

Seventh grader kicks off her first football season

By Ella Piper Claffy

After years spent dreaming of cheerleading at football games, Addison Perry stepped onto the football field for the first time this fall, trading high kicks for kickoffs.

During quarantine, Addison, a seventh grader, got lessons on how to kick from her sophomore brother Caden, the starting kicker for the Mavs.

“Kicking is so enjoyable because it’s different and not something that everyone does or is good at,” Addison said.

According to Marty Thompson, the Director of Experiential Education and a former kicker for SJS and the Trinity University Tigers, “kickers are usually built differently from your typical football player. The kicker is really the only player on the team who uses their foot, even though it’s called football,” Thompson said. “It’s a very specialized role to play.”

Addison has benefitted from eight years of experience playing soccer, both in school and on club teams. She was already well-acquainted with the biomechanics of kicking by the time she tried out for the Southwest Football League in September.

When she went to pick up the paperwork for SFL, she discovered that she would be the first girl to try out for the league as a player, not a cheerleader.

Addison and her mother Angela met with a league director before preliminary practices began. “He was very happy that she was there and was definitely rooting for her,” Angela said. “It was a great experience.”

Before facing off against the boys, Addison and her father Carlton emphasized to coaches that she was only interested in kicking, not tackling. Kickers usually become defensive players after kickoff, but Addison runs off the field after she kicks, a decision made to help her avoid injury.

“I don’t think she would ever play outside of being a kicker,” her father said. “She wants to kick.”

When Addison was selected as the new kicker of the Orange Shamrocks, the Perry family waited for a backlash that never came.

“We expected a lot of roadblocks from both opposing teams and her own teammates, but there have been practically none,” Mr. Perry said. “In fact, this has been one of the most cohesive, supportive, kind groups



Addison Perry, who once dreamed of being a cheerleader, now plays on the field as a kicker for the Orange Shamrocks, her club football team.

PHOTO BY Sarah Clark

that either of the kids have been involved with.”

Addison says her team works well together both on and off the field. They finished the season 5-3, with Addison scoring seven extra points.

While Addison’s teammates and coaches have encouraged her, she has seen a few shocked looks from opposing players when she steps onto the field.

“I wear my hair in a low ponytail,” Addison said. “People can definitely tell I’m a girl — it’s a lot of fun to see everyone’s reaction.”

In November, Vanderbilt University kicker Sarah Fuller became the first woman to play and score in a Power Five Conference NCAA football game. The same week Fuller made her debut, Addison was featured in the

Memorial, West University and Tanglewood editions of Buzz Magazines. Her SFL coach is trying to facilitate having Addison appear on a podcast with Fuller.

Addison is interested in following in her brother’s footsteps and perhaps one day playing for the Mavs. Head Coach Kevin Veltri said he would be excited to coach Addison, but added that if she played high school football, “she might have to make a tackle.”

For now, the Perry family is happy that Addison found something she enjoys so much.

“Because she’s different from everyone else playing around her,” Caden said, “it makes it all the more important that she really remembers to be herself.”



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