

Knengi Martin featured in San Luis Obispo City News

San Luis Obispo, CA - The California Quake All Star player, Knengi Martin, coaches a set of her own all stars on the San Luis Obispo senior youth team, recently crowned Super Bowl Champions of their youth league. On top of coaching and playing, most do not know that Martin created the Central Coast Heat in 2005. Since then her goal has been to develop her organization to enter the Independent Women's Football League (IWFL) as an 11-man team in 2011. She was recently recognized in her local community news for her football accomplishments within the community and her career. Her teammates and entire Quake organization proudly congratulates Knengi Martin for her success and prominent presence within the community.

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Caption from SLO City News, Oct 1-7,2009: San Luis Obispo resident Knengi Martin celebrates after leading senior youth football league team to Super Bowl championship.



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SLO Woman Football Star Named Team MVP

By Jack Beardwood



San Luis Obispo resident Knengi Martin celebrates after leading senior youth football league team to Super Bowl championship.

San Luis Obispo resident Knengi Martin is the consummate football junkie.

Ever since she can remember she has relished the game, whether its backyard touch football, flag football, coaching junior football, playing tackle football or simply watching the game on television.

The 25-year-old recently concluded her first season in the Independent Women's Football League (IWFL), the first ever national women's tackle football league.

"I enjoy the aggressive side of the game," she says. "I like getting the ball and running someone over. That is something that I enjoy. I like knowing that when I hit someone hard enough they walk off the field saying, 'Oh, my god, I don't ever want that person to hit me again.'"

Starring at linebacker, tight end, running back and as a punt and kickoff returner, Martin was named MVP of the California Quake.

Why was she named MVP? "Wherever they put me I was able to be beneficial to the team," she says. "I think that people saw me as a leader.

season for us, but almost half of our team was rookies. It was a rebuilding year for us."

Organized in 2000, the IWFL has more than 50 teams. Based in Los Angeles, the Quake is one of 19 teams in the top tier that includes franchises in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Players are not paid, but they do receive travel money and free hotel rooms.

After a year of playing Pop Warner football at age 10, Martin was the first woman to play at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. She was an offensive

I am fairly good at football for whatever reason. It's something that I love and it comes pretty easily to me."

Martin, who returned two kickoffs and three punts for touchdowns, was named to the IWFL all-star team. The Quake went 4-4 and did not qualify for the playoffs. "It was kind of a disappointing

lineman on the junior varsity squad. After one season, she was forced to quit the team because her grades suffered.

Martin returned to the game in 2001 playing for a San Luis Obispo recreation team called the Heat in an eight-on-eight league. "That was something that I always wanted to do. It's something that I've always loved. I've always loved to watch it. I've always loved to play backyard football, flag football, but this was my first opportunity to be able to really compete."

She was so motivated that when the league folded Martin created the Central Coast Heat in 2005. After four years with the Heat, Martin (and the team) took last year off so she could play against a tougher level of competition in the IWFL. Her goal is to play for the Quake in 2010 and organize an 11-man team that would play in the second tier of the IWFL in 2011.

If you are interested in playing for the Heat, call Martin at (650) 580-9592.

"I love the camaraderie," she says. "I love the fact that with football you need all 11 players to make something happen. In a lot of sports, one person can steal the show. You need everybody to make a football team function. You really have to work as a team and I really love that. I love team sports. I love the fact that I have to work with another person because I think it makes both people better."



Knengi Martin was named MVP of the California Quakes of the Independent Women's Football League.

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Knengi Martin heads up field during Independent Women's Football League game.



Knengi Martin returns punt during Independent Women's Football League game.

Why is she a success? "I am pretty big in stature (5-11, 225). For my size, I'm pretty quick. I'm not afraid to hit people. For some women, launching your body into somebody else just doesn't come naturally. It's not something that I ever shied away from. A lot of people notice when I run the ball is it takes two or three people to bring me down because instead of trying to dance around you, I will go through you. I can use my body and my size and my speed to run the ball 20 yards, when other people

might gain 10 because the first person who hits them is the same size and can knock them over."

Her success on the field carried over to coaching. In her first season, she led the San Luis Obispo Youth Football League Senior team to a Super Bowl championship. "It was something I thought I could be good at. And something that I thought would be a nice way to give back to football, which has given so much to me, especially over the eight seasons I have played." ❖

Knengi Martin poses with a fan at California Quakes game.

