

## Men's rugby catching on

♦Men's rugby hopes to have good season despite inexperience

BY TIM LEADEM  
Staff Writer

The Guilford men's rugby team begins their fall practice season with optimistic uncertainty. A majority of the team has never played competitive rugby before but are learning the basics now to prepare for a full season in the spring.

Rugby, although not traditionally thought of as an American sport, has been gradually catching on. In origin and style of play, it is fairly similar to football, except that in rugby, the action never stops and you are not allowed to throw the ball forwards, although you are allowed to kick it forwards. In this way, rugby combines football and soccer.

Because the sport is fairly alien to new players, the Guilford team faces a major challenge: to get the players they have the knowledge they need to be competitive. Unofficial team captain Ben Ford summed up the general situation: "We're using this fall to teach the new players the skills they'll need for the spring. Luckily the new guys are good athletes, so they're picking it up pretty well. We should have a few scrimmages later this fall, but as of now nothing has been scheduled. We're just taking it one step at a time."

Although short on experience the team is certainly not lacking a work ethic. Their practices are full of intensive running and drills, but no one was complaining. First-time player Damien Shea shared his thoughts on the experience so

far, saying "I'm having a great time learning. It's all about coming out and having fun."

When asked to comment, senior Ben Stahlberg offered the veteran's perspective: "Rugby is the type of sport where you don't really know what you're getting into until your first match. That makes it tough to learn, but that's also the fun part. There used to be a lot of players splitting time between two sports. This year it's a group of guys solely interested in playing rugby. Ben Ford has done a great job developing these guys into a core of rugby players."

All of the players encourage anyone interested in playing to come out to practice, which is held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 3:30 p.m.

## Weekly Whine

BY DAN GATTI  
Sports Editor

Congratulations to the owners of Major League Baseball for bringing the wild card. After all, the wild card is going to be a great way to get more teams into the pennant race, making for a more exciting (and thus, more profitable) September.

Err.... Maybe not. As I write this, there is not a single race left in the American League. What should have been a great thrilling series between the top teams in the AL East last weekend-the Orioles and Yankees-was a yawn.

If we have to have a wild-card, I say that they should never be allowed to play a playoff game at home. Additionally, all wild card teams should not be allowed to have a left-fielder, and they should have to use Heathcliff Slocumb as their closer. That would be an acceptable disadvantage.

## Organized violence

BY ALLISON STRIZAK  
Staff Writer

Smashing tackles, power plays, women's rugby, no holds barred.

It was a hot Saturday afternoon when I meandered over to the rugby field to watch my first game. The atmosphere seemed really relaxed. A small crowd had assembled and the game was about to begin.

With the sound of the whistle the actors took their places on the field and prepared for battle. From nowhere the ball came into play and the action began. With all-out fury these girls ransacked each other.

This was Guilford's game against Elon college, a motley crew. Some of these ladies looked pretty tough. I didn't envy our players one bit. With no sort of protective paraphernalia they thrashed each other over and over. Full-on body slams into the dirt.

Despite what looked like dirty shots and extremely hard hits, the element of good sportsmanship and camaraderie were constantly present. Each player seemed to help the other, picking them up and dusting them off. With pats on the back and helpful hints these girls trudged on.

Yet as much as the brute

strength employed in the game surprised me, what was even more bizarre was the assembly of plays. For example, the peculiar huddle formation called a scrum. The players would get low, knit themselves into some sort of cluster, arms interwoven, shoulders locked as they would begin to push. With force against force the ball was rallied and shot through the entanglement to a waiting team member.

Under the hot sun these ladies battled it out. Our girls were impressive. Although smaller in size and brute strength, they got real low and took Elon down over and over. It seems we have a powerful team, with players who attack with endless fury, sacrificing their bodies over and over for the ball.

With only one bad injury, that of a dislocated shoulder and a possible broken arm to an Elon player, the game was tied at seven to seven. With an excellent goal by Stephanie Long and a powerful conversion kick by Brenda Mulligan our team held their own.

These girls fought hard and long under the late afternoon sun. I was impressed with how primal, brutish and awesome the game turned out to be. It is a great spectator sport, especially on a nice warm day. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was pleased with how much courage these girls displayed. This is one tough sport.

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