



# 'I'll never be a WAG again'

From groupies to betrayals, journalist and Insider columnist **Zoë Foster** reveals the truth about dating a star footballer

**9**.45 Sunday morning: Happily eat scrambled eggs with boyfriend at lovely Hunter Valley hotel.

9.48am: Open papers to see fourth article in as many weeks on his alleged affair with swimsuit model.

9.51am: Refrain from hurling pepper grinder at his face.

9.55am: Stomp to room to pack; wait (frothing) in car.

10.17am: Begin drive back to Sydney and three hours of deafening silence.

11.0pm: Exit car, slam door, spend a week asking myself whether I overreacted, or was I within my rights to be angry, and did I have the energy for this stuff any more.

This "stuff" was being the girlfriend of a professional sportsman (a WAG, aka the Wives and Girlfriends of such high-profile athletes), a role that over almost a decade tested my confidence and relationship in ways I could not have fathomed when I fell in love.

You're forced to become exceptionally creative in order to cope with pressures for which you have no prior reference, given that relationships don't generally come with a football team, public profile and swimsuit model interference included.

I became a WAG at 18, when I started dating rugby union player Craig Wing, also 18. (We broke up last year and remain friendly.)

WAGs weren't focused on much back then, but nowadays the WAGs of every sport from football, tennis, golf, cricket and Formula 1 to lawn bowls are demi-celebrities, some in their own right; some simply by virtue of the fact they date a sportsman.

People are intrigued when

they discover you date a footballer, women especially.

They breathlessly asked about the WAGs — for the record, they're awesome; I met some of my best friends through football. And the groupies — incorrigible and predatory.

Many women would immediately share their dramatic football tale, usually about a friend who had slept with a footballer who had a girlfriend or wife. I was never sure how to respond.

But ultimately, they wanted to know how, with a handsome, Bachelor of the Year footballer boyfriend, I did it.

As the years went on, I stopped responding with my usual effervescent deflections. I wasn't doing it. I sucked at being a WAG. I failed all the tests.

These tests varied. There are the familiar ones — the boys travel a lot, you spend weekends without your boyfriend, you attend weddings and other functions alone — and those that are less documented.

These tests required a solid core of self-confidence, several tonnes of trust and an atypical amount of emotional elegance.

One test involved a gorgeous young thing shimmying in between Craig and me at a nightclub, so she could query if he was with the correct woman. "Why are you with her?" she said. "My girlfriend," — she pointed to her friend sipping her drink close by — "is heaps prettier and I come as part of the deal, too."

I should have laughed it off.

Instead, I asked her to leave, using words unsuitable for publication in a family newspaper.

Fail. But after hours of women aggressively approaching my boyfriend, ignoring me completely, and spitting in the face of sisterhood, this was the proverbial straw and it was about to cause serious vertebrae damage to any nearby camels.

I wondered: if that's what happens while I was there, what went on when I wasn't? I was restrained, relatively speaking.

WAGs have been known to throw drinks and even punches in territorial situations. I know of one WAG who, upon busting her footballer partner with another

woman in a nightclub and watching in shock as he moved to protect his mistress instead of consoling his extremely angry

and upset girlfriend, punched him *and* her.

Then there was the test where a revolting, sleazy friend of the boys brought a couple of strippers to a club function and openly encouraged them to meet and have a drink with Craig and a few other lucky players.

Or the one where a couple of young girls stood a few metres away from us at a fast-food joint and one spoke loudly of how much she would love to perform sexual favours on Craig Wing and how well she'd do it.

Craig laughed; I snapped.

In my mind that was offensive, and I thought he was enjoying the attention a little too much.

Definitely failed that one.



Other fails included going off my nut after seeing a full-page article on him and a Ralph model from the Gold Coast and the details of their night on the town after he judged a bikini competition up there. (Seriously.)

Or a (very hot) non-WAG friend texting me to ask what time the barbecue began ... the barbecue the WAGs had all been told was strictly for the boys.

Or Craig being spotted with a mystery brunette at the movies. (Turns out it was his sister.)

As with any moderately famous person, footballers are the source of much gossip.

In fact, I'd go as far as to say they are targeted. The fun part as their partner is not knowing who, or what, to believe. Even if you learn to gracefully ignore the stuff in the media, it's another matter when your friends spend

anguished weeks or months withholding intelligence on the purported wrongdoings of your partner because they don't know whether to tell you or not.

If they bravely choose to tell you what they've heard, you're never sure what to do with the information. Accuse? Who? The boyfriend for the alleged indiscretion or the friend for fuelling fires sans evidence? It's lose-lose. You second-guess, overthink and find yourself constantly re-evaluating what your deal breakers are.

After all, if he's spotted getting cosy with a girl in a club but it's his best friend's girlfriend, and his best friend was there with them, does that mean the other rumours are wrong, too?

Understandably, Craig grew tired of constantly defending himself — and I got tired of being

a jail warden — but, inconveniently, the footy rumour tap never tires of running.

It's not all bad, obviously; I'm focusing on the worst of it. There are perks to being the partner of a professional athlete — we were invited into beautiful homes, enjoyed stunning sponsor cars, got special treatment at restaurants and attended many exquisite functions.

Combine these luxuries with all the other lunacy and you get one remarkable little ride.

Not to mention the perfect fodder for a novel which, despite me being rubbish at doing it, is precisely why I wrote one about being a WAG.

**Playing The Field, by Zoë Foster (Penguin, \$32.95) goes on sale tomorrow. See her author Q&A on page 125.**

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The groupies are incorrigible and predatory

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Happier times: Zoë Foster and former boyfriend Craig Wing



Single-minded:  
Foster prefers to  
walk the red  
carpet in her  
own right