

QB VANITA KROUCH #4



Hometown: Carrollton, Texas
Residence: Carrollton, Texas
Age: 43
Height: 5-5
Year on U.S. National Team: 5th



“THE TOM BRADY OF FLAG FOOTBALL”

Krouch is the most decorated women’s flag football athlete of all time and widely recognized as the sport’s answer to NFL great Tom Brady.

She has been a member of the U.S. National Team since 2016, winning gold at the 2018 and 2021 IFAF World Championships and 2023 IFAF Americas Championships as starting quarterback and team captain. The U.S. National Team is 25-1 under her leadership.

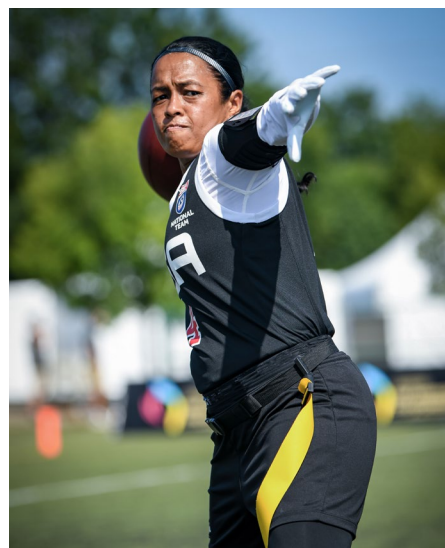
“The flag community would call me the female version of Tom Brady and the success he’s had,” Krouch told the NFL in 2022. “Me, personally, I just play football for myself and for the team and I play my style.”

After taking silver in the 2022 World Games, Krouch and the U.S. Women’s National Team bounced back in the 2023 IFAF Americas Continental Championship, earning a perfect 6-0 record, including a gold-medal game victory over Mexico. Krouch was named MVP of the gold medal game after throwing four touchdowns.

Krouch’s success on the flag football field has led her to several unique experiences as she served as the offensive coordinator for the NFC team at the NFL’s annual all-star game, the Pro Bowl, in 2023, when the game transitioned from a tackle to flag football format.

“For the longest time, thinking about the moment, everything, you’re like, ‘Oh, my gosh, this is a dream come true. Is this really happening?’” Krouch told NBCSports.com in 2023. “But then I started thinking to myself: You know what? None of us grew up thinking of this as a dream to obtain. So really, it’s kind of reversed where I’m living a dream. I get to be a pioneer in this growth of flag football for all and inclusion for all, youth and adults, [women and men]. It’s such an inclusive sport, and I get to be a part of this growth and still actively play. It’s exciting. I’m literally living the dream. I’m very much like, ‘Guys, don’t pinch me. Let me keep sleeping.’”

Krouch also had a role in the NFL’s 2023 Super Bowl commercial “Run With It,” an ad geared toward the push for increased women’s participation in football.



ROUND BALL

Krouch started playing basketball in the fourth grade and eventually earned a scholarship to play at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. She played four seasons (2000-03) at SMU, winning a Western Athletic Conference Championship and earning an appearance in the NCAA Tournament as a freshman.

After college, Krouch played semi-pro basketball with the Dallas Diesels before making the transition to flag football. Her nearly two-decade flag football career started after she did an internet search for rec leagues in the Dallas area and began playing 4-on-4 flag in a men’s division.

“I play flag football because it’s empowering and inclusive,” said Krouch. “I feel women can do all the things a guy can do. Plus, flag solves three problems for me – fulfilling my desire to compete, exercise and be social.”

FLEEING PERSECUTION

Originally from Cambodia, Krouch’s family migrated first to the Philippines (where Vanita was born) and then to the United States when she was two months old, escaping from the deadly Khmer Rouge regime.

Krouch’s mother, Phonnary, was critical to keeping her family together in a time of tremendous difficulty. “In a nutshell, my mom is an amazing woman,” Krouch told NBCSports.com “On the journey, she had a lot of trials, tribulations, ... and after our dad left us, it was just mom and four kids in this little one-bedroom apartment. So, it was a challenge. I’m just so amazed by her strength and will to never give up.”

She credits her family’s inspirational journey as the motivation behind her many achievements and uses it to continue to break barriers in sport.

“I’m just thankful, honestly, that my mom allowed me to break the Asian culture barriers of a woman playing sports because that’s not easy,” she continued in the NBCSports.com interview. “She faced a lot of backlash from the community. But she said, ‘Hey, my child’s making good grades. She’s healthy, she’s good. She’s staying off the streets. I don’t see a problem.’ And she just let me do it. I was just lucky to have a mom that let me spread my wings.”



THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS

Krouch has been a physical education teacher for 20 years and is currently teaching at La Villita Elementary in Irving, Texas.

“My work as a P.E. teacher is beyond fulfilling,” Krouch said. “I feel like I haven’t really worked a day in my life because I get to laugh and smile and play and encourage my kids daily. I know that for some of them, I will be the only smile or hug or high five they get and it’s important to me they feel seen and nurtured and loved. I enjoy teaching them how to work with a team and develop their basic motor

skills and expose them to various sports and activities to hopefully instill a love for a healthy lifestyle.”

Krouch’s elementary school physical education teacher Toni Neibes was instrumental in her sports and life journey. Neibes, who Krouch calls a “second mom,” singed Krouch up for soccer in third grade, paid for her entry fees and helped get her to practice. Krouch wears her No. 4 jersey to honor Neibes and her contributions to Krouch’s getting started in sports. Neibes wore No. 4 as an athlete as well.

“I see Toni in me when I teach because she taught with tough love and always expected the best effort of me and not just enough to be the best compared to others,” said Krouch. “She pushed me to reach my true potential and capabilities. Without Toni, I don’t think I’d be me at all. She believed in me, helped nurture my love of sports and taught me how to be a more well-rounded person. Without Toni, I truly believe I would be a different human on and off the field.”

In addition to soccer, Krouch competed in basketball, track and field and volleyball in high school.