Dallas Diamonds Are A Girl’s Best Friend

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Girls don’t play football.

One Oklahoma State University student not only plays football, but she gets paid to play. Yes, that’s right, she.

Dani Lynn Welniak is a professional athlete and wide receiver for the Dallas Diamonds, which is one of the seven teams of the Independent Woman’s Football league. Her story is unlike many American women.

Welniak is from Keller, Texas, but was born in Illinois and grew up in Australia. She attended Keller Central High School where she played varsity softball and volleyball.

Although Welniak was very athletic and played many sports in high school, she did not start playing football for a team until she was 18 years old. A friend was a member of the Dallas Diamonds and urged Welniak to try out once she saw the potential.

“After watching me in our powder-puff football game, they were like ‘Hey you should come try this out,’” Welniak said.

Welniak’s mother, Stacey Welniak, lives in Keller, Texas and works for the Dallas Diamonds in the VIP room. She has helped a lot with her daughter’s success. Welniak gave her mother the title, “biggest support system ever.” Before attending OSU, Welniak worked two jobs. Not only is she a member of the Dallas Diamonds, but also a member of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority and a fulltime student.

“Without my mom I would not be able to do any of this, especially now that I am going to OSU,” Welniak said.

Stacey has never missed a game and brings her younger daughter and son to watch Welniak.

“Being Dani Lynn’s mom is one of the proudest things I have ever been. I support her 110 percent and I am her biggest fan,” Stacey said.

Welniak is a sports media broadcasting major and zoology minor. This is her first year attending OSU. She attended Tarrant County College in Dallas where she earned her associates of arts degree.

When the Dallas Diamonds are in season, Welniak travels four hours to Dallas every Wednesday in order to make team practices.

“Off season I workout on my own because we just work on the fundamentals, but during the season we have something every day,” said Welniak.

Welniak goes to class Monday through Wednesday and attends class from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.. After class on Wednesday, she drives to Dallas in order to make it to team practice on Thursday. The team has a “walk through” on Friday and then plays its game-time Saturday.

Dawn Berndt is the owner of the Dallas Diamonds and founded the team in 2001.

"People think ‘women's football' and ignore us, but they haven't seen these women play," Berndt said.

The Dallas Diamonds is part of the Independent Woman’s Football League, which is made up of seven teams. The season includes seven games, playoffs, and a Super Bowl Championship, according to the IWFL Web site.

The Kansas City Tribe is the defending world champion after winning the 2009 Super Bowl, but the Diamonds have won four Super Bowl Championships, according to the Dallas Diamonds Web site.

Welniak was on the Dallas Diamonds’ 2008 World Championship Team, but had to work hard and overcome obstacles in order to achieve this goal.

“I broke my leg six weeks before the Super Bowl and had a metal plate and five screws put in my leg. I was devastated but worked really hard and started in the Super Bowl game and we won, “ Welniak said.

Not only has Welniak won a Super Bowl, but also recently made the Women’s Olympic Football team for the 2012 summer Olympics.

“More than 200 girls tried out and I happen to be one of the lucky 45 chosen to be on the team,” Welniak said.

Men’s and women’s football will be an exhibition sport at the 2012 Summer Olympics. Teams will compete for the gold medal, but football has not officially become an Olympic sport. The women’s team was organized under USA Football and it will play five other countries during the exhibition.

“We are going to prove to the world that girls can play football too,” Welniak said.

**Sources**

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Dallas Diamond’s Web site: "Dallas Diamonds". Dallas Diamonds Football. April 12, 2010 <http://www.dallasdiamondsfootball.com/>.

IWFL Web site: "The Official Web Page of the IWFL". Independent Women's Football League. April 12, 2010 <http://www.iwflsports.com/>.