

# DISHIN' DIVAS

SPRING 2010/VOLUME NO. 1

## In Love with a Fantasy Football Fanatic? Start Your Own League

By: Cherri Gregg Mincey

For most women, football off-season is a time to rejoice. It is a time when wives and girlfriends- fondly referred to as "football widows"- once again have access to their football-obsessed husbands and significant others. It is a time when Sundays are once again fair game for family outings and events.

But not all women are happy when football season ends. There is a growing number of women that have found a way enjoy football and to keep their man interested all year round.

Fantasy football is a game where participants, called "owners," are arranged into leagues and earn points based on the statistics of real football players. The concept, which rewards the most knowledgeable and passionate participants, is a powerful draw to fans keen to participate in the greater drama of their sport in some small way.

According to SportsBuff.com, an estimated 20 million Americans played fantasy football; roughly 20 to 25 percent of the fantasy market is women.

Tomika Stevens, 34, an attorney and avid football fan has played fantasy football for four years.

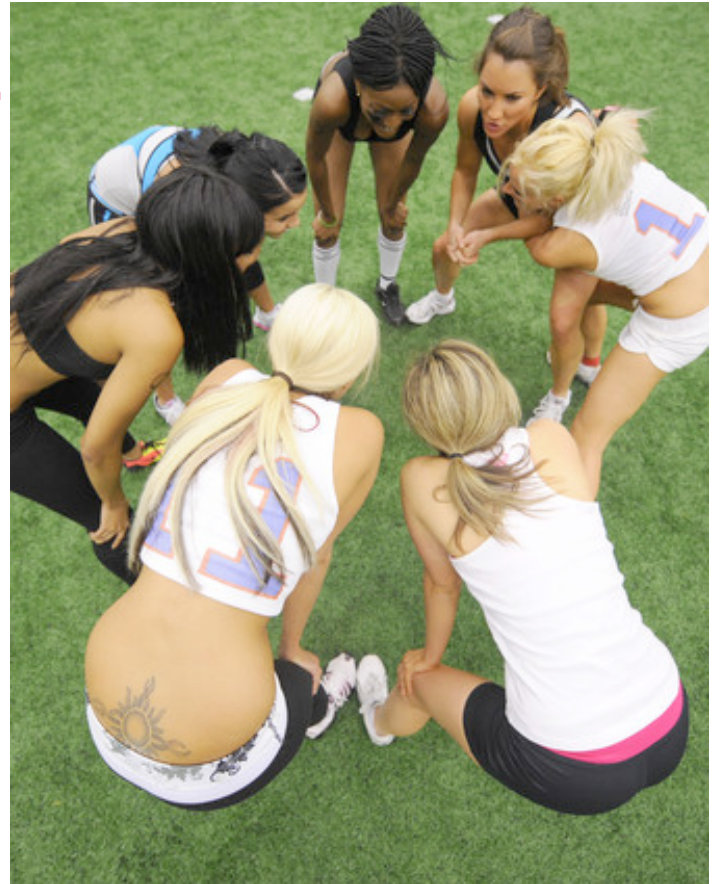
"I was already a football fan, but I had always looked at football as a team sport," she says. "I thought it would be interesting to take players from different teams."

Stevens says that she was not very good when she started, but her competitive nature made her work on her game.

"I sucked the first year," says Stevens. "I picked players based on stuff like- 'he's cute' or 'I like that team's colors. But I hate to lose. So I wanted to get better."

Stevens is the only woman in her fantasy football league, so getting better means beating men who have played the game for many years.

Lenny Marshall, 44, has played fantasy football for 10 years. He spends numerous hours each week watching



football. He even rearranges his schedule to accommodate football games.

"We go to the early church service [on Sundays], so I can be home in time for football," says Marshall. "I love football."

Marshall's fiancé, Keba Riley, was a football widow for three years of their four-year relationship.

"Lenny spent a lot of time playing fantasy football," says Riley. "I mean, he talks about football a lot. He loves the game."

After years of sitting on the sidelines watching Marshall play fantasy football, Riley decided to jump in with both feet. She started her own league, recruiting nine of her girlfriends, Marshall and two male friends. All of the women were first-timers.

Riley, 35, is competitive by nature. As commissioner of the league, she spent five to seven hours per week studying ESPN.com and following the news regarding her players. Luckily, all of her hard work paid off. Although the other



**You know the old saying, “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” Surprise your fantasy football addict by joining the conversation.**

teams scored more points throughout the season, when they played Riley’s team, “All Hail Queen Keba,” they bombed.

“I won!” Riley says, laughing. “I think it was part strategy and part good fortune.”

Unlike some of the women in her league, Riley managed her own team. She bounced ideas off of Marshall, but all of the decisions were her own.

“It was not luck that Keba won,” says Marshall. “She is really good.”

In order for a fantasy football league to work, all of the owners must play consistently. As owners get to know each other and learn each other’s habits, the competition gets stiff.

“You have to be careful who you put in a league,” says Stevens. “It is upsetting when have people in a league that don’t care.

Riley agrees.

“Some [owners] complained the whole season and didn’t take it seriously,” she says. “They won’t be invited back [next year.]

Marshall and Riley are already talking about and planning their teams for next year.

“We’re already talking trash for the upcoming season,” says Marshall.

He and Riley had parties last season where other owners from their fantasy football league came over and watched the games. Riley believes that sharing a hobby made their relationship better.

“It made a difference in my relationship because football is a big part of [Lenny’s] life,” says Riley. “It made us closer because it allowed me to share [football] with him.”

Marshall proposed to Riley just months after she started her fantasy football league. He says that fantasy football allows them to spend more time together.

“We aren’t always put on girlfriend- boyfriend time. Now we just hang [out] as friends.”

## THE SKINNY ON FANTASY FOOTBALL

### THE STATS

### WHAT THIS MEANS

22% of US males age 19-49 play fantasy sports

You are not alone. Millions of men in America play fantasy football; thus millions of women are “widowed” four months each year.

89% of men who play fantasy sports believe they will be playing 10 years from now

This is not a fad; it is very likely that your football fanatic will be playing fantasy football for many years to come.

59% of fantasy sports participants make \$50K per year; the average household income is \$94K

Your man should be taking care of business.

71% of those who play fantasy sports have a bachelor’s degree or higher

Your man is smart.

20 to 25% of the fantasy sports market is made of women.

There are lots of divas that like fantasy sports. You never know- you might like it!

*Data courtesy of Sportsbuff.com*

For more information on how to start your own league go

to: <http://www.girlsfantasyfootball.com/what.html>

Hate fantasy football? Bond with other ladies at: <http://womenagainstanfantasysports.com/>