

CONTRACTS & AGENTS

INTRODUCTION

In **#PLAYER INSIGHTS 1** we discussed how Managers build their squads and how to best position yourself as a Player in order to help you understand where you best fit in terms of status.

In **#PLAYER INSIGHTS 2** we outlined how you can best present yourself and construct a concise and compelling profile in order to enhance your chances of being seen and subsequently signed.

We now move on to discuss contracts and agents. As with all good business relationships, success will often depend on the commitment to the process. Establishing how you want to work together with an agent, and what your ambitions are will provide the best basis for your success.

CONTRACTS

It is important to understand what player contract documents mean for you - before you agree and sign them. A standard employment contract is provided for professional and semi-professional women footballers playing full- or part-time. This puts the commitments of clubs and players on record and is legally-binding.

Typically, it will include the term or duration of your contract (its start and end-dates); the pay on offer to you (by week or month) and any benefits (like accommodation provided). There are also the usual employment contract clauses explaining commitments you and your club have agreed to, such as treating the agreement as confidential; as well as club-related activities, like club marketing you agree to support.

Often the level of pay is the most important factor for a player, but sometimes other conditions are equally vital to get right. For example, the inclusion by a club of an option clause to extend a contract by a further term is considered by some players as a good protection for the future; but others might see it as somewhat restrictive and ask for more favourable terms before agreeing.

As the women's game becomes more professional, clauses can be added to the employment contract such as goal bonuses or clean sheet bonuses. And elite player contracts may include transfer-related conditions like release clauses or sell-on fees.

THE ROLE OF AGENTS

Agents are also called intermediaries, and they act on your behalf, representing you and your interests. One of the key jobs agents do is to check the details of the employment contract to make sure it meets your expectations. They may also help to identifying your options to join or stay at a club.

Signing up with an agent can be very useful for players to ensure that contracts and any other legal paperwork is done correctly - and of course to negotiate the best deal possible!

An agent usually brings a great deal of experience in the women's game to help a player make a decision to join or stay at a club, setting out options available and drawing on their knowledge of the marketplace and their network of contacts among managers and club officials. This is a huge resource for players - but in the end it is the player who must decide.

CHOOSING AN AGENT

As with any relationship, whether business or personal, personality will play a major part in how things are handled and managed. It is a major factor in considering if you should use an agent. Make sure you meet with any potential agent and assess if they are the right one for you - ideally you will want an agent who is focused on client gain! The meeting will help you judge.

Beyond that, you will need to assess the level of engagement and networking undertaken by an agent, which will affect the pace of any negotiation on your behalf. Agents as need to juggle several variables and bring them all together in a timely manner to close a deal.

And of course, an agent that can draw on experience in the women's game will be well-placed to evaluate options and manage player value for any potential contract offers. They will do this through having good, thorough knowledge of the marketplace.

As discussed in the first insight piece, making sure there is a good fit between player and club is essential, and this is the same for a player and their agent.

WORKING WITH AN AGENT

If you decide to appoint an agent, it is important to discuss your priorities with them early on, and agree what you can expect the best terms of any offer to be - before an agent presents you to a club. These need to be realistic but also ambitious.

You also need to work with your agent at the pace of the recruiting process, so that negotiations can be done in a timely manner. In some circumstances players may receive interest from other clubs, in which case this should form part of the negotiation.

A good agent will also encourage you to check that you are happy with all aspects of playing for a club which will affect your performance or wellbeing.

SUMMARY

Players in professional and semi-professional leagues should understand the commitments they make to a club, and the club makes to them. These commitments are set out in contracts which should reflect player and club expectations.

Experienced agents can be very helpful ensuring the best contract terms are achieved and recorded, as well as identifying player options to join or stay at a club.