

Enough Powder Puff

Fighting Fillies tackle empowerment with full-contact force

The Portland Fighting Fillies may be a young team, but they aren't wasting any time rising to the challenge of competing against more established women's football teams. Formed in 2009, the player-owned and -operated professional team was undefeated in its division last year and went on to compete in the playoffs.

The Fighting Fillies are members of the Women's Football Alliance, a league with a National and American conference and more than 60 teams. The WFA is one of a handful of women's full-contact football leagues in the United States.

One of the Fillies' founding members, 38-year-old Tracy Sand, came to the team with eight years' experience playing for the Portland Shockwave, a team in the International Women's Football League.

"That team provided me with an amazing experience and growth, but I wanted to try something new with a new league," Sand, a player and member of the board, recalls. "I played football since I could walk. I would have liked to play in high school, but things were different back then. The coach at my high school was absolutely against girls being on the field."

Now, the Fillies provide opportunities for women and girls that they otherwise might not have, inspired by the team's motto, "Empowering women, one yard at a time."

"Empowerment comes from supporting one



another in whatever path or pastime we choose," Sand explains. "Part of fulfilling our mission is to provide camps for kids that encourage being healthy through play. Football is a great form of play and an outlet for the aggression women are taught to suppress."

It's also an opportunity for women to bond, whether on the field or in the van traveling to a faraway game. Despite the stereotypes, Sand, who is gay, points out the team is not full of lesbians—more like half full.

"It's my belief that teams recruit and find talent in the queer community out of comfort, but if we reach out more to other areas and broaden our scope of recruiting, then teams would certainly hang around 50-50 or even with a more 'straight' base," she explains. "I think the tough straight girls just haven't heard about us enough yet."

The team strives to be accessible, creating a

variety of ways for people to get involved. For those who would rather not be on the field, there are opportunities to coach, volunteer, perform at games and, of course, cheer the team on.

To learn more, visit fightingfillies.com or catch the next home game against the Utah Blitz April 16 at La Salle High School in Milwaukie.

—ERIN ROOK

Paddle Power

Amazon Dragons make a splash for lesbian visibility

Anyone who has walked along or over the Willamette River during the spring and summer has likely seen dragon boats gliding across the water, paddles moving in graceful unison. Among those dedicated paddlers are the Ama-

zon Dragons, Portland's only all-lesbian team.

"I used to commute over the Marquam Bridge and happened to see the Rose Fest races in progress and it looked like fun," says Sandra Lutz-Harden, 45. She's been with the team since 2000 and assists the advisory council. "I was on a women's list serv and the Amazons were looking for new paddlers and I responded."

Started in 1991 as a visibility effort by the Lesbian Community Project, the team initially just participated in the Rose Festival but now attends Row for a Cure and other local races throughout the March-October season.

Dragon boat racing originated in China more than 2,000 years ago and is a traditional component in the ancient Duanwu Festival. The Rose Festival dragon boat races are organized by the Portland-Kaohsiung Sister City Association.

This year will be the Amazons' 20th Rose Festival. The team won that race in 2008, and has placed first in races in Kent, Wash. and in the Row for a Cure. Newbies interested in joining this diverse group of women are invited to attend three practices before they make a decision.

"Paddling gets into your system and you really jones for it," Lutz-Harden says. "Well, at least I did and do."

Lutz-Harden compares dragon boat racing to synchronized swimming because it requires paddlers to work in perfect unison. Each boat holds 16-20 paddlers, a caller and a tiller (to steer) moving forward toward the finish line.

Fortunately, the Amazons have dedicated fans

Lakeside
Bicycles

Everyone Wins

428 N. State St. Lake Oswego
503-699-8665 Lakeside-bikes.com

Doug Beebe + Tom Cotter
Brokers

Doug 503.471.3479
Tom 503.471.3405

CALL us for all PDX Open Houses!
CALL for a value report on
any neighborhood!

EveryPortlandHome.com
THE source for Buyers & Sellers!

WESTOVER HEIGHTS

C L I N I C

Offering general internal
medicine and excelling
in sexual health care

Serving the community for 29 years

2330 NW Flanders
Suite 207
503-226-6678

Looking at hot bodies
at the gym is fun.

Teaching others how
to become healthy is
fun, satisfying
and profitable.

Become a Nationally Certified
Personal Trainer

empowerfitacademy.com

503-274-(BODY) 2639