



Here come the...

girls

The Glasgow Wildcats, Scotland's only netball franchise in the Superleague

"People are stuck with this 'primary school' perception of the game – you stand, you pivot and you pass, you don't run – and Superleague netball isn't like that at all. People don't realise just how physical the game is and how fit and skilful you need to be to play it," says Wildcats' Jenna Storie. Netball's Superleague, which started in October 2005, features nine teams from England, Scotland and Wales, and the girls compete from December to April playing each other twice across 16 games. The league's top four challenge for the title through two rounds of play-offs before the Championship is decided at the Superleague final. "There's been talk in the past of the Superleague becoming

semi-professional, and that would be great. Being paid to play netball and being rewarded for the commitment that we give to the Wildcats would be amazing." Attacker, Karin Connell, is eager to return to the courts and raise the profile of the game after a knee injury forced Scotland's vice-captain to watch the Wildcats' first campaign unfold from the sidelines. "I would love netball to get the recognition it deserves. You'll get a surprise when you watch it for the first time, men in particular. It's a very fast and physical game and once you've seen it, I'm sure you'll want to tune in more often." New to the Wildcats' defence this season is New Zealander, Hu Paul, who also plays for Glasgow's leading rugby 7s team Cartha Queens

Park. "Netball can be fierce at times. There's so much going on, off the ball," reminds Paul. "Every time you go for the ball there's someone behind you and there's going to be players stepping into you. You've got to be ready for that." Scotland international, Claire Brownie, says: "I'm a PE teacher in a nearby school, so I've got the opportunity to encourage more young people to take up netball." Team-mate, Fiona Moore, hopes the exposure netball will get on TV will change perceptions of the game. "I don't rise to the banter or negative comments about the game. I just tell people to watch us on Sky Sports and see for themselves."

LIVE ON SKY SPORTS: SURREY STORM V MAVERICKS THU 7 JAN, 7.30PM SS3

Left to right: Fiona Moore, Karin Connell, Claire Brownie, Jenna Storie and Hu Paul



Sky Sports analyst and Leeds Carnegie player Tracey Deville gives us a team-by-team breakdown of the Superleague



Celtic Dragons
Finished bottom last season and they will find it hard again. Rather than looking to bring in overseas players, they work around the Welsh national team which is struggling at the moment.
Player to watch
Sara Hale: Skipper and a tenacious defender.



Glasgow Wildcats
The Wildcats also work around their national team, most of them play for Scotland. That's great in terms of development but they may be in for another tough campaign.
Player to watch
Claire Brownie: Very highly rated amongst her team-mates.



Leeds Carnegie
We've recruited well bringing in Carla Dziwoki and England under-21 Jo Walker. We're a young team, but have been together for three years which should benefit us.
Player to watch
Danielle Bloomfield: Adds height and pace to the mid-court.



Loughborough Lightning
They finished second in the regular season last year but have lost mid-court experience with the retirement of Olivia Murphy and Jade Clarke going to Northern Thunder.
Player to watch
Jo Harten: England's prolific goal scorer.



Hertfordshire Mavericks
My tip to win Superleague. Last season's beaten Grand Finalists have vast experience all over the court, with Amanda Newton, Naomi Stenhouse, and Karen Atkinson.
Player to watch
Karen Atkinson: Will make a huge impact.



Northern Thunder
My old team have strengthened the mid-court by signing England duo Jade Clarke and Sara Bayman. Expect plenty of eye-catching speed through the court and bags of entertainment.
Player to watch
Sara Bayman: Enjoyed an excellent World Series.



Surrey Storm
The new incarnation of the Brunel Hurricanes have recruited well. Adding Sonia Mkoloma and Geva Mentor brings together two of the world's best defenders. A top four team.
Players to watch
Sonia Mkoloma/Geva Mentor: A world-class defensive pairing.



Team Bath
The defending champions have lost four key players in Sara Bayman, Tamsin Greenway, Rachel Dunn and Geva Mentor. Bath's strength is their attack and Pamela Cookey remains a potent threat.
Player to watch
Pamela Cookey: Worth two players to Team Bath.



Team Northumbria
They could be set for a bottom three spot having lost a lot of experience in their squad. They haven't got great depth and putting a coach in place late will not have helped their cause.
Player to watch
Darcy Worsdale: A consistent goal shooter.