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Transcript of an interview with
Tracey Wheeler

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TRACEY WHEELER TRANSCRIPT – GAME CHANGERS COLLECTION

INTRO [LUIZA]: *Welcome to GAME CHANGERS, a podcast about trailblazing West Australian women and their contribution to the wonderful game of soccer. This collection was produced and developed by the Centre for Stories and the State Library of Western Australia. Together, we are sharing stories that reflect our state's rich heritage, diversity and history.*

The interviews you're about to hear were recorded on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar, and we pay our respects to their elders, traditional custodians, and knowledge-keepers, who are the first storytellers of this place.

In the lead up to Perth hosting some of the games for one of the world's largest sporting tournaments, the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023, we hear stories from local women who rose up against inequality and stereotypes to champion the game of soccer as far back as the 1970s.

We hear from elite athletes past and present considered to be the best in the game, both locally and globally; and we hear from community role models who are courageously making soccer more accessible and equitable for future generations of women, young girls and newcomers of all genders to the game.

Sports media journalist Kris Marano sat down and heard why self-belief, sacrifice and strength is what it takes to become champions of soccer.

In today's episode, Kris talks to Tracey Wheeler, who represented WA first as a midfielder and later as a goalkeeper, making her international goalkeeping debut against New Zealand in 1989. She has played 55 international matches for Australia, including three games at the 2000 Olympics. Enjoy.

KRIS: So, Tracey, what was your childhood like growing up in Sydney?

TRACEY: I've got a slightly older sister and a younger brother, and we just all played a lot of sport. We lived in a quiet street, but with a lot of kids around about the same age as us, and we had a park across the road from us, so all the kids in the street would tend to congregate across there and play cricket or soccer or rugby league or, you know, ride our bikes and skateboards and everything. So, it was a very active childhood and very outdoorsy. And our parents encouraged us to play a lot of sports from a young age. And we did play a variety of things. We did little athletics as well as all of us playing soccer at some stage. And my sister played netball, my brother played cricket and yeah, we didn't spend a lot of time at home.

KRIS: Do you remember the first time you touched a soccer ball?

TRACEY: It was either across the road in the park with the kids in the street, or it might have been at primary school. We had a very multicultural primary school and so it wasn't all rugby league. There was

a lot of soccer being played there as well, so I was kicking the ball about a bit with the boys at school as well.

KRIS: Yeah, how old were you at that time when you started playing?

TRACEY: I started formally playing around about nine, I think I was, and so I was playing with the boys in our church team because there wasn't any girls junior teams at that stage. And I do remember my first match playing with the boys and it was because I kicked the ball quite hard and it hit one of the opposition boys in the stomach and winded him and you know, the opposition probably weren't, didn't even realize that I was a girl anyway. And a lot of the boys had long hair and you know, they probably didn't really know that it was a girl playing anyway. And at that age you know, the girls can compete with the boys when you are young, we are physically similar. I started playing with the girls in under-fourteens and I was way ahead of most of the girls when we started playing then, because I'd been playing with the boys. Some of the girls were, had reasonably equal skill to me, but I was just physically stronger and quicker, 'cause I was just used to playing, you know, a higher level with the boys at that age. So yeah, so I noticed that as soon as I started playing with the girls that it was, you know, I was already ahead of just about all of them.

With the boys I played as a defender. So, I was a wide, a wide defender. I think with the boys often the best players were the forwards. So, you know, if you weren't the best player then you ended up getting pushed backwards a little bit. With the girls, as soon as I started playing I was playing in the midfield for quite a few years with the girls and yeah, that's, I suppose where you have the most impact if you're a good player.

KRIS: Midfield is hard 'cause it's so, it's so much running. Yeah. Lots of endurance. Yeah, lots of skill required.

TRACEY: Yeah, I was doing little athletics then as well and I was, and cross country and everything and so I was pretty fit. Yeah. It wasn't hard. When I was about 18 or 19, I was playing state league with the women, so that was the top women's league in Sydney at the time. And I was a central defender and I'd played in goals a little bit when a goalkeeper got injured or something during the match, I'd be the one they'd throw in goals to, you know, finish off the match. And anyway the first league game of the season, our goalkeeper injured a knee and I had to go in goals for the rest of the match and she was then out, gonna be out, for the rest of the season. So, our coach, who was also an ex-keeper himself, he said to me, look, if I give you a little bit of coaching, will you play in goals for us for the rest of the season? And I thought, oh, I suppose it's only one year and it's a new challenge, I'll give it a go. So, I did.

I think 'cause he had seen me playing goals before when needed. So, he knew that I could play in goals and that game that I had to play in goals when our keeper got injured, was against the team that we were expecting was probably gonna win the league anyway. And I think they only beat us one nil or something. So, I had a pretty, I had a good game and he could see that with a little bit of coaching I could, I could do better. I mean, by the end of that season, some of the girls were saying, oh, you are, you know, you are good enough to be in the Australian team as a keeper and everything. And so you know, once most people see that you're a good goalkeeper, they don't like to let you back on the field again. They want to keep you in goals because good goalkeepers were few and far between and they

didn't wanna, you know, let go of me. So I stayed in goals and then it was about a year later that I ended up getting selected in the Australian team.

KRIS: Yeah, that's fast.

TRACEY: So that was pretty quick. I enjoyed playing in goals, but I also missed playing on the field because, you know, I like to run around and I was always enjoying playing on the field and I didn't really wanna let go of that either. So, my coach allowed me to play half a game for the reserves quite often. So, I played half a game for the reserves and then I'd play in goals on the field and then I'd play in goals for the first team.

KRIS: And when you think back to that time, like making the Australian team, like what do you think it was that made you a good goalkeeper that you could play at that level?

TRACEY: I think my height for one is always an advantage to be, you know, a little bit more than the average height as a keeper and not short, but also I was reasonably athletic because, you know, I'd been a field player and I'd done little athletics, I was, you know, good at high jump, long jump, things like that. So, I was reasonably athletic and I just, I had good goalkeeping instincts in that I, you know, it was just a reaction for me to dive for things and things like that. So I had sort of the good basics to be a good goalkeeper. I just needed some good coaching. There were not necessarily goalkeepers, but there was definitely some other girls, older girls that were playing in New South Wales in the state team and things like that, that I did look up to and, you know, wanted to be as good as them.

KRIS: So, you started playing with the Matildas in the late '80s and then went on to the FIFA Women's World Cup? I think it was in, was it '91?

TRACEY: We didn't qualify for the '91 World Cup. We missed out and New Zealand qualified ahead of us Okay. And went to that World Cup, so we missed out on that one. But we qualified for the '95 World Cup. So that was the first one that I went to.

KRIS: What was it like, you know, being part of the World Cup and playing with the Matildas at that time? Because how old would you have been?

TRACEY: Mid-twenties I suppose. It was exciting and I mean, it was basically the pinnacle of our sport. So, you know, it was, we were very fortunate to have the opportunity to play and because we hadn't qualified for the World Cup in '91, I think we appreciated it even more because we had missed out already a lot of us. And we really appreciated the fact that we did, we did get to that tournament, and as a goalkeeper you don't always get to play because you could be the number two keeper. So I was very, I was fortunate that I got to play in all the matches as well.

I mean, it was a good environment. We had a good team. A lot of us had been in the team for, you know, quite a few years. So, we knew each other quite well. But by the same token, because we were from all parts of Australia and didn't actually get a lot of time together before tournaments and everything, often our biggest training block and time spent together was in the two or three weeks prior to the tournament when we actually left Australia. And went you know, went overseas to train and play a few matches before the tournament and everything. So that was, that was when we got to familiarize

ourselves with each other again. And yeah. It's certainly very different to what it is now. And it did improve a lot over that over the years, but back then there we didn't get to see each other a lot.

No, we did, we really got along well. And yeah, like I said, a lot of us... And even though I, there was from Perth, there was only me and one other girl from Perth in the teams and she'd been my teammate at club level and at state level and everything. So, I knew her quite well. But also a lot of the girls, there was a lot of girls from New South Wales and quite a few of them I'd grown up playing with as well. So there was quite a few girls that I'd known over quite a long period of time. But there's always a broad range of age groups in as well that, you know, there's always girls that are in their early thirties and girls that are in their late teens and everything. So, you know, the age groups tended to sort of stick together a little bit, but by the same token, I think we all, you know, had a really good relationship with each other.

KRIS: You talked a little bit about, you know, as women in football and women in sport, feeling a bit invisible at that time. Can you tell me a little bit more about what that felt like?

TRACEY: Definitely sort of early nineties to mid-nineties especially, there was... You know, we were going to World Cups or going to World Cup qualifiers and things like that. But really a lot of people, people here in Perth, the girls that, you know, we were playing soccer against here in Perth and everything, they didn't know about any of that. We'd have a national championships once a year and they'd sort of see who got selected in the national team after that. And, and then it was pretty much forgotten until the next year, as far as they were concerned. So, a lot of people didn't really know what was happening. I mean, my family and friends here in Perth knew that we were going to the World Cup, and quite a lot of them went and watched as well and had a nice little trip out of it and everything. But outside of that, there wasn't much promotion at all. So, you know, watch your TV, you wouldn't see anything, read the newspaper, you wouldn't see anything. I think SBS might have televised some of it, but not much. So that was about it. So, you know, to some extent we really were a bit invisible at that time.

I think with the men's, if you're talking about soccer, I'm pretty sure they had, bits about their national soccer league was on television. Whenever something was happening with the Socceroos, you'd hear about it and everything. And so, you know, even if they were playing a friendly match or something, everybody would know about it. So, in that way that was, yeah, it was, there wasn't any equality there then. Which was really disappointing and frustrating at the time, but looking back on it, you sort of see the scrutiny on a lot of the athletes these days and, you know, every bit of their behavior is scrutinized and looked at and criticized, and anything they say on social media and everything gets picked up on. So from that point of view, at least we, we didn't feel like our lives were invaded at all, but yeah. But a little more attention would've been good, would've been good for us and our efforts, and it would've also been good for growth of the sport.

KRIS: How did it feel for you at least to have your friends and family in the stands watching?

TRACEY: I mean, for the one in Sweden, my mother and father, they did a, they, I think they went to the UK first and did a trip there and my sister met up with them over there as well to watch a World Cup, and I think they went up to Norway and Sweden or something and everything after that. I'm sure they were very proud and they, they didn't, you know, they were always there watching when we were younger and supporting us and everything, but they were never really vocal supporters. They weren't the parents on the sideline, you know, yelling out or anything. And, you know, they didn't come from a

soccer background at all themselves, so they didn't have coaching tips or anything like that. They were just very supportive of all of us kids with our sport. I think sometimes it's really nice to, you know, leave all the coaching to the coaches and just get total support and positivity from your parents.

KRIS: During that time, any particular memories or that you're really proud of or any goals you saved moments kind of at the World Cup or the Olympics that stand out to you?

TRACEY: I do recall at the Olympics, I made a one-on-one save that kept us in a match against Sweden that we drew. She got through the defense and she only had me to beat. Yeah, one of our defenders had, had made a bit of a mistake and lost the ball and so she, yeah. She was pretty grateful that I'd saved that one as well.

I find standing on the sideline as a coach or a spectator, I get so much more nervous than what I was playing. I think the nerves are there before the game starts and you know, the right at the beginning of the game, but once the game gets going, you know, you just, you're lost in the game and you're not really getting nervous. And it's just, all of your training kicks in and you know that that's your reaction is to, to do things as, you know, you've done a million times at training and everything.

KRIS: Anything particularly challenging at that time? I think we talked a little bit about kind of work life balance or what it was like for women...

TRACEY: So probably the most challenging time was after I'd come back from my second knee reconstruction. And basically, during the time that I was away from the squad, they had a new coach. And prior to that, I'd been the number one keeper, all of the time that I'd been in the national team. Although there was, you know, definitely other keepers that were challenging for my position, I'd still been seen as the number one all of that time. Anyway, I came back into the squad after my knee reconstruction and there was a new coach, and he didn't see me as the number one keeper. He saw me as his number two or three keeper. And it was challenging then because I didn't feel like I was getting much of an opportunity to convince him otherwise. And I think he was, he was pretty much, he wasn't really open to me being his number one keeper at all. And just given the amount of time that we had to spend away from home with you know, very long training camps and everything at that time, it was challenging for me because it was basically costing me a lot of money to be there through, you know, loss of wages and, and everything. And I was, you know, questioning whether it was worth what it was costing me still to be there.

I mean, I had the support. There was quite a few players in the squad around about the same age as me as well, so I was, I think I was close to the oldest in the squad at that time anyway, but there was a few girls the same, a similar age to me, and they supported me. They sort of, you know, they could see that I was, you know, possibly not being treated as fairly as I should have been. But they were also, some of them were also in the same sort of situation in that they felt that they were being pushed out a little bit as all the younger players were getting encouraged and everything as well. So, you know, it wasn't the only one that was doing it a bit tough then, but we just, we just all kept persevering and, you know, expected that our our chances would come if we just kept working at it.

And the thing is, I mean, at this stage, this was leading up to the '99 World Cup. And so basically quite a few of us had, were planning on, you know, being there for the '99 World Cup and the 2000 Olympics, and probably not after that anyway, so we sort of, you know, realized that we were only probably gonna

be in the squad for a couple more years at the most anyway. So, you know, it was probably worth it for us to just keep on going if it meant, you know, getting to the '99 World Cup and the Olympics. So that's what we were persevering with that and just, you know, working as hard as we could. And as it was, you know, I went to the '99 World Cup, played one match, which was more than what I expected to play.

We didn't do that well, and the coach basically got sacked straight after that. His number, his assistant coach got given the job and his assistant coach said to me, you're my number one keeper, you know, how much time can you dedicate to the team for the, you know, the next 12 months leading up to the Olympics? So, I mean, basically that for me then to get to play at the Olympics, that was hugely rewarding because of how much I'd had to put into it and, you know, it was a much bigger effort than, you know, what it would've been if I'd been the, the number one keeper the whole time.

So, yeah. But also with the Olympics. I mean, that's just a totally different event. You know, we'd been to the '99 World Cup, which, which was even bigger than the '95. The, you know, the US have supported and promoted women's soccer, you know, so well up to that point that, you know, the event was, you know, much bigger than what it had been before. But the Olympics then was an even *bigger* event because you've just got all these other sports competing and, you know, you're in the Olympic Village with all of these other, you know, legendary Australian athletes from different sports and, you know, you're kicking a ball around with, you know, tennis players, Lleyton Hewitt, Pat Rafter, players, people like that. And, you know, there's all of these, you know, famous Australian athletes, you know, right around you the whole time. Yeah, yeah. It's just a totally different event and a once in a lifetime experience.

KRIS: Now that we're looking ahead to the Women's World Cup, coming to Perth and across Australia, New Zealand in a couple of months, how does this moment feel for you in terms of like creating even more change for the women's game?

TRACEY: Well, first of all, it's still hard to believe that we're hosting a World Cup. I mean, if you'd asked me 20 years ago even, it's like, oh, I wouldn't have expected that we do it. I wouldn't have thought that the demand in Australia and the support in Australia would've been big enough to do it at that stage. So, it's, you know, it's unbelievable that we're even hosting it. And it looks like the ticket sales so far have been very good, which is fantastic as well. Cause we really need to, you know, if we're gonna host it, we really need to support it properly as well. And here in Perth we're having five matches. I'll just be excited to have it here in Perth. I mean, it won't be any of the Matildas matches so that it won't be any, it won't be a team that I've sort of invested in at all that I'll be watching, so I'll just be enjoying the fact that you don't have to travel overseas to see such a big event. Hopefully I'll be proud of the Perth public for getting out and filling a stadium. Yeah, I really hope that I sort of feel proud of our nation and proud of our city for supporting the event.

But what I'd most like to see come out of us hosting the World Cup is I'd like to see, like I said, a lot of spectators turning up to all of the matches, but I want people to not just want to participate in the sport. I want people to be supporting the sport. I want this to promote the sport. So, I want people to go there and watch it and get that match day experience and then want to go back and watch more matches. Especially something like the A-league matches and everything, because that's something that hasn't taken off enough in Australia yet, is supporting your local teams.

KRIS: Like going out to Perth Glory games.

TRACEY: Exactly. I mean, it's the, what was W-League, A-League has been going for about 15 years now, and I don't think our crowds have gotten any bigger, and it's probably the same people that have been going for the last 15 years. And if you think about the amount of women and girls that play here in Perth, the amount of women and girls that have played here in Perth, because there's a lot of us as well that, you know, were playing 20, 30 years ago, that still should be supporting this sport. You think of all of those people, and you know, we're only getting a thousand or something to watch these matches. It's like, that's just, it's just not right. People should be getting along and watching matches. And if you can just get people there to watch one match, then they'll enjoy it enough that they want to go and watch more.

I watch the men's EPL matches as well 'cause I'm a Liverpool supporter, but I get totally frustrated at the amount of flopping that goes on, acting and everything, and it's like, it's just so embarrassing. But you don't see that in the women's games as much. You might see it a little bit, it might be creeping in a little bit now, but I think that watching the game against, the Matildas game against Scotland recently, that was a really good ad for the sport because the referee let a lot of it go. She allowed it to be a physical match and, you know, didn't call fouls for a lot of little things. And it just showed that the women want to play a physical sport fairly, but without all of this rolling around and everything that's going on and spoiling the men's side of it. So, and that's the thing, I think if people get down and start watching more of these matches, then they'll realize that it's a really good quality game, but without all of the stuff that's spoiling the men's game.

KRIS: It's true, isn't it? Well, I think of like someone like Ali Carpenter, it's like you get down and then she's right back up.

TRACEY: And Haley Rasso, I mean, yeah, all you gotta do is watch her play. She goes in so hard, but it's fair. And then, you know, they just bounce straight back up again. And I mean, that, that's like what it was when we were younger playing as well. So that's what it should be at the elite level as well. It should be, you know, people still playing an honest game.

KRIS: Yeah. I was chatting with someone the other day who kind of likened it to the Freo Dockers and that... What they were saying is that there's been a lot of money invested in advertising as well. Like the Dockers, like you see it everywhere, wherever you're walking or watching things online, but they'd love to see women's football in Perth and Australia get to that point of, you know, your brother, your dad, your friend, whoever's going down on the weekend to watch, because people just wanna be part of it and they're passionate about it.

TRACEY: Be part of the atmosphere and everything. That's why I'm disappointed with the A-league having less, or not having any, women's games on free-to-air this year, because that's when you capture people that aren't watching the sport. They turn on and they just happen to be on that station and the game's on. So, they'll watch it for five or 10 minutes and then they might think, oh, I'll watch the rest of that, or I'll watch that another time. But yeah, if you're relying on people that are already, you know subscribing to Paramount and streaming it, well, you know, that's the audience you've already got. You want to get a different audience as well.

KRIS: And I think what you were saying too about your childhood and growing up in a very multicultural area, I think that's something else kind of within Perth as well, is like, how do we reach everyone in

Perth? How do we make it visible that the Women's World Cup is coming or that these different games are being played?

TRACEY: Well, that's the thing in, in Sydney when I was growing up, the sport that you'd see on TV the whole time would be the rugby league. And, you know, if, if I didn't go to a primary school where there were migrant kids that wanted to play soccer, then, you know, all the kids would be playing rugby league. And it was only because, you know, I was at a school where we had a lot of, you know, Greek and Italian and Lebanese kids and everything, that wanted to play soccer, that, you know, that we started doing that. I think the games are gonna be televised on Channel 7, so I think that's helpful 'cause they will promote it. Usually they don't promote anything to do with women's soccer or soccer in general really. But because they're showing the games, I'm sure they're gonna have to promote it a lot. So, you're gonna hear a lot, you'll see some ads on Channel 7 and you'll see a lot through their news and everything. So they will that way. I expect that through the city and everything, there should be some banners and stuff up. That's what they usually have at World Cups in their cities. So, I expect that will be the case here as well.

KRIS: How long did you end up playing with the Matildas and what year did you retire and then move into coaching?

TRACEY: I finished up with the Matildas after the Sydney 2000 Olympics. And I played for another year in which I went back to playing on the field a fair bit. Yeah, so... And then I injured my other knee and decided that that was a good time to stop playing. So, I stopped playing in 2002 and I'd already done a little bit of coaching, like coaching sort of the state schoolgirl's keepers and coached a bit of the underage, the Junior Girls Keepers, state team keepers and things like that. Then when Perth Glory started, I was the goalkeeper coach for them the first year. And then a couple of years after that, or a year or so after, I think I started coaching the goalkeepers at Beckenham Angels, which was in the top tier of the women's soccer here in Perth at that time. So, I coached there for eight years and then when the NPL started four seasons ago, I started at Murdoch Melville.

KRIS: So, what did you take from your time goalkeeping with the Matildas that you brought into your coaching? Like any lessons learned or anything you wanted to impart on with the girls that you were coaching?

TRACEY: Mostly I sort of felt that, especially when I first started coaching, there wasn't a lot of coaching available here for the goalkeepers in Perth, especially the, you know, the female goalkeepers. So, I sort of felt that it was important for me to pass on as much as I could because I'd had the benefit of some very good coaches while I was with the Matildas. So I thought if I can just pass on as much as I can to these girls, and you know, give them a bit of help. I was always aimed at coaching at the highest level with goalkeepers. But I soon sort of found that coaching at club level that you are, you know, if you're coaching a number of keepers, they're just at such varying levels and such varying sort of ambitions as to where they want to get with, that you've gotta sort of really be adaptable and coach people appropriately to what they're wanting to get out of it as well. You know, basically at the end of the day, make sure that they're enjoying themselves and you know, that they're enjoying being part of the club that they're at and that they're going to, you know, continue to play.

We do a lot a lot of skill stuff, a lot of sort of situational training, 'cause a lot of goalkeeping is decision making and although we do a lot of work on skills and everything at training, at the end of the day when you get to the game, a lot of it is decision making and, you know, the coach truly can't help you a lot

with that. You can only sort of discuss things later on and see if there are ways that you could do things differently or better and that sort of thing. But also, just supporting the keepers and, you know, making sure that they can get over their mistakes quickly and not dwell on errors and, you know, not be affected by their mistakes too much.

I think at the end of the day you've gotta sort of be the right personality to come into goalkeeping to start off with. I think if you're somebody that's not going to deal with the fact that your errors could result, well probably will result, in goals and, you know, and then that can affect the result of the game. If you can't deal with that, then you probably shouldn't be goalkeeping anyway. And so most people sort of self-select themselves into the position anyway. They know that they can deal with that before they start goalkeeping. And there are definitely some players that will never goal keep because they, they're just terrified of the whole idea of goalkeeping.

If you've gotta keep a coach there, they know they've got somebody there that understands what they're going through, because the head coach doesn't understand, and if you've ever, you know, sat on the bench as a reserve keeper or something, then you'll often be appalled at some of the things that the head coach says because they just don't understand. They've just never played in goals themselves and they just don't, you know, really understand the decision making sometimes and everything. So, it can be a bit of an eye opener sitting on the bench if you haven't before and listening to what some of the things that the coaches say. And that's the thing, most of the time the keepers, you know, if that's been the case and, and the keeper hasn't been able to make a save, then it's not so much a big deal. But it's more if a keeper lets in a soft goal or something or makes the wrong decision that that results in a goal or something, then you know, the keepers usually know if it's really down to them and they'll put their hand up. But I mean, it doesn't take away the result, does it? Yeah. They've just gotta deal with the result and, you know, hope their teammates can go and score some goals and help them out a bit.

KRIS: Do you have any advice for younger girls who are thinking about goalkeeping? Even women coming into the game a bit later?

TRACEY: Well, for the young ones particularly, and this is what they tend to do at junior age groups anyway, a lot of the time they don't have a specialist keeper in the team. A lot of the time it's a couple of different players that are rotating through the position. And I think it is a good idea to, at a young age, spend some time playing on the field as well, make sure you've got your, you know, good ball skills and, and you know, reading the play from a different position and everything as well. So, I think that's a really good idea. For the older players coming into it, I don't think that's such a bad idea because sometimes it is a point where people don't want to run around as much or they might have problems with ankles or knees or something, and they can't run around as much. But at the end of the day as an older athlete, you just often don't want, really want to dive too much either.

KRIS: You told me when we were talking, probably a couple weeks ago, that the game kind of lives on for you too because you're still in touch with a lot of the women that you played with and the friendship that you have. Can you tell us a bit about kind of how that lives on for you?

TRACEY: Mostly the group here that I still keep in touch with that are a similar age group to me are the ones that I first started playing with when we first came to Perth. So, they're our club and state teammates from way back then and we catch up regularly and, you know, have a chat and see how each other's going and everything. And so that's sort of one group. And then the Matildas that I played with, and you know, social media being as it is, it's made it so much easier to keep in contact with all of them

now as well. And they're in different places. I traveled to Adelaide last year with my mother to visit a couple of relatives and while I was there I caught up with, I think there was about four Matildas that I played with. So we caught up then with them. Going to, with the World Cup, I'm going to Brisbane and Melbourne and Sydney, so I'll catch up with a whole load of people then as well. Went to the last World Cup as a spectator in France and caught up with an old teammate there that lives in Norway and one from the UK and one from Italy.

KRIS: What does it mean to you to be a woman today?

TRACEY: Feels like we've just got so much more recognition and support and promotion and I don't feel like we are a bit below the males in everything sport-wise as we used to be. And especially, you know, you look at the Matildas and their profile is higher than the Socceroos now. They're, you know, they would probably get more to a match now than the Socceroos would to support them. And yeah, it's definitely an easier time. You don't need your, don't feel like you need to have to work hard to get everything that you feel like you deserve.

Just how far our sport has come since, you know, when I first started playing for the national team, for the Matildas, it's how far it's come with the elite players now, you know, getting paid well and you know, it's their full-time job. Where we never could have dreamt that that would be the case. It was, you know, it was us paying to play basically. And you know, playing against, in front of, you know, very small crowds and things like that. It is amazing how far it's come. Who knows how much further it will go. Maybe the women will start getting paid huge amounts to play. Like the men are, I mean, the men get, some of them get paid obscene amounts to play. I don't think that's absolutely necessary, but yeah, the major, some of the high-level women are getting paid very well now and, and you know, hopefully some stage soon all of the women at, you know, at club level in Europe and UK and that will get paid very well. I don't know that any of them have to work anymore, but they're getting paid enough, enough to play full-time. But not getting paid like what Sam Kerr's getting paid. So for more of them to get paid well so that they so that when they leave the sport for whatever reason, whether it be, you know, injury or just, you know, aging out of it sort of thing that they, you know, they have something to show you know, if they get getting into their thirties and they've actually, you know, earned a reasonable amount during their playing career and, and not just got by the whole time.

OUTRO: *Thank you for listening. This podcast was produced by the Centre for Stories. It was developed in conjunction with and funded by the State Library of Western Australia. Our organisations believe in storytelling as a way to build more inclusive communities. Head to slwa.wa.gov.au to listen to the rest of this oral history collection, or to centreforstories.com to learn more about our storytelling services and mission. Special thanks to our production team, script editor and executive producer Luisa Mitchell – that's me – producer and interviewer Kris Marano, and audio engineer Mason Vellios. Thank you.*