

Over-60s hockey team prove age is just a number

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Wales's over-60s women's hockey team has proven that age is just a number after impressing at recent tournaments.

From left: Kerrin Bowen, Bev Rogers, Gaynor Gierak and Judith Powell representing Wales

The side competed at the Home Nations tournament in London before winning silver at the European Championships in Antwerp, Belgium.

The Home Nations tournament marked the Wales debut of 61-year-old striker Judith Powell from Blackwood.

Also featuring in the 18-player squad was 64-year-old defender Gaynor Gierak from Caerphilly and defender Kerrin Bowen, 66, from Penpedairheol.

The trio also played at the European Championships in June, where Wales beat Scotland and the Netherlands before being pipped in the final by world champions England.

Powell, who has been playing hockey since she was 11-years-old, said: "I probably didn't expect to still be playing hockey at my age when I first started.

"People don't realise how many clubs are in the area and the opportunities there are to keep doing sport.

"I would encourage people to continue and take up new sports at older ages.

"It's given me a new lease of life. The 2020 World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa is my goal and I'm going to keep up my fitness and training.

"It would be an immense feeling to take part in the World Cup next year.

"Being part of the team would be the pinnacle for me. There'll be teams from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and more competing."

It would be the first World Cup Powell has competed in, while Gierak and Bowen both played in the 2016 edition in Australia.

Speaking of the European Championships, Powell said: "Antwerp was my first time competing outside of the UK. The facilities were fantastic.

"The tournament felt massive and there were so many spectators. The support was fantastic."

Powell also explained that while the rules of Over 60s hockey are exactly the same as at any other age group, "we may run a bit slower than the 18-year-olds".

The women had to pay their own expenses to travel to and compete in the tournaments.

Powell explained: "We pay for it out of our own pockets. We don't get any funding at all.

"We're looking at getting sponsorship and fundraising as it will be costly to go to South Africa next year."

Meanwhile, Bev Rogers, 56, from Caerphilly will be travelling with the Over-55s Wales squad to compete at the Over-55s European Championships, which will be held in Krefeld, Germany from August 8 to August 17.

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