

St Augustine's Centre, Halifax
English for Life in the UK

Season 3 - Episode 6 - Football Interviews
March 2022

Mark

Hello and welcome to the podcast "English for Life in the UK". This podcast is for those people who want to improve their English and, at the same time, learn more about life in this country.

My name is Mark and I'm one of the volunteers from the St [Saint] Augustine's Centre in Halifax, Yorkshire, where we provide support, in particular, to asylum seekers, and refugees - people who are fleeing war, conflict and persecution, from all parts of the world, including, increasingly these days, from Ukraine.

In this podcast season, we are interviewing a number of people to talk about their interests and experiences. Today, one of our team - Christine - has interviewed two teenage girls and an older man, about football.

One of the two girls has quite a soft voice - she is quietly spoken - and you may find that you have to turn the volume up a little on your device when you're listening to this.

These two girls also speak with a very modern style, often used by young people, and we pick this up in the "**Language Support**" section, at the end of this episode. We produce a transcript of all of our episodes, which includes notes about some of the vocabulary and phrases used in this particular episode. That transcript will be available in a few days' time, on our website, where you can also find out more about our work and if you're in a position to do so, and would like to, to make a donation to help us.

Information about all of that is available at the end of this episode. For now - over to Christine.

(Music) (2 minutes:27 seconds)

Christine

Well today I've got with me, two girls who live on the same street as me - who've been playing football for quite a while. Would you like to introduce yourselves, please?

Keir

Hi, my name is Keir - I'm 16 years old and I've been playing football since I was 5 years old and it's an ongoing passion of mine.

Millie

I'm Millie - I'm 15 years old and I've been playing football since I was 7.

Christine

Would you like .. would you tell me a bit how you first started playing football and what it was like to begin with?

Keir

Yes - so I started playing football when I was 5. I actually, previously, did ballet but I changed to doing football because I wanted to kind of **get stuck in there**¹ and play on a team. I always loved football. I think it was **just, like, playing on a team and just the beauty of being able to, like, pass to other people** but also have your own turn at, like maybe, having a shot and what it feels like to have that victory, **when you do like score a goal**. It's quite addicting [addictive] so that's why I've carried on doing it.

Christine

Lovely - what about you², Millie?

Millie

Erm - I mean I asked a number of people, advertising it. I thought I'd give it a go - and then, ever since then it's just been like a big part of my life³ - **do you know what I mean?** Because when [if] I don't [didn't] do football I wouldn't know what to do with myself.

Christine

Right.

Millie

Like it's just something that's always ... **do you know what I mean** - it's always part of our week.

Christine

What would you say are the best bits about playing football?

Millie

Working as a team, really.

Keir

Yeah [Yes] - the team aspect of it - like, it's more ... It's also very social cos [because] you get in that minibus and you're on the way to a match - it's it's a lot of fun and when you're on the pitch, it's quite nice just having your friends, like, on a team, just being able to communicate with each other and take it seriously - and then, at the end, you hopefully get a result that you can celebrate.

Christine

What positions do you play?

Millie

I've always been up front, but I quite like being in defence - I mean, I really can play anywhere, I'm not bothered⁴.

Keir

¹ get stuck in - approach something with real enthusiasm to get something done (eg a task or a job), or to take part with energy.

² What about you? - A way to invite someone into the conversation, here, but also might be used to say: "What have you got to add?", "What do you want?", "What do you think?"

³ Big part of my life - takes up a lot of her time and attention

⁴ not bothered - it is not a difficulty for me, I can deal with this easily

Yeah, I play in mid-field normally, but she does put me in defence quite a lot as well, **but I like the running aspect of football as well**, and being able to get the ball past people and then pass it up to up front⁵. So - yeah - I prefer to play mid-field, but you can be put anywhere, really.

Christine

So what happens on a match day? Can you tell us **what it's like on a match day**?

What's a typical match day like?

Keir

I mean, for me, it's ... I go to college anyway and then I've got a match, anyway, so - you know, I do have to prepare for it myself, in the day. Because, obviously I'm in lessons, and then I've got the match coming up - it's quite, like, exciting and a bit nerve-wracking actually. Because obviously, you want to win for your college but on a match day, like we'll get in the minivan [minibus] because the match can be anywhere - in like, in England, loads of different places - and then we like go into the locker rooms and ... obviously, get dressed⁶ and then that's where everything happens like and the motivation builds up and like we get excited - and then we go and play the match and it's - they do make it, like, quite a big thing - they make it seem, **like**, you know, it is the end of the world, if you lose - but actually, it's not.

(6:12)

Christine

Now, when I was young - I wasn't allowed to play football. It was only boys who played football. Was it ever difficult for you or - I mean, you're 16 - has it ever been a problem for you or was it just?

Millie

I mean - it's never been a problem - obviously, a lot of people do say stuff, as a joke - like "girls can't play football" and stuff, but then again, it's a joke, at the end of the day - you don't take it seriously.

Keir

Yeah - I feel like I've never really encountered any problems with being a female playing football. Like, it's, I guess, like you know - it's just it is what it is - everyone can kind of do what they want. But Millie's right - some people will make jokes and say 'you can't play football', especially when I was younger - people would say that - but I would just kind of brush it off⁷ - and think well "OK then" - like, I'm not bothered.

Christine

And have you always played on a girls' team? Or have you played on a mixed team?

Millie

Always a girls' team.

Keir

⁵ pass it up to up front - pass it to the players on the team who are further up the pitch ready to attack the opponents' goal area

⁶ dressed - change clothes and get into sports kit, for the match

⁷ brush it off - not let it trouble you, it doesn't stay with you, forget about it.

I've played on a mixed team before but *I was like the only girl*, I think. And it was fine - it gave me experience, obviously of playing with different genders, but, yeah, now, I do play on female teams.

Christine

What was the difference?

Keir

I guess with the boys, you could say it was a little bit more rough, as in the slide tackling⁸ and a little bit more energetic, but like with the girls: they like to shoulder barge a bit more, so they like to ... kind of - I don't know - they won't go in for a massive slide tackle, and like risk you know, that massive thing but with girls it can be just as rough, in the way, like, you can proper shoulder barge each other.

Christine

So - do you follow football teams? Do you follow a team at all?

Keir

No - I'm not bothered with the football.

Millie

No, I'm not. I mean - I watch matches but, at the end of the day, I don't really support any team.

Keir

It's something I want to be actively involved in rather than watch.

Football players get paid a lot of money, like, they can get millions and it just - for me, that kind of puts me off⁹ - cos [because] it's like I'm watching people on the TV play football and they're earning millions which, I feel, it's a bit unfair because like, you're playing a sport and you're getting loads of money for it. That's just you know, my opinion, and I like to play it because I don't get paid to play it. I like to play it, cos of the sport. But you know, these people get paid - which, it's fair enough, but it's just not for me, really.

Christine

OK. So anything else you'd like to say about football? About you and football?

Keir

I think it's a really good team sport and I like it more than other sports, because I feel like it incorporates everything - so, in terms of like mid-field - you can run, strikers- you can shoot, - you can pass, whereas I feel with other sports like you can only have a few of those elements - - you can maybe, like, for example: netball - you can pass but you have to stand still. For me - I don't like that aspect. That's why I prefer football.

Christine

What about you, Millie? Do you play other sports?

Millie

I play netball and hockey which I think is really good, because when you learn something from another sport, you can see it in a different sport.

Christine

⁸ slide tackling - might also be called "sliding tackle" - an attempt to get the ball from an opponent leading feet first, with the body low to the ground.

⁹ puts me off - I don't like it, it is an unwelcome aspect of the situation,

What have you picked up from hockey that you can use in football?

Millie

I think it's more - not as in like the physical side of it, but in the mental side of it - is more that you get carried on [over] - working as a team and like being able to communicate with people, and figuring out the game and like read [reading] it¹⁰. But probably not the physical side, because they're quite different sports, aren't they?

Christine

Football's great because you can play it anywhere.

Keir

Yes - you can ... obviously, you can be by yourself and you can still practise on your skills. When I was younger, especially, I just used to go outside the house and just do "keepy uppies" - you know, kicking the ball in the air, because you can work on the skills, anywhere.

Christine

Well thank you very much - that's been really interesting.

(Music) (10:45)

Christine

Jamie, thank you very much for coming to talk to us, today. Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about yourself.

Jamie

Yeah [Yes] of course, no problem, Christine.

So, yeah - I'm Jamie - I live in Todmorden with my wife and my daughter who's 4 years old. I've lived in Calderdale on and off most of my life. I've played football since a very early age and it's always been one of my loves. And actually, if you'd have spoke[n] to me as a child I'd have told you: all I wanted to be was a professional footballer.

Christine

Oh really?

Jamie

Yeah - actually if I still had the option, to be one now, I would.

Christine

So tell me - what is it you like about football?

Jamie

I think what I like about football is: it's a sport where skill is very important, so if you watch the game of football if you lined up 22 footballers at the beginning of a game, it's very difficult to work out who the best footballer is, just by looking at them. Whereas - in a game of rugby, you could probably work out who plays where and if they're going to be good, based on what they look like¹¹. Something similar for basketball -quite a lot of sports . I mean, I think I've always liked ... there's a skill element and there's a cleverness element to football. I've always really enjoyed learning the skills, so when I was a child, I would go out and kick a ball around by myself

¹⁰ reading the game - working out the tactics of the other team, seeing where strengths and weaknesses are and what players on the other side are anticipating

¹¹ in the sport of rugby you often have the larger and taller players in one position, whilst the smaller quicker players in another.

for quite a long time, and I never really got bored, because there was always a new skill to try and learn or practise - or see how many kick-ups you could do.

I've always liked playing as part of a team. A lot of my friends, that I'm still friends with now, I played junior football with. I've always liked that it helps ... it means that you've always got something to talk about with a lot of people - not everyone - but a lot of people are into football, so it does give you that common ground. I've loved it from an early age and still do.

Christine

What kind of football do you play now, Jamie?

Jamie

So, I'm 37 now, I play in a vets league - a veteran league which is [for people] over-35s [years old]. I play for a team called "Hebden Royd Red Star". We play every Monday night and it's only a 50 minute game - so 25 minutes each way - rather than a 90-minute game.

Christine

So, Jamie - as well as playing football, I believe that you follow a professional football team. Who do you follow?

Jamie

Yeah - I follow Everton Football Club which is one of the teams in Liverpool - one of the two main teams. So you have Liverpool and Everton, which means a big rivalry. They're in the Premier League.

(14:04)

Christine

Do you ever go to see Everton or do you just watch them on the tele [television] ?

Jamie

Neither, actually - it's very expensive to go, so it's probably £30 to £50 for a ticket and obviously they're in Liverpool and it takes up a lot of time and you've got to get over there, so it's not a cheap thing to do. And even watching them on TV is difficult because nowadays football is mainly on paid-for channels - such as Sky or BT Sport - so I don't watch them, that much and actually, I don't watch much football.

I still like football and when there's a major tournament on, I always like to watch that. By [referring to] "a major tournament", I mean the World Cup, or the European Championship. And that's when you do get a lot of live games on terrestrial TV - so BBC or ITV - so I really enjoy those tournaments - slacking it¹², a little bit of time when I get to indulge, watching some football. Now and again, I go to see Halifax. Our local team 'cos [because] a friend of mine has a season ticket - and even that's £20 [each match] - considering you're watching a team that aren't even in the top four divisions - is quite expensive, but it's nice to see my friend and always good to watch a bit of football.

Christine

What's special about watching it in person?

Jamie

Erm ...there's ... well it's an atmosphere, so there's an experience, which is nice - when you're really involved in a game that you're live at, and you are getting carried away with the crowds. There's quite a great feeling of ... when you get to an exciting moment and everyone's off [on]

¹² slacking it - allowing yourself to take it easy, not to work or be busy.

their feet and the same when everyone's commiserating - when something goes bad - so you get that combined experience, which is quite nice and exciting. So that's a big part of it.

There are negatives, I must admit. There are negatives to going to watch live football. I often find that, especially as I get older, fans are very fickle¹³. Erm ... so they, they break ... their judgement's very clouded¹⁴. I've also experienced racism at football games, which is always upsetting. Not recently - but I have seen that - and homophobia as well, quite a lot of homophobic chants and just quite often, some nasty language and anger - I've seen violence at football games, as well, so it definitely has some negative parts to it, which puts me off, now and again. But, on the whole, most people are really nice and it is a good day out. I'm always interested in catching a game when I can and if I can afford it.

(17:17)

Christine

Well, Jamie - thank you very much indeed, for giving us some time and telling us about your love of football.

Jamie

No problem.

Christine

Before we finish - is there anything you'd like to add?

Jamie

It's given me a lot of joy in my life. It's definitely helped me in lots of ways; so, if ever I've been to, or moved to, a new area or moved to a new job - it's given me an avenue for meeting people. So most jobs *have, like, an organised five-a-side game*¹⁵, that if you can get involved in, it means you get to know a few people. It's helped me in social situations, so if you ... if I've been to a party and I don't know people, I can normally find someone to talk to about football. It's been a real pleasure throughout my life.

Christine

Well thanks very much indeed, Jamie.

Jamie

No problem.

(Music) (18:31)

Language Support

Mark

This is the part of the podcast where we choose some words or phrases from the episode and talk about them. Today, I want to focus on a style of speech used, particularly, by the two young girls, in this interview.

¹³ fickle - their support may change too easily

¹⁴ judgement's clouded - they are not seeing things clearly because of the emotion and excitement of the game

¹⁵ five-a-side - there is normally 11 players in a football team, but smaller organisations using much smaller pitches or gyms for inside play, have teams of five playing against each other.

Now all languages have words and phrases that don't necessarily have a specific meaning in their own right, but are used either as "fillers" or to introduce or to emphasise or highlight certain things, within that particular sentence.

I'm going to start with how one of the girls, in particular, used the word "**like**". Now, she did use it in the more traditional sense of meaning a verb, to say something that you enjoy doing - so she said "**I like the running aspect of football**" - so she was saying: she enjoyed the fact that football meant she could run around, so she "liked", in that sense.

There is another traditional use of the word "**like**" when you are using it as a comparison. So you might say "she looks like her mother" so that is making the comparison, using the word "like" to compare things. And in a similar way to that, Christine actually used it, in one of her questions - when she said "**what's a typical match day like?** How would you describe the match day?" - how could you compare it with other things?

But the girl Keir, in particular, used it in a different and more modern way - for example, she said - when she was asked what she enjoyed about football - she said "**the beauty of being able to, like, pass to other people**" and then later on, she said: "**when you do, like, score a goal**" - and then later, "**I was like the only girl**" - now, in these cases that word "like" is not either of those traditional meanings of the word. So, she was using "like" here: to signal, to highlight it, emphasise something that she was about to say - something that, in some cases, that was an example of something or an important point that she wanted to make, so she wanted to emphasise the fact that she was the only girl in that team - she wanted to highlight passing to other people as one of the beauties of football - so **the beauty of being able to like pass to other people**. You will notice that this girl in particular uses this language style a lot.

Now some people are quite critical about this style of language - they would say it's rather lazy, and that it gets over-used and doesn't really have any purpose. However, we would say that this is more an example of how language changes over time and between generations, but also how there is a more informal, everyday style of language, that might be different from the traditional and formal style of language.

There is another example of a different phrase in this case, that was used - this was by the other girl, Millie - where she was saying football has been a big part of my life - "**d'y'know-what-I-mean?**" And if we spell that out, she was saying "do you know what I mean?".

So she was checking out that the person listening understood what she was saying there, but in fact, the way she said it - is that she blurred together, she linked together, all of those separate words, so it almost sounded like a single word - "**d'y'knowwhatImean?**". The other girl also said "you know" at one point, to check out whether or not something had got understood. And in fact, it is not just young people who are using this word "**like**" in that way, and that is illustrated in our conversation with Jamie, where he said "**most jobs have, like an organised five-a-side team**" so he was using the word "like" in the same way that the young girls were.

Music (24:10)

That's it for this week. I hope that's been helpful. Again, just to stress that the transcript will be available in a few days' time, on our website, where you can also find information about our organisation, what we do, how you can donate, or support in other ways, our work - which is increasingly important, these days.

The transcript and all this information can be found on our website - which is :

www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk

Thank you very much for listening. We'll be back with another episode very soon. Meanwhile, take care of yourself and keep practising your English.

Music (Ends) (25:17)