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Watch the video clip, he says confidently. "Watch and tell me what you think."

You find the website and watch. It's a 30-second offering from a football game between the Houston Energy and SoCal Scorpions that features a Houston running back taking a hand-off, running right then scampering some 60 yards for a touchdown.

"That happened on the first play of our first game this season," said Brian Wiggins, the former Canadian Football League receiver who doubles as the Energy's owner and head coach. "That doesn't look like a bunch of women, does it?"

Honestly, no. The Energy and Scorpions do not look at all like a bunch of women trying to play football. For starters, they can actually play. They wear full equipment. They hit one another. They're well-organized and well-coached. They look less like Lingerie Bowl finalists and more like a couple of NCAA Division II men's teams.

Then again, the Energy and Scorpions play in the Women's Professional Football League, the best and longest-running full-contact pro circuit for female football players in North America, and they take what they do seriously. Ask an Energy linebacker who does her nails and you're likely to get a head slap in response.

"All my friends who played ball, they come out and watch and they're surprised," said Wiggins, a slight chuckle in his voice. "I tell people, 'Give it a shot.' Once they see a game, they'll want to come back."

Becoming the owner, head coach and chief advocate for a women's football team was not what Wiggins envisioned for himself when he ended his playing career with the Edmonton Eskimos. His last game was in 1998 against his former team, the Calgary Stampeders. (As a Stampeders, Wiggins once caught 16 passes in a game, a CFL record he shares with Derrell Mitchell and Terry Greer.)

In between his Stampeders-Eskimo stints, Wiggins was a sure-handed starter with the National Football League's Carolina Panthers. He gave up the game at age 31 after blowing out a knee playing pick-up

basketball. The injury proved to be a seminal moment in Wiggins's life forcing him to concentrate on what he'd learned in the classrooms at Texas Southern University.

He decided to go into business before starting one himself - the First Choice Mortgage Company, where one of his employees is Donald Narcisse, the former Saskatchewan Roughriders receiver.

Then one day a friend asked him to come out and watch the women's football team he was coaching. Wiggins went along for a laugh. The joke was on him.

"I was kind of skeptical, a lot skeptical," he explained. "But I watched practice and fell in love with the girls. The skill level is good. We've got a couple of women who played in the WNBA and a lot of ex-athletes who wanted to do something to keep active. I can tell you we run formations and plays from some of the playbooks I had when I played."

Wiggins said he was impressed with the players, willingness to learn. No one copped an attitude. No one said, "That's not how we did it in Pittsburgh." Wiggins talked; the players listened and at the end of last season Wiggins purchased the team. So far, it has been a good deal.

The Energy, led by running back Stacy Agee, arguably the best player in the WPFL, has lost just once in seven games and even cut up the Dallas Diamonds, who had gone three years and 30-plus games without a loss. The hope, said Wiggins, is to beat the Minnesota Vixen this weekend and advance to the WPFL title game.

Wait a second: the Minnesota Vixen? Yes, the WPFL does have a few teams with groan-inducing nicknames (i.e. the Carolina Queens, Las Vegas Showgirlz and Los Angeles Amazons). Mostly though, the WPFL is about the game not the glitz and that's something of a dilemma since most male sports fans think of women and football as a novelty act.

Historically, women have played the game dating back to 1896 when five ladies from Yale and five from Princeton went skirt to skirt in a game that was called when the male on-lookers got so excited they rushed the field.

In the mid-1920s, women's games were often the halftime show at men's games. Forty years later, the WPFL was born only to be over-powered by the National Women's League only to re-born in 1999 as the top smash-mouth loop for lady blockers and tacklers.

"Fundamentally, the players are not as sound as far as tackling goes

but it's like anything: you've got to work at it," said Wiggins. "They'll get better because they want to get better. They're doing this because they love football."

They love it so much they all have identical contracts and play for the same amount of money. Their princely sum? One dollar a game. And nobody dares holdout for more.