

Team handball gains popularity in U.S.

By Diane Lantto
 ■ The North Wind
 Northern Michigan U.

Twelve players leap and run across a large court. They check each other and sometimes roll to the floor as they try to bomb a cantaloupe-sized ball past a goalie in a mini soccer-style net.



A fast-paced court game with elements of basketball, softball, volleyball and water polo, team handball ranks as the second most popular team sport worldwide, according to the U.S. Team Handball Federation.

"It's a good sport for people with no niche," said Mary Phyl

Dwight, Northern Michigan U.'s team handball coach. The former Olympic team member was involved in a number of the sports team handball is based on, including basketball. But at 5 feet, 7 inches tall, she said she didn't have the speed and aggressiveness to make up for her lack of height.

However, she found her court skills and strong softball throwing arm made her a good team handball player.

The sport is just beginning to take off in the United States despite its popularity in other countries. The International Handball Federation has 4.2 million members in 88 countries.

Twenty-five men and women practice together as NMU's handball club, but compete separately against teams from across the country.

NMU's club members have been nurturing the sport at the grass roots level — the Marquette area public schools are the only ones in the United States Dwight knows of that have permanent team handball mark-

ings on gym floors.

The average final score in team handball is in the low 20s. Most of the action occurs near a six-meter semicircle surrounding the goal.

Only the goalie may stand inside the circle while in possession of the ball, but players do have air rights. Like acrobats, they leap into the air over the circle to shoot the ball, which must be released before they land.

Players can dribble the ball across the court, but it's essentially a fast passing game with a zone defense.

"There are no time outs, and the referee rarely handles the ball," Dwight said. "There's no room to argue with the referee, because the game would go on without you."



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Baseball

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the summer.

Some coaches, including Brock, also said they have a problem playing when the student body is gone for the summer. "I don't think you should have any kind of college athletics while school is not in session," Brock said. "It just doesn't make much sense."

Finally, some coaches and administrators are not convinced the extended season would create additional revenue, as the proposal intends. The additional travel and boarding costs would outweigh the turnstile gains, they say. "I think it would price a lot of schools right out of baseball," Brock said.

But Baseball America Editor Allan Simpson said an extended college season would allow pro scouts more time to look at players.

He said the extended season is the next logical step for college baseball. "There are real limitations with 60 games," he said. "Baseball is now the No. 3 college sport. If it ever wants to make realistic gains and gain acceptance nationwide, it is going to have to be played in the summer."

NCAA

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But Schultz believes with some work this contract is a blessing to the NCAA, and not just from a money standpoint.

"We plan to challenge the membership to come up with creative ways to distribute these funds," he said. "We want to eliminate the comment about the \$400,000 free throw."

Hopefully he means it, and won't let the "big" schools bully the NCAA into letting them reap all the rewards, using the argument that they've kept college athletics running with their names.

Reward schools who make it into the 64-team tournament, but place a cap on the amount of money to be divided up between tournament teams, he said.

The rest of the money generated should be distributed on an equal level to the rest of the NCAA institutions, except for those schools on probation.

Install bonus programs for schools who graduate their athletes on a high ratio based on real figures.

If the NCAA does this or something similar, they will need only ankle boots instead of hip boots to clean up. Because whenever money is involved, there always will be some mess to clean up.

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