

New games

Students have a ball at weekend workshop

By HARRY ESTEVE
Of the Emerald

"OK, noses to kneecaps!" Fifteen pairs of bodies writhe on the Gerlinger Annex floor, trying to achieve the proper contortion. Elsewhere in the gym, nearly 300 students are engrossed in Mingle, Bop or Human Merry-Go-Round.

The activities were part of the 1981 New Games Workshop, a three-day, one-credit course offered to students last weekend by the recreation and park management department.

"Elbows to earlobes!" As they try to fulfill this command, the pairs fall apart, groaning, laughing, complaining.

"All right, all right — people to people!"

The 15 pairs untangle and scramble noisily to find another partner. People to People resumes.

More than just a name for a special kind of sports activity, "New Games" describes a new-age philosophy of competition and play, according to workshop instructor Effie Fairchild.

Traditional sports place too much emphasis on winning and physical ability, thus discouraging most "non-athletic" people from participating, Fairchild says. Those people are left out of games when they are growing up, she says, and as a result are less competitive in life.

New Games, on the other hand, "are for people of any age, any ability."

After teaching physical education for four years, Fairchild became concerned that

the wrong students were getting the most attention.

"The ones that we really should have been trying to reach were the ones that were too fat or too skinny. You know, the ones that are always chosen last."

Fairchild says New Games are perfect for those people, as well as athletes.

There is competition, she says, "but it's not against people. It's usually against a piece of equipment, like the Earth Ball."

The Earth Ball, a highlight of all New Games festivals, resembles a gigantic beach ball, six feet in diameter. The object of Earth Ball games usually involves keeping it airborne or riding it while other players roll it across the floor.

"We call it cooperative play," Fairchild says. "You've heard our motto I'm sure, 'Play hard, play fair and nobody gets hurt.'"

Following Friday afternoon's opening pageant that explained the philosophy of New Games, participants broke into groups and began learning the games. Students of Fairchild's New Games class, a course offered through the physical education department, defined the rules and acted as referees.

After a quiet start, simple enjoyment overcame the players' initial nervousness, and it became hard to hear the referees' instructions over the shouting and laughing of the players.

On Saturday, the workshop moved outside for Earth Ball games, an Ultimate Frisbee



Photos by Erich Boekelheide

Some University students earned one credit for blowing bubbles and holding the "Earth Ball" aloft during this weekend's New Games Workshop. Workshop instructor Effie Fairchild says the workshop is likely to be repeated next year.

demonstration and a massive, campus-wide game of team hide-and-seek.

On Sunday the activities were held in Springfield at the Willamalane swimming pool where participants took to the water for "Aquatic New Games."

Fairchild learned about New Games from the New Games Foundation, an organization founded by Stewart Brand, one of the authors of the Whole Earth Catalogue. Using revenues from the sale of the successful book, Brand created the foundation that continues to fund New Games festivals around the country.

Fairchild first introduced New Games at the University in 1975 with a workshop similar to last weekend's. Since then campus workshops have continued at irregular intervals.

"It's going to be a yearly event as long as I'm at this campus," Fairchild promises. "We've had too many really nice comments."



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