

Athlete of the *issue*

Adrianna Lee tackles football, academics, and her future.

What makes a phenomenal athlete? Is it winning, every time? Crushing the competition? Performing at what appears to be impossible level? While it is undeniable that any one of those characteristics could be found in an exceptional athlete, that isn't all that goes into the makeup of an athlete who leaves a lasting impression.

Senior Adrianna Lee has certainly made a lasting impression - on friends, teammates, and coaches alike. Phenomenal in more ways than one, the fact that she is the only girl on the all-boys football team is only one of the many outstanding things about her.

"Her commitment is outstanding," said Coach Joe Johnson. "I wish all our guys had the same level of commitment to be honest," he added. High praise from a respected coach, and he's not the only one who sees it. When teammates were asked what they knew about her, there was always a common theme.

"Hardworking" was repeated, over and over.

"She always gives her best effort at all times," said Johnson, "[she is] really intelligent."

That kind of work ethic and intelligence reaches beyond football plays and practice. Coaches and teammates attest that Lee is a 'really good' student, extending the commitment she gives at practice to the classroom, and to her other activities. Lee also plays varsity basketball, and the praise follows her from the field to the court.


"She's very athletic," said Coach Statewright, the girls basketball coach, "She is always willing to help," he added.

"She is super smart," said basketball teammate Sierra Culbreath (10), and Lee's lineup of AP classes reflects that. Playing for both Varsity and JV football, Lee filled her position with stride, sidestepping any pushback that stemmed from being a girl.

At times, being the odd one out could be isolating, but Lee pushed through all of it without blinking.

"The guys aren't real sure how to deal with it, but I know they all respect her effort and commitment...they respect her because they know she's serious about it," said Johnson. Respect can be the highest form of praise, and it seems Lee has earned every bit of it.

"Football has been a personal interest since I was younger," said Adrianna Lee. "My brother was playing...[so] I decided to play," she added. With graduation looming, Adrianna felt the time was now or never to make her football debut.



*"She is quiet,
focused,
resilient."*

- Coach Joe Johnson

"You're running out of time and opportunities...so it's like one last chance," said Adrianna. While others may have been daunted by the prospect of trying out for the team, Lee wasn't even fazed.

"That wasn't really a problem," Adrianna said, and her performance showed it. "[We're] smaller, not as strong, slower," said Adrianna - but that didn't stop her from lining up next to everyone else every day, pushing through those perceptions.

"I have been the head coach for 28 teams," said Johnson, "she is the first girl I have ever had play."

As for her teammates, the respect goes both ways. "[They] make it amusing...just guys being guys," said Adrianna. The road wasn't always smooth, but Adrianna pushed through difficulties with the same grit she applies to basketball, school,

and life.

"You just deal with them as they come," said Adrianna. One of those teammates happens to be Adrianna's brother, freshman Curtis Lee. Having his older sister on the team is, "Awesome," Curtis (9) said.

"She's caring and thoughtful...very smart," Curtis added.

Now that she's tucked the football season under her belt, Adrianna Lee is looking to the future.

"I don't really plan to do the generic sports in college," said Adrianna. "I am looking at the Ralphie [handler] stuff," she added. As her high school career comes to a close, it is safe to say that Lee has left a legacy - in the classroom, on the field, and within the student body. *L. Slater*

Eyes focused, jaw set, and helmet on, Adriana Lee (12) looks ready for whatever might come her way. "You just deal with them as they come," said Lee, a Defensive Back for the football team. Photo by Zoe Vescera.