

#HERGAMETOO

For our Rochdale programme we thought of no one better than Charlotte Cromarty to talk to about her love of RAFC and as their HerGameToo ambassador she is perfectly placed to tell us about her work for the campaign at the club.

‘I have been a Rochdale supporter all of my life as my mum and dad are big Dale fans so it was always going to be the case for me, I had the kits when I was little then my love for the club and going to football grew as I got older and I went more! I remember being a four-year-old girl that was obsessed and in awe of our mascot Desmond the Dragon. Then as I started going more and I got older, that’s when it was just for the football and enjoying the game! My first match as a season ticket holder was the 1998/1999 season. Even though we lost, I absolutely loved everything about it. The football, atmosphere, the buzz around the stadium and just being part of something. It honestly felt like home and I was excited to go to football every weekend. When my mum and dad split up, I was really young and it was mine and my dad’s thing to go home and away matches, that’s when I really did become passionate about the sport. There’s so many amazing memories supporting Rochdale, I’ve been extremely lucky as a Dale fan. I’ve seen two promotions, a play off final, play off semi finals, several games that took us on cup runs against big teams. My first favourite cup memory was in 2003, we played Coventry in the FA Cup and beat them 2-0. In 2014 we beat Leeds



in the FA Cup which was one of my all time favourite games. A Stephen Davies equaliser in injury time to get us a replay against Tottenham at Wembley was absolute limbs. The play off semi final against Darlington in 2008 was exactly the same too, absolute limbs. We won on penalties and that secured us a play off final spot against Stockport and a trip to Wembley which was just surreal. We unfortunately lost the final but the memory of that semi final was just fantastic! My all time favourite memory though has to be our first season in league one, it was just so surreal and different to league two! Walking out at St Mary’s and beating them twice in that season. We just missed out on the play-offs too. It really was my favourite season watching us. I’m frustrated this season because I feel a lot of the points lost in games have been again our own faults and basic errors that we shouldn’t be doing at this level. Jim McNulty has took

over as manager, a brilliant guy and Rochdale through and through. I feel like it is a good appointment because he’s a person that knows the club through and through, loves the club and cares for us fans. The situation at the club though with outside investment has been extremely quiet which is frustrating because it’s really hard to be able to compete with clubs in the national league and I feel like we are now struggling with injuries and squad depth because of this. On the pitch I’ve been impressed with our start to National League life, however the last few games have not been great, and we haven’t been winning which is frustrating but hopefully we can turn it around. I didn’t expect us to start as positive as we did, so hopefully we can try and kick on again quickly. HerGameToo is something I’m extremely proud to be part of and something that I feel like I’m lucky to be part of because it’s helping make changes for the next generation and inspiring

people to use their voice to talk about football. I struggle with my mental health suffering from anxiety and depression so I do tend to struggle at times but being an ambassador and putting my efforts and passion into something really does help me on my down days. I feel like I have something to look forward to and work for, and the drive I have with the ambassador role is because I want to make changes for other people as it's something we never had when we were younger! I'm extremely fortunate that I have never been subject to sexist abuse at a football game, both home and away. My negative experiences have always been on social media when I've expressed my views and opinions on a game. I've had the usual 'get back in the kitchen', 'make me a sandwich', 'you're a woman, shut up'. And even when I've posted a picture in my football shirt, I've had backlash about the way I look from both male and female fans. I have also recently been targeted due to the way I look and called 'the ugly one' in my HerGameToo Rochdale team which really knocked my confidence. I want to be remembered for making a positive change for females and the future generation as well as be free to speak my own mind and opinions, so being called 'ugly' for doing that really isn't fair. So, if I can use my voice and social media platform as well as working in a worldwide campaign representing the club I love, then I feel like I'm helping people make positive changes. I've been a HerGameToo ambassador for a year and a half now and the Rochdale team have already achieved so much. We were the first ever club to have a male professional footballer as a player advocate, our goalkeeper at the time Richard O'Donnell stepped forward and took on the role. He's an exceptional role model

for people of all ages, both from a football point of view but also off the pitch. He's such a humble and friendly guy, who's family orientated and respects the female role models in his life. He's spoken about what the campaign means to him and the influence his mum, wife and daughter have in his life and career so he's the perfect person to take on this role. We are very lucky to be able to work with him and have his support. Helping organise dedicated fixtures and the club taking on my ideas, that was just brilliant. We had pictures with the management team and players holding the HGT prop frame and flags. A female playlist on the day, female flag bearers and mascots. The club gave away free tickets to female fans, leading up to the fixture the players spoke about inspirational females, the HGT logo was featured all over the ground, we had hand clappers too with it on. They really did work hard on the fixtures and I appreciate the continued support that they all give me and the campaign. The amount of messages and support we have had from mums and dads telling us how we have inspired their daughters, it's honestly been phenomenal and I'm truly touched. It's amazing to get the players support and have the dedicated fixtures, but inspiring girls to be themselves and get that confidence really is the most important part for me and something I absolutely love hearing about. Me and advocate Victoria also took part in a workshop called 'Cultivate your confidence' with Chloe from Rochdale in the community. We would talk to the girls about the campaign, play games to build their confidence and build trust with the other girls as well as express themselves. Then we would watch them train and play football afterwards, it was fantastic watching their

confidence grow each week. I also received two HGT awards voted by my fellow ambassadors. One of which was the 'Above and Beyond' award which was for both the club and campaign. It was so humbling that I was voted to win that particular award and the other ambassadors thought so highly of me, genuinely means so much and I appreciate that! There's so much I still want to do at Rochdale but the main thing is for people to enjoy coming to football and playing football. I just want females to feel confident doing what they love and be able to express themselves and not be scared. We are extremely lucky at Rochdale because there's been nothing but support for the campaign, so I would love to be able to welcome new fans from the community and even far and wide to come to a game and hopefully they will share the same positive experiences and make the friendships like I have while watching the sport we love! Richard O'Donnell also unfortunately left the club in the summer so a new player advocate is my goal to achieve this season!"

A huge thanks to Charlotte for sharing her experiences of both being a RAFC supporter and her work with the club as HGT ambassador. She is a great inspiration of ours and our team of ambassadors.

We've also welcomed two new advocates to our team this week. Both Emma Martin and Sam Andrews will be huge assets and can't wait to get involved.

TheHer Game Too HUFC Team

