



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

KICKIN' BALLS

Adult league sports By William Kennedy

A kickball outfielder hits the turf at Tugman Park in South Eugene. Play is halted while she's carried to the sideline. Is it a twisted ankle — or worse? “Need some ice?” teammates ask. “Get her a beer — STAT!” responds a teammate helping her from the field. She ices down the calf cramp with a cold one, cracks it open and is soon sitting with her friends, laughing in the shade.

Eugene-based Playground Sports helps grown-ups in the Eugene-Springfield area “get their sweat on” playing traditional games like basketball and volleyball, as well as “retro-rec” sports like dodgeball, bowling and kickball. “It’s not just the game, it’s the social aspect,” Playground Sports founder Bec Williams says.

Playgroundsports.net calls kickball the “most fun you can have in public without getting a ticket.” About 400 people on 25 different teams participate in Playground Sports’ kickball leagues, mainly during the spring and

summer months, though games are played year round. Team names range from “The Recess Rejects” to “We’re Here for the Beer” to simply: “Balls.”

If you’re unfamiliar, or need to refresh your memory, kickball is pretty much baseball with a big rubber ball. Games are seven innings or 50 minutes, whichever comes first. Players are allowed to get base runners out by pegging them directly with the soft bouncy ball — a key difference between kickball and baseball.

Williams says teams are divided into two divisions: the more competitive “rec division” and the just-for-fun “social division,” where trophies are awarded on the sociability of the players rather than wins and losses. After every game, teams gather at Highlands Brew Pub for a special menu, socializing and raffles for gear.

“Why not kickball?” asks Ben Fry of “The Buttekickers,” the three-time champions of the rec division. “Anyone can play,” adds Fry’s teammate Mike Montreuil. Fry says

while the Buttekickers play every weekend and have been together in one form or another for about five years, nobody takes a bunch of adults playing with big rubber balls too seriously. “This town loves activity,” Fry says, adding that kickball is a fun and easy way to get some exercise.

Spring kickball games have already begun, but if you’re interested in playing in a summer league — either as a free agent or part of a team — go to playgroundsports.net for more information on kickball as well as cornhole, bocce and other games.

If kicking rubber bouncy balls isn’t your thing, then go to the city of Eugene athletics website at wkly.ws/1h4 to check out men’s, women’s and coed basketball, ultimate, volleyball and softball. Springfield’s Kick City Sports Park offers indoor soccer, and for those of us more inclined to cheerlead than play, the Corvallis Sports Park has not only indoor soccer but also the Upper Deck Sports Pub with 18 beers on tap. ■

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