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GATORADE® JOINS FORCES WITH INSPIRATIONAL FOOTBALL ICONS TO BOOST CONFIDENCE OF YOUNG FEMALE ATHLETES

London (ots/PRNewswire) -

SHOWCASING OF 'RACHEL MEETS RAY' FILM, AT GATORADE GIRLS 5V5 FINAL AT THE UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL IN BILBAO, SPARKS EMOTIONAL DISCUSSIONS AMONG TEENAGE GIRLS

Gatorade, the world's leading hydration beverage, has brought global footballing icons to Gatorade's Girls' 5v5 Finals at the UEFA Women's Champions League Final in Bilbao, to tackle the issue that 40%* of teen girls lack confidence in sport, a key driver to the athletes of tomorrow dropping out of sports. Each legend shared their motivational tips to inspire girls from across the world to kick down confidence barriers to play football.

To create positive change, Gatorade brought global legends Rachel Yankey (former Arsenal and England International), Laia Aleixandri, and Fernando Llorente (both former Athletic Bilbao and Spain Internationalists) to meet the 14-16-year-old Gatorade 5v5 finalists Zazpi Landa, Ibaiondo, Bilbao Artizarrak, and Basauriko. Yankey shared a Gatorade Fuel Tomorrow produced film where she talked confidence with a version of her younger self, created using de-aging technology, to inspire a new generation to play and stay in the game. The film sparked a conversation about how to keep self-esteem and confidence high in the face of adversity.

As a child, Yankey cut off her hair, and pretended to be a boy, so she could play football. Despite more girls having access to football today, they face the same issues Yankey did when she was nine years old in the 1980s. The confidence talk in Bilbao unpacked the issues that impact girls' confidence that were raised in the film such as gender inequality in teen football, the scrutiny girls face on social media, and the scarcity of female coaches.

Rachel Yankey said: 'It's no surprise to me that 40% of girls lack confidence in sport. When I was growing up there were no visible female coaches and that can be really difficult as a young girl - your body and mind is going through so many changes! The more female role models, the more education for male coaches on the difference between teenage girls and boys the better the two way conversation will be between players and coaches'

Laia Aleixandri adds: 'The issues that Rachel faced growing up hit me hard. Whilst the game for women has grown so much in recent years, there is still a long way to go. Even how we call it 'women's football' - why can't it just be football?'

The players, acclaimed for their elite level careers for club and country, shared insights on skills and confidence needed in football. As 'Confidence Coaches', they shared their journeys, inspiring players to believe in their potential to succeed in sports. These included:

- A Teenage Laia Aleixandri transitioning from youth football to Atletico Madrid, securing the Primera Division title in her debut season.
- Rachel Yankey's international career, starting at just 17 with the Lionesses and going on to represent Team GB in the 2012 London Olympics.
- Fernando Llorente's career journey, from starting his with Athletic Bilbao, the host city for this year's UEFA Women's Champions League Final, to going on to play for clubs in the top leagues in England and Italy, as well as internationally for Spain.

This year, Gatorade 5v5 tournament was won by Bilbao Artizarrak from Bilbao. 5v5 is an annual global football tournament for 14-16-year-olds, which promotes equal opportunities for young talent. Now in its seventh year, it continues to inspire and fuel the next generation of athletes, building their confidence and offering unique sporting opportunities. The tournament, unique in structure, includes an all-female contest at the UEFA Women's Champions League Final in Bilbao, Spain.

Since its inception, Gatorade 5v5 tournament has provided over 126,000 young athletes worldwide with positive sporting experiences. This year, 13 countries across Latin America, Asia, Middle East, and Europe will participate across all tournaments, with an estimated 26,000 teenagers - 11,000 more than in 2023.

Speaking about this year's Gatorade Girls' 5v5 Finals at the Women's Champions League Final in Bilbao, VP of Marketing at Gatorade, Bart LaCount says, "The Gatorade 5v5 Finals brings participants together on a global stage and shows that every girl, regardless of her background, can participate in sport, learning lifelong lessons and values of sport. Our research shows that 40% of teen girls lack confidence in sport, an alarming statistic which doesn't belong in today's world. No girl should grow out of her confidence, so we are working with legends of the game to be Confidence Coaches to inspire and motivate teens to play and stay in football. Their advice helps break down barriers and fuel confidence."

Visit Gatorade's Confidence Coaches Hub at [Gatorade.com/confidence-coaches](https://gatorade.com/confidence-coaches) to learn how to keep confidence high and watch the Rachel Meets Ray film as well as the confidence talk at Bilbao between the football legends.

* In Q1 2024, Gatorade conducted cross-market research which surveyed over 2,500 parents of teens aged 13-17 from Mexico, Colombia, China, Australia and The Philippines. Research undertaken by [Revolt London](https://revolt.com)

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