

Uncommon Enterprise A League of Her Own

By Sandy Siegel

Paula Duffy teaches women how to score. Well, how to keep score. As the owner of Incidental Contact (www.incidentalcontact.com), Duffy offers seminars on football, basketball and baseball for sports-challenged females, whether they're moms of junior jocks, single women dating athletes, sports widows or businesswomen hoping to level the playing field with male colleagues.

The inspiration for the business came from a few trips to sports bars with a friend. "She saw me in action there and saw the commonality of purpose among people of all races, ages and genders-and the fact that men circled around like buzzards," Duffy says. "She goes, 'You should teach women how to do this.' And so, Incidental Contact was born."

Starting the company in 2004 was the perfect game plan for Duffy, a New Jersey native and Long Beach, Calif., resident, who has been hooked on sports since her father took her to her first baseball game at Yankee Stadium when she was 5. Dad also introduced her to football and basketball.

Using her extensive sports knowledge, Duffy kicks off her two-hour coaching sessions with the basics, including the rules, players and lingo. "Last but not least," she says, "I talk about how to translate this into being able to connect with someone." Armed with a supplemental guidebook and a "powder room power card" (a wallet-sized cheat sheet), seminar participants come away with enough expertise to be the belle of the ball, so to speak, ready to impress sports-loving husbands, boyfriends, brothers, kids and business colleagues-all for about \$60 each.

Those who can't get to Duffy's Los Angeles-area classes don't have to sit on the sidelines-they can read her online column or download her audio book, *Girlfriend's Guide to Football: How to Talk His Language*. A basketball edition is in the works.

But sports-challenged women aren't the only ones gaining from Incidental Contact. The biggest winner just might be Duffy herself. "It's very rewarding," she says. "To me, it's drawing people into the game, and it's sharing something with them that's so passionate for me."