

ERIN ARAGON, WELDER APPRENTICE

I ACTUALLY HAVE NOT BEEN LIKE THIS MY WHOLE LIFE. LIKE IF YOU ASK MY PARENTS GROWING UP I WAS PAINFULLY SHY AND MY PARENTS THOUGHT I'D NEVER LEAVE HOME. AND I'M FROM ARIZONA SO I CAME TO VIRGINIA BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF NEW EXPERIENCES AND I DIDN'T WANT TO BE ANYMORE. SO NOW I'M KIND OF DRIVEN BY THE THINGS THAT I'M AFRAID OF.

I'VE BEEN PLAYING SPORTS MY WHOLE LIFE. I STARTED PLAYING T-BALL WHEN I WAS IN KINDERGARTEN, I THINK, AND I'VE BEEN PLAYING SOFTBALL FROM SIXTH GRADE UNTIL I WAS A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL. AND IN SEVENTH GRADE I STARTED PLAYING VOLLEYBALL. AND I WAS BAD AT ALL OF THESE SPORTS. I WAS NOT GOOD UNTIL I GOT TO HIGH SCHOOL AND STARTED CARING BECAUSE UP UNTIL PROBABLY MY JUNIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL I WANTED TO QUIT SPORTS EVERY YEAR AND MY MOM MADE ME DO IT. SHE'S ACTUALLY THE REASON THAT I'M HERE, BECAUSE SHE WOULDN'T LET ME QUIT ANYTHING. AND ACTUALLY, I TORE MY ACL MY SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE MY VOLLEYBALL SEASON EVEN STARTED. SO I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO PLAY MY SENIOR YEAR SO THAT WAS WHAT I THOUGHT WAS THE END OF MY ATHLETIC CAREER. BUT AFTER I GOT BACK INTO SPORTS I WAS ABLE TO START DOING JIU-JITSU AND I IMMEDIATELY, IMMEDIATELY FELL IN LOVE WITH IT. SO I'VE ALWAYS LOVED COMPETING AND I'M ONE OF THE MOST COMPETITIVE PEOPLE I KNOW. SO I REALLY LIKE THE INDIVIDUAL ASPECT OF ATHLETICS. LIKE, I LIKE BEING AN ATHLETE. I LIKE BEING THE BEST.

I ACTUALLY STARTED GOING TO SCHOOL FOR JOURNALISM RIGHT OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL AND I HATED IT. SO I STARTED THINKING ABOUT ALTERNATIVE CAREERS THAT I COULD GO INTO AND I ACTUALLY CALLED MY MOM AND WAS CRYING, HAVING AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS. I WAS LIKE, "I'M JUST GOING TO BE A WELDER." AND SHE WAS LIKE, "THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!" AND I WAS LOOKING UP APPRENTICESHIPS AND I FOUND THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL SO I JUST APPLIED FOR IT, NOT HAVING ANY IDEA WHAT IT WAS. AND I WAS TOLD NO THE FIRST TIME AND THREE YEARS LATER THEY CALLED ME AND ASKED ME TO APPLY AGAIN AND I JUST HAPPENED TO MAKE IT.

AND I JUST THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BE WORKING HERE, I JUST THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BE A WELDER. I STILL DIDN'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO. AND AS I STARTED LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL, I STARTED FEELING LIKE I CAN MAKE THIS A CAREER, I CAN BE HERE FOR A LONG TIME.

MICAH AMROZOWICZ, CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR, THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL WRESTLING COACH

THE QUESTION WAS, "HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO TAKE TO MAKE IT A POSSIBILITY?" I'VE ALWAYS HAD A PLAN IN THE BACK OF MY MIND, I WANT TO TRY TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN. AND I WASN'T SURE WHEN IT WOULD HAPPEN. BUT THEN ERIN APPROACHED ME AND SAID, YOU KNOW, SHE WANTS TO WRESTLE.

ERIN ARAGON

MICAH SPENT MONTHS TRYING TO CONVINCING THE DIRECTOR OF THE SCHOOL AND EVERYBODY WHO NEEDED TO BE CONVINCED THAT HAVING A WOMEN'S WRESTLING TEAM IS A GOOD IDEA.

MICAH AMROZOWICZ

IT'S A GOOD STEP FOR THE APPRENTICE SCHOOL TO TAKE. AND I DON'T THINK I REALLY GOT TOO MUCH PUSHBACK AS FAR AS PEOPLE BELIEVING IN THE IDEA OF STARTING A WOMEN'S WRESTLING TEAM. I THINK THE HARD PART WAS CONVINCING THEM THE TIME WAS NOW.

ERIN ARAGON

I LOVE THAT I GET TO BE THREE DIFFERENT PEOPLE. SO AT WORK I GET TO WEAR MY COVERALLS AND I GET TO BE DIRTY AND I GET TO NOT CARE ABOUT HOW I LOOK AND HOW I'M PERCEIVED. AND THEN I GET TO GO TO CLASS AND I GET TO DRESS UP. I GET TO COME TO WRESTLING WHERE I GET TO SHOW THAT I CAN DO THINGS, I CAN SHOW WHAT I CAN DO.

MICAH AMROZOWICZ

I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY AND IT HAS. AND SHE HONESTLY HAS LEARNED QUICKER THAN ANY MALE THAT I'VE EVER COACHED. ERIN'S PROBABLY THE HARDEST-WORKING PERSON ON THE TEAM.

PETER CORTAPASSO, INSULATOR APPRENTICE

A BIG THING THAT THEY PREACH IN THE YARD IS DIVERSITY, YOU KNOW, MAKING SURE EVERYONE FEELS THAT THEY'RE PART OF A BIG TEAM. I THINK JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT WE'RE BECOMING MORE DIVERSE BY THE MINUTE, BY THE PERSON, AND EVERYONE THAT COMES IN IS GOING TO BE ACCEPTED JUST AS FAMILY.

CHAD SIMMONS, RIGGER APPRENTICE

I DON'T LIKE THIS WHOLE THING ABOUT HER BEING LABELED A WOMAN WRESTLER, YOU KNOW, SHE'S JUST A WRESTLER TO ME, SHE'S JUST ANOTHER PERSON. SHE'S ANOTHER TEAMMATE, SHE'S ANOTHER WORKOUT PARTNER, JUST ANOTHER PERSON THAT'S IN HERE GRINDING WITH ALL OF US. AND I APPRECIATE IT.

MICAH AMROZOWICZ

SHE'S ALREADY PUT US ON THE MAP. SHE WENT FROM AN UNKNOWN PERSON, UNRANKED, AND SHE'S AT THE POINT NOW WHERE PEOPLE KNOW SHE'S COMING. SHE'S THE NUMBER ONE RANKED GIRL. SHE'S A COACHABLE ATHLETE. SHE LEARNS SO QUICK. SO IT'S GOING TO BE EASY FOR HER TO SHINE. I CAN'T TAKE MUCH CREDIT, SHE JUST MAKES MY JOB THAT EASY. AND I'M JUST GLAD TO BE A PART OF IT.

ERIN ARAGON

THIS IS, IT'S HUGE FOR WOMEN IN GENERAL. LIKE, I'M A STRONG BELIEVER THAT WOMEN HAVE EVERY EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. WE JUST HAVE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM NOW. LIKE, WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT NOT HAVING WHAT WE WANT ANY MORE WE JUST HAVE TO DO IT, WE HAVE TO TAKE IT. AND SO FOR ME TO BE TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A WELDER, AND TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A WRESTLER, I'M LUCKY THAT THE OPPORTUNITY WAS GIVEN TO ME, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M DOING MY PART FOR WOMEN EVERYWHERE JUST BY TAKING THESE OPPORTUNITIES.

COACH

GOOD JOB TODAY GUYS. HARD WORK ON THREE: ONE, TWO, THREE. HARD WORK!