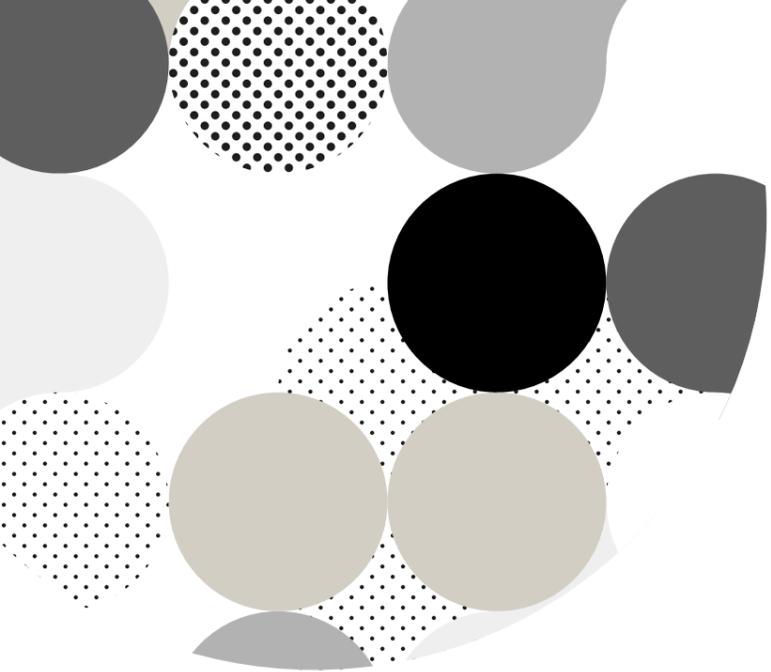


Break the Bias





Break the Bias

International Women's Day 2022

To celebrate International Women's Day, we are shining the spotlight on five inspiring individuals from the Netball Family.

Each of the stories you are about to read delve into different netball journeys and how those experiences have helped to shape these women into who they are today.

For each of them, there have been challenges that they've had to overcome to get them to where they are. But it's hoped that by sharing their stories, we can **#BreakTheBias** by having open conversations about bias, representation and stereotypes still present in women's sport and encourage others to speak up. Ultimately, we want to inspire change. We want to encourage the Netball Family to speak up and challenge inequality and help us address any existing barriers.

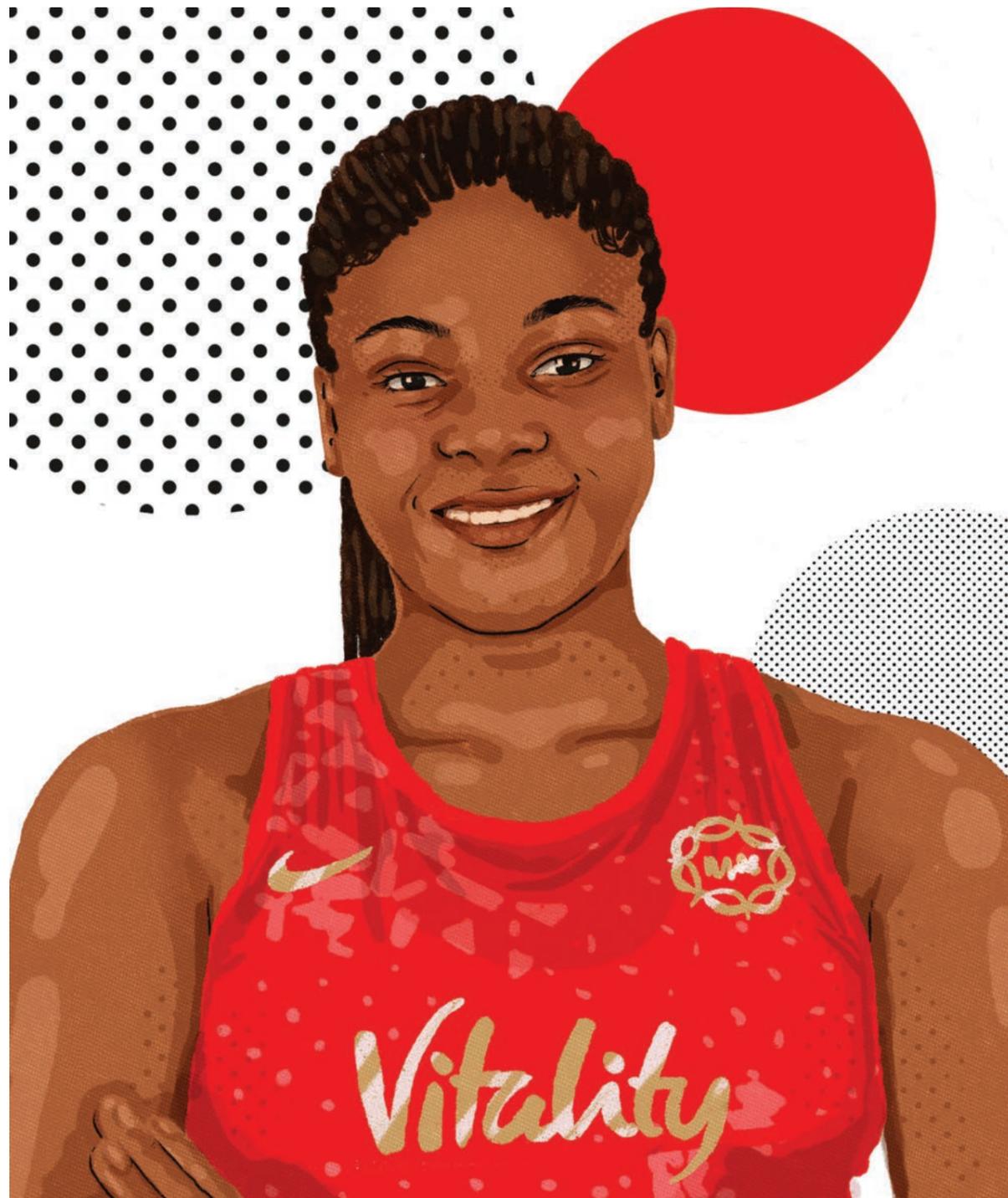
As part of our 10-year strategy, we remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls and we have pledged to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage and at every age.

We are also committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the rich diversity of the country it proudly represents.

We hope these stories will help inspire others who have experienced challenges throughout their sporting journey to share their experiences through **#BreakTheBias**.

We would also like to encourage those who work in the sport to help us break down barriers by checking out our guidance on how to make netball inclusive for everyone in their community.





“ I play netball because I enjoy it, but I think it has helped me become who I am. ”

Halimat Adio

For Halimat Adio, netball has given her more than just athletic skills; it has helped her to grow as a person and learn what it takes to get the most out of herself.

Influenced by her sister, Hali began her sporting journey in primary school. Little did she know the impact it would have on her.

“I play netball because I enjoy it, but I think it has helped me become who I am,” Halimat began. “From a young age, before I played netball, I was a quiet young girl who kept to herself, but I think once I started playing netball, I was able to make new friends, become a lot more confident in the sport - and in myself - and be a bit more vocal.”

Hali continued her netball journey into secondary school where she decided to take the sport more seriously and search for a route to play at a higher level. She went to a state school and it was here where she felt she had to show resilience to get where she is now.

“I’ve come from a state school and we didn’t have the facilities that a lot of private schools had. I didn’t play against those amazing teams, and neither did I have scouts coming in to watch me play. The fact that I’m able to play with these class athletes is a massive thing - to show young girls that if they put their minds to something, work hard and keep pushing they have the potential to make it.

“I didn’t get into county a couple of times and I was told by a few coaches that I wouldn’t make it into the Superleague so I

should find another route - kind of telling me to just stop playing. I then found that coach who decided to put her faith in me and that’s how I made it.”

In her pursuit to fulfill her dream, Hali worked around certain challenges with her coaches.

“When I was younger, I had to get public transport everywhere and there was actually one time I had to bring my little sister up to Loughborough when I had England training, I remember my little sister sitting on the side playing on my coaches iPad and on that same day I had to bring her back home. Luckily I had a head coach who understood that and my situation.”

“I think having that support and having coaches who understand you is very crucial.”

Support from coaches like Violet Corbin, Sam Bird, who made her co-captain of Pulse, and Danni Titmuss-Morris have been key for Hali who feels the belief of her coaches - and the belief in herself - are key reasons to why she made it.

“Dannii would make me do 7am sessions to improve my fitness before my trials for England. Even though I didn’t want to do it at times, I knew the reasons why I was doing it. I enjoyed netball and I wanted to make it far in life.”

Hannah McGregor

Part of England Netball’s Adventure Strategy is to ensure netball is a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong. Hannah McGregor is just one example of somebody who feels that sense of belonging when it comes to netball.

Hannah is a grassroots netballer from Sunderland University Netball Club who in the last two years has learned she is autistic, a form of neurodivergence. Neurodivergent is a term used to describe someone who thinks differently from the way the majority (referred to as neurotypical) expect – this is something that Hannah acknowledges is a term still unheard of by many.

“I have started to mention to a few of the girls at netball that I’m autistic,” Hannah explains.

“I realised that autistic people can struggle a lot physically. I know where I need to be when I’m shooting but I feel like my body moves a second slower than my brain. Because it’s such a fast-paced game, something has already happened before my body can move and I’m like ‘ugh, I’ve just messed that up!’”

“Sometimes I struggle to grasp the concept of different drills and I get a bit flustered on the sideline and think ‘why can’t I understand it?’”

To support her, Hannah reaches out to her coach who helps to better her experience.

“I talk to my coach quite a lot about being autistic because she has quite a good understanding of it. She is very good at explaining things in a different way and is good at listening to me if I’m struggling.”

Despite some challenges, Hannah’s affinity for netball is unmoved.

“I really feel like it’s become such a part of my identity, knowing the game well and knowing how freeing it is to play well on court. If you have a good game, you feel absolutely on top of the world, and seeing your improvement, you just think ‘oh, I’m actually good at something so I should stick with this!’”

“I’ve never ever given up on netball because I just think this is for me, it’s not for anybody else.”

Hannah hopes in the future that more people will talk about neurodiversity and that other people who are neurodivergent can have role models to look up to at the top of the game.

“There must be people doing well who are also neurodivergent because being autistic, having ADHD, having dyspraxia is so common, more so than people realise.”

“Being LGBT+ as well, I love seeing Nat Panagarry and Stacey Francis-Bayman being so well-represented. It just makes you feel seen and that’s so important when it’s something you feel so passionate about.”



“ I’ve never ever given up on netball because I just think this is for me. ”



“There has to be diversity in all elements of netball.”

Kirsty Woodhouse

Off the court there are members of the Netball Family who are helping to pave the way for better experiences for the next generation. People like Kirsty Woodhouse.

Kirsty works for the county of West Yorkshire as their Officiating Secretary, a role she took up after her playing career. Whether it's playing or officiating, she loves both sides of the game and is now passing on this passion to her daughters.

“I just love it. In lockdown I appreciated it even more because I think like other people, we didn't know what we had until it was gone - meeting players, taking your mind off what has happened during the day and enjoying the sport.

“I ruptured my Achilles last year and while I've been recovering, I realise that I miss umpiring more. The people you meet and the friends you make; you create a bit of a community and it's great fun. Without netball I'd be lost.

“I'm getting my two little girls involved as well. They're eight and nine and they started a couple of years ago and are addicted. It's a good addiction to have!”

Following the death of George Floyd which raised the profile of the Black Lives Matter movement, Kirsty helped to set up a Here to Listen forum to provide people in the area with a means of sharing experiences in the sport.

This then led to the creation of West Yorkshire's Racial Equality Group of which Kirsty is the co-chair.

“When the forum was done, I had meetings with our county chair around what we could do next and what we could change because

West Yorkshire is very diverse. It's made up of lots of people with different ethnicities and religions and we want to ensure those bad experiences don't happen again.

“Our main aim through the Racial Equality Group is to train people so that they don't see colour - as simple as that may sound - and to remove that unconscious bias. People might not realise they're doing it so we're helping to educate and make people aware how certain actions can impact others.

“We've also set up a statement of purpose which outlines what we believe in, what we stand for and what we won't tolerate.

“Our next step will be to deliver that education and train people. We've got a vast range of people involved in the group and what's good is we have people part of the group that haven't experienced racism, but they want to change.”

One thing that Kirsty believes would help encourage change is the promotion of more diverse role models in other parts of the game.

“It's good that there is a lot of diversity with the players in the Superleague but if you look at other areas of the game like coaching, technical officials and umpires, for young kids who think 'I want to get there', there aren't as many role models for them and for some, they may not think they're going to get there.”

“There has to be diversity in all elements of netball, regardless of the role, to help other people think that they can get there; otherwise they will just stop.”

Nordia Masters

Balancing work, home life and netball is no mean feat. For Nordia Masters, ex-Army netball captain and ex-international player, the three have naturally intertwined.

Nordia had her first taste for netball as a child in Jamaica before moving to the UK where her netball journey stopped and then started again.

“Netball is like the female sport of Jamaica, you know!” Said Nordia. “I did a lot of high school netball and then I came over here and didn’t start playing again until I was 25. I joined the army and my first posting was in Germany and I was out there concentrating on work.”

Nordia also spent some time in Northern Ireland, where she played international netball and found an opportunity to combine two of her passions.

“When I came back to the UK and heard about netball in the Army, I was like ‘I’ve got to go get me some of that!’ I really wanted to get back into it. The first time I went to see them play, I got involved and they liked what they saw and they asked me to come back. Since then, it’s been going on and on!”

Finding time between being a regimental accountant and getting on the netball court, Nordia believes there are skills she has transferred from her job into the sport.

“My chain of command is very supportive and I’ve got a strong group of people around me who are really helpful.

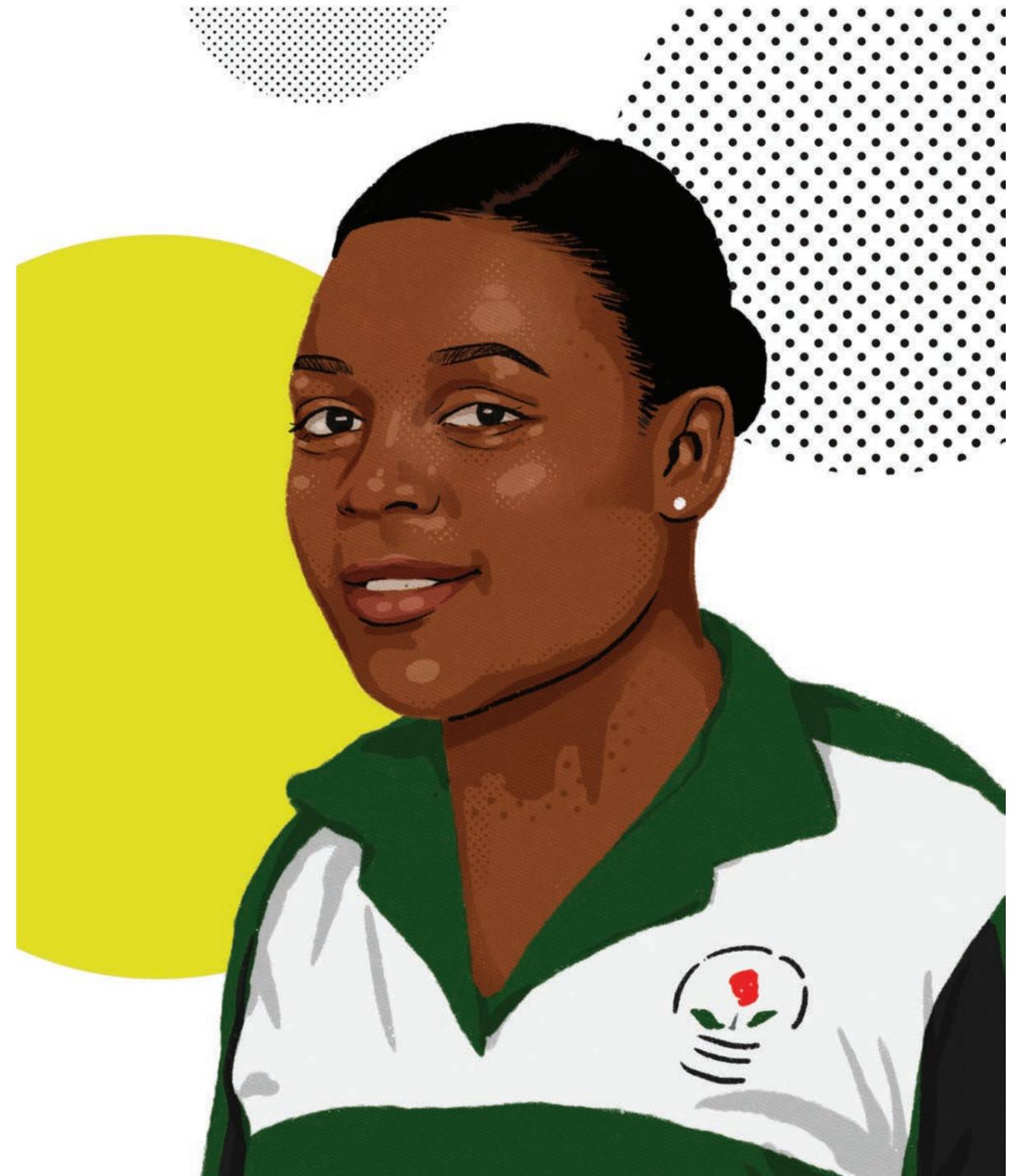
“Being in the army itself instills a lot of self-discipline and you bring that over to the netball court. We also have a team ethos. Doing things in teams is the norm for us in the army and we do a lot of team cohesion just to build rapport with each other.”

When not on a netball court, Nordia closely follows the Suncorp Super Netball league in Australia, where some of her friends from Jamaica play, as well as the Vitality Netball Superleague. She feels that the strong female role models in netball will encourage more girls to commit to pursuing opportunities in women’s sport.

“It’s really important because when you’re a young girl and you don’t see somebody who looks like you, or is the same sex as you, doing something positive, then you don’t really have anybody to look up to. Having that person who is doing well and is propelling themselves towards being the best is really empowering for young girls. It’s good to see women doing well, not only in sport, but in their careers because you have to have that balance, both career wise and sporting.”

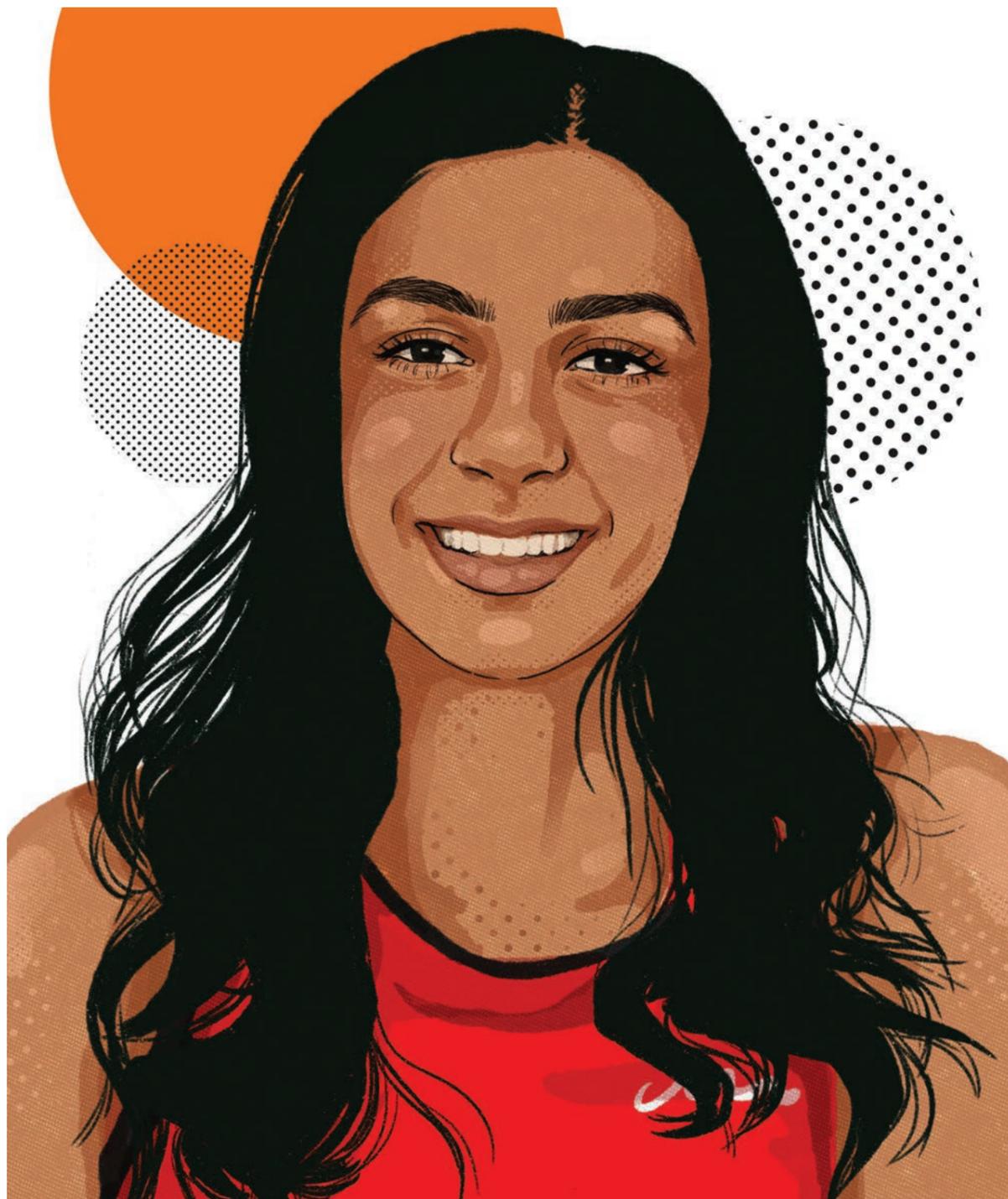
For Nordia, she hopes netball will have the same effect on her 4-year-old daughter as it does on her.

“You build some real friends at netball. It’s not just a sport that you just turn up to and play; it’s somewhere where you can go when you’re having a bad day and as soon as you see the girls you forget about it! There are some true friendships that I have built out of netball. Netball is a way of life for me.”



“Netball is a way of life for me.”

Ziana Butt



Daughter of a champion youth squash player and a semi-professional cricketer in Pakistan, Ziana Butt is using her sporting prowess through netball to encourage the next generation of British Asian sportswomen.

Ziana became a trailblazer for English netball in 2019 when she became the first player of Pakistani heritage to represent England in the England NETS U21's World Indoor Netball Championships.

Like other young girls, Ziana's love for netball was encouraged by her experience in school.

"I feel as if I've always played netball as it was part of regular PE lessons at school," Ziana began to explain. "I would always really look forward to it and I'd be the first one out of the changing rooms and onto the court. That love for the game from such a young age has really carried me through, from joining a club, to then a Superleague franchise pathway and also England Nets."

Training twice a week with Saracens Mavericks as well as being part of Premier League 3 side Leyton Netball Club, Ziana's dedication to the sport is paying dividends.

"Netball is a huge part of my daily life. Without it, I really don't think I would feel complete as to me, it's much more than just a sport."

"To play netball and sport I think in general you need a lot of other strong qualities and characteristics. I've been able to develop my teamwork, organisation, leadership and communications skills and build friendships over the years."

Using her experience, Ziana is trying to inspire other children into the sport through her book, *Aisha's Netball* - a story centralised around a young Asian girl who wants to play netball.

"I think it's fair to say that children like to read a variety of different books, some with characters that look like them that they can relate to and this can help develop a love for reading. With *Aisha's Netball*, I hope that this can be a creative way to encourage inclusion and a passion for the sport."

"Often, it's the lack of visible role models, acceptance and not knowing what to expect that can be daunting. I feel that the more Asian girls that start to play netball, the easier and more welcoming it will make it for others."

“ I feel that the more Asian girls that start to play netball, the easier and more welcoming it will make it for others. ”

