

MY LIFE IN FOOTBALL

# AROUND FREESTYLE

**LIV  
COOKE**

**Age** 19

**Job** Pro Freestyle Footballer

**Team** Manchester United

**Would most like to  
freestyle with** Ronaldinho

A world champion by the age of 18, pro football freestyler Liv Cooke spends her life juggling a ball "round the world". With hard work, she says you can too

**My earliest football memory** is playing out in the street with my older brothers, Sam and Jack, and our friends. I always had a football at my feet.

**We had season tickets at Manchester United.** The best game I've been to as a fan was the 2011 Champions League final between Man Utd and Barcelona. It was my first time at Wembley and I loved it.

**I got more into doing tricks** when I had a back injury. It was when I was 15 and with Blackburn Rovers. I hated being unable to play, so I practised my touch, control and juggling in the garden. I started posting videos on Instagram, got good comments and thrived off it.

**I started to do shows before I started to compete.** My first show was at a local primary school and my legs felt like jelly. My routine was a mess but the kids were lovely. Then Blackburn invited me to do routines at a match. The crowd was 22,000, it was February, it was freezing, the pitch was muddy and I was terrified!

Liv started freestyling when she was 15!



Liv uses her head at Super Ball!





# THE WORLD

## WITH



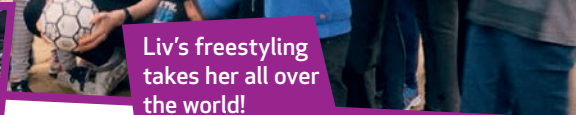
Juggling the ball takes serious concentration!



Smile everyone!



Man Utd v Barça at Wembley: Liv's favourite game



Liv's freestyling takes her all over the world!

As I walked out they stuck a mic and camera in front of me. "You support Blackburn don't you?" they asked and I said: "No, I support Man United." The whole stadium was booing! The show went well though, I felt amazing.

**I don't think talent comes into freestyling.** When I was 13, I was only the fourth person on my team who mastered a "round the world". How good you are at tricks depends on how much work you put in. In football you can train your hardest, be the best but your team still might not win. That frustrates me. I'm only the best in the world because I work the hardest. If I can do it, you can.

**To start with, I learned from YouTube tutorials.** Watch videos of freestylers, copy their movements and when you can do it, put your own emphasis on it. Then put tricks together to make combinations. Remember: use both feet!

**When I walk out on stage in a competition I'm confident.** I'll have trained for six months and done that

set of tricks 2,000 times. There could be bad music, a slanted stage or even a different ball – a lot of people drop out of a competition if they change the ball – but I'm so well prepared I don't care.

**The best thing I've done in my career** is work with UEFA on their #WePlayStrong #PlayAnywhere campaigns. We went to 13 locations in six countries, so I got to see different football cultures. We went to the highest football pitch in Europe, at the top of the Swiss Alps, and to Eriskay, a remote Scottish island. In Norway I climbed on top of a fishing boat in a fjord. It was swaying, I could hardly stand up but after a few minutes, I was doing tricks.

**I've been asked loads of times to freestyle in high heels** but you wouldn't ask a plumber to come along in a dress, would you? I always say no, not for any amount of money. I want to show the world that girls can be as skilful as the guys and that women's sport has a lot of potential.

**Some famous players have skills.**

Chelsea's Fran Kirby is really good, she's got nice control, Gemma Davison too and Lyon's Ada Hegerberg can pull out multiple round the worlds!

**I achieved my dream of being world champion last year** and so I was a bit lost afterwards, wondering: "What's next?" I've already proved that I'm the best freestyler in the world, so now I want to be the best ever.

Super Ball – the world open Freestyle Football championships – is in Prague in the Czech Republic this August. There's no prize money, so it's a pure competition with thousands entering. When I started out there weren't that many girls at world-class level. Now there are lots of girls popping up. So this year it will be interesting!



Can Gareth Bale do this one?



Chilling at Wembley with world No 2 freestyler Caitlyn Schrepfer