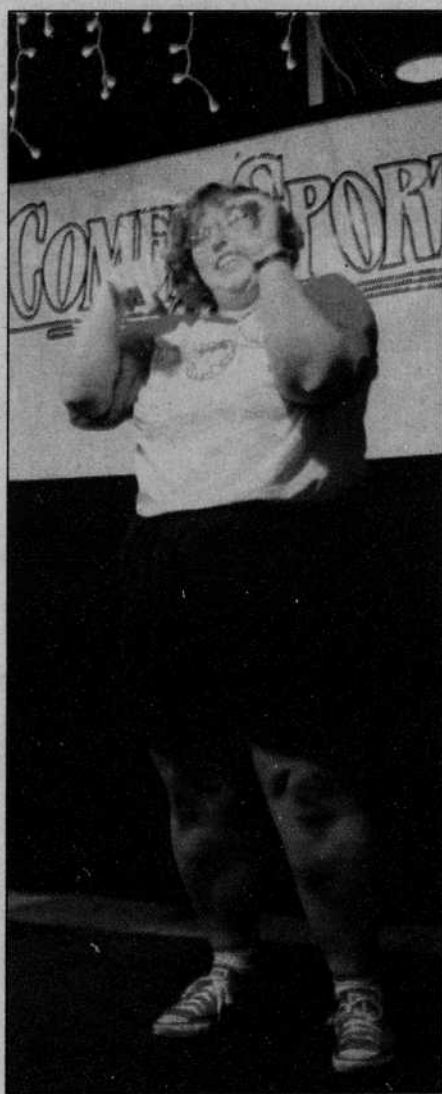


# Let the gags begin

ComedySportz scores big by bringing its nationally recognized improvisational style to downtown Eugene.



By Yael Menahem  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The "pro wrestling of comedy" is how Kent "Touch This" McCarty defines his local improvisational troupe, ComedySportz.

Ten months ago, McCarty and his partner in crime, Rob "Schoolhouse" Rock, introduced Eugene to ComedySportz, a national comedy movement.

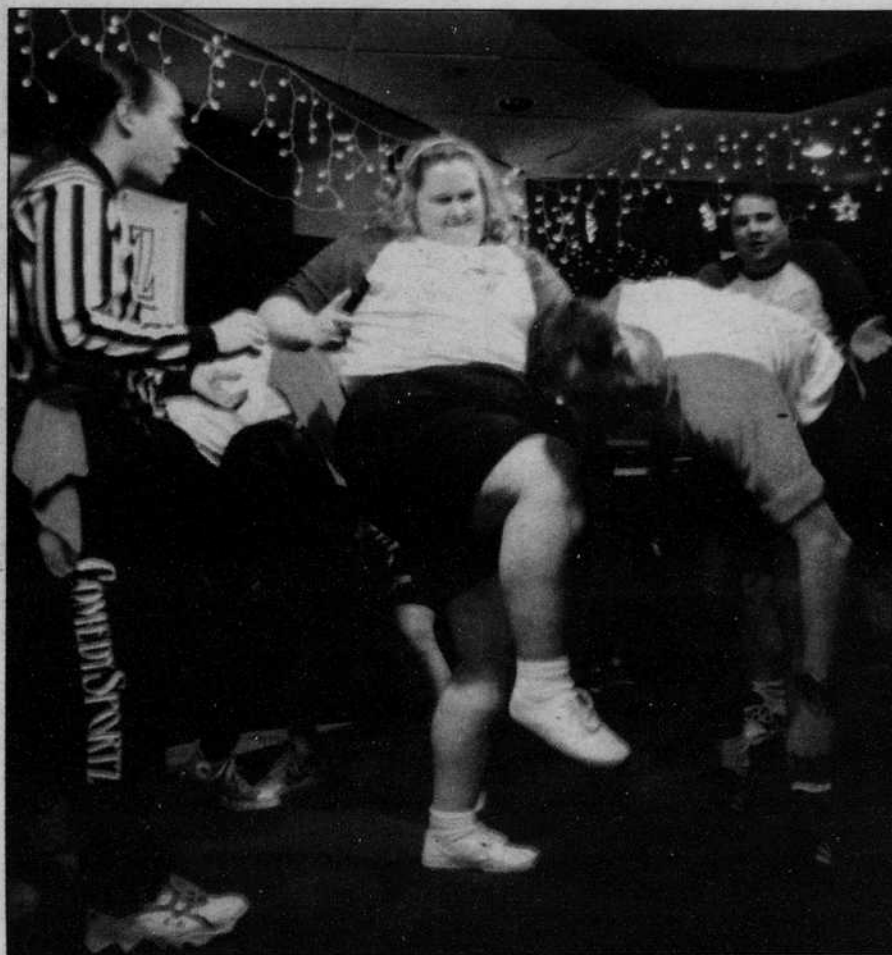
The weekly performances at Rosewater's Deli in downtown Eugene continue to build an audience, while attracting local community members who join ComedySportz teams with names like the Hult Center Fielders and the Beltline Sus-penders.

ComedySportz is a national comedy organization with groups in 26 U.S. cities, one of which is the Portland group that McCarty helped found. He answered an open call in the paper to join and because he was already involved in theater sports — another form of improvisational comedy — he decided to take ComedySportz workshops to learn the rules of this new game.

McCarty met Rock six years ago in Portland, when the latter comedian joined that city's troupe. The two are trying to make this weekly event a permanent part of Eugene's entertainment scene.

For the uninitiated, ComedySportz involves audience participation, talented comedians and a scoring format.

In a typical show, the referee — McCarty's role — asks audience members for suggestions, perhaps a line from a movie or a title of an unpublished book. Those comments lead to different games where the performers, through their improvisational skills, attempt to make the audience laugh. The referee can call a "groaner foul" or "delay of game" if the skit isn't funny.



All photos by Erin O'Connell for the Emerald  
(above) Referee Kent McCarty watches over a skit involving Melissa Heilman and Rob Davidson. (below) McCarty leads Davidson, Craig McCarty and Miranda Prince in a medley of songs. (left) Prince during a skit.

The performances are different every time and the Jan. 28 show was no exception.

Unlike similar improvisational shows, ComedySportz has some house rules. A main one, which must be followed by the players and the audience, is to keep the language clean. Fail and you get a "brown bag foul" called on you, which entails a brown bag put on your head.

Although McCarty said that Eugene audiences normally "don't go for the low-brow humor," there were some attendees with just that in mind.

While warming up the patrons, McCarty began explaining the rules of the game and asked for someone to yell out a number. A man sitting in the front yelled "69" and was immediately brown-bagged.

Comedy Sportz is a family show and appeals to all ages, McCarty points out, and he admits that it's easier for the audience and the performers to reach for bad language. It's more of a challenge and requires sophisticated creativity, however, to keep the language clean.

As the game progressed, the audience and the players warmed up and the performance took on a life of its own.

An audience favorite called "Five Things" required a team to step out of the warm deli into the freezing Eugene evening while the audience conjured up difficult sports activities using odd instruments. Once the players stepped back into the playing area, the fun began.

One team member was required to guess the activities while the other two described the activity. Participants used their hands, legs and body, but had little help from verbal cues.

Although the comedians don't remain completely silent — they use words like "dabba do" — it's a challenging and funny game.

The high point came when time ran out and the team member on the receiving end of the guessing game attempted to name the sports. Somehow, she guessed three of

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the five correctly.

One was skiing on orange juice with flipper skis. A more challenging one — which she didn't guess — was performing tai chi, with Richard Nixon as her instructor, in a marshmallow-padded cup.

Sound complicated? It is, but that's what makes ComedySportz fun.

ComedySportz appears in Eugene every Friday night at Rosewater's Deli, located downtown at 44 W. Broadway beginning at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$8 at the door or \$6 with a can of food for Food for Lane County. Reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 302-9782.

If you're interested in taking some workshops to learn this type of improv, e-mail Comedy Sportz at eugene@comedysportz.com.

