

## To those who are opposed to LFL in Australia.

First of all you are entitled to your own opinion, and how vocal you choose to be about it. However before you make too many assumptions and begin your attack, I ask that you listen to my side of the story, and have the decency to consider the sport from another point of view.

Before I tried out for LFL I had represented my state for around 15 years playing volleyball. Those 15 years of sport provided me with experiences and friendships that are invaluable, and will last a lifetime. I was never paid. Insurance was never provided. I witnessed many major knee and shoulder injuries. There was never any sponsorship. Flights, accommodation, training fees, uniforms and everything else were paid for by the athletes. The last year I played the WA Pearls won the Australian Volleyball League for the third year in a row, and still could not secure any sponsorship or any substantial media recognition. That year probably cost me around \$3,000 to play. Oh, I also played beach volleyball. In a bikini.

I saw the advertisement for LFL try outs on facebook and as I was looking for a new sport to try out I went along to see what it would be like. I did not have high expectations (other than that I really wanted to tackle the tackle bags like in the movies), and I thought there would be a lot of skinny, fake breasted promotional model type girls that wanted to be famous. There were some of those girls. They didn't make the team.

After a few weeks of training with the girls in the squad it was evident that the talent and commitment levels were extreme. One of our weekly training sessions was set at 6.30am on a Sunday morning. Training at this time of the week almost a year before we would ever play a fixtured game is a good example of how serious we were about the team. Training sessions were tough, most of us had never even watched a full game of NFL before, so we had to study and practice hard to learn the ropes. We all struggled to juggle our full time jobs with practice, gym programs, promotions and for some of us other sports which we were still playing at a competitive level. Time with friends and family has been sacrificed, but it has been an awesome experience and worth every minute.

I am a little upset about the comments made regarding body image. Let me ask you this. Would you prefer your teenage daughter to aspire to have the body of a Victoria's Secret model, or an LFL player?



Victoria's Secret model



LFL promo poster

At the start of the year, some girls in the squad were told they were too skinny. One girl in the team has put on 11kg and a couple more over 5kg. We have to be able to take a hit. Every single girl in the team has been working their butt off for a year in the gym as well as on the field. Dress sizes range from around size 6 to size 14. Viewers will be seeing a realistic sample of healthy, fit, strong women without eating disorders. We love cupcakes, M&Ms and Nandos. I do not have a perfect body. But in the last year I have worked hard, become fitter and stronger, and I am proud of my imperfect self. LFL has been good for my body image.

The uniforms are a part of the Legends Football League. The league exists because it is marketed well, and it is entertainment as well as hard hitting sport. The games will be fun to go to. It is NOT called the Lingerie Football league anymore. There are NOT garter belts. There is NO lace on the uniforms. The tops are like a sports bra. The shoulder pads have been upgraded to provide better protection and we will be wearing helmets (fit to our size) and mouthguards. Unlike the US league we will be playing on grass as opposed to turf, so we will not get turf burns. Our contracts cover us for insurance in case of serious injuries, and we have been offered discounts on private health insurance and counselled as to what level of cover is optimal. Above all, we CHOSE to play this sport fully aware of the high levels of contact, and also of what we would be wearing. Respect our choice.

In regards to my previous comment about playing sport at a high level and the expenses incurred – LFL covers all flights, accommodation and uniform costs. The most expensive thing I have forked out for has been my training shoes back in January. I have a mortgage now and can't afford to pay \$3000 to represent my state. This is an opportunity to play sport at a high level at a low cost, a sport which I have fallen in love with.

I wholeheartedly agree with the notion that it is really disappointing that women's sport remains hidden in the background and has little media presence. I would love to see women's AFL, hockey, volleyball and other sports broadcast. Maybe if 7mate is successful in getting good ratings with LFL then other stations will follow suit and screen more women's sport. Maybe we can produce some higher profile female athletes that will encourage benefits of corporate sponsorship to athletes in other fields. LFL could have a positive impact in this area.

7mate have scheduled to screen the games at 10.30pm on Saturday nights. For all of the comments regarding mothers not wanting their children to be exposed to such 'exploitation', my suggestion is that if you children are old enough to stay up later than 10.30pm they are probably old enough to make their own decisions, and they have probably seen MUCH worse than LFL.

If you don't want to see LFL on TV, don't watch. Simple. It is your choice, just as it is ours to play. I only ask that you please allow others to enjoy the sport and above all respect the four teams of extremely hard working and dedicated young women (along with coaching and management staff) who have put their heart and souls into the sport for the last year.

**Elise**