

[www.netballsl.com/team/severn-stars](http://www.netballsl.com/team/severn-stars)

The Severn Stars Super League Club joined in the 2017 season having applied for a franchise in 2016.

Why the name Severn Stars? The name emerged due to the River Severn meandering through the area and connecting the University of Gloucestershire and University of Worcester. Stars was a name created to connect with the Galaxy using words such as birth of a star, shining star etc. All could be connected to the development of players etc.

But why bid for a franchise? This was based on a discussion with Anita Navin (Head of School at University of Gloucestershire) and Vanessa Jones (Worcester University) who wanted to try and develop netball in the area using the resources of both universities. The ambition was to develop as much community netball as possible and then the chance to apply for a contract came up. Collaborating ensured expertise could be shared between personnel at both institutions.

What were the challenges? Contract bidding was in April to June 2016 ready for the 2017 Super League season. The challenges related to recruiting players when there were so many established clubs. Given the experience of Mick Donovan at Worcester with the Wolves Basketball franchise there were links to businesses interested in sponsorship. Arctic Saps pledged a commitment for 3 years to help the club develop - this was a great investment for 3 years circa £70k. CCR motor group sponsored the club with a stars decorated Mitsubishi car.

The club rallied volunteers from the netball fraternity at the premier clubs surrounding the two universities. Worcester had the arena and so the netball could mirror the Wolves basketball franchise. University of Gloucestershire were building an arena and so netball could also be hosted there. Matches are played at both University of Gloucestershire and Worcester University. Severn Stars used a consultant to help write the bid given the challenges of collating lots of information. Anita Navin, Mick Donovan and David Green (VC Worcester) presented the bid to EN, which was successful.

**Year 1 in 2017**, The Severn Stars Board included Dr. Anita Navin, Mick Donovan (Pro VC Worcester), Richard O’Doherty (Deputy VC Glos), Susie Scriven (Worcester), Pamela Cookey and finance and HR staff from each university.

Mo’onia Gerrard, an Australian ex- International was the Coach for the first season. Pamela Cookey was recruited as Director of Severn Stars Netball (14 hours per week) whilst employed at the University of Gloucestershire. Anita Navin was the Director of Coaching and Co-founder of the Club. Denise Egan was Head of Selectors and Technical coach. Sam Cook, who came over from Team Bath, was the Pathway Coach for 2017 to 2019 and Assistant Team Coach from 2018.

The first signing was Jodie Gibson – Severn Stars player number 1. Eleanor Cardwell and Laura Malcolm moved from Manchester Thunder. International players included Josie Janz (Australia) and Afisha Noel (Trinidad and Tobago International).

Sam Bird became the coach for the 2018 and 2019 seasons followed by Melissa Bessell (New Zealand). Iona Darroch joined the club in year 2 and was selected to the Roses Futures/U21 World Cup Squad held in Botswana in 2017.  
  
**During the short few years, Severn Stars developed and attracted several International players.**

[**England**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England_national_netball_team)[Ama Agbeze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ama_Agbeze)  
[Eleanor Cardwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_Cardwell)  
[Jodie Gibson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jodie_Gibson)

[**Australia**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia_national_netball_team)[Ashleigh Brazill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashleigh_Brazill)

[**Jamaica**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica_national_netball_team)[Jodi-Ann Ward](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jodi-Ann_Ward)

[**Malawi**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malawi_national_netball_team)[Towera Vinkhumbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Towera_Vinkhumbo)

[**New Zealand**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_national_netball_team)[Liana Leota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liana_Leota)

[**South Africa**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa_national_netball_team)[Maryka Holtzhausen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryka_Holtzhausen)  
[Phumza Maweni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phumza_Maweni)

[**Wales**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales_national_netball_team)[Nia Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nia_Jones)

[**Zimbabwe**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe_national_netball_team)[Adelaide Muskwe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adelaide_Muskwe)

Severn Stars also developed a strong pathway for future senior team players. This included U21, U19 and U17 squads, along with Academies, named Nova’s after the birth of a star, for 15 to 17 year olds in many schools across Gloucestershire an Worcestershire.

Severn Stars have a research paper published on their early development and ambitions around the culture / leadership being advocated at the club - published in The Sport Psychologist, 2000 -by Anita Navin and colleagues.