

Frisbee finally flies into the sports world

By ANGELA HAMPTON
Staff Writer

It flies through the air with the greatest of ease. Some smart fellow, realizing the popularity and fun of Frisbee throwing, has traded in his trapeze for one of those colorful flying discs, just as his fellow Frisbee-throwers have done since 1947, when the first Frisbee evolved. This was a couple of years after W.R. Frisbie bought a small bakery. Empty pie and cookie tins from the Frisbie Co. made excellent throwing devices — or at least so Yale students thought. "Frisbie" even became the popular call to warn a catcher that a tin was coming his way.

Who would have guessed that a bunch of college students throwing empty pie tins around would result in both a national pastime and a serious sport of which there are over two dozen varieties? Walter Frederick Morrison deserves credit for the Frisbee as the world knows it today. Trying to prosper from the wave of UFO sightings in 1948, Morrison made the first plastic Frisbee, shaped much like a flying saucer. As a matter of fact, Morrison's plastic disc and modern day Frisbees still resemble the original pie tins. However, the tucked under lip of today's Frisbee enhances stability.

Today, there are more than 500 club teams and more than 250 college teams that play Ultimate Frisbee during a season that usually starts in mid-September and ends at Thanksgiving.

For such a small and simple-looking object, an extensive vocabulary has formed around the flying disc. Take, for example, the ever-specific and often tricky procedures for throwing and catching Frisbees, steps that might baffle amateurs (i.e. beachgoers). In his book "Frisbee," Stancil E.D. Johnson names five basic grips and four catches, including the BTB (behind-the-back) catch and the BTL (between-the-legs) catch. And that's not all; these basic grips and catches don't include all of those used by more advanced players for greater style and control.

Frisbee terminology has not been the only facet of Frisbeedom to expand. When plastic revolutionized the Frisbee industry and added to the disc's popularity in the 1960s, the sport took off. Isolated tournaments began, and in the 1960s the International Frisbee Association was founded. The IFA sponsors the most popular tournament in discom, the International Frisbee Tournament, which was first held in 1958 and still goes on every 4th of July weekend in Escanaba, Mich.

Tournaments, now played on both the national and international levels, usually include games like Guts and Ultimate Frisbee and various individual categories of competition. Accuracy, distance and freestyle events for all ages, sexes and even canines are common today. And every year the field of players (and dogs) increases.

A formal tournament for dogs is now part of Frisbee tradition. This canine event is officially known as the Ashley Whippet Invitational, after the first truly extraordinary dog of talent. He could jump 9 feet in the air to catch a Frisbee. "Catch and fetch" competition was first included in the world championships in 1975.

Dogbee competition involves one human and one dog. The object is for the pair to complete as many throws and catches as possible in a two-minute time span. The throws must cover at least 15 yards and the pooch receives extra points if all four paws are off the ground during a catch.

Over 24 Frisbee games without canine participation now exist, and probably the oldest is known as Guts Frisbee. Players say Guts is also the most popular tournament game. Five people usually play on a team, each playing left wing, left whip, center, right whip or right wing. Team Guts is played on a 15-by-10-yard field. Teams score points by throwing a Frisbee, without being intercepted, at least eight feet above the ground through a 30-foot goal space on the opponent's side.

The game begins with a coin (or Frisbee) toss for the desired goal. The key to Guts, the players say, is a team's ability to scramble or back

each other's catches, because a team loses possession of the Frisbee if it touches the ground.

Then there's Ultimate. Ultimate Frisbee is more of a field game than Guts because of its larger playing area and emphasis on strategic passing. Ultimate is played on a field 60 yards long, with 40-yard-wide goal lines. Two teams of any number of members (usually seven in organized games) try to pass the Frisbee to teammates on the inside of the opponent's end zone. What's the catch? Players cannot run with the Frisbee. Twenty-one points wins the game.

The Rochester, N. Y., Frisbee Club plays Double Disc Court. Two discs are in play at all times and the two players try to drop the discs in their opponent's court without touching court lines or foul boundaries.

How do players score? For stopping a disc within the opponent's court, a player gains one point. If a disc touches out-of-bound areas in flight or isn't caught by a player's opponent, he loses a point. And if a player touches both discs simultaneously, then his opponent gets a point.

According to Stancil's book, some Frisbee games are more popular as street pick-up games than as official tournament games. Street Frisbee is one such game that is derived from a culmination of keep-away and dodge ball.

In Street Frisbee, two teams of any number of players try to "dead-stop" the Frisbee behind the opponents' goal without their catching it. Street curbs make boundary lines, and goal lines (street cracks) are 10 to 15 yards apart. A successful stop merits one point and the game ends at 21 points.

In 1974, the International Frisbee Association introduced "The Frisbee Game," also called Netbee. It is a field game, like Ultimate. But unlike Ultimate, it emphasizes strategic short-term passes without the running Ultimate requires, even though the fields are the same size. Usually, there are six players on a team, including a goalie who defends an 8-by-15 foot goal cage. Players score by landing their Frisbee in the opponent's cage.

A goal cage is divided into three sections, with those on the outside being two yards smaller in length than the one in the center. Consequently, goals made within the smaller areas of the goal count five points and those in the middle area score three points. Any throwing style is allowed in Netbee, as long as the throw moves a team across midfield nearer to the opponent's goal. Once on the opponent's side, a team has 30 seconds to make a shot on the goal. If unsuccessful, the team must retreat to its side.

Among the many flying disc games, several are devoted solely to style. These have become very popular within the last 10 years as the trend has moved towards style and grace in Frisbee competition, according to Stancil.

For example, Trick Catch, better known among serious Frisbee players as the Millersville Game, originated in (you guessed it) Millersville, Pa. It features two players, one Frisbee and two ground circles six feet in diameter placed 25 yards apart. One player stands within each circle and players throw the Frisbee back and forth, each trying to make as complicated a catch as possible.

Each player attempts to force his opponent to catch the Frisbee outside of his circle and thus forfeit three points.

Feeling at home at Al Lang Field

James Surowiecki
On Spring Training

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Last Saturday, in their first meeting since the 1986 World Series, the New York Mets and the Boston Red Sox squared off before a sellout crowd at Al Lang Stadium. Squared off, that is, quite literally.

It wasn't a full-scale brawl by any stretch of the imagination. But there were some intramural fireworks, thanks to an Al Nipper pitch which plunked Mets star Darryl Strawberry on the back. Strawberry took a few menacing steps toward the mound, put on his best I'm-baaaad-man-don't-mess-with-me grimace and presumably expressed to Nipper his displeasure at the incident.

The two teams leaped from their respective dugouts and there was a short period of amicable anarchy. Amicable because no punches were thrown and no one was tackled. Mostly the players milled around, resembling a flock of pigeons angered by a hurried pedestrian.

Eventually, order was restored. Strawberry sauntered down to first base, and the fans were able to enter again the elysian world of spring training baseball. The Red Sox, incidentally won 7-2. The score didn't really matter, though. The people shouting "Let's Go Mets" and all the Boston fans jeering Strawberry could not disturb the sense that, for the moment, winning and losing were secondary concerns. It

was March and it was Florida, and that meant baseball for baseball's sake.

The Mets-Sox scuffle was thus rather stunning. Brawls are unheard of in spring training. This one, though, had strong roots in the past. During Game 7 of the Series, Strawberry sealed New York's remarkable comeback victory by redirecting a Nipper pitch over the fence. He then symbolically kicked Boston in the teeth by embarking on an interminable trot around the bases. If there are such things as the baseball gods, knocking down Strawberry was the only way to appease them.

But such considerations are better left behind until Opening Day. Saturday's battle is useful as an introduction to spring training only as a counterpoint. For the prevailing mood during these four weeks in March is not competitive. There is rather a giddiness and freedom about the game which is exhilarating.

The exhilaration can be felt in Al Lang Stadium, which is home not just to the Mets but also to the St. Louis Cardinals. It used to be called

Al Lang Field, and that name was far more appropriate for the cozy park than stadium, a word which always seems to carry with it the connotations of massive and distant and, somehow, football. The two best places in the world to watch baseball, after all, are Fenway Park and Wrigley Field, and there is nary a stadium among them.

Al Lang is a great park in its own right. Resting on the waterfront, with the Gulf breezes blowing out, it can be a power hitter's dream. The outfield fence is a dark green, undecorated by the signs which cover the walls of the Texas Rangers' home field. The color makes hitting there a pleasure, as does a huge back-ground wall just behind the center-field fence. Friday, Cardinals outfielder Andy Van Slyke ripped a 425-foot shot off that wall.

But the park's greatness does not derive from the way it looks. Where it resembles Fenway is in spirit. There is a gentility about the ushers, a pleasing lack of sophistication about the vendors. Even the scalpers seem less hardened than their major-league counterparts.

The vendors are a story in themselves. One beer salesman, who to be honest could hardly be called genteel, comes dressed each day in

the visiting team's uniform. Another never fails to fill the ballpark with the reassuring cries of "Peanuts and popcorn!"

The best, though, is Tommy Walton, an elderly black man with white hair and the self-described world's greatest salesman. Tommy sells "ice-cold" hot dogs but advertises watermelon and fried chicken. The fans love him, though, because he sings, ranging from "The Side-walks of New York" to "Old Man River." And of course he always has "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" ready, regardless of whether it's the seventh inning or not.

It all sounds rather frivolous, and perhaps it is. Certainly it is difficult to be serious while watching nine Mets toss a baseball at each other with their gloves.

But for a baseball fan, there is a marvelous security in spring training. Everything is familiar, except perhaps for some of the names. The figures loping across the green field and throwing easily in the bullpen, reawakening the memories of last fall, prefigure the rebirth the world experiences in the spring. And sitting in the grandstand on a sunny day, watching a young prospect stroke a double into the gap, you know that you are, in some sense, home.

Theatrical people to get outdoor opportunity

By MARTY MICHAELS
Staff Writer

Aspiring performers will have an opportunity to try for summer theater work when the Institute of Outdoor Drama conducts regional auditions on campus Saturday. These auditions, co-sponsored by the drama department, serve as a dynamic forum for bringing theater companies and performers together. Actors, singers, dancers, and technicians are provided the rare chance of being seen by 18 outdoor drama companies in a single day in a centralized location.

Outdoor theater with its amphitheater setting offers artists an unconventional environment in which to develop dramatic skills and techniques. Ruth Fletcher, an undergraduate drama student, said she is excited about the opportunity to audition. "Many people don't realize what a great experience outdoor drama is," she said. "I think this type of theater presents a tremendous challenge. Actors must be able to project and create on a large scale. For example, an actor in 'The Lost Colony' production at Manteo must be able to project out to 2,000 or 3,000 people in the outdoors without acoustical equipment."

For these reasons, outdoor theater is unusual. Sound, special effects and lighting all require state-of-the-art technology to achieve an effortless impression. Fletcher added that outdoor theater provides a chance to work with professional actors. "The lead roles are always chosen carefully from a professional cast," she said.

Sara Bass, another UNC student who will audition, is also impressed with the logistics of the audition. "It's wonderful because it gets everyone in one place," she said. "All the artistic directors are seated in basically one place and can screen

through the performers. You don't have to send resumes and portfolios around to various locations. Here you know exactly what to expect and what roles are filled. It's exciting — you meet all kinds of other actors from all over the Southeast area."

Employment at outdoor summer theater locations usually entails a nine to 12 week commitment. Companies may then offer various other productions, workshops, and credit programs.

Actors will be expected to perform a one-minute prepared monologue at general auditions, then may perform a second at callback interviews. Singers are asked to prepare two numbers with music, and dancers will be given exercises and modern choreography of increasing difficulty.

Interested performers should complete audition applications by contacting the Institute of Outdoor Drama in 202 Graham Memorial 052A as soon as possible.

UNC Athlete of the Week

Although the caption over this regular little feature of ours reads: "UNC Athlete of the Week," this one is a little different. We've been out of circulation for a spell, so today we present our annual "UNC Athlete of the Break" award.

By now you've looked at the picture and seen Al Palacio of the UNC wrestling team staring back. Here's what he did to earn this prestigious award:

1) he became only the third grappler in ACC history to win four conference titles.

2) he set an ACC record for most wins in a season with 40.

3) he's basically a real nice guy.

Honorable mention goes to Dave Fuhrmann and Johan Boakes of the track team, both of whom earned All-America honors at the recent NCAA Indoor Championships.



Al Palacio ... takes fourth title

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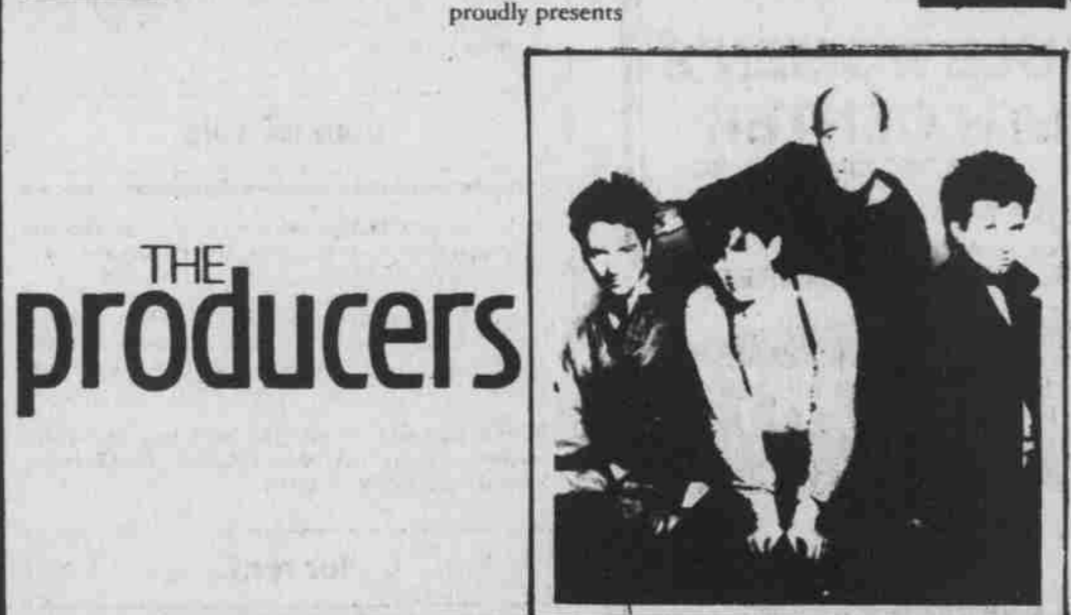
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