



A COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA BY
SARAH DELAPPE

Audience Guide



renaissance



THEATERWORKS

SYNOPSIS

THE WOLVES presents an up-close and personal view of a girls' indoor soccer team as they prepare before a game. Every Saturday the team of high school juniors warm up and drill with the ferocity of soldiers going into battle.

We are observers as the Wolves dive into rapid-fire, unfiltered conversations, navigating their personal lives and the politics of the larger world, including; war, menstrual products, genocide, sports, pop culture, and their relationships.

What happens when life both on and off the field tests the team's endurance? A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, THE WOLVES boldly celebrates the grit and grace of 21st-century American girls.

SETTING

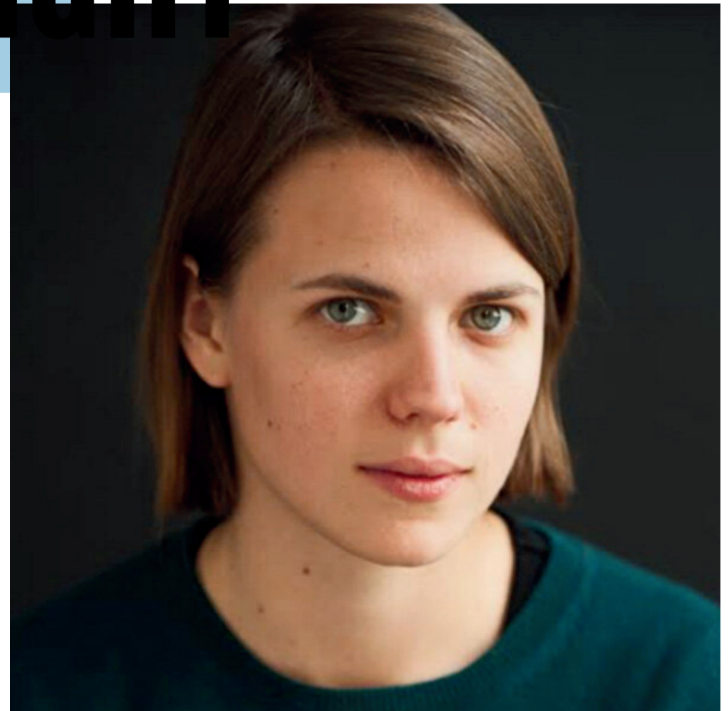
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THE WOLVES takes place on an indoor soccer field during the winter of 2018.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

SARAH DELAPPE

Sarah DeLappe is an American playwright. Her play THE WOLVES premiered Off-Broadway in 2016 to acclaim. It received the American Playwriting Foundation's Relentless Award in 2015 and was a finalist for the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play won the 2017 Obie Award for Ensemble work and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn and Yale Drama Series Prizes. DeLappe received her M.F.A. from Brooklyn College.



CHARACTERS



#11 MIDFIELD PLAYED BY MAYA THOMURE

Brainy, morbid, budding elitist, thoughtful. Seventeen. #11, is curious about the world and grapples with questions of morality.

- "I never said we should take our liberties for granted."



#25 DEFENSE, CAPTAIN PLAYED BY ALICE RIVERA

Classic (ex)coach's daughter. Seventeen. The team's Captain, #25, works to keep everyone in line, both physically and socially, while also making an attempt to strike out on her own with a new relationship.

- "I mean we like to have fun but you know uh 'if you can't say something nice don't say anything at all?"



#13 MIDFIELD PLAYED BY JOSIE VAN SLYKE

Stoner, older pot dealer brother, into her wackiness. Sixteen. #13 self-medicates with marijuana and attempts to understand the complexity of relationships.

- "We should be like very, very thankful for our liberties, you know."



#46 BENCH PLAYED BY REILEY FITZSIMMONS

New girl. Awkward, different, just wants to fit in. Sixteen. #46 struggles awkwardly, and often unsuccessfully, to fit in, but eventually proves that she is a worthy teammate.

- "Why can't I make a pregnancy joke?"



#2 DEFENSE PLAYED BY MADISON JONES

Innocent, unlucky, kind, skinny. Sixteen. #2, more innocent than the other girls, has strong religious beliefs and a secret eating disorder.

- "I eat plenty of protein. I like basically live on peanut butter and cheese!"

CHARACTERS



#7 STRIKER PLAYED BY RYAN BENNETT

Too cool for school. Sarcastic. "fuck," thick eyeliner. Almost Seventeen. The very cool #7 loses a bit of her cool factor when she gets injured and has to miss the last game in the season. She watches in dismay as #46 appears to usurp her position as striker.

- "We don't do genocides 'til senior year."



#14 MIDFIELD PLAYED BY LORELEI WESSELOWSKI

#7's insecure sidekick. Just switched to contacts. Sixteen. #14 tries to be as cool as her friend #7, but struggles with the pressure of sex and growing up before she is quite ready. She brings orange slices to practice and the team takes a photo with orange slices in their mouths.

- "Alright, um, look fierce."



#8 DEFENSE PLAYED BY NATALIE OTTMAN

Plays dumber than she is. Sixteen. #8 acts less intelligent than she is so that people will like her.

- "I am getting such a bad grade in social studies."



#00 GOALIE PLAYED BY ELENA MARKING

Intense performance anxiety, perfectionist, high achiever. Seventeen. #00 copes with intense anxiety which causes her to vomit before every game.

- "Even if he's weak, he deserves it."



SOCCER MOM PLAYED BY MARCELLA KEARNS

Soccer Mom shows up at practice after a tragedy, bringing with her a bag of orange slices and grief.

- "You're not getting any younger you know?"

AN INTERVIEW WITH SARAH DELAPPE*

Where did the play come from?

I played soccer and other sports as a kid, but I never played at the elite level as the girls who are on the Wolves. I quit when I was fourteen so I could do theater and act in plays. They didn't have a soccer team at my high school so, in a way, this is wish fulfillment: I got to write about the team that I was never a part of in high school.

A couple of summers ago, I went to an exhibit at The New Museum that was a survey of contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa. I was walking around and watching all of these metropolitan New Yorkers look at their iPhones in the middle of this incredibly affecting art about suicide bombings, and Syria, and the civil war in Lebanon, and then go back to drinking cold brew or talking about what they were doing that weekend. They would say something intelligent about the art and then just move quickly along with the rest of their life. There was something about the obvious gap in the experience of these people and the world that they were consuming briefly that made me think, "What could be further away than a bunch of suburban girls on an indoor soccer field warming up for a soccer game?"

On the subway on the way back to my apartment, I started writing the first scene of the play. At the time, I didn't know it was [the first scene] - it was just two simultaneous conversations, one about the Khmer Rouge and one about the efficacy of tampons or pads. While I was writing it, I quickly began thinking of it as a war movie. But instead of a bunch of men who are going into battle, you have a bunch of young women who are preparing for their soccer games.

Why did you choose to identify the characters by their numbers and not their names?

I wanted the characters to exist only as members of the team on the turf. This is the only place where they are athletes, first and foremost. I was interested in creating a world where teenage girls could define themselves, as opposed to being defined by parents or boyfriends or the male gaze. They get to set the rules, but they're also moving through this simultaneous, synchronized warm up, physically moving as one organism. Each of them existing as a number is related to the idea of them moving and existing as one organism on the field.

How long did it take you to write the play?

It was fast. The first draft was written in three weeks, a month. I spent at least two years refining it through a series of workshops, but seventy-five percent of the first draft is still intact. My changes are probably unnoticeable to the naked eye. I heard each of the nine voices orchestrally, so there would be a moment when I could just intuitively feel that we needed more piccolo here, or more cello here.

What made you want to become a playwright?

I reached a point in college when I felt disenchanted by my own abilities and limitations as an actor, but also at the roles that were available for women, especially young women. I took a playwriting class with Paula Vogel. I felt like everything about the [theater's] attention to "liveness" and actually being in the room - the way that it forces audience members to pay attention to the ways we're not paying attention in our day-to-day life - was really attractive to me.

What is your ideal relationship with a director, actors, designers, and the people who become a part of the production process?

My ideal collaborators are a lot of the people I've gotten to work with on *The Wolves*. Lila Neugebauer is an incredible director, fiercely intelligent and rigorous and generous to every single person involved with the process. (Neugebauer directed *The Wolves* at Lincoln Center.) She really understands these characters, and she really understands actors. Working with all of the designers and the actors is amazing. I had an idea of things going into it, but their vision, talent and skill exceeded any of my expectations. That's what's so great about theater. When you write a play it's just a blueprint for a production. You're one member of this very large team that's hopefully going to create an extraordinary event.

What are the questions that you want people to be thinking about when they watch the play?

The play has a certain 'choose-your-own-adventure' aspect to it because there's so much overlapping dialogue and so much action. I hope that the audience doesn't catch every single word or every single moment of the play. In a way, you're a fly-on-the-wall. I want the audience to be wondering who each of these girls are as they slowly reveal themselves over the course of the play.

SOCCER: THE RULES OF THE GAME

- A soccer game starts with a coin toss. The captain of the away team calls heads or tails. The team winning the toss takes the first kickoff.
- Each team consists of 11 soccer players. A game is split into two 45-minute halves, with a break in between for halftime.
- The aim of the game is to score goals by getting the ball into the other team's net. The team with the most goals at the end of the game wins.
- Players can score a goal from anywhere on the field, but there are some specific rules. For example, a goal cannot be scored from an indirect free kick.
- There is no time limit on how long a team can keep the ball.
- The game clock does not stop, even if the ball goes out of bounds or there is an injury.

PENALTY KICKS

often referred to as a "penalty," is a direct free kick awarded to a team in soccer when a defensive player commits a foul inside their own penalty area.

CORNER KICK

Occurs when the ball goes out of play over the goal line, the last team to touch the ball loses possession and the other team is awarded a corner kick. Kicking The ball from the intersection of the goal line and the touchline. Corner Kick: Megan Rapinoe
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwZjkVlxbys>

SHOOT OUT

When a match ends in a tie each team selects five players to take alternating penalty kicks. If the score remains tied the shootout goes into a sudden death, with each team taking one penalty kick at a time until a winner is determined.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UK FOOTBALL AND USA SOCCER

TERMINOLOGY

In the UK, the sport is known as "football," while in the USA, it is referred to as "soccer" to distinguish it from American football.

POPULARITY

Football is the most popular sport in the UK, ingrained in the culture and passionately followed by millions. In the USA, while soccer has grown in popularity, it competes with other major sports like American football, basketball, and baseball.

STRUCTURE OF THE LEAGUES

In the UK, football operates on a promotion and relegation system across multiple tiers of leagues. The top tier is the Premier League. In the USA, Major League Soccer (MLS) is the top-tier professional league, and there is no promotion and relegation system.

COMPETITION FORMAT

UK football has various domestic competitions such as the FA Cup and the League Cup, in addition to league competitions. In the USA, besides the MLS regular season, there is the MLS Cup, a playoff-style competition similar to other American sports leagues.

FAN CULTURE

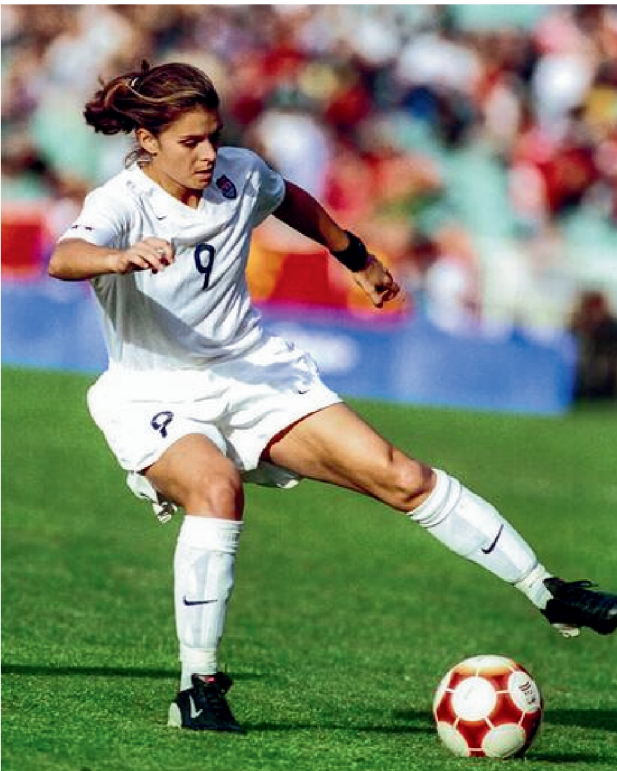
Football in the UK boasts passionate and dedicated fan bases for each club. Soccer in the USA is developing its fan culture.

WOMEN'S SOCCER IN THE U.S.

Soccer can be traced back to ancient China, ancient Greece, and ancient Rome; it is difficult to determine which country originated it. England is generally credited with making soccer, or “football,” the game we know today. Soccer has been in the U.S. since the mid-nineteenth century. It grew in popularity in the 1960s as a result of the creation of two national teams. The participation of women in soccer grew after Title IX was enacted in 1972, but it wasn't until the U.S. team's victory over China in the first Women's World Cup in 1991 that women catapulted to the forefront of the sport. The first U.S. women's professional soccer league formed after the U.S. national team's success at the 1999 Women's World Cup which featured soccer stars such as Mia Hamm, Michelle Akers, and Brandi Chastain.



Brandi Chastain



Mia Hamm

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the number of high school soccer players more than doubled, making soccer the fastest growing of all major U.S. sports. Today there are several national youth soccer club leagues, including the U.S. Youth Soccer Association and the American Youth Soccer Organization. Many high schools in the U.S. offer boys' and girls' soccer. Soccer is the third-most played team sport by high school girls today. Young soccer players may graduate from house leagues or rec leagues to travel leagues, in which they travel to different cities to play against more competitive teams.

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