

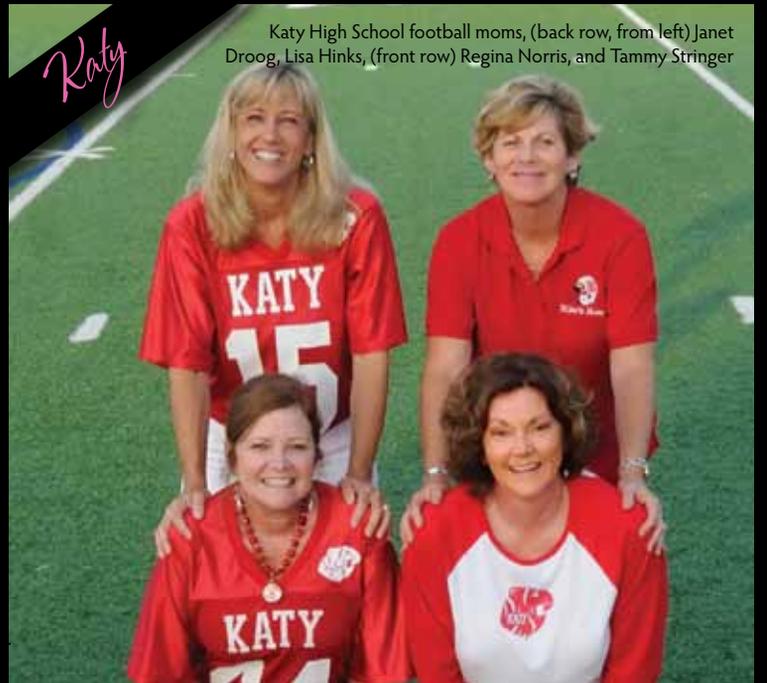


Katy football moms (back row, from left) Maya Pinkney, Terie Cole, Lisa Akard, Pam O'Bryan, Kim Stacks, Tammy Stringer, Lisa Hinks, Sheila McArthur, Regina Norris, Carlette Sampa, Janet Droog, (middle row, from left) Loretta Semanko, Jennifer Hemenway, Lisa Kenny, Silvia Torres, Connie Gonzalez, Debbie Reynolds, Silvia Bellota, Cindy Branch, Chris Saltal, Anita Stewart, (front row, from left) Julie Knowles, Rose Mathews, Mariana Vigil, Cathy Miller, Cheryl Phillips, Shawn Guarniere, and Beth Risien

Katy's Football Moms



Cinco Ranch High School football moms, (from left) Mariana Vigil, Rose Mathews, and Julie Knowles



Katy High School football moms, (back row, from left) Janet Droog, Lisa Hinks, (front row) Regina Norris, and Tammy Stringer



Scoring Big as Their Sons' Number One Football Fans

Written by Heather Lowrie & Photography by Suzi Issa



Seven Lakes

Seven Lakes High School football moms, (from left) Pam O'Bryan, Kim Stacks, Terie Cole, Lisa Akard, and Maya Pinkney

Mayde Creek High School football moms, (back row, from left) Jennifer Hemenway, Loretta Semanko, (front row) Margaret Torres, Debbie Reynolds, Silvia Torres, Connie Gonzalez, and Lisa Kenny

Mayde Creek

Taylor

Taylor High School football moms, (from left) Shawn Guarniere, Cheryl Phillips, Cathy Miller, and Beth Risien

Morton Ranch

Morton Ranch High School football moms, (from left) Silvia Bellota, Chris Saltal, Anita Stewart (kneeling), and Cindy Branch

As their sons' biggest fans, Katy football moms know what it takes for their athletes to make the varsity team in high school. Game after game, they are there on the sidelines cheering on their star players and acting as a driving force behind their continued success.

Let the Games Begin

While some Katy kids start playing football in elementary school, others might not pick up the game until junior high. Naomi Williams' son, Jeffrey, started on the field with the Katy Youth Football Titans when he was in third grade. He is now a senior at Cinco Ranch High School and playing his second year on the varsity team. Naomi shares that in the beginning, she had second thoughts about her son playing. "I asked him if he loved it and to pray about it, because you can get hurt," she says. After a few days, he told his mom he did love it, and 10 years later that is still apparent when Jeffrey takes the field. It is a feeling of pride shared by many football moms across Katy as they revel in the excitement of the game and watching their sons compete at different levels.

Supporting Their Sons from the Sidelines

A huge part of a football mom's job description is to be an encourager, to stand by your son even when it gets difficult, and to be his biggest supporter no matter what. In Katy, being your son's number one football fan is a year-long commitment, as the football season doesn't have a beginning or an end. Athletes are constantly working to improve, by lifting weights, running track, playing spring football and seven-on-seven, and going to strength and conditioning camps in the summer.

Shawn Guarniere knows the demands and rewards of being a football mom. Her son, Max has been playing football for 13 years and is now a senior varsity player at Taylor High School. Shawn knows the value of hard work and has watched her son never give up even when it gets tough. Her son played on the junior varsity team his sophomore year and it was tough on him to watch his friends move up to the varsity team. Guarniere encouraged Max not to give

up, though, reassuring him that everything happens for a reason. "The experience he got as a starter on JV helped him so much," she says. "If he had been a back-up on varsity, he wouldn't have gotten that experience." Max even agrees that it made him tougher and stronger, and he learned to work harder without giving up.

Encouraging Every Player to Be His Best

A typical varsity team can have 30 to 50 players suited up during a game, but only 11 are allowed on the field at a time. Every one of those boys, whether on the field or off has an important role to play for the team. "Not all kids can be the starters, and the teams that are the most successful are the teams that have everyone believing they are important," says Shawn Guarniere. Each player has a role and helps contribute to the strength and unity of a team.

All football moms want their sons to be their best regardless of where they are in the game, and their encouragement for their boys can make a huge difference. Terie Cole's son, Blake is a third-year varsity player at Seven Lakes High School who has been playing since the sixth grade. She encourages other football moms to stay supportive, be active, and get involved. "It is important for the children to be out there and know that it's not just the dads that can be involved, but moms can, too," she says. Cole wants all new football moms to know they need to be there for their sons, let their spirit be heard, and most importantly, enjoy the game. "The kids know who is there and when, and they love it!" she says. The bonding that takes place within the football community, both on and off the field, is what makes the process enjoyable for everyone.

Learning the Basics of Football

To help out her fellow Taylor High School football moms, Beth Ris-



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ien developed the Football 101 class with help from her husband, Flint Risien, the Mustangs' head coach. The goal of the course is to educate moms about the game of football, provide a brief overview of the rules, penalties, and official hand signals, and discuss player positions. "It's an empowering feeling for a woman to have discussions about football with [her] spouse or son," Beth says. "Moms can do it all – manage the household, have a career, be supportive of their spouse, and actively participate in their children's education and extracurricular activities. Knowledge is empowering, and there is nothing more dangerous than a woman who knows her football!"

The course began with a general overview of football terminology, which turned into an interactive session. The last part of the class was held out in the field house, where the football coaches spoke about a range of topics like individual player positions, where they line up on the field, and how the positions fit into the overall offense and defense strategies. Taylor football moms also learned about proper nutrition for their sons, and how strength and conditioning training can help football players become better athletes.

"I was very impressed that several moms who have a better understanding of the game were able to jump in and offer their insights as I wanted the class to be fun, interactive, and informative," Risien shares. In the future, she says she would love to expand the program to include all the Katy ISD varsity football moms.

More than Just a Spectator Sport

Every football mom looks forward to the start of the season, but there is so much more that takes place before the first game. In late March, Guarniere starts getting ready to help out with spring football, and in the summertime, she gets information packets ready to be mailed out to other football families. Then she works with the decoration committee to prepare signs for the stadium. Her work doesn't stop, there, either. "We also help the coaches by setting a good example of how parents should act," she says. "The coaches coach, and it is our job to make sure all the parents are in the loop and feeling good about the team."

Some moms get more involved than others, and that is the great thing about football: There is always more than one thing that needs to be done. It's easy for any football mom to get involved – just find something you'd enjoy doing and volunteer! Williams helps sell tickets during the season and programs at games, decorates the locker room, and provides refreshments for the players and game day lunches for the coaching staff.

Along with cheering for their sons, football moms find a variety of ways to make a difference and give back. Through it all, though, when the game is over and the season has ended, a football mom will always be there supporting and loving her son regardless of the final score. KM

HEATHER LOWRIE is a kindergarten teacher and mother of two. She is married to her high school sweetheart, James, and enjoys the opportunity to encourage others through her writing.

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