

Smith Offers Woman's View Of Football

Rhonda Smith's 5-foot, 9-inch model's appearance is usually an immediate challenge to the mind-set of the male-dominated field of pro football commentary, but sport affectionados around the world have come to rely on the knowledge behind the feminine beauty for—as boasted by the title of her international top seller—"The Lady Knows The Game" (Manchester Press).

Subtitled "A Woman's Guide To Watching, Understanding And Talking Football," Smith's book has proven to be an indispensable reference guide for both men and women wanting to know every aspect in modern terms of this great American pastime.

And now, hot on the heels of "The Lady Knows The Game," Smith embarks on a highly unique venture as a nationally syndicated sports columnist, thus becoming the newest member of the old-boy club of sports journalism.

"What I'm doing with this column is making football interesting to a broader cross section of people," she says with the fever of a league coach. "Women should have the chance to enjoy the thrill of the



RHONDA SMITH

game, too. I mean, we're talking about a sport that is very aggressive, very exciting and very tension-relieving. A sensation second only to sex.

"What I'm doing is stripping down the mystery of the game and going for the bottom-line entertainment that only comes with understanding it. So many women get so uptight during football season because most commentators and columnists speak to an informed audience in a language that is heavy on

the inside lingo. I'm going to remedy that."

Born in Berkeley, Calif., Smith's interest in the game began early. Her father and brother were fanatical—if amateur—players and the Smith children grew up watching football instead of cartoons.

"You had to look at the game if you wanted to look at TV at all," she laughs, "so when I started asking about what the hell I was watching my Dad was more than happy to explain it to me. In no time at all I was hooked."

The love of the game stayed with her throughout high school and college (she attended The University of San Francisco and completed her studies as a biology major at Howard University).

She then spent the next nine years as a flight attendant, eventually handling the football charter flights.

Most of her "hang-out buddies" are either athletes or share her interest in the sport and she confesses to rarely dating outside of her circle. ("The guys I date know not to call me between noon and 4 on Sundays unless it's during half-time.")