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Capital Pioneers offer tackle football to women from "all walks of life"



The Capital Pioneers celebrate after completing an undefeated regular season in 2021. Submitted photo

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Rebecca Fineran has always had a passion for football. But after being forced to sit on the sideline for most of her life because of her gender, the Keizer resident decided that she wanted to strive to help women and girls play that game she has loved her whole life.

Fineran is the president of the Salem Women's Football Association, a non-profit that was created in 2019 with the goal of expanding football opportunities for women and girls in the area. Additionally, she plays tight end and defensive line on the Capital Pioneers, an all women's tackle football team that is a part of the Women's Football Alliance — which features teams from Portland, Medford, Eugene and Washington State.

"As a woman, you're told that there's a standard and that you're supposed

to look a certain way, even if you're an athlete. Football shows women that,

regardless of shape or size, we will find a position for you and you can be good at it," Fineran said.

In their inaugural 2021 campaign, the Pioneers went 6-0 during the regular season before being knocked out of the playoffs by the Arizona Outcasts. Ten players on the Pioneers were selected to play in the league's All-American games in Canton, Ohio.

Considering

that they had less than 20 players on the roster, the first-year success of the Pioneers was quite remarkable. Fineran said that it was the most enjoyable sports experience she has ever had.

"It is the most fun sport I have ever played, and I played a lot of sports growing up. It's amazing. I hope I can keep going for years to come," Fineran said.

Fineran was contemplating not playing this season and just resuming her duties in the front office. But when she discovered how much she was inspiring her children, she was motivated to keep competing.

"My daughter didn't want me to quit because she wanted to tell people that her mom plays tackle football. I didn't realize how much our families and kids really latched on to it," Fineran said.

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— REBECCA FINERAN

President, SALEM WOMEN'S FB. ASSO.