

U LIFE

Sports of All Sorts

SOME COLLEGE sports make bocce ball look mainstream. Playing everything from Frisbee golf to intercollegiate water hockey, nearly 80 percent of college students partake in the wild world of intramural/recreational sports, according to the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA).

OFFBEAT

"We probably look like a bunch of feeding fish," says water hockey player Robert Church, a grad student at East Carolina U., N.C.

A dozen ECU students hit the lap pool in snorkels, fins and scuba masks every week. Players wield foot-long sticks underwater to whack the puck into the opposing goal, but touching the pool floor isn't allowed.

"It's really a passing game," Church says. "Only a few people stay down for 15 or 20 seconds at a time."

Most water hockey clubs are self-supported, but some band together at intercollegiate tournaments.



Kevin Hudry, soccer, Central Connecticut State U. Wets his head before he goes onto the field.
Duane Posey, basketball, Hofstra U., N.Y. Listens to "How About Some Hardcore" by M.O.P. before every game.

In nationally organized bike polo matches, players on mountain bikes use mallets to knock the mini soccer ball toward the goal.

"It's a fast game, like soccer on wheels," says bike polo player Matt Bennett, a senior at California State U.,

Sacramento. "It appeals to our short American attention span."

To avoid collisions, players ride vertically toward the ball and swing their mallets with the right hand only.

"Every once in awhile, you brake too hard and go flying over the handlebars, but there's not a lot of blood involved," Bennett says.

Disc golf, an early '80s fad, is mounting a modest comeback.

"I think it's very creative, visualizing the flight path of the disc and figuring out the quickest way to get to the hole," says Shawn Kennedy, a junior at U. of Connecticut.

Disc golf's 4-foot tall targets support chain curtains that stop the disc, which is smaller and harder than a traditional Frisbee. A few campuses have disc golf courses, but players can set up anywhere with about five open acres.

The ultimate alternative college sport is, of course, Ultimate. It's another disc game styled after soccer and basketball. But it requires more running, according to Rik Granis, a grad student at U. of Minnesota.

"There's a rumor that somewhere in the country, [Ultimate] has achieved varsity-sport status," Granis says. If so, that program is a well-guarded secret.

So when will contact knitting hit college sports arenas?

By Matt Johanson, San Francisco State U./ Photo by Brian Atad, U. of Connecticut



The new Rodeo Drive

Back in the Saddle

WOULD YOU ENDURE a few bucks to make some? An impeccable jump shot or curve ball may be the normal way to score a scholarship, but rodeo life is becoming a popular second job to help pay the bills for students at schools like Boise State U., Idaho; U. of Montana; Murray State U., Ky.; U. of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Weber State U., Utah.

IN-PLAY

"You just eat, sleep and drink rodeo," says Montana State U. senior Bill Harris. "It's becoming more and more of an athlete's sport. You have to be dedicated to get off your rear end and go find practice."

Modern-day cowboys aren't alone in noticing the big collegiate interest in rodeos. The National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association

holds competitions throughout the year and national finals in June. Several colleges have school-sponsored teams and scholarship funds. James Tarver collected \$30,000 before leaving high school, and he roped a scholarship from Eastern Wyoming College, where he's now a sophomore.

And the men aren't the only ones kicking up some dust. At age 5, Tona Wright followed in the footsteps of her professional rodeo circuit parents. When she was ready to saddle up for college, the early exposure paid off in a full ride to Western Texas College.

"In high school, the only sports I played were basketball and rodeo," says Wright, a sophomore. "The only reason I got to play basketball was because there aren't many rodeos in the winter."

Most rodeo participants would agree the sport requires a lot of time and effort. They also invest thousands of dollars in a horse and continuously pay for equipment upkeep.

"That bill is amazing. You have to put in a lot of time and money if you want to do well and win that money back," Wright says.

In some ways, rodeo is much more than competition. It recalls the free-spirited wild West — being

home on the range, lassoing livestock and overcoming wild animals. Tarver, Harris and Wright, like most student rodeo competitors, grew up on ranches where they learned riding and roping as part of their weekly chores.

"If you haven't been around horses all your life, it's hard to get into," Tarver says.

However, for urbanites who dream of equestrian mastery, there are schools that teach rodeo basics. But be forewarned. Harris says a four-day lesson could kick a \$300 to \$500 hole in your wallet. But you won't catch these students saying it isn't worth it.

"I've played all kinds of sports, and there is nothing like rodeo in the whole world," Wright says. "It's my life."

By Tim Neville, Montana State U./ Photo courtesy of Andy Watson



Guest Expert: RuPaul

On rodeos:
"I love western outfits. The lift in the heel on cowboy boots makes men's butts look really hot in jeans."

Ahmad Jackson, basketball, Hofstra U. After evaluating a slump in high school, Jackson realized that he was looking at his coach's shoes — black wing tips — before the game. He hasn't looked at his coach's shoes since.

Chrissi Pruitt, field hockey, U. of Delaware Rubs a bump on her nose three times.
Joelle Babula, basketball, California State U., Chico Takes a 10-minute nap before game time and plays on an empty stomach.