

Life Is Short. Play Hardly

IN THE '90s, MANY TRADITIONAL sports have given way to a series of nontraditional, adventurous pursuits. Rock climbing, white-water canoeing and bungee jumping have all found their way into popular culture. But in this brave new world of equality and inclusiveness, the sedentary still have little sporting to do.

IN-PLAY

This needs to be corrected. Low-impact sports have long been neglected as legitimate athletic pursuits. What is a low-impact sport? If you can win a match without mussing your hair or spilling your beer, you're probably playing a low-impact sport. We've listed a few below and rated them on three scales: ease, coolness and ability to hold onto the beverage of your choice.



Bowling

Long the province of doughy guys, bowling is now going cutting-edge. The new trend is rock 'n' bowl: live music and the hurling of heavy objects. Bowling requires only moderate levels of strength and coordination. The minimum required is the ability to roll a 12-pound ball between two ditches. We'll let the pros on ABC's *Wide World of Sports* worry about actually knocking down the pins.

Bowling alleys typically offer soft drinks and domestic beers. Although it's somewhat challenging to hold onto your drink while actually rolling the ball, the majority of time spent sitting offers no such obstacles. Despite all these advantages, bowling is still typically looked upon as the sport of middle-aged Kiwanians with beer bellies.

Ease: 8
Coolness: 3
Spillage Resistance: 8



Billiards/Pool

Pool has always had a mystique about it. Smoke-filled bars, big-city hustlers and Paul Newman all come to mind. Pool requires a certain combination of hand-eye coordination and intricate trigonometry to be played successfully. And not unlike bowling, it's hard to actually hold onto your beverage while making a shot. But when your opponent or partner is shooting, you can enjoy your drink — often culled from the wide selection of foreign and domestic choices many pool bars offer. The best part of pool is the seedy tradition of the hustler. And if you want to draw comparisons of yourself with Newman, *The Hustler* poses much less trouble than *Slapshot*.

Ease: 6
Coolness: 10
Spillage Resistance: 9



Darts

Darts, if thought of at all, is rarely thought of as a sport. It doesn't have the kitschiness of bowling or the romance of pool. It's basically throwing stuff at a wall. You don't spill your beer when you throw, and even after you've emptied the cup, it's still pretty hard to miss the target.

Ease: 9
Coolness: 5
Spillage Resistance: 10

The sedentary have many other sports to choose from — horseshoes, lawn darts and, for the active burnout, Frisbee golf and Hacky Sack. As a society, we must move beyond the narrow vision that holds athletes must be athletic. The acceptance of low-impact sports is the first step. Indolent unite!

James Plummer, U. of Virginia



Excuses, Excuses

YOUR ALARM DIDN'T GO OFF, you couldn't pry your homework loose from your dog and your grandmother died... again. Right?

Two-hundred plus years of American higher learning have yielded many less-than-stellar reasons for going AWOL on test day. And professors have heard them all. Here are some of their favorites:

CLASS

"I had a student say, 'Do you remember when my grandparent died, and I had to go to her funeral? Well, she really died this time, and I really have to go to the funeral.'" — David MacDonald, professor of history, Illinois State U.

"I had a fellow who said a bird in a tree 'went' on his head. He said he had to go clean it off, got his clothes wet and just couldn't make it to class." — David Royse, assistant professor of music education, Kansas State U.

"A young man called and said he was stuck in Fort Worth — 120 miles away — and his car wasn't running. Our caller ID showed he was calling from a dorm room on campus." — Emily LaBeff, professor of sociology, Midwestern State U., Texas

"A student said she was sprayed by a skunk. She had to stay home and take five baths and call the doctor, and it took all day before she felt presentable." — John Zelezny, professor of mass communication and journalism, California State U., Fresno

"One girl said her best friend

had gotten pregnant. The friend's family was having a shotgun wedding, and she had to leave school immediately to be the maid of honor." — Marshall Duke, professor of psychology, Emory U., Ga.

"A student called and said, 'My roommate fell out of the top bunk, and I had to take her to the emergency room.'" — Mary Gill, professor of speech communication, Buena Vista U., Iowa

"A young woman said her grandmother was near death, and she had to go see her [in Seattle]. I said, 'That's fine. Take care of your family problems first.' Well, we're about 300 miles east of Seattle. During the final period, I had some meetings in Las Vegas, so my [teaching assistant] gave the final. As I was boarding the plane, I looked up and there she was. I said, 'How's your grandmother?' She

said, 'I couldn't get a direct flight to Seattle. I have to go through Las Vegas.' And we both just roared. She wasn't going to see her grandmother. She was going to Las Vegas to gamble. I let her take a makeup exam, though. It was kinda funny." — John Crane, associate professor of biology and zoology, Washington State U.

"A student missed my final and called in a terror. She had a shrine in her dorm, and she'd had a fire, and this obscure shrine burned. The loss had so unnerved her and deprived her of a source of strength that she couldn't take the final, she said." — Stephen Chapman, professor of agronomy, Clemson U., S.C.

Ashley Estes, Auburn U., Ala.
Illustration by Shin Kao, U. of California, Berkeley



Guest Expert: The Alien

On Excuses:
"After millions of eons of development, we have eliminated or solved the problems that require excuses."