

National Column
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SURVIVAL TACTICS

Gentlepersons Have a Fling at Ultimate Frisbee

By James G. Deicola
New Worcester, Conn.

A superb fish cleaver for lunch, but my attention focuses mainly on Al Jolley and Bill Murphy as they explain the game called Ultimate Frisbee. Al is showing the local newspaper clipping about the Staples High School Frisbee team, and a woman at the next table leans over and asks if she can read it.

"Is Frisbee actually a team sport now?" she asks. "That's fantastic!"

Indeed, flipping the popular plastic disc has become a team sport, and this is Al Jolley, a math teacher, a faculty adviser to the Staples team, which claims to be the national champion of Ultimate Frisbee.

The team is based largely on Staples' smashing victory this spring over Columbia High School of Maplewood, N.J., Columbia, originator of the game and pride of New Jersey Frisbee, couldn't cope with Staples' sticky man-to-man defense and lost 12-0.

Columbia, however, played the game without fear of its starwarts, one of whom, team capt. David Lewand, promises revenge in a rematch. "I hope they can do man-to-man defense again," growls Lewand, a track sprinter. "I doubt if they'll anyone on their team who can cover me or the other three who ruined the last game."

Bustery Ambience

The good-natured belch of blustery threats is part of Ultimate Frisbee's ambience. So is fierce competitiveness during a game, but so pressure at all during practices. Bill Murphy, Staples' headmaster, compares the game in that respect to chess, which students play simply because they like it. Al Jolley calls it "the game of the people" and says no Staples student can play on the team. Two girls are team members.

I came to Connecticut to learn about Ultimate Frisbee, which a scrimmage of the Staples team, and pick up some Frisbee-throwing techniques to pass on to you. Almost everyone has flipped a Frisbee, and millions of the discs will now adorn the summer air beaches, in parks, and in backyards. Perhaps with the help of this column, you can teach your friends with Frisbee prowess.

Ultimate Frisbee, invented in 1969 by a few Columbia High School students, is a fast-moving, competitive game played by two seven-man teams. The official rule says: After watching a spirited, yet scrumlike here, I must confess.

Ultimate Frisbee combines aspects of soccer, hockey, and football with less mechanical. The game consists basically of quick passes from player to player as they dart down the field. A score is made by completing a pass over the goal line, one player throws the Frisbee to another, who catches it.

In an easygoing atmosphere, the Staples squad straggled onto the field wearing their blue sweat shirts with Frisbee on the back; the big S stands for Staples. After warming up by expertly throwing the Frisbee around—each uses a larger, lightweight model, 10½ inches in diameter—the players divided into two teams, with members of one team lining backyards around their heads for easy identification.

The game starts with the throwoff. Each team lines up on its goal line—the field's 50 yards line, or sometimes longer—and one player skims the Frisbee down the field to the receiving team. A thrower may catch it, or let it fall to the ground untouched, but if he drops it, the Frisbee goes over to the other team.

Don Buckley, generally thought of as

Staples' best all-around player—he missed the game with Columbia—doing a screaming line down the field to start the scoring. Later Bob Kary caught it, and his team dashed into action. Pass, pass, pass. The players say they can catch a thrower's Frisbee, which means, better than a out of 10 times, and I believe it.

An agile defender knocked down a pass, thereby winning possession of the Frisbee for his team. He picked it up and, proving ahead on one back like a basketball player (you can't run with the Frisbee), looked for a teammate to pass to. An opponent tried to prevent a good pass, but failed it, by waving his hands and jumping close.

Here's where scoring a variety of ways to throw a Frisbee becomes valuable. There's the standard backhand throw,

something like a backhand tennis stroke. Two kind the Frisbee with the convex side up; place the index finger on the Frisbee's edge, the thumb on top, and the other fingers underneath. Bend players curl the index finger on the underside too.

In the forehand throw you flip it with thumb on top, other fingers below. For the overhead throw, place below your's a softball pitcher and use the backhand

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The Jersey Throw

In the Columbia game, Staples players were impressed by a discolor throw of a Columbia player, so they've copied it, calling it the "Jockey Throw." And Larry DeCola of Staples invented the exotic reverse backhand that looks as if it would break his wrist. Larry's ambivalence, and it's actually difficult to block one of his passes.

What's the attraction of Ultimate Frisbee? Why are there 12 high-school Frisbee teams in New Jersey, plus teams at Princeton and Rutgers universities?

Bob Lacy, one of two students who organized the Staples team last year, likes the game because it moves fast and he can play it well. It attracts top students like Bob; the Staples team has a high-point average.

Lure of Intermixability

Another attraction is its intermixability. Al Jolley acts as adviser, not as coach, and often joins in scrimmages. Jane Kimer and Sharon Apping are welcome on the team, and play quite well. Sharon scored a goal against Columbia, thereby becoming the first girl in Ultimate Frisbee history to do so in an interstate intercollegiate game.

There are no referees, and it's a player hits an opponent's arm while he's trying to pass, he calls foul on himself, and the Frisbee is returned to the player who was fouled. In that respect, a gentleman's and gentlewoman's game. Yet a player can be injured in such a fast game. Bob Kary hurt his ankles in the scrimmage after leaping high to intercept a pass with one hand.

The rematch between Columbia and Staples, scheduled later this spring, promises to be hard fought and close. Columbia with Lewand and the three others who missed the first match will be a stronger team. And Staples will have Don Buckley this time.

If Staples manages to win again, that's keeping the "national championship." There'll be one more world to conquer. A former Staples player has moved to Montreal and is organizing a team at his school there. There may be a game between Staples and the Canadian team, and if Staples wins . . . well, "world champion" sounds even better than "national champion."

The official rules of Ultimate Frisbee are available in 10 cents a copy from CBS Varsity Frisbee Team, Columbia High School, 17 Parker Ave., Maplewood, N.J. 07061.

