

War game pitting Oregon State University against University of Oregon—football is nearly a religion. To date, however, women's full-contact football has not become the opiate of the masses. According to Allinger, between 200 and 500 fans attend each home game at Lincoln High School.

Brisson is concerned about attendance but knows women's football is gaining in popularity. "The sport is growing in some respects," she begins. "We have 30 teams in the league [from as far east as New York and as far south as Jacksonville, Fla.] and we don't want the league to add more teams. What we want is the fan base to grow."

And it is—at least in some markets. Perennial powerhouses like the New York Sharks and three-time national champions the Sacramento Sirens generate enough revenues to pay their players and provide top-quality equipment.

The Portland Shockwave still holds small fund-raisers like a recent karaoke night where the team sold 200 tickets. The team also depends on the sale of merchandise such as T-shirts, caps, hats and league balls. The game is more expensive than you think: Pads, pants and jersey run 200 bucks, and a helmet can cost that much alone. Players contribute a nominal \$20 a year to the league for the chance to play, and the prestige is nonexistent. After games, the women will politely sign autographs, photos and posters.

Little-Known Facts

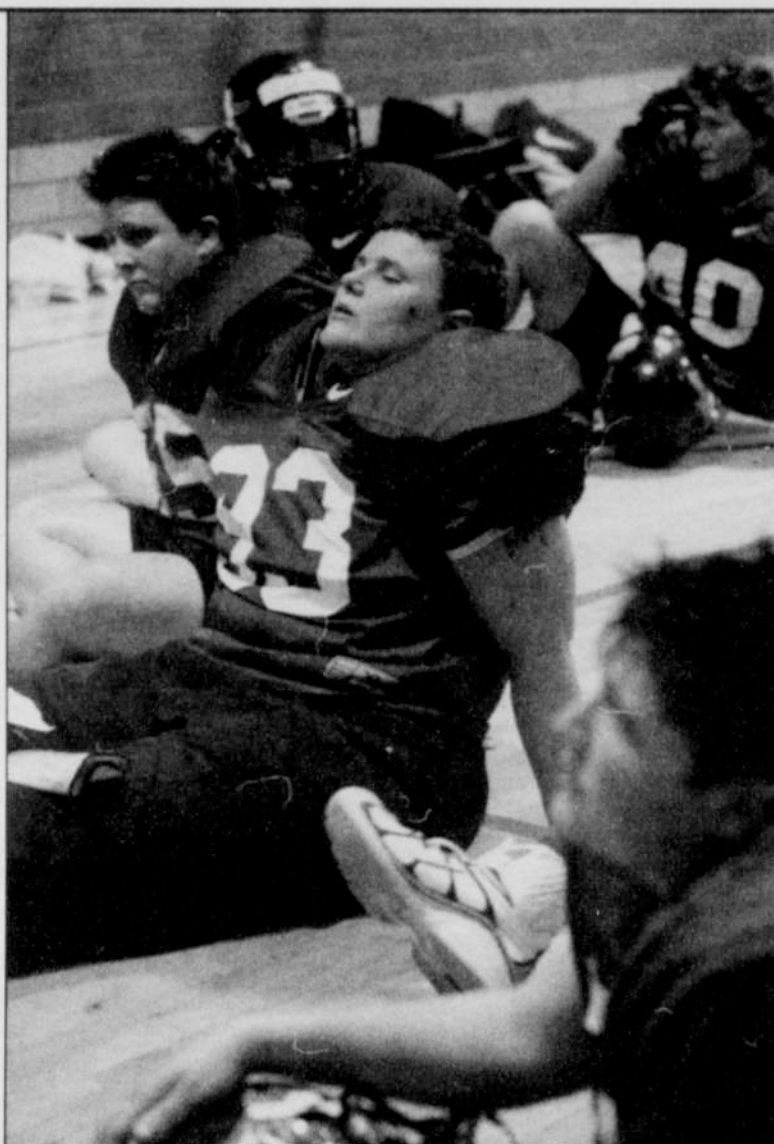
About Women Warriors in History #5:

Matilda, countess of Tuscany, was born in northern Italy in A.D. 1046. She learned weapons skills as a child. She first went into battle at her mother's side in A.D. 1061 defending the interests of Pope Alexander II.

When her stepfather, Duke Godfrey, died eight years later, Matilda began to command armies. She led her troops personally and wielded her late father's sword.

She spent some 30 years at war in the service of Pope Gregory VIII.

We're perhaps indebted to these women warriors—valiant of spirit and strong of body—

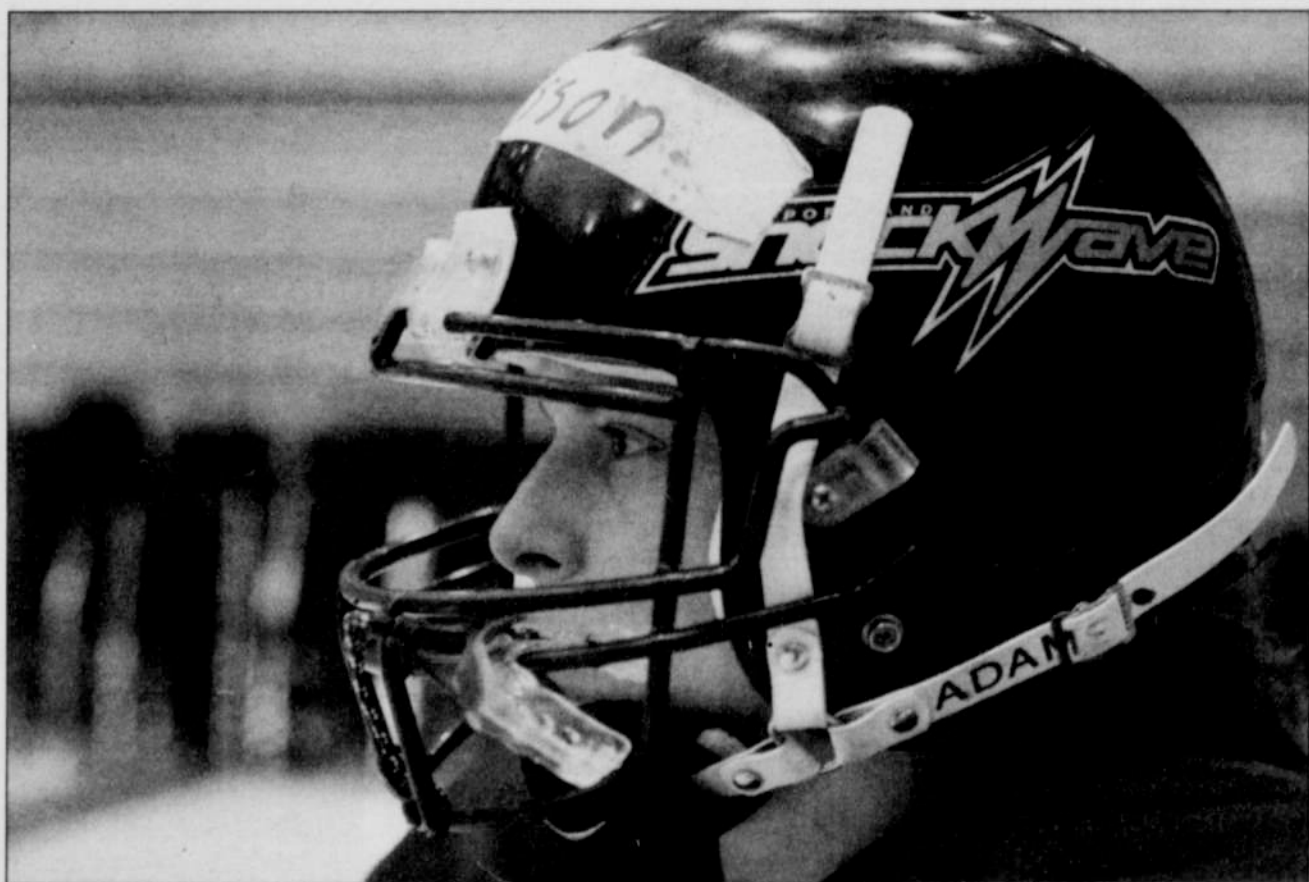


The women range in age from 19 to 44.

who carry the sport of women's full-contact football on their shoulders and best represent the game. These women make nothing. They work their asses off not for trophies or fanfare or adulation. No, they work side by side because they love football. After decades of hearing they could not play football because they were girls or because they weren't tough enough, they finally can express themselves through their sport. And no man on earth—not Peyton Manning, Walter Jones or even Matt Hasselbeck—knows what it's like to play football against these women. And if they did, they'd be scared. Trust me on that. 10

The PORTLAND SHOCKWAVE takes on the Redding Rage of California 4 p.m. April 29 at Lincoln High School, 1600 S.W. Salmon St. Tickets are \$3-\$7. The team is accepting players all season long. For more information call 503-693-4844 or 360-513-6575 or visit www.portlandshockwave.com.

JOSHUA RYAN is an Emmy-nominated performer and writer and a former award-winning club owner and Las Vegas showgirl. You can write him at sashascarlett@msn.com.



Team owner Rebecca Brisson was named Defensive Player of the Year in 2004.



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