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Six Lamorinda girls suit up for football this fall

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo juniors

Ava Filer and Pinkie Schnayer

Photos Jon Kingdon

Acalanes JV placekicker Lucca

DeBiasse

No longer are the cheerleaders the only females on the football field. They're now referees and coaches and in Lamorinda this year, there are six girls suiting up to play for the freshman, JV and varsity teams.

Campolindo has two players on the varsity, junior offensive lineman Avery "Pinkie" Schnayer and linebacker Ava Filer; on the JV are sophomores defensive end Avery Jules and WR/CB Ali McCauley and Emily Dolge who plays linebacker on the freshman team. Sophomore Lucca DeBiasse is the placekicker on the Acalanes JV team.

DeBiasse is a first-time player who came out for the team at the suggestion of assistant coach Bill Frazier who also coached her on the Dons' lacrosse team. "Lucca is a very good athlete who picked up the sport of lacrosse quickly so when I found out she played soccer, I suggested that she try out for the JV team," Frazier said.

"When she chose to play on the team, she came out and showed the head coach she could kick. Lucca is mostly working on x-pts but is comfortable from 25 yards in and I've seen her make a 35-yard field goal."

DeBiasse went to a field with her father and brother and kicked the football with some success. "My parents didn't discourage or encourage me to go out for the team," DeBiasse said. "They just wanted me to do what was best for me and to make the decision on my own."

After football practice, DeBiasse then goes to soccer practice with her club team. As a club soccer player, she has had to adjust her style in kicking a football while getting used to the equipment. "In kicking a football, you have to kick it higher up, swing your leg through and point your toe but with a soccer ball you have to drive through the ball," DeBiasse said. "Also kicking while wearing football equipment took some getting used to because it's very heavy. I'm just trying to figure it out myself."

Flag football is where Dolge, Jules, McCauley and Schnayer began their exposure to football, some as far back as third grade, so playing in high school was not as big an adjustment as it could have been.

Dolge, who also plays basketball, followed her older brothers in playing flag football and was looking for a new challenge. "It was a chance to get to know more people and I wanted to try a new sport to play over the fall season and I thought it would be fun," Dolge said.

The demands of the sport have proven to be a revelation to Dolge who is playing linebacker: "I've never done anything this intense. I'm out from 8 in the morning until 6 in the evening and I don't have time do anything besides school, football, and homework," Dolge said. "It's also getting used to such a male dominated environment with their sense of humor and just how they act overall. I underestimated the amount of thought that goes into the playbook and how well organized and put together the plays are."

Filer is from Texas and had never played football prior to coming to Campolindo but took the challenge head on, though just getting used to the equipment was not that easy. "The shoulder pads were the hardest part to get used to because they're not built for us," Filer said. "I found a way to adjust and to squeeze into them, modifying things and figuring out how to wear them correctly."

Filer, who played cornerback last year and moved to linebacker this year, initially had some concerns about the physical nature of the game but adjusted quickly. "I had expected it to be worse than it was because I had been revving myself up and thought it was going to hurt," Filer said. "The first time I got decked, I got back up and had a lot of fun. I did a lot of lifting after my first year and put on about 15 pounds."

From the start, Filer saw that everyone shared in the community of football which was something new to her. "So much of the game is built on you and your will and what you want to accomplish that day and how angry you are going to get," Filer said. "The main reason that I get up every time I get hit, as I am not that big, is because I have so much to prove to people in my head and I can't let myself quit."

Jules started playing flag football in third grade and was already very familiar with Campolindo football, following in the footsteps of her brother. "The program and the community around Campo football is amazing and I saw that with my brother and that was something that I wanted to be a part of," Jules said. "My parents were super supportive because they had seen my brother go through the program and they know how amazing the coaching staff and the community was."

Now playing defensive end for the first time, Jules appreciates the equipment she has to wear. "At first it was a big adjustment but once I got used to it, it was a lot more fun because you could have a lot more contact and be more aggressive on the field," Jules said. "I had never played much on the line before, so I was starting fresh, and it's been fun to learn everything. My teammates have been super supportive, and I have never had an issue with any of them."

McCauley also began playing flag football in third grade and found the coaches at Campolindo very welcoming. "My teammates were very supportive, and I have a lot of friends on the team," McCauley said. "The physical contact was and still is an adjustment but I'm getting used to it."

On the high school level, she found the game much more advanced. "I had to learn a lot of new terms but once I learned what everything meant, it was a lot easier to understand what the plays were," McCauley said. "Most of the techniques were the same but I just had to perfect it. I learned that whether in practice or in a game, you have to go 100 percent. Everyone wants to be here, and it makes it a lot more fun if you go all out."

Schnayer's older brothers played football at Campolindo, so she was introduced to the program through them. "I was able to see what they got to do, and I thought it was really cool and wanted to be a part of it," Schnayer said. "My brothers really blossomed on the team and made friends with whom they are still close. My teammates have always been supportive and that has grown through the years and they're all the nicest guys I've ever met. Once in a game when an opposing player said some things to me, on the next play three to four of my teammates were on that person and he went down hard."

The camaraderie on the team proved to be a pleasant surprise for Schnayer. "Initially I did not anticipate the bond that would be created with the players on the team," Schnayer said. "I am around them at school and there is a constant connection with them that so many people don't get to experience because the game truly is life, and your life revolves around the game. Just being able to spend time with your teammates and best friends is so special which is something that I had not anticipated."

Campolindo head coach Kevin Macy concedes that having a number of girls on his teams is different. "Obviously, it's unusual but with so many of them like Pinkie having played MOL flag football, they already earned their teammates' respect," Macy said. "We haven't had any issues with the boys slighting the girls in any way and have accepted them as a natural part of the program. We've got a unique culture at Campo and it's a real strength and the girls have added to it, being just one more piece of the culture puzzle that we have."

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