

Interview with Stephanie Skilton and Jessie Mathews

This week New Zealand U17 Women's Coach Dave Edmondson announced his final squad for the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup that will take place in Trinidad & Tobago in September this year. The squad, known as the "Young Football Ferns" shot to prominence in 2008 when the inaugural FIFA U17 Women's World Cup was held here in New Zealand. The team secured New Zealand's first win at a Women's FIFA event - against Colombia in Wellington. Since then the new generation of Young Football Ferns have been working hard to continue that good work. Jessie Mathews and Stephanie Skilton are two girls from Three Kings who will be representing our club at this U17 World Cup.

Stephanie is a wide player or striker, whose pace makes her an exciting player to watch and a danger to any opposition team. She'll be looking to get on the end of a few attacks in Trinidad and Tobago.

Jessie is a work horse in central midfield whose job is to win the ball and distribute it to her attackers in the team. She plays the link role between defense and attack which is becoming more important in the modern game.

Our girls were interviewed upon the squad announcement last week.

Girls how does it feel to get picked for the NZ U17 World Cup Team?

Jessie: Amazing! I wasn't sure of my chances so I was really overwhelmed

Steph: It feels like a dream come true, I am honoured to be able to have the chance and experience to represent my country in the sport I love in a world cup! It is an amazing feeling.

How did you find out and who was the first person you told?

Steph: I received a phone call from Dave Edmondson. I was with my Three Kings team mates in Wellington for the semi final of the National Women's Knockout Cup so they were the first to know.

Jessie: I found out at the airport in front of the Three Kings team. Dave called Steph and me and told us we made it. I rang my mum almost straight away but my brother answered so I told him and he passed on the news to my family. I got home and when I walked in the lights went on and my family had blown up balloons and was popping streamers and party poppers everywhere. It was so cool.

Did you watch the U17 World Cup in NZ in 2008 and if so did it inspire you or motivate you to be part of this year's team?

Steph: Yes I watched most of the games in 2008, and seeing the girls play made my dream become even bigger and I was very inspired

Jessie: I went to the games in Auckland. I was really impressed with the standard of play and thought that I'd like to one day be a part of that so yeah it did motivate and inspire me especially seeing as I knew players in the team.

What are your ambitions going into this world cup?

Jessie: Quite simply our team wants to win games and I want to be as much a part of that as I can.

Steph: My ambitions are to make the starting eleven. Also to contribute to our team in a positive, and inspiring way that results in games being won, and scoring goals!!!

What do you think about your group and the team's chances?

Jessie: I think our group is pretty hard. Spain is the European champion, Japan are always a very tough side and we don't know much about Venezuela. I think our team will be competitive as we have all trained really hard for a long time and are very determined to get a good result.

Steph: I think we have a good chance to win games. We are in a reasonably tough group, but I believe we have every chance to win games.

I'm sure everyone that witnessed the U17 World Cup in New Zealand back in 2008 would have been surprised by the standard of football, no doubt this tournament will be producing that kind of attacking and entertaining football. Everyone should get behind the Young Football Ferns during this tournament in Trinidad & Tobago, they are the stars of the future and some may go onto become household names in years to come, with football being on such a buzz this year make sure the whole club and football family gets behind the team.

Book these U17 Women's World Cup dates into your diaries.

Warm up Matches

August 28th New Zealand v Korea Republic (Miami, USA)

August 31st New Zealand v Republic of Ireland (Miami, USA)

FIFA U17 Women's World Cup – Group C

September 6th New Zealand v Venezuela (Couva, Trinidad)

September 9th New Zealand v Spain (Couva, Trinidad)

September 13th New Zealand v Japan (Scarborough, Tobago)