

The fad is BACK

Yo-yos are gaining popularity throughout the nation as an alternative sport



Azle Malinao-Alvarez

Andrew Teem demonstrate his yo-yo skills at Flying Clippers. The store is located at 1680 W. 11th.

Yael Menahem
Oregon Daily Emerald

Yo-yos are making a comeback. Who knew the little toys have such a deep impact on people's lives?

Andrew Teem, a yo-yo enthusiast who picked up the alternative sports form two years ago, feels that the yo-yo made its way back to the mainstream, including Eugene, a year and a half ago, because it's a cycle, just like fashion.

"Yo-yos have come back with vengeance," Teem says.

There are many yo-yo groups around the country; most are affiliated with the American Yo-Yo Association, which was established in October 1993. Its mission statement reads, "The mission of the AYYA is to provide a venue for players and collectors to come together in fellowship and to engage in the promotion of yo-yo playing as an art form and a sport, for both amateur and professional players."

They take yo-yoing seriously.

Locally, there's Club Yo, which Teem is trying to reorganize so it will be a place for all to learn new tricks and different styles of yo-yoing. Teem plans to set up clinics and club gatherings for those who want to share their tricks with others.

The history of the yo-yo can be traced back to 500 B.C. in Greece when they were made from clay and were used for decoration rather than playing. At a certain age, children would offer their toys to the gods, and the yo-yo was one of the toys that was given up.

It's believed that yo-yos made their way to the United States in

the 1920s when a man named Pedro Flores brought the first one from the Philippines to the United States and toured the country, leaving audiences in awe of the tricks he could perform with the toy. Teem believes they were most popular during the 1950s.

Today, yo-yo championships and competitions are held throughout the nation and worldwide. The 1999 AYYA World Champion is Takumi Nagase, a 12-year-old from Japan.

Not all yo-yos are created equal. There are the solid wood yo-yos that have a fixed axle that doesn't come apart and is the cheapest. There's also the trans-axle yo-yo that has a metal axle with a plastic sleeve around the center, and there's the yo-yo with the superior spin, which Teem uses, called the ball-bearing yo-yo, also known as the turbo bumble bee. It was successfully created in 1997 and offers "a new level of yo-yo," said Teem, who thinks the axle is like a skateboard wheel.

This new technology lets the yo-yo "sleep," or spin, for 11 minutes, which gives yo-yoers an opportunity to develop more tricks.

One of the most popular is Tom Kuhn's "No Live 3-in-1" yo-yo, which was created in 1978. It's the first take-apart-by-hand yo-yo that has a replaceable axle. In 1980, "The yo-yo with a Brain" was created by Michael Caffrey and offers a centrifugal spring-loaded clutch mechanism that causes the automatic return of the yo-yo to the hand when the rotational spin slows to a predetermined rate. Sounds like a bunch of scientific

terms, but the rotation and the axle of the yo-yo is essential to the player.

The Silver Bullet II, considered the top-of-the-line yo-yo, runs for \$90 and is considered the world's longest-spinning yo-yo.

The key to keeping the yo-yos rotation fresh is replacing the string often, according to the AYYA's Web site.

The Flying Clipper, an alternative sports store in Eugene, where Teem works, offers the most enthusiastic yo-yoer a wall full of yo-yos, some instructional videos and accessories.

According to Teem, there's two yo-yoing styles. The imperial is the simplest form, where people do tricks like "walk the dog," where the yo-yo touches the ground and continues to move forward, while the butterfly is fit for the advanced yo-yoer who experiments with freestyle yo-yoing and a variety of string tricks based on the art of Diabolo, a Chinese technique.

The sport is non-competitive, and that is its appeal to many, including Teem, who believes the sport "instills concentration and agility" in him.

"It's a balance and meditation for me," he says. But that doesn't mean that he doesn't get hurt when trying new tricks.

Sometimes the yo-yo can "wake-up," which means that it snaps, and can hit a person anywhere, including the head or teeth.

And who said yo-yos can't be a good workout too?

"I think my biceps got bigger from yo-yoing," Teem says.

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