

Mom & Daughter Duo Reunites at LVI

Written by Jackie Finlan

Thursday, 07 February 2013 23:01

The scene here at Heritage Park, one of three locations at the Las Vegas Invitational, skews young. A bevy of girls' and boys' high school 7s and 15s games have overrun the grounds, but there's a hint of wisdom present.

The Olde Girls, for example, took on the Wildrose Academy today in a 15s match, and won 44-10. The Olde Girls' players hail from all over the country, but they have one thing in common: They're all over 30 years old. Well, except Baylee Annis. The traveling all-star team made an exception for the Norwich University junior and former USA U20 player, thanks to the influence of Olde Girl Stacey Annis, Baylee's mom.

The Olde Girls traveled light to Las Vegas and were looking for a couple of stand-ins when they touched down. Baylee was already heading to the USA 7s as a spectator, so it didn't take much to convince her to strap on the boots. It also wouldn't be the first time Baylee played with her mom.

"My brother and I were at practices every week," Baylee reflected on her first exposure to rugby, which mom picked up when she was 40 (she's now in her 50s). "It became part of what we did, and it was definitely something I looked forward to coming into my high school and college career."

Stacey had played rugby for five years before Baylee was old enough to play with the big girls, but once Annis jr. turned 16, she joined her mom on the Burlington women's club.

"It was pretty hard when we first started," Stacey said. "I said, 'As soon as we step on the field, I'm not your mother anymore. We're both just players. So I don't want to hear any whining or crying [Baylee: It made me better]. But we worked it out.'"

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Mom broke her word – “Baylee, you’ve got to get lower on that,” – on occasion, but the two made a nice pair. They were both in the pack – Annis the Elder started at No. 8 and then moved to second row. Baylee plays prop but can be found at flanker or even wing for the Olde Girls.

“We’re pretty good at reading what the other’s going to do,” Baylee said. “Like when mom goes into ruck or getting the ball, I pretty much know how she’s going to go in. We’ve been playing together for five or six years – ”

“And then she went off to college and left me,” Mom charged, half joking.

The two are obviously close, gently ribbing each other and giggling about their past. It’s a fun, respectful dynamic, which has come in handy when the pair have played against each other.

“It’s usually pretty funny to play against each other, because we kinda know what we’re going to do,” Baylee said. “Most of the time we’re laughing.”

“I have tackled her though, so that was fun,” Mom smirked. “And then she’ll come right back and tackle me – it’s just as bad.”

Baylee was especially excited to play with the Olde Girls, a team her mom revered.

“I do consider it an honor,” Baylee said. “I hear about the Olde Girls all the time. I’ve never had the chance to play with them. It’s amazing to watch them, even on hot days like this, they get each other and it’s pretty cool to be a part of it. It’s definitely a learning experience.”

And even though Baylee made mom proud on the day, she still has some learning to do – off the field. The Olde Girls precede every match with a roaring rendition of Johnny Cash’s Ring of Fire.

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“I knew most of them,” Baylee fibbed about her knowledge of the lyrics. “I knew the chorus, but the beginning, I kinda had to mumble.”

The youngster just needs a little more practice, and mom couldn't be happier for it.