

## **Leading ladies look to future**

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Winsford Ladies are on the up - they are top and have won eight games in a row - but will they go up?

'I just don't know,' says manager Tony Lee, 'the women's game is being restructured, but no-one seems to know what will happen and when.'

This is frustrating for Winsford, who lead the Cheshire & Manchester League First Division by three points.

They have won nothing yet, of course, but they have the title well in their freeshooting sights.

But when then? In theory, they should join the North West League automatically, but the FA want to streamline the system into a system similar to the men's pyramid which, in theory provides a clear route to the top from the bottom for Winsford's other team, or Northwich Vics or Witton Albion for that matter.

Under the National Leagues are a series of Combinations and then the regionals, followed by the locals.

Winsford Ladies, who draw nearly all their players from Winsford and Northwich, have ambitions to match United, Vics or Albion and they have the team, they believe, to achieve just that.

Lee said: 'Ladies football is fragmented, there are so many different leagues and it is all under review.'

'We have already spoken to the North West Counties and they can't admit anyone until the system is sorted. It might be for next season, but no-one knows.'

'We have played North West teams in friendlies and beaten them. We have got a very strong team and girls who are capable of playing a few divisions higher.'

'Even five divisions higher we could compete.'

'Our aim has always been to keep the team together and progress as a team.'

'The average age of the team is 18 and instead of losing players to the likes of Everton and Tranmere we have the ultimate aim of reaching the National League and play the Arsenals and Fulhams of this world. Well, why not?

'We have three girls who will be good enough to play at the top level. They have had approaches from other clubs, but nobody is leaving and they don't want to. The team spirit is fabulous and there is tremendous pace in the side. 'We have added to the squad and have won eight in a row and our last away game was at Manchester City, a big club in women's football, and won 8-1. 'I don't kid myself, we have got some tough games to come, but at the moment we are looking unbeatable. They are good and are only going to get better.

'We gave ourselves 10 years to reach national level and we are only two years into that and we are actually two years ahead of schedule.'

Winsford Ladies play their games at the Barton Stadium and play in United's blue colours.

They started life as part of the Over Three junior club and branched out on their own in 1999.

As the first team developed so younger teams have formed beneath them: the U14s are top and the U16s second in their respective Cheshire League divisions.

Northwich-based 17-year-olds, skipper and centre back Emma Johnson and midfielder Danielle Lydiate, along with Tony Lee's daughter, Sarah, 16, leading scorer with 15 goals and a pupil at Liverpool's Centre of Excellence, are the trio tipped for bigger things.

They are joined on Sunday afternoons by goalkeeper Lucy Presland, defenders Jen Burgess, Rachel Cheshire, Katherine Hulme; midfielders Becky Hilditch, Sharon Tidd, Michaela Thompson and striker Kylie Kettle in the first choice line-up, with Carrie-Ann Bowyer, Lauren Wilkinson, Rebecca Pilkington and Lauren Renshaw vying for the remaining places.