

Teaching football players yoga ... and so much more



Photo Diane Claytor

Michelle Brown leads Miramonte's varsity football team in their weekly Stretching, Mobility and Breathing class.

By Diane Claytor

Twenty minutes after the last bell of the day has rung at Miramonte High School, 30 young men, all varsity football players, begin sauntering into the gym. There's bantering and fist pumps as they warmly greet one another. One by one they pick up a yoga mat, lacrosse ball and foam pads and find a spot on the floor. At 3:30 p.m., the lights are turned off and other than the voice of Michelle Brown, standing in the middle of the gym, barely a peep is heard. This is how it remains for the next hour, with the exception of the occasional groans.

Brown, a 2001, 2002 and 2009 Kung Fu Full Contact National Champion, a 2009 Full Contact World Champion and

a Second Degree Black Belt, is leading the varsity football team in a Stretching, Mobility and Breathing class. What began five years ago as an idea from Jack Schram, head football coach, to start a yoga program for his players, has evolved into much more. "We do some yoga, but focus more on stretching, breathing and myofascial release for an hour every week during football season," Brown explains.

Myofascial release, Brown describes, deals with the fascial network – the "place where the body tends to hold more tension and where there is more tension imbalance. MFR allows those areas to spread out through pressure, rehydrate and get more circulation. When you suffer an injury," Brown continues, "your body has mechanisms to heal

itself. But sometimes scar tissue develops and breaking up that scar tissue can be very beneficial."

Coach Schram reports that when he was playing college football years ago, he took two years of ballet, which, at the time, was recommended by the NFL. "It really helped my flexibility," Schram said. "I thought that incorporating yoga, stretching, and working out the muscles would be beneficial to the kids and teach them something useful.

"Michelle was the perfect fit for what I wanted," Schram remembers. "She fully understood that I didn't want a typical yoga class but something more personalized for football players." The class includes a lot of warming up of the muscles using blocks and lacrosse

balls to loosen them. "I think it's worked out great," Schram said proudly. "The kids seem to enjoy the class and I think they genuinely see the benefit."

Brown agrees. "Allowing your body to rest is so undervalued, especially with athletes," she notes. "They feel like they have to go all the time and if you want to perform well, rest and recovery are essential at any age." Her goal is enabling these young men "to get the best out of their bodies."

Educating the players about their bodies is an important part of Brown's class because, as she notes, "Most people know more about their cars than their own bodies. I talk to them about muscle groups and why things do what they do and feel like they feel." She happily finds that the boys are very respectful and "eager to learn."

Brown, an Alamo native, knows football. She is a lifetime 49ers fan and wished she could have played the sport herself. Instead, she became a high school cheerleader and now attends at least one Miramonte game each season.

More than 20 years ago, Brown was living in San Francisco and decided, at the urging of her father, to learn self defense. She signed up for a kick boxing class at a local YMCA and, as she remembers, "when I threw my first martial arts kick, I realized that

this is what I'd been missing. I felt an immediate connection to it. The whole mind body spirit aspect became the real reason I wanted to do it."

Martial arts, Brown explains, is very psychological and actually more about the mind than the body. "You have to learn to control your mind before you can learn to control your body and then your spirit," she says.

Brown developed her own self defense class – Hit with Power – where she teaches mostly young women, many going off to college, how to make smarter choices, avoid risky situations and how to deal with an unsafe situation should they be confronted with one. "We talk a lot about using your voice because, after all, that's really our most powerful weapon," Brown states. "It's an intense class and these young women go away feeling very empowered."

In addition to her passion for the martial arts, Brown is a medical exercise specialist and health coach; she oversees three Gumsaba outdoor boot camps and owns a personal training gym in Alamo – Gumsaba Custom Fitness Programs – where she is a personal trainer for 60 clients.

Brown loves what she does and is quite proud of the fact that she is able to help people feel better and get the most from their bodies.

Basketball Tournament Champions



Aiden Wong, Blake Frechman, Channing Stewart, Chase Nickens, Hudson Luenigo, Julian Arrigotti, Julian Jilokovic, Lane Dalton, Michael Fagundes, Michael Vallas, Miles Cooper, Rhys Robinson; coaches: Brian Frechman and Mark Robinson

Submitted by Jon Nickens

Lafayette-based Bay Area Blitz 2028 Boys Team (fourth grade) won the Select Fall Classic in Hayward over the Sept. 21-22 weekend. With victories

over Prime Gold 10u, OC Elite 10u and the No. 1 ranked team in Northern California, SF Rebels, the Blitz displayed great team work and defense. The boys will continue their Fall AAU Season in the weeks ahead with multiple tournaments around the Bay Area.

Cal Magic 2005 girls take 2nd in Nevada Cup



Submitted by Lynn Barney

The Cal Magic 2005 girls went to Reno to compete in the Nevada Cup soccer tournament. They placed second overall, having to overcome a 0-2

deficit in their final game; coming back to win 3-2 in the final minutes. Their coach, Luis Pinto, said "The girls showed heart! They relied on their training and kept pushing, never lost faith and all that hard work paid off."



LMYA SOCCER Meet Our Commissioners

L to R: Judy McNeil - LMYA Executive Director/Treasurer, Hillary Johnston - LMYA Secretary/Registrar, Erin McCoin and Matt Helder - LMYA Soccer Commissioners



Erin McCoin

Lafayette Soccer Commissioner

Erin has lived in Lafayette for 10 years with his wife Mikelle and their 3 kids. When not coaching and running LMYA Soccer, he works in real estate.

What is one thing you love about where we live?

The access to trails and open space is one of the things that drew me here and every time I find a new trail or quiet spot near a creek or the top of a hill it reminds me why I still am.

How many years have you been involved in LMYA?

I began coaching LMYA soccer in 2011 when my son and daughter were in kindergarten (team Brazil!) and have been coaching ever since. I joined the board in 2017 and have been the Lafayette commissioner since 2018.

How many LMYA sports have your kids played/have you coached?

My kids have played soccer (obviously), basketball and volleyball and on every team they have met new friends which is the great benefit of LMYA. This year I am coaching my 10th team. I have coached all my kids at one time or another.

What's your favorite thing about being involved with LMYA?

The unwavering commitment to the success and joy of the kids. The board members and people who run the organization never, even for a second, lose sight of that mission. It's no doubt why it's been so successful for so long.

What do you wish other people knew about LMYA?

Much of the success of LMYA and the great value LMYA provides for this community and for thousands of children is due in large part to a very small handful of dedicated and selfless people, especially Hillary and Judy. Many people know them only from emails but they are two amazing women who are responsible for keeping this organization going.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering or coaching for LMYA?

We need you, we love you! Without you there would be no LMYA. Yes we have a dedicated board and leadership but without the volunteers, especially the coaches who give so much of their time and energy to LMYA, it would not exist, you make this organization what it is.

Matt Helder

Moraga Soccer Commissioner & LMYA Vice-President

Matt grew up in Moraga and attended Rheem, JM and Campolindo. Go class of '92! He has now lived with his family in Moraga for 9 years. When not coaching his two boys in soccer, Matt teaches technology at Camino Pablo. His wife Stephanie teaches Kindergarten at Sleepy Hollow and is coaching his daughter's LMYA soccer team.

What is one thing you love about where we live?

Love the sunsets over the hills of Moraga and the fog in the valley in the mornings. It's a little hidden gem that feels so removed from the busy urban life just over the hills but is yet so close to the amazing opportunities available in the Bay Area cities.

How many years have you been involved in LMYA?

Coached my youngest son for three years and have been a commissioner for six years.

What's your favorite thing about being involved with LMYA?

The community. No other organization is as connected to the towns of Lafayette and Moraga that spans ages and genders. Everyone has a story about playing some sport with LMYA...even me 38 years ago. My friends

from that time still tell stories about our experiences with LMYA and love seeing our children have similar experiences today.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering or coaching for LMYA?

It may be cliché, but you get back so much more than you put in. Magical moments happen with kids in sport. They may be infrequent and inconsistent. Sometimes they are lost in challenging seasons where it feels like the whole league is stacked against your team. But, in 10 or 20 years no one will remember the scorelines or the standings. What will remain and will travel with the you is that player who had a magical moment that warmed your heart, challenged your preconceptions or inspired you. Children are amazing and if you are not involved then you may miss your chance to experience something special.



www.lmyasports.com

Thank you from LMYA!