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## Not Just A Girl

by Michelle Mellon

I am not your delicate flower. I am not your damsel in distress. I have the disc. Now run, dammit! ↓

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I can throw the disc. Far. My backhand is stronger than my forehand, but I can get good distance on both. You're beating your man deep, and I prepare to throw. Just as I release, I see you've turned and are heading back to me. The disc goes sailing past you and lands lonely in the endzone. Why did you do that?

I know it's because I'm a girl. I can't throw it that far, right? Or I might crack under the pressure and do something stupid. That must be why you're behind me, telling me to dump it to you. That really pisses me off.

I wouldn't mind if I saw you treating guys that way. You know the ones. Overeager newbies who haven't learned the art of body control in a non-contact sport. Who get the disc and think "if I see it, I can throw it." Even after several atrocious errors from these guys, I have not yet seen one of you immediately run to his aid with a short cut or a dump. How about giving us ladies the benefit of the doubt? We'd like to learn from our own mistakes, too.

I think we've gotten to the point in history where we acknowledge that men and women are different. I will happily say that I am a nurturer. Knowing that most of my fellow females are the same at some level, I will venture to say that we also appreciate the art of nurturing. This doesn't mean that we want flowers, candy, hugs, and kisses after every good play. But some acknowledgement is good (and not the disbelieving "I had no idea you could do that" type, either), and encouragement is better. Men and women like to do things together. Coed ultimate is a great environment for enjoyable sport and socializing. So why would you want to drive the women away?

I've had this argument many times with male friends who say that women ultimate players should get encouragement from other women ultimate players. They do. We're not the ones sending them packing. If someone like me, who has

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been playing ultimate for over a decade, is treated like Jane Doe who steps onto the field for the first time in tennis shoes, what does that say to women who would like to play and get better and be good? Don't judge me by the fact that I'm female. Assume the best, and, if I make a mistake, talk to me about it. See if I know better and was trying something new or if I totally spaced. If I don't know any better, explain to me the strategy or another way to try what I did. Do not be patronizing, do not yell at me, do not look me off when I'm cutting for the disc. If you do, I will go to a more nurturing environment and stay there. Then you and all of your macho male friends can huck all the live long day, and party by yourselves.

Now that we've got that straight, go long...

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