

SSE AIRTRICITY WOMENS PREMIER DIVISION Matchday Programme 2024



CITY VIEW

Volume 3 Issue 3



CORK CITY

V SHAMROCK ROVERS
Saturday May 11th, 2024
TURNER'S CROSS, CORK
Kick Off 5pm



@CorkCityFCWomen



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FROM THE DUGOUT

Welcome to Collie O'Neill and the players, staff and supporters of Shamrock Rovers to Turners Cross this afternoon.

Like us, Rovers have up and down results, but they have tremendous quality right through the squad. People have been critical, but Collie is sticking to his principles in how he plays because he trusts the quality of player he has. I understand what he's saying because we've had that criticism too at times, we're a young squad but I look at our quality and know that if we stay together and work together, we have unbelievable potential in this squad, and we've already seen it pay off in games this season.

We just need to find a consistency. Our attendance last weekend for the Treaty United game was fantastic, in front of the TV cameras and I just want to thank all 803 supporters for the reception they gave the players, the staff and myself at full-time. Our heads were down, as we wanted a better performance and a better result, but we got such a lift from the reception.

We hope we can keep those crowds coming back because we have a group of girls who work so hard for the club and who deserve that support. I've no doubt you'll see that hard work and dedication on display again today, and we want a positive result for the fans.

Enjoy the game,
Danny Murphy



AROUND THE CLUB



Click on the image to the left to hear City boss Danny Murphy on this week's Finalwhistle.ie podcast

While the result didn't go our way last weekend, everyone at the club wants to thank the 803 supporters who made their way to the Cross for our Televised game last weekend. The noise you generated came across loud and proud on TG4. Thanks for the lift you gave the players after the game.



Click on the image to the left to see former City player Vanessa Ogbonna's Instagram video of last weekend's televised match from Turners Cross, you might see yourself in the crown. Vanessa does some great video content for the League!

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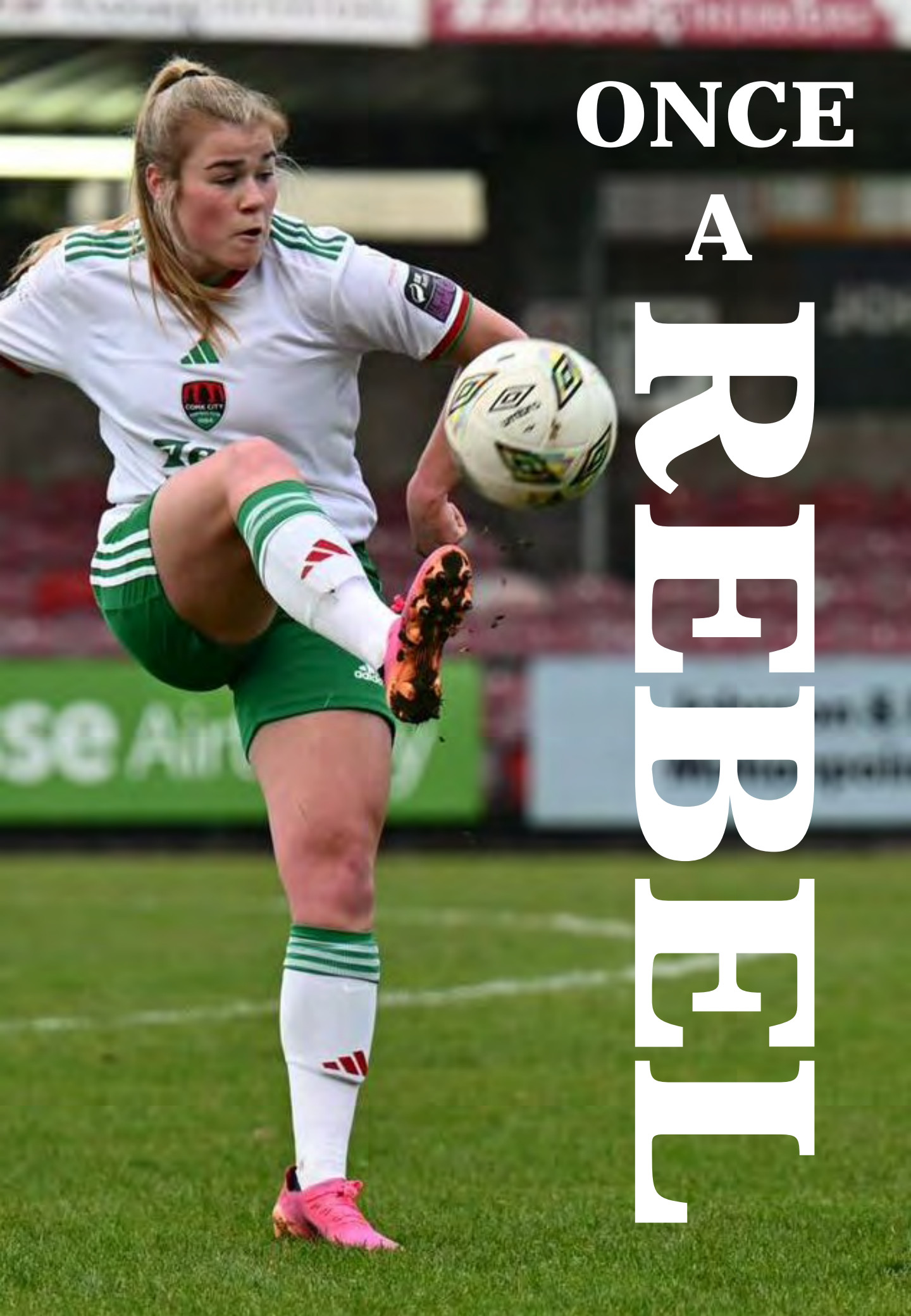


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ONCE

A

REBELL

When Orlaith O'Mahony was announced as a new signing at the start of the season, a ripple of excitement spread through City supporters. Attracting a player from Dublin, rather than losing one North, is a new experience.

City View sat down with the former Rovers player, ahead of facing her old club, and started with her first steps out of a “Gaelic mad house”.

“It was Gaelic first, at the age of four it was down to the pitch” Orlaith laughs, “I had a coach there when I was about none who was also a coach in the local girls’ soccer team in Newbridge and he rang my mam and asked me to come down, so I started going down there on Friday nights.”

“I just loved it and I've loved soccer ever since. I kept playing Gaelic but gave it up around three years ago. I played with Newbridge until I joined Shamrock Rovers.”

“I went down to the Gaynor Cup in UL with Kildare. For me, I was a bit nervous going in because it's the first time going away from home for a few days without your family, and as well you're not just representing your own club anymore, and it's a step up but I loved every second of it, and it gives you a taste of what that level is like, and I suppose I just wanted to keep playing at that level.”

Orlaith’s success at Gaynor led to her becoming part of the Leinster Interprovincial side and it was there



David Riberio

that Rovers spotted her. “I knew one of the girls that I played Gaelic with, her father was part of the coaching staff with Rovers, he was on the fitness side. I remember I played a game with Leinster against Rovers as preparation for the inter-pros.”

“We played their U17s, and I remember a couple of days after that they rang my dad and was asking would I like to come up. I said no initially because I wanted to play in the Gaynor Cup again,, but it got cancelled because of Covid so I joined then.”

“Rovers was great, it's a professional set-up and I have to give credit to them for how much I improved as a player there. I'll always be grateful for that it's such a help. I went straight into League of Ireland 17s at 14, I played three years 17s at Rovers, two years 19s and then one year senior.”

The first few games, I was a bag of nerves because it was so different.”

“At Newbridge you just rock up on matchday and you're playing and no real through goes into it, but Rovers was the first time I suppose where you think about what you have to do to prepare for a game, Saturdays and Sundays become that little bit more important and you have to be ready and prepared, it's a change when it happens, but I guess all the team were going through it at the same time, you take it in your stride.”



Around the same time Orlaith's International journey started, following an impressive Leinster win in the Inter-Pros. “After we won, I got called in for Irish U15 assessment. You're back into the deep end, it's another step up, but it was unbelievable.”

“I remember the first time playing for Ireland, I don't think I could ever describe that feeling. The bonds you form on those camps and in that set up are brilliant, you're away with them 10 or 12 days straight and you make great friends.”

The highlight so far in an Irish Jersey came when the second round Elite WU17 qualifiers was announced to take place in Tallaght Stadium. “It was fantastic, when we heard it was at home it was unreal. I mean, my whole school came out to one of them, it was some experience to play in front of those crowds.”

“Sometimes in the International games people can miss them because they're overseas and can be far for family to travel, but to have the Elite level qualifiers in Tallaght was unreal. The game that sticks out for me, where we were so unlucky, was that second game against Finland. We were shell-shocked.”

The move to Senior with Rovers last year was helped hugely by the players around her, with **Aine O'Gorman** coming in for huge praise. “It was brilliant, to play as a young player alongside those players and the advice and experience they can give you is unreal. When they're telling you things and giving advice, you just listen because they've been there 100 times before. For a first year in the league of Ireland, they were a huge help.”

"The first time Aine walked in to training I think we were all like 'where do we even look', but she's so lovely, she'd never make you feel below her, you're a team-mate and that's it and she'll help you every step of the way."

"But the league has a number of those players, one moment that stands out for me is one of my first senior games for Rovers, we played Peamount, and I remember making a pass that ran out over the end line. I was frustrated and said something underneath my breath. I was probably putting too much pressure on myself to make an impression and I remember **Karen Duggan** turned around to me and said, *"that was the right idea, you'll get it the next time"* and I just thought 'Wow, she's playing against me but she's still helping and giving advice', she knew I was young and just starting out and the league has those players and it's brilliant."

The move to City came at the right time, but with Orlaith in her Leaving Cert year, took thought. "I was thinking it was time for a move and then it's 'where to?', my dad was hinting Cork City all the time" she laughs, "we talked to Danny and that was great, but we had to talk to my school as well, with it being the Leaving Cert year, they had to be on board too, so it was a big decision, but I know it's the right one."

"I do take school quite seriously and I want to do well. I'd make sure I get my study in, it's so important because your football career won't be forever."

"That's why I get the train down, you can work while you're travelling, but really, it's only a few months left so I've a year and a half where I've worked hard all along. I want to go to and get a degree, I'd love to be a paramedic, that's the goal. Ultimately I'd love to play football, but first, get the degree and have that security. "

Orlaith doesn't hesitate is the move has been the right one. "Oh Yeah,, I've loved every minute of it. I suppose at the start, even though you've made the decision, there's nerves and you can doubt yourself, but definitely not, I'm, absolutely loving it."

"What a group we have too, and I think we're growing every week and what a group and a journey to be part of. I think there's a sense of belief in the group and the results have shown that when we perform, we're a match for anyone. Since Doro came in, I mean, what she brings is brilliant and again a player who has that bit of experience. I mean, being young, I can still get a bit lost and take off on mad adventures up the field, but she'll pull me back in" she laughs "Then we can let Eva do what she does best, she's creative and she comes up with some moments."

"It's hard when things aren't going your way, and as good as it's been for me and the new players coming in, I think it's even better for the girls who had such a tough season last year, to show we can challenge and get good results, be further up the table. It means a lot."



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LAUREN

BATTALION



It's been a positive start to the season for Craig Robinson's WU17 side who have recorded three wins in their last three games, so it was a good time to sit down with Captain Lauren Balaur, in her second season with City to talk about her journey, the bond in the team and her hopes for the season.

Lauren started her journey a little later than some of her City teammates which has made her progression even more impressive.

"Yeah, I suppose it was a bit late, I started off when I was ten, playing soccer. I was always playing with my cousins outside, so my mum signed me up for Kinsale."

"I was in goal when I first started playing but as I kept playing, I moved out the field and I just grew to love it really. I always played midfield after, I never really played anywhere else. When I was 12, just before Covid, I went to the City Academy in Bishopstown, and I went every Friday evening for a year. I had gotten called up to the Cork side around the same time, so it was great to get the extra training."

"We never really won anything with Kinsale" she smiles "but we came close a few times. I captained Kinsale for two years before I made the move to City."

Lauren trialled for City in 2023, but it didn't go as hoped initially, "When I started off, I went to the trials. I didn't get in at first, I heard one of



my friends had, and I was a bit upset and thought maybe next year but I got a call from Craig the next week and I was in and delighted."

"For a while I was so nervous, playing and training. I think we all were really, it's a big step-up. We weren't doing too well the first few matches, I came on as sub a few times, maybe 20 minutes or so, but we were a really young side, as we got into the season, we all settled down, became a lot more comfortable and started winning. I loved it, we won eleven games in a row at the end of the season."

One aspect of the game that took getting used to was the travel, but trips away with the group have become something to look forward to. "It's a good bonding experience, and you meet a lot of new friends through it too, I have friends from Ballincollig and Macroom now and it's a bit different."

At the start of 2024 and after a great season behind her, the coaches asked Lauren to captain the side this season. “I was really happy and surprised. I suppose there aren't too many girls who were on the team last season, so I had that experience, but I was just really happy to be asked to be captain.”

Part of the role is making new recruits settle in, it's a young team again so Lauren knows what they're facing but is a welcoming presence to many who she already knows. “It's a pretty new team, a lot of the team came out of the Cork Side and Gaynor Cup, and I know them from Cork's centre of Excellence as well, I think we've had a really good start to the season, but if we can just keep going and keep winning, we've got great potential.”

The fact that so many of the team are former Cork team-mates helps and brings back memories of the Gaynor Cup in Limerick. “I loved the Gaynor, we went to Limerick, we won the lowest category, but it was better to win a final. It was another really good bonding experience, and a lot of those girls are still friends and I'm seeing them some into the City team this season too. You meet people from different counties too and make friends with them.”

Lauren also plays with her school, Kinsale Community School and that offers a chance to continue playing purely for the fun of the game.

“Yeah, the school soccer team offers a change” she smiles, “you want to do well of course, but it's more about fun and getting out of a couple of classes. I enjoy it, it's easier and I get to play with all my school friends.”

It's been a positive start to the season, and given the slow start last year, Lauren ponders whether that gives the team more of an edge if they click as they did last season.

“Yeah definitely, I think we're even closer than we were at this stage last year as so many of us knew each other from Gaynor. We're all kind of the same age, we are a young squad still, but it helps that we all get along really well. We all want to do well and support each other.”

“I just want to work as hard as possible, and we want to finish as high as we can on the table. We all want to improve, individually and as a team and hopefully lift a trophy. I would love to keep playing with City and work my way up to senior, it's such a good opportunity.”

An off the field, study isn't forgotten. “I think I would like to maybe study something sports related in college too and keep sports going, but I've got plenty time to think about that.”

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GIRLS ACADEMY ROUNDUP

It's 3 wins from the last three games for Craig Robinson's WU17 side and the manager was especially pleased to come out of the Bank Holiday weekend with six points, having played CK United on Saturday and Kerry FC on Monday.

"Really pleased with last weekend and building on the excellent result against Cobh the weekend previously. With two games in the weekend, we had to manage the load and really make use of the squad and it worked well."

Both games followed a similar pattern, with City taking early leads, before the visitors equalised before half-time. In both games, City went up through the gears in the second half and Robinson felt deserved both victories. The challenge continues this weekend as the opponents are second placed Wexford, who currently lie on point ahead of City. "It's our first game with Wexford this season, the game in Bishopstown got called off just before kick-off. The girls are just keen to get started and show that we've moved on from last season."

Our Wu19 got back to winning ways last weekend with an impressive 7-2 victory over Treaty United, which moves them back into second place in the table. It's CK United at home this weekend and Manager Trish Fennelly-Hunt and her staff target



back-to-back wins together and at minimum maintain second place behind a Wexford FC team who have won all 8 of their league games.

"Obviously playing CK United this weekend at home, our first time playing them this season the way the fixtures went."

"We're coming off the back of a very good win, confidence is high and training has been really good, the girls are in good spirits, so we're just looking forward to taking it into the weekend."

"We're expecting a tough, physical opposition but we're just looking forward to getting out on the pitch and putting the few bits and pieces we've been working on into action. The girls have worked really hard and we're looking to get a result at the weekend."

GETTING TO KNOW CCFC's U19s & U17s



Name: Shauna Cashman

Team: WU19

Position: Goalkeeper

Previous Clubs: Midleton FC, Corkbeg AFC

Describe Yourself: Determined, Hard-working, Passionate

Favourite Player: Katie McCabe

Biggest Influence: My Dad

Favourite Sporting Memory: Winning a Munster soccer title with my school St Mary's High school for the first time

Favourite Food: Steak

Favourite Film/TV Show: Prison Break

Favourite Game: 8 Ball Pool

If you had a superpower, what would it be: To fly

Name: Eva Buckley

Team: WU17

Position: Left Wing

Previous Clubs: Carrigaline

Describe Yourself: Chatty, kind, Funny

Favourite Player: Katie McCabe

Biggest Influence: My Dad

Favourite Sporting Memory: Being the captain of the winning u15s league team.

Favourite Food: Mashed Potatoes

Favourite Film/TV Show: Brooklyn

99

Favourite Game: Monopoly

If you had a superpower, what would it be: Teleportation





The Rovers Return

Christine Allen

“There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about”

Oscar Wilde

“You’ve had a fair few draws, haven’t you?”

This question was put to me recently, as I searched for a free charging outlet in the press box at Tallaght Stadium. When reporting for a publication, you are expected to maintain a non-partisan stance – both in your pieces and as a live reporter at the games. Hearing the satisfying click of the three prongs, I pause before sitting back in my seat, bristling inside - keeping your emotions at bay becomes

increasingly difficult when you follow a side’s progress week in, week out.

Across 630 minutes and some change in this campaign, I’ve grown to see the players that make up Collie O’Neill’s Dublin 24 outfit as not just footballers, but humans, exerting themselves to the absolute max each weekend as they look to secure their first League win for not just their followers, but their friends and family. Lest I be accused of plucking a miniature green violin in an attempt to invoke sympathy across the Women’s League of Ireland for The Hoops (an impossible task), this is not a ‘woe is Rovers’ piece.

It's a reflection.
A reminder.

An attempt to frame their season with some much-needed perspective - if you will.

Granted, O'Neill's side have drawn five, won and lost one across all competitions - not the start the girls expected or wanted, yet Shamrock Rovers are far from teetering off a precipice in 2024.

The optics of their position (two from bottom, with four points collected across five League games) fails to account for both their dominant spells of possession and creativity shown in front of goal since March 9th, when the women in green and white opened their season with a gutsy away draw against Laura Heffernan's DLR Waves.

Nor does their standing reflect the individual stand out performances of players such a Mullingar native Jessica Hennessy, who, along with twenty-year-old Maria Reynolds (who has returned following a 15-month injury spell), have fought tooth and nail for every ball.

Yes, there have been mistakes, and at times, a lack of ruthlessness shown in front of goal, yet the Dublin 24 side have also been seriously lacking a rub of the green.

Cue the eyeroll.

No, seriously now, bare with this Dub for another few paragraphs...



In their most recent loss to the Greenogue Giants, The Hoops hit the crossbar in the opening three minutes with a spectacular effort from Greenhills native Joy Ralph - the March Player Of The Month proving to be a real livewire for O'Neills side this season.

Despite conceding two goals in the first half, Rovers would retain their belief and dominate the reigning Champions in the second. O'Neills eleven had a number of chances to convert and came agonisingly close – Academy talent Katie O'Reilly making an impressive impact down the right-hand channel in what was only her second outing for O'Neills senior side.

Following on from an exciting contest against Wexford at home, where goal minder Jayne Merren and her backline

hung on to deny Rovers their first win of the season, The Hoops faced a double header against Treaty United in late March.

Rovers travelled to Markets Field for their opening Avenir All Island Cup clash and were held to a 1-1 draw, O'Neills side welcoming the Garryowen women to Tallaght Stadium the following weekend - former Irish international Dominic Foley and his Canadian Cavalry, along with the in-form Katie Lawlee, proving difficult to dispatch. Ralph once again roved for Rovers, while skipper Aine O'Gorman covered every blade of grass in Dublin 24. Having pulled one back to level the contest at 2-2 in the 61st minute, the number 19 came agonisingly close to netting the three points in the dying embers of the match - her impressive link up with O'Leary, with whom she partners at international level for the Under 19s, leaving Ralph with a close range tap in at the front post.

Away to Shelbourne at Tolka on April 13th, Rovers beat The Reds to both first and second touches and were unlucky not to take home the three points when an unfortunate bounce of the ball denied marauding winger Lia O'Leary, who has been tearing up the left channel for The Hoops, as the game approached the full ninety.

On the 20th of April in their second Group D All Island Cup fixture, the gears finally clicked as the women in

Badana - both O'Leary and Ralph marking the scoresheet for the home side along with O'Gorman and Academy newcomer, fifteen-year-old Ella Kelly.

O'Neills side will have undoubtedly hoped to carry that momentum into their clash against fourth placed Peamount at Tallaght last Saturday, yet a disjointed twenty minutes for The Hoops in the first half saw the women in sky blue take advantage, Erin McLaughlin's brace breaking hearts in Dublin 24.

It may have felt a little like one step forward, two steps back for O'Neill, who looked visibly disappointed post final whistle.

Shamrock Rovers possess all the ingredients required to string together a blistering run of results, yet time is not on their side, with 1/4 of the SSE Women's Airtricity Premier Division fixtures completed.

O'Neill's squad will look to accelerate into the fast lane when they land in the Rebel County.

The blinkers are on.

Pride is at stake.

Underestimate Shamrock Rovers at your peril.

Wounded, they are at their most dangerous.

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7. Kiera SENA 



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8. Orlaith O'MAHONY 



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9. Christina DRING 



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