

INTERVIEW

'We want to enjoy the jersey again': The new era for Welsh women's rugby

The Wales women's national team believe something special is just beginning



Wales finally have reasons to be hopeful despite consecutive defeats (Photo: AFP/Getty)



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THE **i** PAPER

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Welsh rugby is in disarray following the men's 17th successive Test defeat, with the women's side also expected to emulate them with a Wooden Spoon – their second in a row – as they prepare to face a strong French side this weekend.

But while the future of men's rugby is still in limbo, the women's national team hope they are on the precipice of a new era after years of controversy that included threats to withdraw players from tournaments, contract issues and allegations of sexism against the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU).

“The big focus for us is just enjoying the Welsh jersey again, and that’s started to happen,” Wales captain Hannah Jones tells *The i Paper*.

“I have seen a lot of progress in terms of our energy going into games recently,”

That shift in perspective came after the appointments of recent title-winning head coach Sean Lynn and ex-Premiership chief executive Belinda Moore as head of women’s rugby.

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Lynn joined the Welsh camp as head coach following the dismissal of Ioan Cunningham last year, less than 24 hours after winning the PWR (Premiership Women’s Rugby) with Gloucester-Hartpury.

After five days with the squad before their curtain-raiser against [Scotland](#), the 24-21 defeat in that match was unsurprising. However, it already showed a marked improvement compared to the 40-14 demolition against the same opponents last year.

“It feels like a breath of fresh air. With a new head coach, ‘Lynny’ brings a different energy and experience,” says Jones.

Jones, who has played for Gloucester-Hartpury since 2019, added:

“He’s always wanted to coach Wales women, and for him, it’s a very proud moment.

“He’s a very passionate, proud, Welshman, so it’s nice to see him bring that energy from club to country and have that winning mindset.”

Lynn’s integration signals a commitment to address the ongoing challenges within the WRU. There were well-reported sexism scandals and ahead of the 2025 World Cup, there were even alleged threats to withdraw the team from the tournament if they did not sign new contracts. Those deals were said to have contained clauses that would stop the WRU having to pay travel expenses.

It is hoped Moore’s role as head of women’s rugby will eradicate any remnants of that culture.

“I’m hoping [Moore] is going to continue to make it better, and it’s her on to make sure it never happens again so that players don’t go through what I went through,” says Jones.

But while boardroom arguments seem to be under control, the focus has now turned to ironing out issues on the field, following the defensive problems seen against England and Scotland.

What Wales need to work on

Despite leading for the majority of the second half against Scotland, Wales conceded a penalty after an ill-disciplined tackle put their opponents ahead.

In this year’s Six Nations, Wales have made the second fewest tackles with (252) and the second most missed tackles (65).

It is hoped that alongside new defense coach Dan Murphy, Lynn will introduce a Gloucester-Hartpury style defense – no PWR side has made as many tackles since the 2022 season.

What's more, in Georgia Evans, Jasmine Joyce-Butchers, Abbie Fleming and Keira Bevan, Wales have some of the most talented players in the Six Nations at their disposal.



Jasmine Joyce launches for England's Megan Jones at the Principality (Photo: Getty)

Yet Jones stresses that "Rome wasn't built in a day".

"Once the new system is in place, I am confident we're going to be a very physical and hard team to beat," she says.

Despite the mammoth score difference against England, Wales have almost surpassed last year's eight tries scored, with five in two games so far.

Instead, though, much of the media coverage of their tournament has focused on a backlash against Joyce's involvement in a post-match TikTok dance with England's Sarah Bern.

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Supporters criticised the move following England putting 11 tries past Wales, one of which dance partner Bern ran home.

"We are always told to be us, and after 80 minutes of hard work, I said in the circle at the end, we have some learnings and we can be disappointed, but let's enjoy the crowd who have come out to watch us," says Jones.

"We've got a different brand to the men, and we're not the same as the men, and that's something people need to understand – we are not little men running around, we've got our own women moving the game forward."

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And it's working. Women's rugby has never been more popular in Wales as a record crowd of 21,186 watched the match at the Principality Stadium – the most of any Welsh women's home game in any sport.

“It shows the sport is going in the right direction,” Jones points out. “That was definitely the biggest crowd I have had in front of me at the Principality in a Wales shirt.

“This is all because of the trailblazers who pushed before us to allow us to have this professionalism, and now we're doing the same, making the jersey better for the future players.”