

Women football players tackle stereotypes

■ Potential athletes for a pro football team are more concerned with giving their all than with breaking a nail

By Erin Middleton
for the Emerald

As a cool breeze blew across the green turf field next to the Recreation Center Saturday, about 40 young women stretched, sprinted, and prepared to try out for a new professional women's football league.

Women's football? "What's this?" I asked myself. Is it like powder puff, the game I tried to organize as a fundraiser in high school with other girls? I tried, but in the end, the game fell flat on its face because we could never get it together.

Or would it be like tag football, the fifth- and sixth-grade PE game we used to play with boys and girls running around grabbing a colorful ribbon from somebody's waist?

I soon found out this was the real deal. I would not find any ribbons in this game, nor would this be a fundraiser. It was going to be full-contact football, just with women.

Now, don't get me wrong. I think women playing football is a great idea, something that's never been done before, but I had to ask the coach (in not so many words): "How are you going to get rid of the stereotype of big-breasted, beautiful women running around in tight clothing, wrestling in mud together?"

"Hey, this ain't no powder-puffin'. It's just as fast ... as strong ... as men's football," owner and manager Randall Field said. Field stressed the point that the women trying out were "full-fledged athletes" and were going to be "more vicious than men playing football."

As women assembled on the field, coach Osbourn Thomas, in an attempt to gain their attention, called out "Hey guys!" Then, after a brief pause, he corrected himself, saying, "Ladies," followed by a brief smile and a laugh. I can see Thomas is going to take some time adjusting to the

fact that females are now going to be running the show — literally.

As I watched women of all ages, heights, weights, hair colors, nail colors, bra sizes, and shoe sizes run 40-yard sprints, I realized they meant business. I reminisced about one of my favorite all-time movies, "A League of Their Own." You know, the one starring Tom Hanks, Madonna, Geena Davis, Rosie O'Donnell, and a bunch of other people, playing in the first-ever all-women professional baseball league. Hanks has a hard time coaching feminine characters in a male-dominated sport, but the women drive on with spirit and charisma. I love that movie! Go women! I asked some of the prospective players what their thoughts were about being in the first-ever professional Women's American Football League.

"I think it's fun. It's a good opportunity for women to get out and play some ball," said Christie Hardenbrook. Hardenbrook, along with other women, said she had always wanted to play football. Well, now I guess this is their chance.

As Thomas gave the team a five-

minute break, I wandered to the sideline to talk to some women getting a drink of water, when I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. Player Cindy Ottley's knee was covered in clumps of turf and bright red blood. She sat calmly, but I freaked out.

"I dove for a pass ... it's all right," she said. "I played soccer and was goalie. It's part of sports."

Ottley did not need any assistance, not even a Band-Aid. When I asked Ottley what position she hoped to play, she responded, "Hopefully I'll be a linebacker, so I can hit people."

I definitely do not want to get on her bad side.

This team is for real — women are going to play football. There's not going to be make-up or pretty jewelry, and whining will not be tolerated. These are the criteria of the Oregon Unforgiven, one of two teams in the new Women's American Football League from Oregon. The other team hails from Portland, known as the Rose City Wildcats.

The 40 or so young women standing on the turf eagerly awaited their

next order to do push-ups, sprints, shuttle runs or passes. They weren't as ready to go home as I was. I admired their stamina.

As tryouts were coming to an end and I was exhausted from just standing around, Thomas yelled out, "This is the fourth quarter. This is where we get better. I want every second to count."

Every second to count, I thought. I've been out here for two hours. I'm tired, let me go home.

I am proud of my fellow females for doing something they've never been given the chance to do: play a sport that only men, up until now, have excelled in.

As I packed up my stuff to go home for the day, I remembered what Amy Howard told me before tryouts: "All my girliness is at home."

Well Amy, all MY girliness is going home. Today, I will do my nails, primp my hair, and watch my eight-minute-abs tape. I will turn on reruns of "Saved by the Bell" and relax. But I will not be playing football. Let it be said that I support those women who had the foot-"balls" to try out.

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Much information still confidential in civil rights complaint against UO

■ A complaint of alleged discrimination has been filed against Project Saferide, but no details have been released

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

A complaint against the University singling out Project Saferide has been filed with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) — but details about the complaint and who filed it are under lock and key.

The University received a letter written March 23 by Nicholas Rock, the OCR investigator handling the case. The letter said a complaint had been filed alleging gender discrimination by Saferide because only females are allowed to participate in and take advantage of the program. Saferide is recognized by the ASUO, which means it receives funding from student incidental fees.

But the University administration said that's all it knows.

"We know almost nothing, but

we're trying to find out," said Anne Leavitt, vice president for student affairs and dean of students at the University. "We're still out of the loop."

Roger Murphy, U.S. Department of Education OCR spokesman, said the complaint was filed Jan. 31. In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1972, however, the name of the person or persons who filed the complaint will never be released.

The actual wording of the complaint has not been revealed to the administration, Leavitt said, which makes it hard for the University to respond.

University General Counsel Melinda Grier said the administration had received a phone call from Rock, introducing himself and saying that there was an investigation underway. Rock said he would be contacting the University more as the investigation continues, she said.

Grier said the administration will cooperate fully — as it always does in a situation such as this — and provide the investigators with all the information they need.

Until then, Leavitt said, the administration and the others who would be involved in the action, including the ASUO and the Office of Affirmative Action, will remain in the dark.

"It's going to be a very interesting conversation, but I don't know yet how it's going to unfold," Leavitt said.

Grier pointed out that any movements made now are "really preliminary," and that while an outcome is possible within a few months, it may not arrive for up to a year.

"It's so early right now that it's really hard at this point to have a sense of what it's going to be looking at," Grier said.

The way such complaint investigations typically play out, Murphy said, is that the involved parties reach a resolution. In extreme cases in which the sides are unable to come to an agreement, steps can be taken to stop federal funding to the school. But Murphy emphasized that hardly ever happens.

"That's a very extreme and a very rare case," Murphy said. "Very rare."

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Calendar

Tuesday, April 17

Career Center presents: "How to Work the Fair." 12:30 p.m. River Room, EMU. For information, call 346-6020.

Workshop: "Negotiating a Job Offer." 2 p.m. River Room, EMU. Free. For information, call 346-6020.

Architecture and Allied Arts Faculty Lecture: Richard Sundt, art history, discusses "Maori vs. Missionaries: Cultural Interference and Compromise in the Decoration of Traditional Maori Churches in 19th-Century New Zealand." Mary Ann Beecher, architect, presents "Stories My Chair Told Me," a look at what designed objects and the built environment reveal about aspects of American culture. 4 p.m. Room 206, Lawrence Hall. Free. For information, call 346-2077.

International Film Series: "St. Michael Had a Rooster" (Italy) tells how Italian International member Giulio Maniere, sentenced to life imprisonment for illegal activities, holds onto his political ideals while struggling against insanity in the loneliness of prison. This is part of the "You Say You Want a Revolution?" series of films shown in their original languages with English subtitles. 7-9 p.m. Room 122, Pacific Hall. Free. For information, call 346-4011.

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