

## Getting over first-game jitters: A first-person account

**Aaron Varnam**

Staff Writer

Two weeks of intense practice come down to this: I'm riding on a bus with people I hardly know and we have a game looming with a team I first heard of the week before. Why does this make me so nervous?

I sleep through most of the bus ride and when I wake up we're at Methodist College; the colors green and yellow already make me nauseous. My stomach is fluttering, and I don't know if it was the Golden Corral food we ate earlier or just my nerves. I slide my borrowed headphones on and put in Danzig to get pumped up and calm down a little; music is my pacifier.

We unload the bus and go to the locker rooms to get dressed; Coach says we have an hour before we

have to go out. I think to myself that this going to be a long hour. I pass the time with more music and imagining what the other team is going to be like.

I just came from a good high school program where I'm the average size for line-backer. Too bad that's not the case for college. The first day of practice I felt like a dwarf on the field, with everyone a lot taller and stronger than me. What a radical change.

We head down to the field for warm-ups. This is always my least favorite part of games, because my emotions are always so high. I don't know, but I always turn into a different person before games.

Methodist wins the coin toss, so that means that after the "Star Spangled Banner" I'm going straight to

field for the kick-off.

The ball is kicked and I sprint down the field, barely dodging a block by a guy who probably outweighs me by a hundred pounds, but I don't have time to properly absorb that. I have a job to do: make a tackle. The deep receiver for Methodist tip-toes past two tacklers. I'm in perfect position to stop him. My mind goes blank and I dive.

I miss.

But I somehow manage to grab his legs and pull him down. The nervousness is gone.

Three quarters trudge by, and my jersey is pristine - not the slightest bit dirty. I don't care though; I got the first tackle of the first game. I know that as a freshman I'm not going to be getting the kind of playing time I got in high school; I knew this

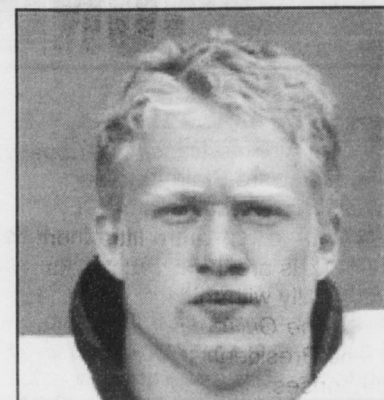
before I got to Guilford.

I'm pacing up and down the field like I always do at games, and I hear something I didn't expect: "Varnam, get ready, you're going in!" I clumsily throw my helmet on and run to the coach. Is he joking? Does he really want me in there?

I run on the field, my heart pumping louder than the fans' cheers and BOOM the ball is snapped. What do I do now? For a split second I panic, but I gather myself and remember my almost boot-camp-like training.

I take a deep breath, I close my eyes on contact, and before I can properly take a mental picture of it, the game is over.

My first game has breezed by me, and I almost missed it. I am relieved to have it



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Varnam in uniform

over now; its impact on my psyche was unimaginable. From here on out, it's smooth sailing.☼

*The Quakers take on Hampden Sydney Sept. 25 in an away game, then Greensboro College on Oct. 2 for Homecoming.*

## Rugby explained as teams prepare for fall season

**Carlos D'Agostino**

Staff Writer

After their 65-5 victory over Eno River Rugby Football Club, the Guilford College's Men's Rugby Club - the Ruggers - are more than ready to kick off the season. The Eno River win combined with Saturday's triumph over the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill Tarheels puts the Quakers at 2-0. The Ruggers beat UNC 35-17.

"(The Eno) game was more of a scrimmage," said president and captain of the Ruggers, Kevin Woodcock. "We were able to give all our new players more experience. We now have a better idea of where people need to be and what people need to do."

On the field, Woodcock plays eight-man, an offensive position. For those who are unfamiliar with rugby, it's very similar to football, minus the attire of pads.

Fifteen players, divided into forwards and backs, compete for 48

minutes carrying, passing, and kicking the ball beyond the opposition's goal area. Meanwhile, the team without possession of the ball tries to regain it by grounding (tackling) members from the opposing team. The ball is immediately released onto the field until another player recovers it. The team with the most points at the end of the match wins.

Rugby is played year-round, but any athlete playing another sport the same semester is prohibited from participating in rugby matches. For example, football players are excluded from playing this semester. However, that doesn't cause any concerns considering the size of the 25-man, mostly first-year roster.

Practices are held Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from four o'clock p.m. until six. Games are scheduled to be played on Saturdays around noon.

Rugby at Guilford, like at most other colleges, is a club sport. Unlike varsity sports, club sports

are funded by Senate or are sponsored by some other organization within the institution.

Last year, men's and women's rugby solicited Senate for sponsorship. With the money they received, team members were able to purchase uniforms, promoting unity.

Ruggers' vice president and co-captain Dan Hayden said, "So far, we look pretty good, even though we're a young team. And we hope to keep improving."

Hayden is a back, also called scrum-half, and his job is to follow the blocks of the forwards until he can break free into the open field and score.

Junior forward Andrew Gottlieb said, "The team is going well. There's a lot of new guys and they're coming along pretty quickly."

The Lady Ruggers of Guilford, the women's rugby club, currently has 16 members on the team roster, with half the team consisting of first-year players. Practices are held on Mondays, Wednesdays,

and Fridays, from 3:45 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. Games are played on Saturdays at noon.

"If you've been told you can't play contact sports in the past, in rugby it doesn't matter what your size is," said team captain Sarah Levenson. "I've seen our smallest teammates hit the hardest and the ones who called themselves slow, out-run speedy little [ladies]."

On Sept. 18 and 19 the women's team attended a clinic, where 112 participants from eight different colleges in North Carolina received tips on how to improve their game. Coordinated by the National Women's Rugby Team coach, the fundamentals taught at the workshop were beneficial for everyone, especially the first-years.

Saturday Sept. 25 marks the first match of the year for the Lady Ruggers. The game is at Guilford on Haworth Field at noon.☼