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Women's American Football (Gridiron) in Victoria

Victoria's Western Foxes Women's Gridiron Team will make history on Saturday 23rd March when they play the Female Gridiron League of Queensland's All-Stars. It will be the first time that women from Victoria and Queensland will engage in battle, and only the 2nd interstate game in the history of women's involvement in the sport in Australia.

The first interstate game three weeks ago saw the Foxes take on the ACT's Tuggeranong Tornadoes on March 2nd of this year. The Tornadoes inched out with a 26-20 win, after an epic game that saw the teams' battle through to 4th and inches in double-overtime.

It's been less than a year since the Western Foxes were established as the first women's team in the league's 15 year history. The Foxes are part of the Western Crusaders Gridiron Club based in Footscray.

"This interstate game represents the culmination of about a year's hard work, blood and sweat by the players, coaches, and administration of the Foxes, the FGLQ, and the state bodies in both Queensland and Victoria," said Gridiron Victoria President Sam Weller. "This is still an emerging sport for women in Australia, and to have been able to pull together an interstate match in such a short period of time speaks volumes to the dedication of the people involved in both states."

The Foxes played their inaugural season of 4 intra-club scrimmage games in 2012. The players must pay big money to play the sport, with insurances, team fees, and, of course, the equipment, all of which must be shipped in from the US. The girls all play in full gridiron uniforms, with helmets, lower padding, and special shoulder pads that are designed to properly protect women's bodies from the bone-crunching collisions.

The players come from a huge range of social and sporting backgrounds. There are engineers, mothers, administration workers and students. Some of them have played sports such as AFL, soccer or women's rugby, whilst some girls have never played a team sport at all.

Julia Birks, president of the Foxes, is excited that Victorian women have a full-uniform alternative to the lingerie-style football that many Australians will have heard about over the past few years. "The great thing about gridiron is that it really is the most universal team sport that absolutely anyone can play. Someone who weighs 100kg+ can be as crucial to the team on the offensive line as a 60kg speed-demon, playing free safety on the defence," says Birks. "Previously, this kind of inclusivity has been absent from most team sports for women. It's a the ultimate way to get fit, feel empowered, make friends, and have a great time."

They will be in for a tough fight against the All-Stars who were part of a 3-team league that played an 9-week season, culminating in Queensland's first-ever bowl game for women's gridiron.

Nationally, the sport is seeing a huge surge of interest, with the existing leagues in Victoria, Queensland and the ACT set to grow in 2013 and NSW Gridiron recently announcing that it too will field a women's league this year.

For more information on joining a team, contact your local team, your state's gridiron association, or Gridiron Australia.

The Western Foxes take on the FGLQ All-Stars on Saturday 23rd March at 4pm to be held at Ranger Field, Springfield Avenue, Croydon Victoria.