A new breed of soccer player is emerging here, and it sports painted toe-nails inside the boots. Lifestyle susses out this blooming trend.

In a move away from the often-described “beautiful game” of soccer, there’s a new type of player around with an even more flawless complexion, flashing eyes, and shapelier legs.

Welcome onto the pitch members of the elite sisterhood of soccer babes, who, in Singapore, are taking to the once male-dominated sport in increasing numbers.

All you doubting soccer die-hards, forget the old idea of soccer attracting she-men. This lot are mini-skirted, perfumed and made-up. But being girls doesn’t mean they are pushovers on the pitch. Any dribbling male player trying to score a goal could find himself outmanoeuvered.

The feisty females earn their studs playing in girls-only soccer leagues organised by the Football Association of Singapore (FAS), as well as in open category leagues such as the upcoming Diva La Futbol, a six-a-side tournament.

This one-day competition, set to take place July 1, is organised by the Singapore Management University’s (SMU) women soccer team in collaboration with Heartware Network, a non-profit youth organisation.

This year, the organisers have gone all out to encourage new players with a new ruling that forbids participants from fielding more than one league player per team. Also, the qualifying age group has been widened to range from 13 to 30, unlike the 15 to 25 age cap of the past.

Chairman of the planning committee Carissa Kang, 20, explains: “The cap on league players makes the competition less intimidating for beginners, while the extension of age limits means that the game can be a family activity, too.”

About 50 teams are expected to take part. They are likely to be made up of students in the secondary school to junior college age range, where soccer is fast becoming a popular sport.

Last year, the FAS kicked off an Inter-JC Girls’ Championship which has become so popular that nine teams from various colleges are taking part this year. So the organisers have upgraded the tournament from a seven-a-side format on a smaller pitch to a full-blown 11-a-side game on a regular pitch.

And it also has an Inter-secondary School Girls’ League, which is in its third year. This league is going strong, with 11 schools participating in the 11-a-side league.

As a sign of soccer’s growing appeal to younger girls, the first-ever FAS Girls’ Mini Football Carnival for those below the age of 12 attracted 31 teams in March this year. That has prompted plans to make this a quarterly event.

So what do guys feel about Singapore girls bending it like Beckham?

Brandon Lee, 18, a JC soccer player, reckons it is a winner: “It’s time to open up soccer to girls, since it has always been a male-dominated sport. Girls in soccer is an encouraging trend because soccer is a beautiful game that everyone can enjoy.”

That view is echoed by various soccer coaches and teachers in-charge of the all-girl teams here. They are quick to dispel any notion that girls are not as committed to the sport as their male counterparts.

“The girls train just as hard, if not harder.” says Mrs Chua Li Young, teacher-in-charge of the girls soccer team at Meridian Junior College.

So what do the girls have to say about the notion that soccer is a men’s sport?

“Some people still think that girls can’t play. So playing the game is really satisfying because every second on the pitch is proving them wrong.” says Nadiah Suhpi, 22, a player on the SMU team.

Christel Yong, 18, and Tan Xuan, 19, from Victoria Junior College’s team, say that girls in the game are fast leveling the playing field.

“The guys’ response? ‘Let the football do the talking,’” deadpans Lee.

Audrey Ong