

NY Times article 8 7 1977

[To Frisbee Fans, It's the Ultimate - The New York Times](#)

WESTPORT IN THE beginning, of course, a Frisbee was a tin plate holding a pie that was produced by the thousands in a Bridgeport bakery. The Frisbie Pie Company was its name, and somewhere between 1871 (when William R. Frisbie started the business) and 1920 (when somebody saw the fun in tossing the empty tins), Frisbee started on its way to becoming one of America's rare native sports.

A misspelling early in the game changed an "i" to "e," a man on the West Coast (W. Fred Morrison) developed a plastic version of the flying plate and a California company called Wham-O (famed for introducing the Hula Hoop) began manufacturing aerodynamically improved versions of the disc in 1957.

Now it's come home, but with a new name: Ultimate Frisbee.

Connecticut kids (including those in college) have leapt into Ultimate Frisbee, a team sport first devised in Maplewood, N.J., 10 years ago. There are clubs almost everywhere—including Darien, Norwalk, Wilton, Westport, Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan and South Windsor—that compete regularly with each other.

There are high school Ultimate teams complete with faculty advisers, practicing two or three times a week. There are varsity squads in Ultimate Frisbee at UConn, Yale, Harvard, Brandeis, Penn, Rutgers, and New Hampshire, plus junior varsities waiting to move up. With no restrictions as to sex, age or skill, groups play on weekends, after school or work and even at night on floodlit fields.

A lot has happened to a Frisbee since it held a pie, but a lot more has happened to the ability of Frisbee tossers. This becomes very evident in an Ultimate Frisbee match, where a team of seven players tries to pass a Frisbee down a 60-yard field without letting it hit the ground or be blocked by an opposing team of seven.

As in basketball, you can't run with Frisbee. As in soccer, you try to maneuver your way with quick passes. And as in football, you can go for the bomb by throwing the Frisbee 20 or 30 yards ahead of the pack and watching it hang there in the sky until it lazily falls into receiver's hands as he races across the goal line.

The ball is dead, as far as Frisbee freaks are concerned. A ball holds no mystery, they contend, has a slavish attachment to the earth and falls quickly if missed in the initial attempt to catch it.

But not the Frisbee, which exists just to fly. Propelling it from an incredible number of positions (behind the back, through the legs, around the shoulders, backhand, forehand, underhand,

overhead, upside down, prone, falling or leaping) as well as by foot, finger, elbow, knee, stomach, head or rump, there seems to be limitless versatility in a game of Ultimate Frisbee.

“But the most important thing to remember,” said Dan Buckley, the captain of the Westport team and a former captain at UConn, “is that there is no right or wrong way to play Ultimate Frisbee. The joy of the game lies in being imaginative and adaptable. The emphasis is not on competing as much as on cooperation and creativity.”

There are no rules to speak of in Ultimate Frisbee. If play gets too rough, you start over. The offense calls the close plays, and no one argues. There are no officials. Substitutes come and go when they feel like it. Hardly anyone (outside of the scorekeeper) knows what the score is.

“The I.F.A. [International Frisbee Association] has laid down some rules for Ultimate,” said Mr. Buckley, “but no one follows them.”

Sports fans accustomed to being partial and rooting for one side might find it hard to comprehend both teams cheering for a good catch or the opposition applauding a lovely toss by the other club. Best of all, it costs almost nothing to field and equip an ultimate Frisbee team.

“In a store you pay \$4 or \$5 for a tournament-type Frisbee,” said Ron Kaufman, a former captain of the Brown varsity and one of Westport's most dazzling performers: “But we get seconds from Wham-O, which cost us only 50 cents each.”

To become a second, a Frisbee need only have a scratch on the label, crooked letter or some paint missing, but nothing that would deter from its performance capability. And that is quite a capability.

Mr. Buckley and Mr. Kaufman, who plan to enter the state championships in Westport next Saturday as a freestyle team, can send a Frisbee the length of the field without straining. “Oh, that's nothing,” asserted Mr. Buckley. “The, world record is 378 feet [126 yards].”

Before and after an Ultimate Frisbee match, you can learn what else goes on in the world of Frisbees. One gyrating performer nicknamed Circus (his full name is G. Augustine Lynas) propels disc 100 feet into the sky so that it sails right back into his hand, which is held behind his back in a crouch.

Mr. Buckley and Mr. Kaufman work on their “antler catch,” their name for the maneuver that occurs when, after a series of finger and foot catches, the Frisbee ends up spinning on fingers extended over the head like moose antlers.

Another couple plays what they call “foil” (Frisbee golf), where the targets can be a telephone poll behind a backstop, a rock over a pond, a tree behind clump of bushes, and so forth. By releasing the Frisbee in contorted, but controlled tosses, imparting a spin aid planning their

trajectory (after gauging the wind condition), players can turn almost anyplace into a “folf” course with a little imagination.

Since Wham-O has remained the Frisbee's major manufacturer (it is constantly buying out competitors), the disc has evolved into at least 16 current models of various diameters and weights, while Frisbee experts have developed six basic grips besides the trick ones with which to throw it.

Made of polyethylene, a Frisbee has life expectancy of from two minutes to 20 years, according to Circus, whose own company, the New York Flying Disc Institute, was recently bought out by Wham-O.

Frisbee freaks rival baseball fanatics in parlance, too. They have been able to dissect the Frisbee into eight or nine parts, including back, belly, lip, rim, edge, rings, plate and cheek, and have even broken down the Frisbee flight into eight alliterative phases, which are, in order from release: whelm, wedge, well, wax, waft (the apex), wane, waste, warp and was (end of flight).

As for curving a Frisbee, one can spin it it la Hyzer or Mung (named after H.R. Hyzer and X.E. Mung, the first, persons. to develop particular throws), which can also become hyper-Hyzer (extra torque or spin) or hypo-Mung (negative or opposite angle for ricocheting). Other deviations include the wobble, rattle, flutter, skip, dip, tailskate, sider, lift and drop.

How one catches a Frisbee can be just as spectacular and is limited only by one's daring and need to show off.

Frisbee has become more than a pie in the sky. It's the ultimate fantasy.

Frisbee Festival

For those who would like to view Frisbee at its most fanciful, next Saturday's Festival of Flight in Westport will include some of the country's top performers in the sport.

Also billed as the Connecticut state championships, the Frisbee tournament will begin at 9 A.M. and continue through the day at Staples High School, 70 North Avenue, Westport.

Events include Ultimate Frisbee, freestyle pairs, miniature disc golf and various field games as directed by the International Frisbee Association.

Although Frisbee champions from other parts of the country plan to participate, 15 Connecticut residents still be awarded invitations to compete in the New England regionals to be held in September.

For further information, call Dan Buckley at 226-9061 or Ron Kaufman at 255-1271.

