

Calendar Girls

Pinups promote power

I spotted two women working out at a break-neck pace while I was scanning the weight room floor a few evenings ago. The woman in charge of the workout had thick arms and was very focused. I watched as she worked out, assuming her to be a trainer or athlete. Every time I glanced over, she was doing something more difficult and worthy of watching. Then it happened. She and her girlfriend started staring back at me. I don't like to wear my glasses when I train, so upon closer inspection, I noticed that the thick-armed woman had two black eyes, a "goose egg" on her forehead and a swollen nose. I started to laugh a little nervously, knowing that this is Loprinzi's Gym and that all types exercise here. I thought I might have a fight on my hands.

Beckett Royce then approached and in a soft-spoken voice I wasn't expecting and told me about Oregon Sports Union Rugby Club's 2007 calendar. I breathed a sigh of relief and checked out the calendar, which is full of nearly naked muscular women with balls (rugby balls, of course). Always on the lookout for good women's athletic calendars, Beckett says: "I got tired of seeing calendars that portrayed women as slutty or overly femmy. The calendar portrays women as strong, attractive and nothing to be hidden by a skirt. We designed this calendar to raise funds for the team."

At 32 years old, when most people opt toward lighter-impact activities like television, Beckett started playing rugby at the urging of a friend. She's now entering her fourth season at age 35. The lifelong athlete began playing sports at the age of 5 as



Dear Ethel
BY MARIA CALLAHAN

an Army brat in the Dependent Youth Activities league, excelling at soccer. A construction worker specializing in residential remodeling, Beckett says that her upper body has always been stronger than most women but that she started weight training and quit smoking as soon she realized she wanted to develop as a player.

In rugby, team positions correspond to jersey numbers. Nos. 1 through 8 are forwards. They tend to be bigger and stronger in stature than backs (Nos. 9 through 15), who tend to be faster and smaller. In Union rugby (15 players a team), Beckett usually plays No. 7 (flanker), whose job is to defend against the backs of the opposing team—somewhat similar to football's linebacker position. No. 7 is arguably the most aggressive position in Union rugby.

Beckett was recently asked to play on the U.S. National 7s team (seven players a team) at a tournament in Barbados. 7s rugby features three for-

wards, three backs and a scrum half, the player who distributes the ball between forwards and backs. 7s is a faster game, consisting of two seven-minute halves (a Union game is two 40-minute halves), and 7s players tend to be similarly matched, physically and athletically speaking.

Beckett wasn't exactly ready for the physical challenge of Barbados' humidity, known to drop many a player. Despite the heat index, she was voted "most valuable player" and was the leading try (touchdown) scorer. Oh, and she received stitches on the field, with someone wiping the sweat off the stitching doctor's face.

Looking at the large bandage above her left eye, I finally had to ask why. Without missing a beat, Beckett said, "Because I like the team dynamics, and rugby is the most complete type of competition because it takes strength, speed, aggression, endurance and skill."

And, I'd like to add, because she can.

You can purchase the 2007 rugby calendar at www.ruggeronly.com, Haven Coffeehouse, Loprinzi's Gym, Hawthorne Chiropractic and Jackman Joe Coffee.

Now for this month's question.

DEAR ETHEL:

My friends are trying to convince me to play rugby with them next season. I'm athletic, but I'm 39 and I've gotten pretty heavy during the past few years. Ethel, will I be killed?



Photographer Brigett Mann, who shot the Oregon Sports Union Rugby Club calendar, plays No. 2 hooker on the team.

Focus on strength training before weight loss, and remember that you must train aggressively to prevent injury. If you're not willing to dedicate yourself to a structured and intense training program, don't bother playing next spring—for your own safety. Contrary to common belief, rugby isn't all about clobbering your opponent mercilessly without cause; it's illegal to tackle someone unless she possesses the ball. To further encourage and entice you (and potential spectators) into this exhilarating game: After scoring her first try, a player commonly removes her clothing quickly while the team dances and chants around her. **10**

To learn more about rugby, visit news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/flow/rugby_union/rules_and_equipment/default.tm.

Information in this column should not be used in place of advice from a licensed health care professional. If you have a health or fitness question, e-mail DEAR ETHEL at mariacallahan@gmail.com or visit www.mariacallahan.net.

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