



Mother  
Kathrynne,  
daughter  
Courtney

## IN SHAPE TO PLAY

**RICH DANIELS**, general manager for the DC Divas, and Jackson and Robinson offer tips on the best ways to protect yourself from injury in a contact sport:

**DANIELS:** "The breast area is potentially the most dangerous area. There is a new shoulder pad—we were the first team in the world to use it—called Zina. It provides better protection in terms of padding and fit versus a man's pad."

"People who prepare their bodies and train and sacrifice will be ready for the opportunity to play. You should prepare year 'round in some form or fashion to be ready for the challenge."

**JACKSON:** "Stretch before and after plays."

**ROBINSON:** "I try to eat healthy, take vitamins and work out. And just try to get into the mindset of football that you are going to get hit."

# Tackling Football

## A Mother-Daughter Duo Takes Its Love for the Game to the Field

by ericka blount danois

Four years ago then-14-year-old Courtney Robinson walked into Coach Joe Lewis' office and asked if she could play on the boys' team at Duvall High School in Lanham, Maryland. Lewis' first inclination was to turn her away. The football field, he felt, wasn't a playground for girls. Her mother, Kathrynne Jackson, met him the next day and assured him her daughter was cut out for any broad-shouldered play the guys could dish.

The coach became convinced when he would open the gym doors at 6:30 a.m. and Robinson would be the only student there. On the field she was hit and tackled her teammates with abandon. In the locker room, with her helmet still intact, she overheard some of the players talking about a girl who had the nerve to tryout for the team. When she took off her helmet they were surprised to find she was that girl. "She is the most dedicated player I have coached in 15 years," Lewis says.

"If I had 60 boys with her heart, we would be a winning team every year."

Robinson comes by it honestly. In October 2001, her mother was in Cole Field House at the University of Maryland, at tryouts for the DC Divas. At 44, Jackson was one of the oldest women to tryout for the Divas, —part of the 34-team National Women's Football Association (NWFA). She and her daughter were two of the first fans, watching with a handful of others when the Divas played. During tryouts her daughter cheered along the sidelines and rubbed her shoulders on water breaks.

Though a broken wrist from a roller skating accident thwarted her chances of making the team in 2001, five years later her daughter joined the team and led the Divas to the NWFA equivalent of the Super Bowl. Jackson tried out for the team again last year, but didn't make it. Still, she says, she is not giving up. "After that first tryout my body was sore for a week," Jackson says. "This time after the tryout, my body was sore

for a day. So I am getting better."

When Robinson, now a freshman at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, is home she and her mom work out together. She plans to return to the Divas this summer. Would Robinson mind playing with her mom? "It would be nice, a mother and daughter in action," she says. "She wants to be a quarterback and I am a receiver, so she could throw me the ball all the time!" ..

*Baltimore-based writer Ericka Blount Danois would play tackle football if she were built more like former pro player William "Refrigerator" Perry.*