

History of the New Orleans Blaze

Born on a day seared into the minds of the American public, the New Orleans franchise of the National Women's Football Association began under austere circumstances. September 11th will be remembered for a lot of reasons, most of them bad. But for this team, it was a beginning.

Christened with the team name of New Orleans Spice, women's football began in New Orleans in April of 2002. Lisa Lunsford was one of the team's star players. That first team found the going tough and finished with a 2-6 record. It is not easy when it is your first year regardless of the sport.

Things improved in 2003 as the team put together the standard by which all subsequent teams would strive to beat. A 5-3 record was tremendous progress in New Orleans' second year. However, it was not good enough for the playoffs.

Despite the improvement, after two seasons the original management was ready to walk away from the sport. However, star linebacker Lisa Lunsford saw this as an opportunity and proceeded to purchase the team along with partner Suzi Kloiber. Renaming the team in honor of former New Orleans legend Blaze Starr, the two partners began the task of putting together a consistent winner under the name of the New Orleans Blaze. A new logo was created though the team colors of red and black remained the same. Lisa continued to play for the Blaze while owning the team.

The road to consistent winning has been at times difficult. Occasional league divisional changes have not made it easy to consistently win, but Lunsford and Kloiber put together a solid core of coaches and recruit new players yearly to help the team maintain its status. The team also had to change venues in 2004 as the team moved from Pan American Stadium in New Orleans to Bertolino Stadium in Kenner. In their first year as owners, the Blaze put together another record of 5 wins and 3 losses, had the top passing quarterback in the league with over 1700 yards, but the post-season once again was elusive.

Finally in 2005, success emerged in the form of a playoff appearance. Following a tough regular season and a familiar record of 5-3, the New Orleans Blaze made its first venture into the NWFA playoffs. Despite losing on the road to the Oklahoma City Lightning, things were looking up. Then, Katrina came ashore.

The 2006 season was wiped away before the schedule even came out. It looked as though the team might possibly suffer the same fate. A springtime phone call from league president Catherine Masters asked if Lunsford and Kloiber could put together a team to fill a hole in one of the league's competing team's schedule. The two contacted many team members to gauge their feeling about playing. The overwhelming show of support by the women, though spread both near and far, led to a coalition with the Biloxi Hurricanes who were also struggling to put their lives back together in the storm's aftermath.

Despite all the obstacles, the combined team showed up and beat the Emerald Coast Barracudas. Women's football in New Orleans had been saved. The players wanted to compete and showed co-owners Lunsford and Kloiber that they should prepare for 2007.

In 2007, the team pulled itself together after a tough 1-2 start to the season. Utilizing the league's top passer and receiver combination, New Orleans came back to post another 5-3 record. The division championship came down to the last game of the season against rival Pensacola. Though the Blaze would lose that game, by finishing strong, New Orleans was headed to the team's second straight playoff appearance as a wildcard - once again against Oklahoma City. In the pouring rain of a southwest Saturday night, the result would be the same. The Blaze would be outscored 42-12, come home disappointed, but understand that the desire to play on sometimes is enough. The team had come together following the adversity of Hurricane Katrina and had once again been a success on the field. For their efforts, the New Orleans Blaze was named the NWFA Come-Back Team of the Year.

As the team gears up for the 2008 season, efforts are being made to continually upgrade the team and get better. Practice commenced early in the fall and will continue until the new season begins. Players are committed to learning more and improving. The New Orleans Blaze is committed to bringing a football championship to the Crescent City.

2007

5 wins – 3 losses

1st Round Playoff Game

#1 Passer in NWFA with over 1500 yards

#1 Receiver with most receptions in NWFA

2007 NWFA Comeback Team of the Year

2006

1 win – 0 losses

Exhibition Game

Team temporarily suspended due to Hurricane Katrina

2005

5 wins – 3 losses

1st Round Playoff Game

2004

5 wins – 3 losses

#1 Passer in NWFA with over 1700 yards

2003

5 wins – 3 losses

2002

2 wins – 6 losses

Inaugural Campaign