



From a GOAT and two Matildas stars to one of the best ever signings: Our WSL Team of the Season

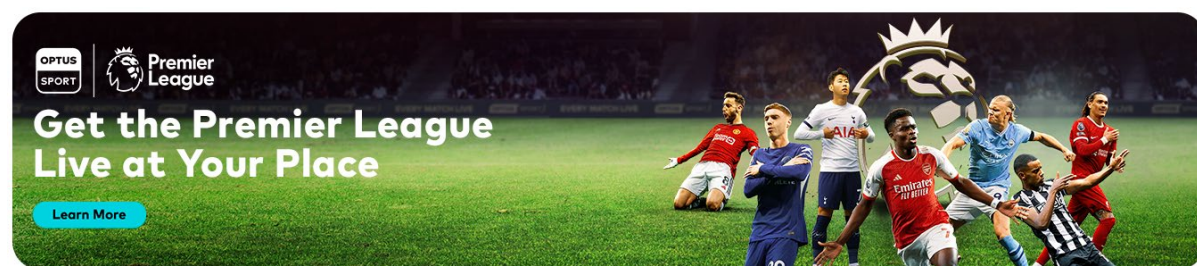
Another season has come to a close and there was no shortage of players who stepped up.

By Kristy Williams
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The 2024/25 WSL season has wrapped up and that means it's time to start assembling the Team of the Season.

From goalkeepers and defenders that were key to clean sheets, to midfielders and forwards that helped put the ball into the back of the net - there was no shortage of stars that shined consistently in the competition.

Here is Optus Sport's WSL Team of the Season...



Goalkeeper: Phallon Tullis-Joyce (Manchester United)

- *22 matches*
- *Equal-first for clean sheets (13)*
- *First for save percentage (83.1%)*
- *Second in goals conceded (16)*

United didn't even consider chasing another shot-stopper when Mary Earps left on a free transfer at the end of last season, such was their confidence in Tullis-Joyce - and that has well and truly proven to be the correct call.

The American has been simply sensational in between the sticks this season, making save after save with breathtaking and acrobatic athleticism.

She isn't asked by manager Marc Skinner to distribute with her feet, but she doesn't need to in order to be the leader, and presence, her side - which was the best defence in the league until the final day - needs.

Perhaps the best way to highlight just how incredibly the Golden Glove winner has been is her post-shot expected goals and goals allowed (PsxG-GA) tally, which is easily the league's best - +6.8. Essentially that means, based on the quality of shots she faced, that she stopped seven goals that statistically should've gone in given the quality of them.

EURO 2022 champion Nikita Parris, who played with Tullis-Joyce until her move to Brighton this season, couldn't speak any more highly of her former teammate.

"She was one of the best teammates. She was always be available (for shooting sessions). She'd never say no whether she was absolutely tired, freezing cold or soaking wet, she would still stay outside for that extra hour to keep on working," Parris said on [Sky Sports](#) recently.

"This girl was saving left, right and centre. We would be like 'you're an octopus!'. There's nowhere we could find that she was not getting to."

Honourable mention: Hannah Hampton (Chelsea)

Daphne van Domselaar's shot-stopping, lack of errors and work with the ball at her feet with a slightly worse defence was at a higher level, but the Chelsea No. 1 gets the nod for consistency across the whole season given the former missed a few games (which were sorely noticed by Gunners fans).

Cemented and entrusted with the starting role permanently (aided by Zecira Musovic's midseason pregnancy announcement) by Sonia Bompastor, Hampton had a couple of nervy moments, but the way she plays out from the back is vital to Chelsea's tactical style.

Fourth in the league among all players for progressive pass distance and third for save percentage.

Right-back: Lucy Bronze (Chelsea)

- *19 matches (16 starts)*
- *Two goals, three assists*
- *Second for interceptions (42)*
- *Fourth for crosses into penalty area (11)*
- *Seventh for passes into final third (100) and progressive passes (114)*

That Bronze is still the league's best right-back at the age of 33 after all the horror knee issues she's dealt with since her senior career began an incredible 18 years ago is a testament to her resilience and relentless competitiveness. We're talking about a player whose middle name is literally Tough.

So while she isn't, quite rightly, playing at the standard of her peak when she was winning titles with Lyon and Barcelona and being named The Best player in the world by FIFA, she has still proven to be a key cog in Chelsea's attack and defence.

On one side of the ball, she is one of league's best at getting the ball into the penalty area with precision, and importantly 8th in the WSL for shot-creating actions. On the other side,, she is second in the league for interceptions, showing that while she doesn't still have her blistering speed, her vision is still second to none. The occasional defensive lapse doesn't cancel that out.

Speaking on [*The Women's Football Wrap*](#) on Optus Sport, former Matilda Ash Sykes said it was Bronze's mentality that set her apart.

"She's such a competitor which I love because she is always up for the fight," the A-League Women's legend said.

Honourable mention: Emily Fox (Arsenal)

That Fox didn't isn't the first choice is a testament to both her understated and underrated reliability, and the continued excellence of Bronze, despite the EURO champion being somewhat past her best.

The USWNT star has been unstoppable for the Gunners, and the most reliable member of the backline when it comes to containing opposition attacks; all while rampaging down the right wing with relentless athleticism and brilliant dribbling ability. 10th in the league when it comes to goal-creating actions and eighth for progressive carries.

Centre-back: Millie Bright (Chelsea)

- *21 matches*
- *Two assists*
- *First for percentage of dribblers tackled (82%),*
- *Second for total touches (1749)*

- *Third for aerals won (49)*

Bright lifted the WSL trophy for the sixth consecutive season, writing another chapter for a book filled with success and stoic leadership.

Last season, she missed a huge chunk of time with a knee injury and never really got going, but as soon as the 2024/25 season was underway it was clear the 31-year-old hadn't lost her spark.

In fact under Sonia Bompastor's more patient, possession-based style, in contrast with Emma Hayes' up-tempo and direct gameplan, Bright has thrived, being involved more in build-up play. That's reflected in her passing and touches statistics, but as per usual, it is still her effectively functioning as a brick wall in defence that has been of most importance to Chelsea.

Third in the league for aerals won (probably only not first because why would you target her?) and first for dribblers tackled, Bright is also the single most important player in the entire league to their side, with her presence on the field contributing to +43 in goals scored and conceded.

Lionesses legend Fara Williams even went so far in March to say Bright was the best player in WSL history.

"If you think how she's led Chelsea and the responsibilities than come with that; she's a no-nonsense defender, every weekend she turns up the same way. She doesn't try to be something she's not," Williams said on her [Boots, Balls and Bras](#) podcast.

"I think sometimes players like that get massively overlooked because they aren't as easy on the eye but I think in terms of what she's achieved at Chelsea, she's the WSL GOAT."

Honourable mention: Leah Williamson (Arsenal)

The Lionesses captain is back to her EURO-winning best after her awful ACL injury. It has been a stunning individual season by Williamson, whose stature in the game has almost towered over how brilliant she's been in the league.

The only reason she wasn't the first centre-back chosen is the fact there's been a few games where Arsenal have been taken apart down the left side, and Williamson couldn't pick up all the pieces.

The lifelong Gunner led the league in progressive passes and carries, but the crucial goal-saving blocks and interceptions we. The precision long-ball passing both through and over all three oppositions lines is back, and it's going to be brilliant to watch at UEFA Women's EURO 2025.

Centre-back: Maya Le Tissier (Manchester United)

- *22 matches*
- *Three goals, one assist*
- *Second for progressive pass distance (11699 metres)*
- *Third for progressive carry distance (3073 metres)*
- *Fourth for passes into final third (133)*

Maya Le Tissier hasn't missed a single minute in the WSL since December 2022. She's played every single minute of the last two seasons - something not even a goalkeeper has done. And she's still only 23, and captaining one of the biggest clubs in the world.

In many ways it's the intangibles that makes her season stand out. Entrusted with the leadership by Skinner, she has been a tower of strength from the back in season that has seen so much noise surrounding the way co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe has treated the women's side. She's never wavered, and is probably one of the most physical players the league has seen for some time.

Nominated for the WSL's Player of the League award, the United captain has been pivotal with her long passing game, providing the foundation for the club's movement with the ball. She's been the steady constant for the backline, and with her vital interceptions and blocks been a clear in the face of so much outside noise.

"We're so together, honestly – I feel like we're unbreakable at times," Le Tissier said after winning the FA Cup semi-final.

Honourable mention: Nathalie Bjorn (Chelsea)

Chelsea broke the transfer record for the women's game to sign USA centre-back Naomi Girma, but as it turned out, they didn't need her in the slightest. The Swede has been brilliant alongside Bright this season, a steady presence in the passing game and able to keep pace with opposition forwards better than her partner.

She's too good to be spending chunks of the season on the bench so it will be interesting to see how Bompastor incorporates Girma, given Bjorn was one of the best players this year.

Left-back: Katie McCabe (Arsenal)

- *20 matches*
- *One goal, five assists*
- *First for chances created (51) and total crosses (125)*
- *Second for shot-creating actions (94), passes into penalty area (45), successful through balls (5) and crosses into penalty area (13)*
- *Third for goal-creating actions (12) and progressive passes (141)*

McCabe's reputation as a very (sometimes too much) physical player in some people's minds often glosses over just how special she is down the left wing - the Irishwoman is truly one of the best players in the world.

Aside from one or two games where she had very uncharacteristic poor performances leading to opposition goals, McCabe has had what is quite probably the best season of her storied career.

A huge part of that has been fellow left-footer Steph Catley being moved to centre-back to cover for McCabe's many forays forward, which has given Arsenal a more solid base and allowed her to throw her considerable talents more often at opposition defences.

McCabe has created the most chances in the league, and is now learning to hold back better on pulling with trigger with long-range strikes; bringing her teammates into the contest more. Her partnership with Foord in front of her has also gone to another level, with the pair both equal-third in the league for goal-creating actions.

Being entrusted more by Renee Slegers to use her creativity has been the catalyst, with her league-leading amount of passes and crosses into the penalty area finally unlocking the Gunners' world-class attack.

And that one goal she's scored this season? What a goal it was, a matchwinner against West Ham from the most impossible of angles. Bangers, McCabe only scores bangers. No one bleeds red and white like her.

"I play hard, I play strong. I wear my heart on my sleeve when I am representing this club, like I have done for the last nine years. That's the way it will be and I don't want to change that," McCabe said earlier this season of her beloved club.

Honourable mention: Sandy Baltimore (Chelsea)

Baltimore came to the club as a forward, but has thrived in defence after Niamh Charles dislocated her shoulder at the start of the season. She's been so good she's kept the Lionesses defender out of the side.

The Frenchwoman has troubled the opposition with her dribbling ability and speed down the left, and has popped up for a number of very crucial goals. Interesting to see whether Bompastor wants her compatriot to make the left-back position her own.

Centre midfield: Grace Clinton (Manchester United)

- *21 matches*
- *Eight goals*
- *First for successful through balls (8)*
- *Second for total tackles (86)*
- *Third for tackles won (54), dribblers tackled (38) and blocks (41)*

The United prodigy had her break-out WSL season on loan to Spurs last season - and has taken it to yet another level since returning to her parent club. Scoring eight goals as someone who has been moved between both wing, the No. 10 role and a No. 8 is a brilliant return for a 22-year-old still finding her feet in the game.

Skinner still hasn't figured out how to best use her and Ella Toone together in the same formation - but she has thrived regardless, with her creativity on display. It's not about being a neat footballer for Clinton, with her bravery on the ball highlighted by her completed through balls and her success at taking on the opposition with the ball at her feet.

Out of possession she's gone to another level, to the point where she is now one of the best in the league, despite her tender age. She crashes into tackles like a bulldozer, and alongside Katrina Gorry, easily the best tackler across the entire season when it comes to both amount and effectiveness.

Clinton says she's been able to go to another level by putting the noise and hype around her firmly in the background.

"I'd say my biggest strength is my creativity. I'm quite unpredictable in how I play, you don't really know what I'm going to do," she told [Indivisa](#).

"A good game looks like there is not a lot going on in my mind. I'm forward-thinking, not a lot of chatter, I'm just calm and composed."

Honourable mention: Erin Cuthbert (Chelsea)

Not having the Scot in the Team of the Season was incredibly tough given how important she has been to Chelsea. That they only dropped points in the league when Cuthbert was off the field highlights that; but she is more set up for success with those around her unlike the other midfielders, like Clinton.

The addition of Keira Walsh since January in the No.6 role has allowed Cuthbert to play an even more expansive game, and allowed her the freedom to more aggressively take possession off the opposition with a safety blanket behind her. A truly brilliant individual season from the fiery Scot.

Centre midfield: Katrina Gorry (West Ham)

- *22 matches*
- *Three goals, four assists*
- *Second for tackles won (55)*
- *Fourth for total tackles (72)*

The Hammers had an awful start to the season, winning just two games before the Christmas break; but after that, they managed to hold Chelsea and Man City to draws, came within a whisker of beating Arsenal and won against Brighton, Everton and Spurs.

And much of that comes down to the leadership on, and off, the field and effectiveness in the middle of the park from Gorry. Like some of the other players in this team, her intangibles are as important as her output, and the adoration and respect her teammates have for her fearless leadership is obvious..

Her ferocious attack on the ball this season has been something to behold, but it isn't reckless. It's just about the best in the league, in fact.

But something else that has stood out has been her ability to capitalise when given an ounce of space, driving herself forwards or finding teammates with strong diagonal balls. Three goals and four assists is certainly a brilliant return for a midfielder who flits between the No.6 and No.8 roles.

Former Matilda Leah Blayney told [Optus Sport](#) that the most special thing about Gorry was the way she seized the important moments.

"She's been incredible, and she's such a leader and we see that in the Matildas as well. In the big moments you can rely on her," Japan's assistant manager said.

Honourable mention: Sjoeki Nusken (Chelsea)

It is so hard to leave out the incredibly versatile Nusken, who has played just about every position on the field bar goalkeeper since joining Chelsea last season. But locked (mostly) into a No.8 role by Bompastor has seen the German turn into a lethal threat on goal, while maintaining her ability to make important defensive interventions.

Third in the WSL for interceptions, but also eighth in shot-creating actions, she is starting to look like the completely package - a scary proposition for opponents given she is still just 24.

Centre midfield: Yui Hasegawa (Manchester City)

- *22 matches*
- *Three assists*
- *First for successful take-ons (36)*
- *Fourth for interceptions (36)*
- *Fifth for progressive passes (133) and passes into final third (123)*

In terms of just how vital one player has been to holding their entire side together, not sure any has been more important than the diminutive, but deceptively strong, Japanese star.

Hasegawa is one of the most respected figures within the WSL and international stage, but, like many world-class No.6's, doesn't always get the plaudits she deserves despite being a truly world-class player.

She has been the glue that has held City together in what has been a nightmare, injury-riddled season. It's scary to think what would've happened if she broke down too. No midfielder or forward (and only centre-backs Le Tissier and Guro Bergsvand) have played more minutes over the past two seasons than Hasegawa, who has missed just 22 minutes across 44 games. And while playing in a very physical position asking for relentless running.

But that's just one small aspect. Hasegawa is setting the standards for other midfielders to follow both with, and without, the ball. Only Jill Roord and Kim Little have better passing percentages as midfielders across the past two seasons, and they both have a significantly smaller sample size. And they don't play the adventurous, line-skipping passes Hasegawa does.

Then to be first in the league this season for successfully dribbling past opponents and well as ranking near the top in passing into the most dangerous areas and fourth in interceptions shows just how impeccable her judgement and movement is. She's always playing 4D chess when others are playing in 2D.

Blayney told [Optus Sport](#), that she thinks Hasegawa is one of 'the best players in the world' as she described her strengths.

"She learns how she finds space and she's a fierce competitor. She's technically proficient, as all the Japanese are, but she's also really brave. She will play it forward in moments under high pressure, like some of the tight spaces she gets out of because she's brave to play forward," Japan's assistant manager said of her star player.

"She's the pass before the assist. The best way to put it...she's that instrumental in how all starts."

Honourable mention: Marie Hobinger (Liverpool)

The Austrian built on her strong debut WSL season in 2023/24 by going to another level this time around; quietly building a hugely underrated career in one of, if not the, best leagues in the world.

Her set-pieces, be it penalty, free-kick or corner, are all exemplary and have been one of the WSL's best; but it's her ability to drive into or through the final third that makes her stand out,

And that's despite, inexplicably, not being started every game when she is one of her team's most dangerous player when it comes to creating opportunities on goal. In fact only McCabe has created more chances on goal than Hobinger, who the Reds need to rebuild their side around.

Right wing: Mary Fowler (Manchester City)

- 17 matches

- *Six goals and seven assists*
- *Second in WSL for assists (7) and successful through balls (5)*
- *Fifth in goals+assists (13)*

It's the breakout season the football world - and Matildas fans in particular - were waiting for.

It might have been cruelly ended in the worst way possible but Fowler set the league on fire in what was a horror season for her club. Finally entrusted with regular minutes and clarity on her role on the wings, Fowler's vision, dribbling and creativity was finally shining.

Her ability to hit corners with both feet with no discernible differences was stunning. Only perhaps Beth Mead and perhaps Alexia Putellas (who doesn't even take corners) could come anywhere close to the ability to do that. Fifth in the WSL for goals and assists combined, is one thing, but the style with which she did so will make her a hero and role model for so many little boys and girls.

The way she took on opponents and kept trying the risky balls in the final third was a huge part of City's flying start to the season, then she played every random position asked of her as the injury crisis hit, then worsened.

Blayney told *Optus Sport* that City's possession-based style and Fowler's determination helped set her up for a breakout domestic season at age 22. Yes - she is still just 22.

"There's a few pieces, mainly mentality," she said when asked of how Fowler, who she guided through the Young Matildas program, turned it around this season.

"She's in an environment where she's playing with some of the best players in the world so there's that. City is playing style suits the type of player Mary is, and I do believe we see the best of her at club level.

"I don't think she necessarily really fits into a counter-attacking system (like the Matildas) as much as she does in a team that plays a bit more of a shorter passing game and values having the ball for long periods of time in the front."

Honourable mention: Olivia Smith (Liverpool)

She's a still a little rough around the edges when it comes to her own, and dealing with others' physicality, but the Canadian prodigy was an absolute star in her debut WSL season.

The 20-year-old kicked seven goals, and impressively, stepped up when the stakes were highest. You couldn't tear your eyes away from her battle with McCabe in one match where she well and truly claimed the points.

The second-most fouled player in the league, Smith is also the second- best at successful dribbles - and only touching the edges of her talents.

Striker: Alessia Russo (Arsenal)

- *21 matches*
- *12 goals and two assists*
- *Equal-first for goals scored (12), total shots (72) and shots on target (31)*
- *Second for xG (+2.5)*
- *Third for goals and assists (14)*

The WSL season we've all been waiting for from Russo - and scarily you can sense she still has much more she can achieve thanks to Slegers finally giving her the happiness, confidence and clarity to get the best of herself as a No.9.

The Gunners frontwoman has thrived under Slegers, scoring all of her 12 league goals from 17 WSL fixtures under the Dutchwoman, after nabbing just one under Jonas Eidevall to begin the season in nine matches across all competitions.

The goals and statistics do speak for themselves, but you do get the sense she's still only scratching the surface under 'Slegersball'.

Russo has such an admirable desire to track back and launch herself into winning the ball, and under Eidevall she appeared to do it more out of desperation to contribute when he couldn't understand how to harness his players' talents or mentality. With Slegers, she is still crucial to the press in the final third, but she is more present in the box and ready to utilise her lethal finishing ability.

The Lionesses star is taking the pressure in her stride with her customary smile; and back to her carefree North Carolina days when it comes to her success at taking opponents on one-on-one. A preseason under Slegers spells danger for the competition.

"The obvious one is her (Russo's) goal contributions which has been great, but all the things in the background; the way she treats people, very humble, respectful, and she always wants to learn," Slegers said of her superstar striker's famed attitude.

"I believe that when players or people are like that, you are more likely to get the best out yourself and that is what she has been doing consistently. I'm very impressed and it's a privilege to work with her."

Honourable mention: Elisabeth Terland (Manchester United)

Aggie Beever-Jones came within a whisker of this spot given her clutch moments and consistency across the season, but output and productivity are the currency for a No. 9, and Terland showed up when it counted most.

The Norwegian can't replace either Russo or Parris, who both left on free transfers in consecutive seasons, but in her own fiery way she's been able to score with both feet, head and perhaps more crucially, set up teammates for five assists as well as nabbing 10 goals.

Left wing: Mariona Caldentey (Arsenal)

- *21 matches*
- *Nine goals and five assists*
- *First in passes into penalty area (65), shot creating-actions (104) and progressive passes (199)*
- *Second in passes into final third (142) and successful through balls (5)*
- *Third in chances created (43), total tackles (74), tackles won (54) and goals+assists (14)*

Even if it's only for two seasons (hopefully more), prising Caldentey from Barcelona at the peak of her powers for free might just go down as one of the great transfers in WSL history - a league title or Champions League trophy would seal it.

It's not often you can say this without debate, but the 29-year-old Spaniard was so far in front as the WSL Player of the Year it wasn't funny. That's also despite spending a third of it in a position - as a hybrid No. 6 - that she's barely played in.

Whether dominating on the left wing as she did for much of the season or directing play from the centre of the park, Caldentey's first touch, goal nous and tiki-taka reception she could manage in a phone box has been a big part of Arsenal's 'Reneessaince'.

The match-winning penalties and stunners from the top of the box were merely the cherry on top.

Speaking on [The Women's Football Wrap](#), Sykes said the injection of Caldentey wasn't something the league had experienced.

"I just thought she brought something different to the WSL this season," she said on [Optus Sport](#).

"Her technical class, her tactical intelligence, the way she can pick up the ball between the defensive lines and either score herself or distribute to her teammates really linked their attack so she was super impressive."

Honourable mention: Viviane Asseyi (West Ham)

The Frenchwoman is a joyous footballer to watch, and has had a brilliant season down the left wing for the Hammers, and has created the fourth most chances on goal in the league. Her and Riko Ueke are building a really strong partnership all across the field, and Asseyi finished equal top with Terland in the league for goals and assists combined.

Her speed, dribbling and goal nous have been a key reason for West Ham responding with a strong end to the season and her output this campaign is a just reward for her determination since joining the club three years ago.