UH Law School’s ‘Ete Bowl’ Honored with Hawai‘i Women Lawyers President’s Award

Thirty-five years after its founding as a good-natured flag football match between second and third-year women law students at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai‘i, the Ete Bowl has earned community-wide recognition.

Founders and participants in the annual hard-fought game that now pits current law students against Richardson graduates working in the community this week will receive the coveted President’s Award from the Hawai‘i Women Lawyers association.

The award honors these many women for their promotion of camaraderie, support, and networking among women attorneys in Hawai‘i.

The tradition began back in 1978, launched by classmates Diane Ho and Ricki Amano, as a way to spark interest during the dreary days of November. That game was a rousing success. But when interest lagged the following year, those third-year students - now alumnae working in the legal profession – challenged all the Law School women to field a team. That’s all it took to launch a now beloved tradition.

Each November the Bruzers – now attorneys, judges, legislators – challenge the Etes – current law students - to a vigorous dust-up.

Before last year’s game, Professor Mari Matsuda, a 1980 graduate who played in the very first game, praised the annual challenge. “I tell my students there is no way I would have been prepared for practice – or life – if I had not done the Ete Bowl,” noted Matsuda. “Thanks to Ete, I can stare down any opponent, face any situation, with that calm look that says: ‘Oh, come on, you think I’m scared of you?! I was nose guard against Riki Amano.’”

Bruzers and Ete participants alike share the view that the camaraderie developed during the months of practice and then in the years afterward, have been important to their careers and to their long-term friendships.

Law Dean Avi Soifer noted, “The Ete Bowl and its friendly post-game circle each year show that sisterhood truly is powerful. This shared experience goes far beyond the zeal and fervor with which the game is played each year.”

Soifer points out that the Ete Bowl is one of the key events that connect law students with mentors in the community.

Hawai‘i Supreme Court Associate Justice Sabrina McKenna, who played as an Ete during her days at the UH Law School, and later played regularly
as a Bruzer, said the skills learned in the game teach one how to work well within an organization so that everyone succeeds. Famously, McKenna was sworn in as a District Court Judge in November 1999 while still showing some of the effects of black eyes she incurred when hit in the face during that year’s Ete Bowl.

Ete founders and participants are being honored Friday, April 5, at the Annual Awards ceremony and dinner at the Plaza Club.