

SPORTS

Gaining the upper hand

National-caliber UNC club struggles for recognition at home

By **RODNEY CLINE**
Staff Writer

For starters, this is not the game you go to your local YMCA or to some small room in Fetzer Gym to play. And it's not the game where you hit a little round ball up against a wall with your hand.

This is team handball—the second-most popular participation sport in the world.

Many people do not realize that fact, said John Silva, an associate professor of sport psychology and coach/faculty adviser of the Carolina Team Handball Club.

"Team Handball is very popular in Europe and Asia," Silva said. "It's a growing sport in the United States right now, and the U.S. Team Handball Federation is committed to growth from the grassroots level on up, much like what is being done with soccer in this country."

The sport is played on a court slightly larger than a basketball court with six players plus a goalie on each side. The offense is organized around a nine-meter line, and its objective is to penetrate up to the six-meter line and take a shot. It may do this by passing the ball—running with it is not allowed.

The defense stands around the six-meter line, and the goalie situates himself in front of the goal. If the defense succeeds in stopping the opponents' offense, possession changes and the defending team may run a controlled fast-break back the other way.

Games are played in two 30-minute halves, and scores typically range around 20 goals per team.

"It's like water polo on a court, only this is more forceful," Silva said. "In a lot of ways, it's like soccer and hockey."

Silva started the UNC's team handball club, now in its third year of competition, after watching the sport at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, where he served the U.S. Team Handball Federation as a sports psychologist.

"The function of the club is to provide anyone in the University community the opportunity to learn this sport and to play against good competition," Silva said.

And finding good competition isn't



DTH/Grant Halverson

Junior goalie Rik Walls and the three-year-old UNC team handball club finished fourth in the country in the team's first year of NCAA competition

always easy. "Our average competition is over 500 miles away," said club president Leo Yakutis, a graduate student in Information Sciences.

"There aren't that many universities around with team handball programs," said Steven Penn, a senior left backcourt player. "The best teams are in New Jersey, Long Island, Wisconsin and the West Coast."

That makes for some long road trips,

ones Silva hopes will shorten with the advent of more clubs within North Carolina.

"We would like to get clubs at other universities in this state," Silva said. "Appalachian State may get a team, Davidson's is loosely formed, and East Carolina used to have a team until their coach left."

In the meantime, North Carolina participates in the NCAA Division II, a

division for clubs less than five years old. In 1988, the UNC club's first year, the team finished fourth in the country.

And despite the fact that players know little about the sport when they join the club, UNC has sent its share of players on to higher competition. This year's example is Penn.

"I didn't start playing until the fall of 1989," the senior said. "I was referred to team handball by a friend and just decided to come out. I liked it—it was a different type of challenge from any American sport I was used to."

Penn liked it so much that he was invited to train with the national team this past summer in Colorado Springs and to participate in the Olympic Sports Festival. "It was awesome," he said. "The festival was really a big deal, and it was a great experience to play at that level."

Penn faced a decision at the end of the summer: Should he continue training with the national team or return to school? He opted for his education.

"I think Steven's a good prospective candidate for the Olympics in 1996," Silva said.

Penn and his teammates usually play in at least three tournaments every year, the first of which is this weekend at West Point, the owner of the last five national championships.

UNC hosts its own tournament every year, too—the Carolina Blue Cup. This year's date is Feb. 16-17, 1991. "I've already received calls from teams wanting to enter," Silva said. "West Point wants in, and Garden City, a powerful club team, wants to come. We finished second last year, but it'll be tougher this time."

While the UNC club fights its way to national prominence, it also struggles to promote a very little-known sport on campus, a sport based on teamwork, much unlike the one-on-one handball game.

"Our challenge is to get people to know the sport," Yakutis said. We have to get the word out."

Said Silva, "Team handball is a great forum for competition. It is action-packed, and once you're exposed to it, you're hooked."

Hooked on a sport entirely different from the one played at the YMCA.

NCAA bans Illini from postseason play in '91

From Associated Press reports

URBANA, Ill. — The Illinois basketball team was banned from postseason play in 1991, placed on three years' probation and limited to two new scholarships each of the next two years. And that's after being cleared by the NCAA of the worst charges: offering cash and cars to top recruits.

The NCAA stopped short Wednesday of wiping out Illinois' season altogether, but left no doubt it could have.

"If the most serious violations had been found then I think from reading the report the so-called death penalty ... would have been imposed," said David Berst, the NCAA's assistant executive director for enforcement.

Such a penalty can be imposed after a school is sanctioned twice within a five-year period for major NCAA infractions. This is Illinois' third penalty since 1984—the other two involved football.

Still, Illinois thought the penalties weren't fair.

"We disagree with several of the committee's findings, and some of the sanctions are harsher than we expected," Illinois chancellor Morton Weir said.

Illinois will be banned from off-

campus basketball recruiting and from paying for visits by recruits to its campus the first year. It will also be limited to awarding just two basketball scholarships in each of the first two seasons of the probation.

Television coverage, however, will not be restricted.

The scholarship sanctions were especially strict. Kentucky, which got among the toughest penalties ever imposed by the NCAA a year ago, was limited to three new scholarships for two years.

That's one more each year than Illinois.

Coach Lou Henson said he was disappointed that he could not award all five scholarships he had promised to high school recruits, but said he expected his current players would stay.

"We're not in shambles," said Henson, now in his 16th season. "When we take the floor this year, our players will be more motivated and more inspired than perhaps ever before."

Weir said that the university's own investigation turned up most of the violations, and that the school was determined to abide by NCAA rules.

FSU officials don't expect ACC play until 1995

From Associated Press reports

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida State University athletic officials say they won't rush headlong into massive schedule shuffling and don't expect to play a full Atlantic Coast Conference football schedule until 1995.

ACC officials had hoped to see the Seminoles up to a full schedule by 1993. Associate commissioner Tom Mickle said that if FSU could schedule six or seven league teams in 1993, the league would consider counting two non-conference games toward the championship.

"If they take one or two non-conference games, I can see it as a possibility, but we've got contracts and obligations," said FSU Athletic Director Bob Goin. "I've never tried to wipe out a football schedule and start anew."

"If I can mutually get out of anything before 1995, I'm going to do it. But if I can't, I'm not going to break those contracts."

Alomar unanimous choice for A.L. rookie of the year

NEW YORK — Sandy Alomar Jr., a prospect who turned promise into productivity, became only the third unanimous choice as rookie of the year, winning the American League award Wednesday.

The Cleveland catcher joined Mark McGwire (1987) and Carlton Fisk (1972) as the only major leaguers to sweep the honor since it was first presented 1947. Alomar, 24, hit .290 with nine homers and 66 RBIs and was the first rookie catcher ever to start an All-

Star game.

Alomar received all 28 first-place votes. Two members of the Baseball Writers Association of America in each AL city voted.

Steinbrenner's attorneys attacking commissioner again

NEW YORK — Attorneys for George Steinbrenner on Wednesday challenged baseball commissioner Fay Vincent to show why the New York Yankees owner, despite being barred from daily operations, cannot participate in free agent negotiations.

Last July, Steinbrenner signed an agreement that stripped him of the team's day-to-day control. The settlement provided that "it is recognized that circumstances may arise involving material and extraordinary financial or business affairs of the New York Yankees in which Mr. Steinbrenner may feel his participation is necessary."

Steinbrenner twice in September asked Vincent for permission to take

part of free agent talks, and was turned down both times.

"If free agency, and the millions of dollars spent on free agents each year, is

not material and extraordinary to the Yankee partnership, then I don't know what is," said Stephen Kaufman, an attorney for Steinbrenner.

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