

Hurleys & Sliotars

The Eugene Trappers put the Sick in Hurling



First-year player Ryan Falk feeds off defense to keep control of the sliotar

Consider the brutality of a pad-less, club-wielding field of men beating the living crap out of each other for no good reason. Now consider the brutality of giving that field of bloody, beaten and bruised men jerseys, a ball, a goal and good reason. This actually exists. This is the hybridic predecessor of rugby, lacrosse and field hockey. This is hurling.

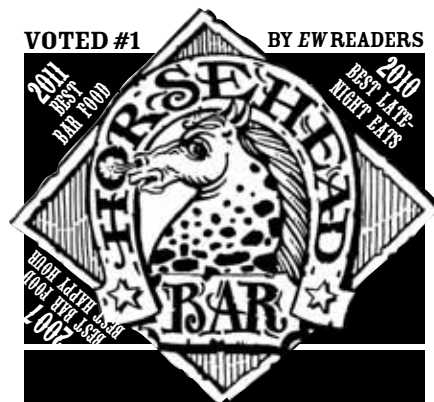
The game dates back 3,000 or so years to the Celts in Ireland, and it's still steeped in tradition today — right down to miniscule details like calling the seamed ball a sliotar, and the flat-headed stick a hurley, as well as preeminent administration by the Gaelic Athletic Association.

It's played just as one would expect, considering the aforementioned combination of sports, but with a large set of rules regarding the ways in which the ball can be maneuvered. Simply, the goal is to get the ball into the goal. How it gets there is up to the players — it can be kicked, slapped, hit or carried, but not thrown. You may not have heard, but some locals decided to try their luck at this sport.

"I mean, just on aesthetics alone it looks like lacrosse and hockey and whatnot, but as far as playing style goes it's almost like basketball," says Peter Gallagher, captain and coach of the **Eugene Trappers**. "It's been fun trying new things, trying new moves; it's such a weird open sport. It's so improvisational."

The Trappers began playing regularly in the fall of 2009 when former team member Chris Griffith brought the idea to some friends. From there Eugene's hurling scene has blossomed into far more than a simple way to beat the hangover out of each other on a Saturday morning. Becoming involved with the Oregonian hurling circuit (which is not to be confused with the official Oregon Hurling Association) means regular home and away games — savage, teeth-gritting match-ups between two 9 to 13 member teams that almost always end in scrapes and bruises for all. Though the traditional Irish way of hurling dictates that there be 15 to a side, the sport must first generate enough local interest to encompass teams of such magnitude.

So if you're outside this weekend and you happen to see a gaggle of dudes in green taking LARPing to a whole new level, don't stop them — they're beating the shit out of each other in the names of tradition, sportsmanship and recreation. And as brutal as it sounds, you've got to admit: This puts the fun back into hurling after a night of heavy drinking. *EW*



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