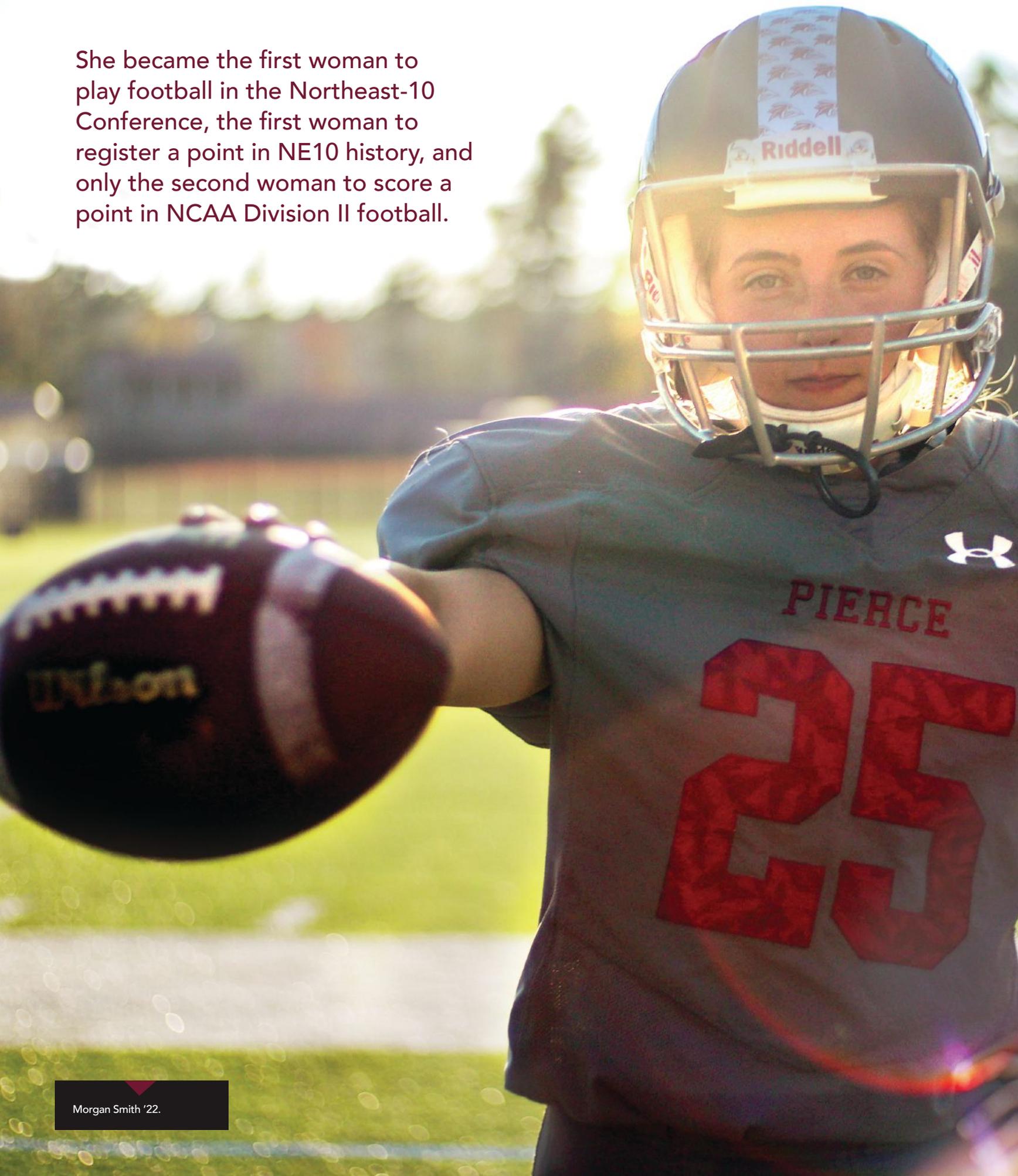


She became the first woman to play football in the Northeast-10 Conference, the first woman to register a point in NE10 history, and only the second woman to score a point in NCAA Division II football.



Morgan Smith '22.

# RAVENS ROUNDUP

## GRIDIRON TRAILBLAZER

### Right Where She Belongs

Following Morgan Smith '22's journey from soccer to football.

The ball sailed through the uprights cleanly, a 20-yard chip shot off the foot of then-high school senior Morgan Smith '22. Smith, along with some friends, was down at the empty football field after school when she attempted her first-ever field goal for fun. But for Smith – a five-year varsity soccer player – the idea of playing football was initially a joke. Then, ironically, it wasn't. Smith soon earned a spot as kicker for the South Glens Falls High School Bulldogs in upstate New York.

Smith handled field goals and extra points for the Bulldogs, while also playing soccer. The dual-sport life treated her well; her football teammates were regulars at her soccer games, while her soccer teammates cheered her on at football games. Once she got to Franklin Pierce in fall 2018, Smith's sole focus returned to soccer.

Believing she could make a greater impact playing football than soccer, Smith found herself at a crossroads. After consulting with her parents, she reached out to Franklin Pierce football coach Russell Gaskamp in May 2019, and he offered her a tryout.

"I didn't want to embarrass myself," says Smith, who recalls that she botched her first two kicks in front of the entire coaching staff. But she didn't let that rattle her. Instead, she regrouped, lined back up, and drilled a much better kick through the uprights from about 30 yards out. Smith impressed the coaches with her leg power and kick height, and Gaskamp soon informed her that she had made the Ravens' roster.

"My dad and I danced in the parking lot after I was named to the team," Smith says.

"It was such an exciting feeling."

The Ravens' inaugural game at the Division II level came against Wesley on September 7, 2019. In that contest, Smith was needed only once for the second-half kickoff. The following week, with the Ravens up 8-7 against Pace, freshman Nathan Selby caught a 10-yard touchdown pass, paving the way for Smith's first extra-point attempt. She made her way onto the field, lined up, and delivered a solid kick through the uprights. In the eventual 29-27 victory for the Ravens, Smith was a perfect 3-for-3 on extra points. In doing so, she became the first woman to play football in the Northeast-10 Conference, the first woman to register a point in NE10 history, and only the second woman to score a point in NCAA Division II football. In 1997, DIII Willamette University kicker Liz Heaston became the first woman to score a point in a college football game, while Ashley Martin of DI Jacksonville State scored an extra point in 2001, and Katie Hnida of the University of New Mexico accomplished the same feat in a Division I-A game in 2003.

In her first season, Smith proved reliable on kickoffs and extra-point attempts (she also made her lone field-goal attempt, a 31-yard strike), and has shown she's up to the physical tasks the game imposes. Women have traditionally been either a minority or nonexistent in football, but Smith is proving the gridiron is exactly where she belongs.

"Morgan is a Ravens' football player first," says Gaskamp. "She is an athlete who competes, works hard, and has earned respect from her teammates." —Tyler Aragao '20