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Involved with intramurals

5,000 students took advantage last year

The last two years have been filled with equal parts of turmoil and triumph for Karla Rice and the University's intramural program.

Though it all, though, both have managed to remain practically invisible to anyone but the work-study students who work in the intramural office.

But that is the way Rice prefers it, because to her, doing is important, not watching.

"The biggest value of our program for many is social," she says, referring to the wide variety of team-oriented sports sponsored by Recreation and Intramurals.

"Coupled with that are the open recreation hours we offer that attract 'fitness' people like swimmers and weightlifters," she adds.

Rice was formerly the head of the Women's Recreation Association, which merged with the men's intramural program in 1979 into RIM. Rice moved from WRA to head the new University intramural program.

Little did Rice know what was in store. As part of her duties, Rice not only directed the intramural program but scheduled much of the use of the physical education facilities at the University during non-class hours.

What was already a difficult job was made harder by the unlimited access to University facilities afforded the general public. The result, says Rice, was overuse, misuse and a rapid deterioration of the facilities.

"We had no control before," she recalls. "Our facilities were deteriorating. But our new security has stopped that. And because of that, we have been able to upgrade the facilities."

Last year, almost 4,000 students were involved in RIM-sponsored activities, and another 1,300 used the intramural facilities on a reservation basis (racquetball, handball, etc.).

The "traditional" sports — football, basketball and softball — have proven the most popular, according to a statistical summary of activities compiled over the summer.

In all three, men's leagues have drawn the most participants, a fact which has Rice both concerned and content.

The concern stems from the lack of entries in the women's leagues.

"Our main problem is that we need more women to participate in recreational activities," Rice says. "Men are drawn more to what we offer than women, because we offer a lot of competitive activities."

As an example, Rice points to basketball. Last winter, 930 men played in the RIM basketball leagues, while only 80 women signed up to play.

To reach more women, Rice has increased the number of coed activities, which she says seem to draw more women.

"We seem to reach more women through coed activities," she says. "That would seem to indicate that women are more interested in the social aspect."

Although Rice believes that competitive recreational activities have a place in what RIM offers students, she doesn't believe conflict has a place in RIM activities.

"We want a wholesome type of competition," says Rice. "We want it based on a friendship level, not on a 'You dirty so and so' level."

Rice moved to change intramural flag football rules this year because of that type of problem. All contact has been

eliminated, says Rice.

"Contact gives an opportunity for conflict. We would rather have a wide-open game than a lot of crash and bash."

Unlike schools like Ohio State, which are funded through their athletic departments, RIM is funded partially through student fees (\$56,000 last year) and partially through the physical education department.

Although there is no direct tie between intramurals and the athletic department, Rice says there is quite a bit of contact between the two.

"It's a two-way street. We take advantage of some of their facilities, like Autzen Stadium and Hayward Field, and they use some of our facilities," Rice says.

"They also often help with their expertise. For instance, the assistant wrestling coach is putting on our wrestling tournament this year, and he is getting help from his wrestlers," she says.

With the improvement in facilities and adequate student funding, there are few things left on Rice's "wish list."

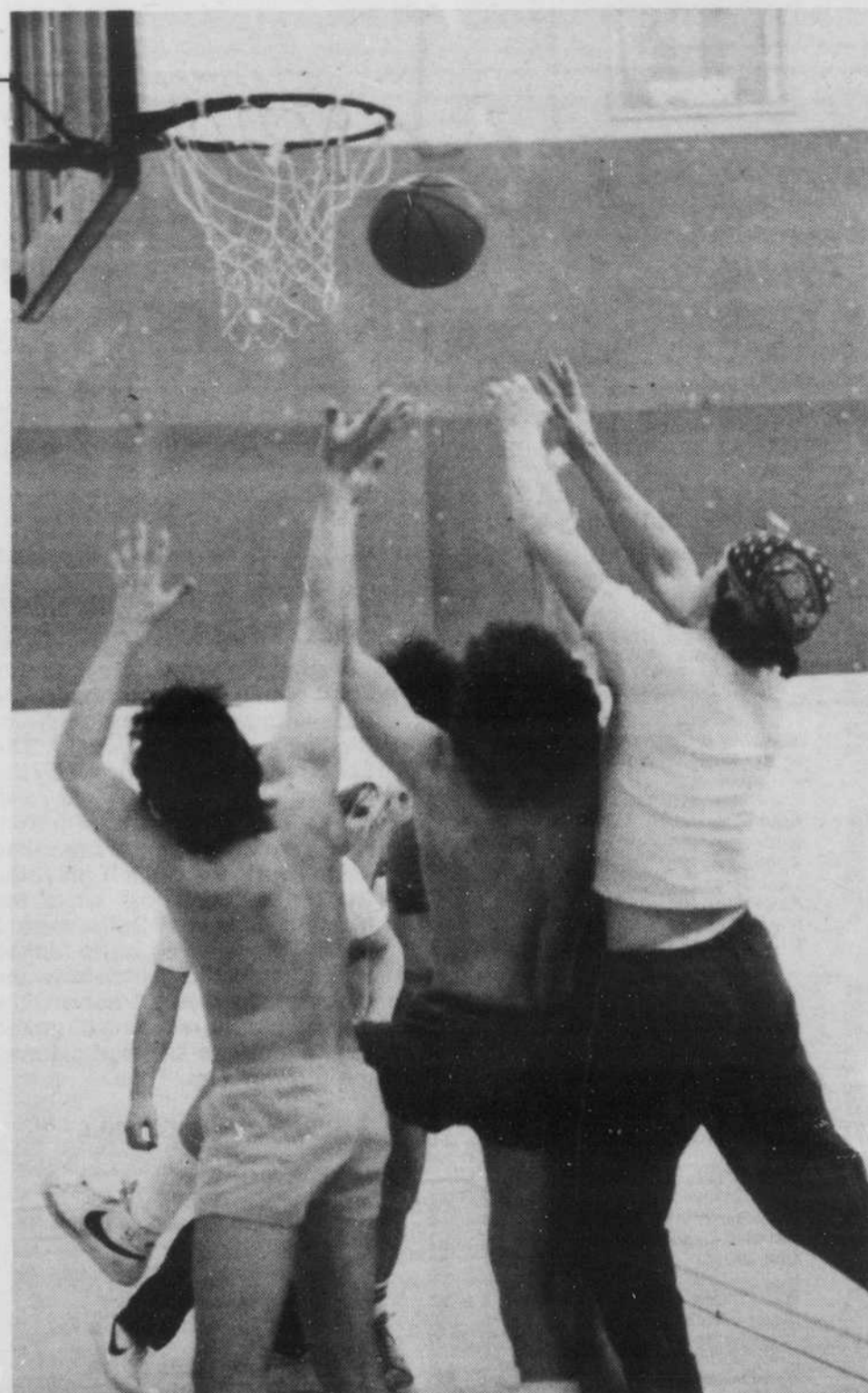
One present Rice would like is a concentrated recreation and intramural center, similar to the one at Oregon State, that would be "open day and night."

Coupled with that, Rice would like to find a solution to the "dire need for fields" that plagues RIM every year. She says the recent construction of the South Bank field next to the Willamette River is a start, and that plans for three more similar fields will provide even more help.

"We're in a constant state of flux," says Rice. "We are still trying to improve, to make RIM better."

"We are always trying to move forward."

By John Healy



Emerald photo

Over 930 men played R.I.M. basketball last year — but only 80 women.

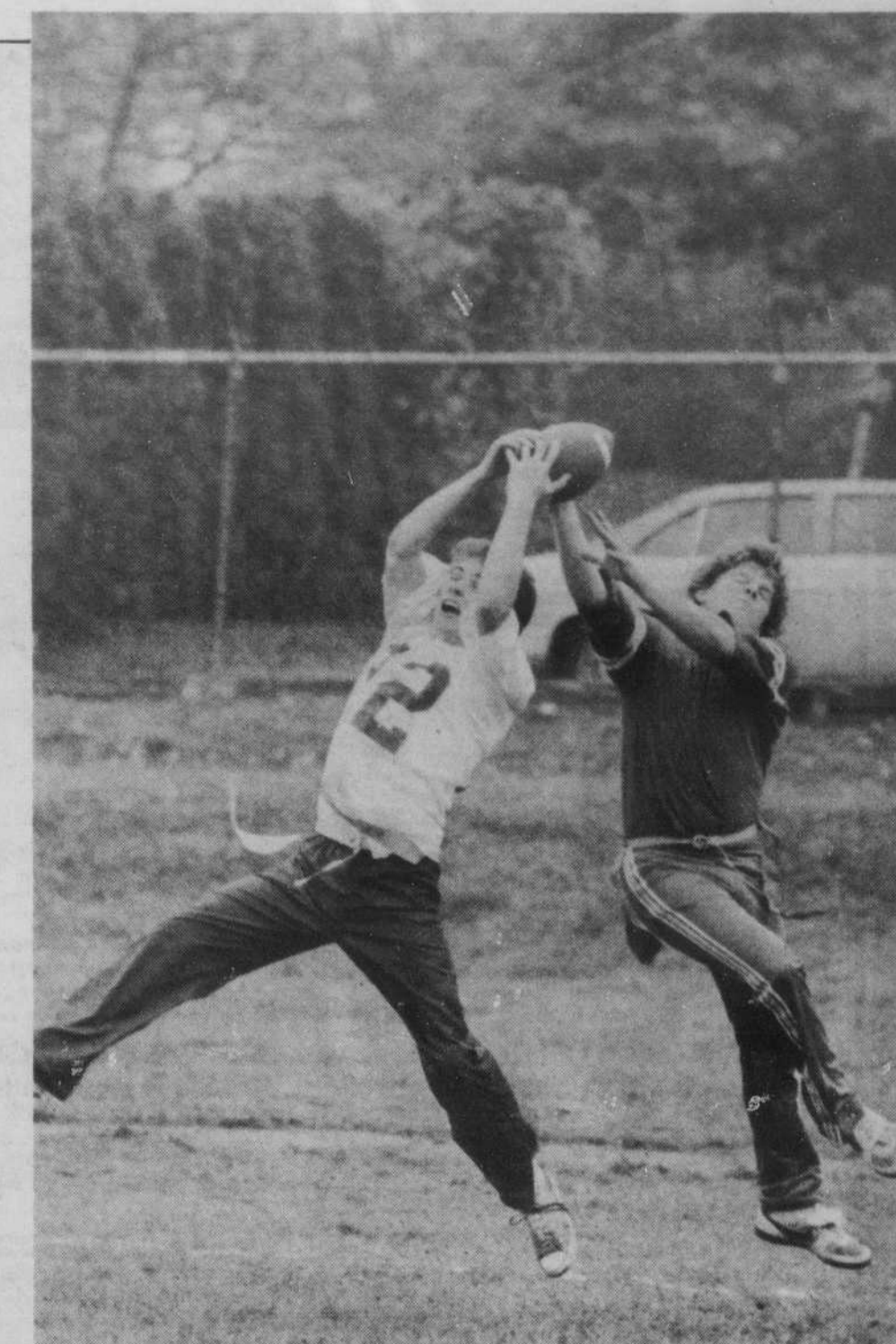


Photo by Dean Guernsey

Flag football rules have been changed this fall to eliminate all contact.

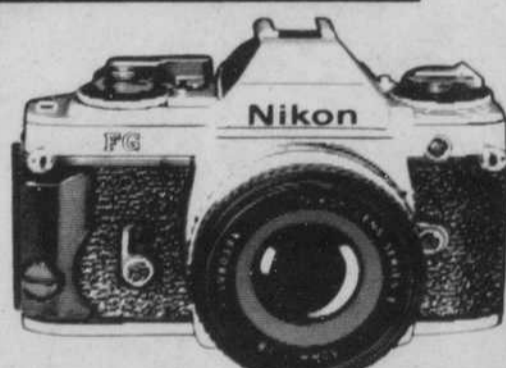
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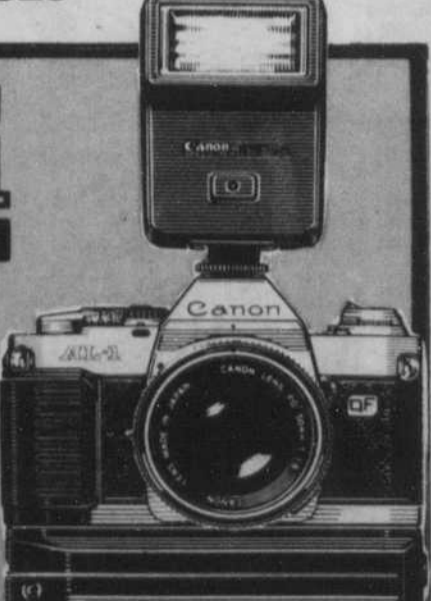
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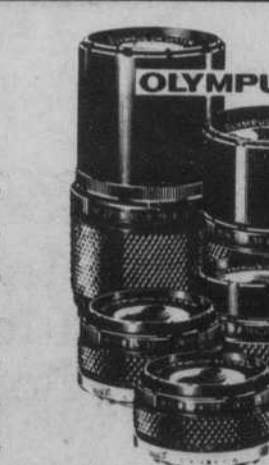
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