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## Balls Out!

Portland's LGBTQ sports clubs eye a busy season of competition and community BY RYAN J. PRADO

As is likely to be discussed in roughly every written or verbal encounter you'll have in the next few weeks, spring is almost, possibly, definitely here. Not that your daily donning of a thermal onesie may connote the coming of our "April showers," but it's true—you can nearly smell the season change. For some it's the scent of grass finally mowed after an icy winter, for others, the pungent aroma of daffodils sprouting in the rain gutter. Either way, it's time. Perhaps nowhere is this more true than within the hearts, biceps and glutes of the mounting brigades of Portland's LGBTQ sports associations.

Portland has established itself as a stronghold for inclusive sports programs, a regional accolade made even more impressive considering an almost impenetrable yearlong storm. And like the inevitable stabbing of sun rays through the clouds we're all crossing our frostbitten fingers for, organizations big and small contribute to the dappling of light on a community that just wants to get outside and play.

Whether established LGBTQ sports pioneers such as the ones profiled further along in our spring sports coverage (Rose City Softball, Portland Gay Volleyball, et al.) or more intimate clubs like Gay Men's Jump Rope, or Ruby Red Flippers, the sense of camaraderie and good health remains tantamount. Just as important, though, is giving back to the community.

Take Team Portland Tennis Association, a 150-member strong LGBTQ club that raised a personal record of \$7,400 for Portland After School Tennis & Education, Cascade AIDS Project and QCenter. As TPTA board member Dennis Lo explains, tennis is inherently a social and community-minded sport, creating a perfect fit for supporting local charity causes.

"In general, the LGBT tennis community is very close-knit," says Lo, noting that TPTA is in the process of putting together a team for this year's CAP Aids Walk, as well as marching



**LEFT:** The Adventure Group at Hamilton Mountain

**BELOW:** Kevin and Scott from Team Portland Tennis at Rose City Open XX

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ADVENTURE GROUP & TEAM PORTLAND TENNIS

in the 2011 Portland Pride parade. "We travel to each other's cities to play each other's tournaments and you meet some great people and make some great friends."

Celebrating its 25th season this year is Portland's Adventure Group—an outdoors club whose members generally care little about the ebbs and flows of weather. Springtime brings transitions to hiking as the temps get warmer and the snow melts. In the spring, hikers enjoy the wildflowers in the Gorge, with the treks getting higher in elevation as the summer progresses. By midsummer, a variety of hikes make way for kayaking, backpacking, bicycling, car camping and huckleberry-picking trips. Members also organize outings to Portland Gay Men's Chorus concerts, local museums, plays and sporting events.

Head indoors at the Hollywood Bowl in Northeast Portland, and you'll see the tail end of 33 years of pin-pulverizing action with the Portland Gay and Lesbian Bowling League. Stick your head underwater later in the summer, and you're likely to find Ruby Red Flippers bringing LGBTQ divers and allies together in a scuba-fied sensation, and generating some \$10,000 in funds this year for area nonprofits.



The point is no matter where you look, chances are you'll find welcoming arms to embrace your sporting ways. Even the largest organizations are always looking for more members. The more the merrier, after all—unless you're talking about these clouds. Then you're just talking crazy talk.

So dig out your helmets, your pads, your huddled masses of cleats and sneakers yearning to breathe free. Spring is here; you've got a game to win.

For more on Team Portland Tennis, visit [teamporland-tennis.org](http://teamporland-tennis.org); for Ruby Red Flippers, visit [rubyredflippers.org](http://rubyredflippers.org); for the Adventure Group, visit [adventuregroup.org](http://adventuregroup.org); for the Portland Gay and Lesbian Bowling League, visit [pdxbowling.com](http://pdxbowling.com).

### Hardcourt Action

Portland Gay Basketball joins Portland Gay Volleyball for 2011 season

Empowered by a 2010 season that saw Portland hosting the North American Gay Volleyball Association (NAGVA) National Championships, Portland Gay Volleyball isn't resting on its laurels. Such exposure meant more interest from newcomers and established bumpers, setters and spikers alike, as evidenced most recently by March's Last Chance Tournament in Tualatin, which featured 32 teams from all over the West Coast and Canada.

"I definitely think the popularity is growing," explains PGV president Sean Walker, noting the importance of PGV's involvement in area non-gay volleyball leagues as well. "There's a lot

of crossover now between Portland volleyball teams and Portland gay volleyball teams. We used to probably be an 80-90 percent gay-oriented organization, but now we have a larger number of straight teams coming in and putting things together for our tournaments. That's really helped build our organization."

PGV's open gyms are held Sundays from 4 to 6 p.m. at Hillside Community Center (653 NW Culpepper Terrace). The organization will continue its impressive court-side reputation when PGV sends one team—as of press time, with the likelihood of more to be determined later—to the 2011 NAGVA Championships in Houston at the end of May.

In the meantime, Walker's part of the "pseudo board" in place over the recently established Portland Gay Basketball Association. With

only some six months under their collective sweatbands, the PGVA has amassed 30-40 regular members to open gyms—which begin again April 4 and continue every Monday night from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Markham Elementary (10531 SW Capitol Highway)—and is even flooring two recreation teams, the PDX Ballers and Fusion to represent the PGVA in the larger Portland Basketball League. A women's open gym is also hosted Tuesday evenings from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. at Scott Elementary School (6700 NE Prescott St.).

"Gay basketball is fairly new and fairly small," explains Walker. "They have maybe three or four tournaments a year, as opposed to gay volleyball where we have 40 tournaments a year. We're hoping to get more interest in that, so we can host our own tournament here in Portland."