

## Women athletes take hard hits for the love of the **game**

For many girls, aspirations of playing football – tackle football – typically end during their elementary school years. But for Nance Wernes '83, Mindy White '99, Anna Findley (attd. '83-'86) and current Northwest student Tessa Stewart, that dream is still a reality.

Playing for the Kansas City Storm, a women's tackle football team in the Independent Women's Football League, the four women are making the most of their opportunities in football.

"It's great to be a part of something that is bigger than you are," said Findley, a credit and collections manager with the Kansas City Water Department and an offensive guard for the Storm.

For Wernes, a senior program manager for Sprint Nextel, there is an extra-special meaning to the team: Not only is she an offensive tackle and tight end, she also is the team's owner. Having completed a rigorous application process in 2004, she was granted a license for the Kansas City Storm to join the league during the 2005 season.

"When we took the field for the first time and I saw everyone wearing the new Kansas City Storm uniforms, I was very proud," Wernes said. "A lot of hard work went into making that moment a possibility."

During the 2006 season, more than 300 fans attended each game at the Storm's home stadium at Blue Springs High School. With an overall record of 3-5, the Storm finished the regular season in third place in the Midwest division, and are well-armed for the 2007 season, which runs May 5 through June 30.

The women who play for the Storm admit they love the sport, but because there is no monetary compensation involved, they "haven't quit their day jobs."

White, an attorney with Shook, Hardy and Bacon by day and linebacker by night, said it isn't

about the money.

"I love being able to take out life's frustrations in a positive and legal, yet violent, manner," White said. "There's nothing like running as fast as you can and tackling someone after a long day at the office."

Stewart, an interactive digital media major who plays wide receiver and defensive back, echoes those sentiments. Growing up, she was involved in many activities, including Pop Warner football.

"I love being a part of a competitive team, and I am really excited that women have the opportunity to play the sport that I love," Stewart said.

The IWFL, a non-profit organization, was founded in 2000 solely for the purpose of women's tackle football. Today, the league boasts 31 teams in the United States and Canada.

While all four Bearcats have personal reasons for playing, they all agree that following their dreams is the overriding factor.

"Anything is possible," Findley said. "Sometimes you may have to wait a few years, even decades, but never give up on your dreams." ■

For more information about the Kansas City Storm, visit [www.kcstormfootball.com](http://www.kcstormfootball.com).



PHOTO BY KC STORM

At 5-foot, 3-inches and 120 pounds, Tessa Stewart (No. 7) holds her own as a wide receiver and cornerback for the KC Storm. Last season, she ran a kickoff return for a touchdown. Stewart, a Northwest student who participated on her high school cross country and track teams, has played for the Storm for two years.

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**Mindy White '99**  
Attorney/Linebacker



PHOTO BY NADINE REDD

With 28 tackles and 31 assists combined with 129 receiving yards last season, Mindy White (No. 12) was named the KC Storm's MVP and Defensive Player of the Year.