

Hometown: Round Rock, Texas

Residence: Round Rock, Texas

Age: 21

Height: 5-5

Year on U.S. National Team: 2nd

“I HAVE A DAUGHTER WHO CAN PLAY”

Orsborn’s introduction to flag football wasn’t exactly planned. She found herself traveling to play in a tournament after her mother volunteered her to fill in for a local team that had an open spot.

“My mom got me started on flag football when I was eight,” Orsborn said. “Her boss needed one person to play in a tournament or else their team couldn’t play. My mom said, ‘Oh, I have a daughter who can play,’ even though I had never played flag before. I played in that tournament and haven’t stopped since.”

Flag wasn’t the only sport Orsborn played while growing up. She started out with soccer and basketball, continuing to play the latter in high school. Orsborn also picked up baseball because her school didn’t offer softball. The team played her in center field and as a pinch runner to maximize her speed.

Orsborn’s family’s athletic background played a role in her trying out various sports. Her mother played softball in high school, while her dad was a wrestler at Kansas State. Orsborn’s brother also played multiple sports in high school, participating in the cross country, swimming and tennis programs.

While Orsborn enjoyed playing baseball and basketball, it was flag football that opened the door for her to play at the college level.

FINDING A HOME IN FLAG

Flag football is more than just a hobby for Orsborn and many of the other elite athletes pursuing the game at an international level. However, the sport is also an outlet for her to escape everyday concerns.

“It’s an escape. Most people have different escapes like painting or drawing. This is my form of that,” Orsborn said. “I can come out here and I don’t have to pay attention to the bad things going on in the world or the homework I have to do when I get back. I just get to be myself and do something that I’m genuinely good at.”

Flag football also helped Orsborn meet one of her longest-tenured teammates: two-time U.S. National Team athlete and Keiser University star Ashlea Klam.

“I played with boys for a bit when I first got into flag football, but I finally got on a team with Ashlea Klam,” Orsborn explained. “We played together and started going to nationals together. We’ve been playing since I was 11 and she was nine.”

Orsborn even developed a pre-game ritual with Klam’s mother, Amber. Orsborn and Amber will both eat a green M&M before games. Green is Orsborn’s favorite color, and she swears the green M&M’s taste the best.



REIGN OF DOMINANCE

Orsborn began her college flag football career at Ottawa University (Kan.) during the 2022 season. She has been a part of three out of Ottawa’s four consecutive NAIA National Championships, including the program’s recent victory against Keiser University. Ottawa is building a dynasty during the early years of women’s college flag football.

“Our whole Ottawa team talked about this after nationals. You can do it once, twice, three times, but that fourth time is crazy because you go into it with a huge target on your back,” Orsborn said. “Keiser University was extremely talented this year. I was very excited to play them but also nervous because I knew they could knock us out of the tournament as they did with many other teams. Going in knowing that nobody wants you to win – nobody – not one single person except for the girls standing around you on the field – your teammates, coaches and staff members – it becomes a ‘we’re all we have, we’re all we need’ mentality. The feeling of winning when nobody wants you to win is peaceful in the sense that we did it, and all we needed was ourselves.”

One of the driving forces behind Orsborn attending Ottawa and the program’s outstanding success is head coach Liz Sowers. A former U.S. National Team athlete in women’s tackle football and an assistant coach on the 2023 U.S. Women’s Flag National Team, Sowers’ love for the game and experience made it easy for Orsborn to connect with her.

“I went to Ottawa because of the coaching staff,” Orsborn said. “I appreciate their love for the game. I also had a strong connection with head coach Liz Sowers. My senior year of high school, my mother had a stroke. That was hard to navigate, especially being a young adult trying to figure out where to go to school. I was scared to leave her because I wanted to help take care of her. I grew really close to Liz who had gone through something similar, and she was there to help with my mom. I started watching her coaching style and really fell in love with it.”

Orsborn has earned First Team All-KCAC honors during each of her three seasons at Ottawa and was the NAIA National Invitational Championship Game MVP in 2022.

GROWING THE GAME THROUGH KINDNESS

Like most sports with pathways to play at the college and international levels, flag football is a highly competitive sport. Sometimes emotions can take over, but Orsborn keeps the game in perspective. She believes the sport will grow in popularity as athletes uplift and encourage each other.

“Kindness on and off the field is really important,” she said. “Since we’re all very competitive, sometimes people forget we all come from different places and backgrounds. This is an escape for the majority of us. You have to remember to be kind to people on and off the field. Encourage other people, even if somebody is on the other team but they’re doing well. Spread the game and let people know that we’re all here for the same reason.”

As an athlete who started playing flag football on boys’ teams, Orsborn is excited to see how much the sport has grown in the past decade. The game creates new opportunities every year for athletes of all ages. Orsborn believes flag football’s community is one of the reasons why the game continues to grow.

“It’s insane how flag football has grown,” Orsborn said. “That’s another reason why I tell people to be kind. You want the flag community to be a good community to be a part of. We’re welcoming of anybody because the sport has opened doors for a lot of us. I wouldn’t have the chance to go to the Olympics if it wasn’t for flag football. We should be positive, welcoming and let anybody try it. We’re all here to make history.”

