



CHRIS KRAUSE



ANDREA WING



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rule was enforced in a game: "The first time I saw a team stripped down to their underwear, I was in awe. But the real FOB moment came when the striker continued to shoot at the goal. The keeper moved out of the way as the ball rolled in, and the winning team had to play the rest of the game buck naked."

The original organizers deemed FOB as a "festival" rather than a "tournament" to sidestep the rigidity that accompanies official tournament status. The added flexibility of a "festival" allowed for greater emphasis on community building as well as soccer: "[FOB] was mostly about having a soccer tournament that was less focused on the rules and regulations and what felt like the fuddy-duddyness of mainstream soccer and more on celebrating the community aspect—especially for women—of playing on a soccer team," remarks Alexa Wilkie, another founding member of the festival.

Other FOB eccentricities? Running with beer in hand, kissing the ref at the end of the game, hugging the goalkeepers after a goal, spankings for bad behavior and topless penalty kick shootouts.

While the initial tournament was held in San Francisco, FOB has now taken place in two different countries and four cities. The mobility of the festival not only enables responsibilities to be shared among a broad pool of organizers, but it also allows each city to shape the tournament in its own, unique way. "Part of the evolution was to export [FOB] to other cities, who [would add] their own stamp to the festival," says White. This consistent fresh perspective, she believes, is one of the reasons FOB is still thriving 17 years after its inception.

With its colorful and often raucous antics, it is easy to overlook the revolutionary nature of Festival of the Babes. It is not merely a huge lesbian party shrouded in the veil of irony and athleticism. In the world of contact sports, FOB represents a radical rebuttal to the patriarchal, homophobic ideologies that either prevent lesbians from engaging in

sports in the first place or silence them once they are in a team environment. Historically, gender-specific team sports represent a bastion of homophobic anxiety. In such an intimate, homosocial setting, heterosexual ideals and boundaries are compulsively policed.

Wilkie reflects on the sociopolitical implications of a lesbian soccer festival: "It was about challenging homophobia in sports and creating an environment for a soccer tournament in which lesbians could be comfortable expressing themselves." Whether it be playing an entire match in your skivvies or settling the score with a hearty makeout session, FOB undoubtedly succeeds in its attacks against institutionalized inhibitions.

This spirit of revelry exists on and off the field. In addition to organizing two solid days of soccer, the FOB pack also plans parties held at the end of all three days of the festival at various venues. (No games are played on the first day.) The social aspects of FOB—during games, on the sidelines or at parties—create a unique environment in which queer women can connect. Countless lesbian love stories began in the sweaty tangles of lighthearted competition. When asked how FOB has changed her life, White replies: "All of my most important friendships have their roots in FOB." **jo**

*"With little more than word of mouth, it grew year by year into what it is now: almost a Halloween, Gay Pride, Burning Woman, soccer event that now turns teams away."*

—Millie Supple



Portland hosts FESTIVAL OF THE BABES

Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 at Fernhill Park in Northeast Portland. If you have a team that is interested in playing, download a form and mail it in promptly along with the registration fee. FOB is run entirely by volunteers and is always looking for extra help. For more information or to volunteer, visit [www.festivalofthebabes.com](http://www.festivalofthebabes.com).

MARIA CALLAHAN is a certified personal trainer and group fitness instructor who can be reached via [www.mariacallahan.net](http://www.mariacallahan.net).



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Festival of the Babes started during the summer of 1991 in San Francisco.

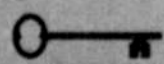


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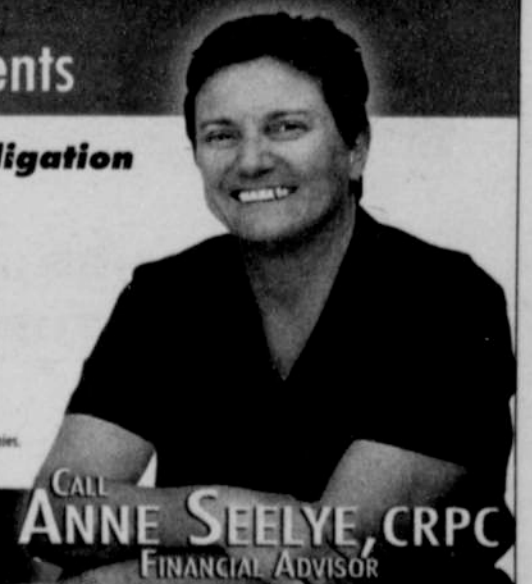
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