

Men's rugby loses to Duke in last home game



DAN MILLER/GUILFORDIAN

Guilford players reach for a throw-in during their 20-18 loss to Duke in the final home game of the year.

Club falls just short against best team in the league

By Jake Blumgart
SENIOR WRITER

Traditionally, the men's rugby team would have been clobbered in the Saturday, Sept. 29, game, against Duke University's A-side (their best and most experienced players)—who are generally acknowledged to be the best team in the league.

But the game, which was the men's last home game of the semester, was very close, with Guilford leading for 60 minutes of the 80-minute game. The final score: 20-18, Duke. When Guilford played Duke's A-Side last semester, the score was 35-7 Duke.

"It's the best game we've played all year and it was against the best team in the state," said first-year David McKinley-Ward. "It was a completely winnable game. We just got the short end of the stick this time."

The men's rugby team has improved mightily this year and the other league teams have taken notice. Wake Forest's director of rugby, Patrick Kane, complimented Guilford on their 20-18 victory over his players a few weeks back.

"(The Guilford team that has come a very long way from the team that last year was losing to Wake's second side," Kane wrote in his blog. "(It was a) great perfor-

mance from a much improved and well-drilled Guilford team."

"In the past, rugby has been seen as something to do on the weekend when you weren't wasted," said senior rugby veteran Nick Hunter. "But now we are taking ourselves seriously. We're a small team but we are extremely physical. Its funny seeing these big dudes, with confident looks on their faces, running down the field and getting steamrolled by a 150 pound fly-half."

The turnout for practices has been more consistent this year than ever before. Twenty-five guys regularly show up when in previous years it was often as low as nine or ten.

"I know it's a cliché, but we've been in every match this year," said senior Tyler Cope, one of the team's most experienced players. "It's been frustrating when we lose, but we've been legitimately competing against teams that used to wreck us."

Although the Saturday match against Duke was the last home game of the semester, the men's team will still be playing games in the area. The next game close to campus will be at UNCG after fall break. Home games will resume in the spring.

"We've surprised a lot of people this year," Hunter said. "In terms of morale we beat Duke's A side. It was just due to a random penalty that we lost. And I got to head-butt somebody!" ♦

Students discover Irish hurling

By Reid Cranfill
STAFF WRITER

Studying abroad in Ireland for the summer, Guilford senior, Brett McDonough discovered the ancient Irish sport of hurling.

"My roommate said, 'you've got to check this out!' and he turned on hurling on the television," McDonough said. "These little kids were playing hurling—it was one of the most violent, confusing things I've ever seen."

Hurling is older than the recorded history of Ireland and is the country's second most popular sport, behind Gaelic football. Fifteen people per team brandish hurleys, which are three-foot long dull wooden axes that can hit a leather ball with a cork core, called a sliotar, over 100 yards.

"Some of the adults wore helmets kind of like the old leather football helmets, only thinner," McDonough said. "But they weren't required to."

Players over 21 usually forego all safety equipment, despite the fact that certain types of tackling are permitted and hitting one's opponent with the

hurley is legal, provided it's done two-handed. Children wear only a plastic helmet and mouth guard; no one wears pads.

"That must be fun to get hit with," Guilford Athletic Trainer Shannon Swiatkiewicz said. "I'd want them to have the same type of pads and helmets Lacrosse players have."

Hurling is usually played on a pitch

"Hurling is more proof that non-American sports can be more bad-ass than American sports."

Tristan Winkler
senior

100 yards by 160 yards, and has eight referees. At either end of the field, H-shaped posts stand just over six and a half yards high, seven yards wide, and have a crossbar eight feet off the ground. The lower portion of the goal has a net guarded by a goalie.

Hitting the ball between the top posts scores a point, while scoring a goal on the bottom gains three points. The goalie's hurley has a slightly larger paddle,

but he remains otherwise unprotected against sliotars routinely going over 93 miles per hour.

"Hurling is more proof that non-American sports can be more bad-ass than American sports," senior Tristan Winkler said.

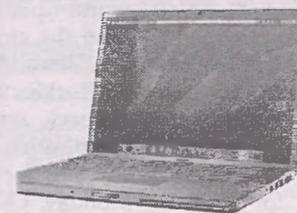
Offensive players are allowed to grab the ball with one hand, but can only take three steps with the sliotar in hand, before having to balance or dribble the ball off the hurley. The ball can be passed via a drop-kick or open-handed strike, and at all times a player is free to hit the ball as hard as he can with the hurley.

The Gaelic Athletic Association has controlled the professional sport since 1884, and tens of thousands attend the matches.

Seating more fans than Charlotte's 73,298-capacity Carolina Panthers' Bank of America Stadium, Croke Park hosts over 82,000 people and is the headquarters of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

"I lived right beside Croke Park in Dublin; it was pretty intense," McDonough said. "The park was huge. You could hear it echoing through all of Dublin on game day." ♦

Contribute to The Guilfordian!



WRITING



OR PHOTOS

guilfordian@guilford.edu