</td>
<td>40.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>43.39%</td>
<td>43.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of passes in attacking half

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>50.70%</td>
<td>49.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>49.20%</td>
<td>49.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>48.75%</td>
<td>48.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of passes long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Current Season</th>
<th>Previous Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W-League</td>
<td>16.22%</td>
<td>15.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWSL</td>
<td>15.25%</td>
<td>15.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSL</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POSSESSION

Average possession for top 2 possession teams

- Melbourne City: 63.95%
- Brisbane Roar: 52.81%
- Utah Royals: 54.61%
- Portland Thorns: 53.20%
- Arsenal: 62.36%
- Manchester City: 61.31%

Average possession for top 2 performing teams

- Melbourne Victory: 47.66%
- Brisbane Roar: 52.81%
- Portland Thorns: 53.20%
- Nth Carolina Courage: 51.15%
- Arsenal: 62.36%
- Manchester City: 61.31%
DEFENDING

Fouls per match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W-League</th>
<th>NWSL</th>
<th>WSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>18.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interceptions per match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W-League</th>
<th>NWSL</th>
<th>WSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>25.13</td>
<td>22.33</td>
<td>32.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tackles per match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W-League</th>
<th>NWSL</th>
<th>WSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>38.43</td>
<td>35.57</td>
<td>39.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average referee ratings

This season, we added referee ratings to our post-match surveys. Selected players from the away team were asked to rate the referee’s overall performance, communication and protection of player safety out of five.

**COMMUNICATION**

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐  

**PLAYER SAFETY**  

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

**OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
There was a dramatic spike in the number and severity of injuries this season. For the past two seasons, there were 35 injuries throughout the season which caused players to miss matches, but this rose to 47 in 2018/19, a 34% increase. Those injuries caused players to miss 174 matches, up from 99 in 2017/18 and 130 in 2016/17.

These results are not easily explained. Some element of luck will always be involved. The PFA’s methodology has not changed, but as we rely on public sources of information, there is a possibility that a significant change in the level of reporting by clubs could impact these results.

There are factors which expose W-League players to greater risk of injury, such as heat exposure and playing and training on a wide variety of pitches, but to explain a change, we need to isolate factors which have changed since last season.

One such factor is the players’ feedback through the annual survey. In 2017/18, only 10% of players described the medical support provided by their club as “below expectations”. In 2018/19, this rose to 18%. However, the worst rated clubs were not necessarily the ones with the most injuries. And the club with the least satisfaction regarding this season’s training facilities, Melbourne Victory, led the way with just one match missed due to injury all season.

Looking at injury location, the increase was almost entirely driven by lower body joints and muscles, the exception being Hayley Raso’s serious back injury which contributed 11 matches missed. This rise in leg-based injuries was all the more stark given the notable decrease in injuries to wrists and arms. This is a concerning trend since lower body issues are more likely to be connected to controllable factors such as pitch quality, load management and medical treatment, while upper body issues are more likely to be accidental in nature.

The rewards of injury minimisation are clear: Victory’s aforementioned success in keeping its players fit and healthy translated to the most stable starting XI and the Premiership trophy. The PFA’s injury cost formula also puts a dollar figure to the benefit of fit players, or, conversely, the loss associated with games missed. Due to a combination of more injuries and higher paid players, the conservative cost of matches missed topped $300,000 for the first time, more than double the figure from last season. This is food for thought for clubs considering the cost-benefit analysis of increased investment in support staff or better facilities or conditions.
During the 2018/19 W-League season (excluding finals), the PFA collected and recorded the occurrence and location of all injuries causing players to miss matches.

The PFA Injury Report was formulated from publicly available information and private feedback, specifically through the following key sources:

- FFA weekly match previews
- Official W-League club match previews/reviews
- Official media releases
- Official websites
- Direct communication with W-League players

In this report, injury is defined as “any physical complaint sustained during a competitive game or training that resulted in a player being unable to take part in, at a minimum, the player’s next official W-League game.” Based on the data collected about injury occurrence and related games missed, descriptive analyses were conducted.

The accuracy of the PFA W-League Injury Report’s results and analysis is dependent upon the accuracy of the sources of information from which it is derived. Accordingly, the PFA does not warrant that the results are an exact and complete record of player injuries. They are, however, an accurate summation of the publicly available information provided by FFA and club sources. This report does not include injuries players received while playing for the Australian Women’s National Team.
2018/19 INJURY OVERVIEW

Total cost of injuries

$300,315

Total cost is calculated by dividing the total player payments at each club by 192 (16 players x 12 rounds) to find the average cost to that club of each match missed due to injury, then multiplying by the recorded number of matches missed.

2018/19 injury overview

- INJURIES: 47
- MATCHES MISSED: 173
- MATCHES MISSED PER INJURY: 3.68

CURRENT SEASON

- MATCHES MISSED: 33
- MATCHES MISSED PER INJURY: 2.83

PREVIOUS SEASON

- MATCHES MISSED: 99

Matches missed per club

- 8
- 23
- 21
- 30
- 1

- 24
- 18
- 27
- 21
### Location of Injuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Injuries</th>
<th>Matches Missed</th>
<th>Change from 2017/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concussion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamstring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>+28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calf</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankle</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achilles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>+36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT
Which best describes your overall perception of the PFA Player Development Program?

- EXCELLENT: 43%
- VERY GOOD: 45%
- GOOD: 12%
- POOR: 0%
- VERY POOR: 0%
IDENTITY & TRANSITION

The results of the past two W-League surveys show the importance of off-field development to prepare for transition. In both years, 41% of players held negative feelings towards life after football, and less than half of players feel better than slightly prepared for it. This challenge is compounded by the fact many players’ careers will end sooner than they anticipate.

The questions about personal identity were added to the W-League and A-League surveys for the past two seasons. It may surprise some that W-League players have reported that football forms a larger part of their personal identity than A-League players said it did.

This can be interpreted in numerous ways. On the one hand, it underscores how committed our female players are to their careers. On the other hand, it reflects the challenge all professional athletes face when those careers come to an end and personal fulfillment must be sought through other means.
Courage
World Class
Intelligence
Trust
Respect