Games people play

By Martin Dickau

With all of the many sports MIT has to offer, it is no surprise that a student occasionally meets up with a sport of which he has no knowledge. So, as a service to the MIT community, we offer here the first in a series of articles explaining the working of some of the lesser-known athletic activities.

Europeans will tell you that Americans are basically very ignorant, so, perhaps it is fitting that the first sport we should deal with is the world's most widely-played amateur game — rugby.

I was, admittedly, one such ignorant American. I had always figured that rugby was nothing special. After all, what red-blooded American kid did not play "kill-the-guy-with-the-ball" in his elementary school days? I felt that the only difference between the two games was the age of the players and the size of the teams. How wrong I was! What first looks like a contest to see who can break the entire skeletal structure of the poor sap who is unlucky enough to catch the ball will result in much more organized than first impression would have it.

Rugby is played in two forty-five-minute halves by two teams of fifteen players, nine on a field slightly larger than a football field (100 x 75 yards). One referee supervises the game, and only stops play when someone commits an infraction, when the ball is ripped beneath a pile of humanity without hope of being moved, or when the ball travels out of bounds (called "in touch" by those who know). The game starts with a typical football-style kick-off, and stoppages in play are restarted by either a lineout (sucker-style throw-in), a kick, or a curious phenomenon called a "scrum." A scrum looks like a football huddle, except both teams have their arms around each other, and the ball is thrown into their midst. The players then all try to kick the ball out of the reach of their waiting teammates, who pick up the ball and run merrily toward the goal line, occasionally passing the ball to another teammate when a tackle seems imminent.

A tackle is defined as the situation when one player is in another's grasp and falls to the ground. Upon lifting the ground, he must get all of the ball and may not play it, as the tackle may not, until he has regained feet.

Points are scored when the ball is touched on the ground in one of the teams' seven-yard try area, or on a field goal. Tries are worth four points, and field goals are worth three. Players attempt to score a try as near to the middle of the field as possible because a two-point conversion is kicked from a line going through the point where the ball touched the ground and must go through the uprights in the other.

There is no blocking in rugby. There is as much danger of a ball carrier who interferes with a defender is called for an off-side penalty. Any attempt to injure another player is not allowed, the penalty for the equivalent of an American sport like conduct being expulsion from the game. Expelled players are not replaced — replacements are only allowed for injury.

Besides these basic concepts, rugby is as much for the coincidences and subtle strategies as any other sport. The quality of the game depends on the ability of the referee to oversee the thirty players on the field. And if one varsity, hard action, rugby is the sport for it, although I would not personally recommend it to anyone who is allergic to bruises.

Tennis

Coming off of a five-game preseason Southern road trip, the men's tennis team opened the 1982 season with a 6-3 victory over visiting Wesleyan University last Saturday afternoon. The Egyptians are looking forward to having a fine year, as the top seven players seem very strong, and number oneseed Vartan Pirouzian '83 is back from last year's hip injury.

A bright spot in the Southern series was the win over the team's 2-3, was the play of Will Sauer '85, who was undefeated in singles play. Sauer is currently ranked fifth on the team. Other members are, in order of seeding, John Chen '84, Tom Ramsey '82, John Whalen '84, team captain George Medici '82, Chuan Hsu '83, and Dave Pope '84.

Although the team is young and has no seniors, it is looking good, as there are no weak spots on the ladder.

The women's tennis team raised its record to 5-0 Monday in the Athletic Center. The match was moved inside from the duPont Center due to excessively high winds.

MIT moved to 4-2 lead in the singles, on the strength of wins by Sue Setuliam '83, Alison Kitchens '82, Margarete Rakas '82, and Kim Ramsey '81. Salem State, however, rallied to take the first two doubles matches before the duo's of Jennifer Lin '84 and Michelle Lee '83 closed out the match with a victory in the decisive third match.

Clyde Royer's group has the weekend off, facing Wellesley here on Wednesday, April 14th.

Baseball

The Beavers' season began inauspiciously last week, losing 13-2 to Boston College on Thursday, and 11-5 to Bowdoin on Saturday. The loss to BC, a Division I school was expected. The bright spot was rookie Mike D'Christina's home run to left in his seventh inning, though the game was well out of reach by that time.

Saturday's home opener with the Bowdoin Polar Bears was more disappointing. MIT dug itself a hole in the second inning, from which it tried to climb all day, never succeeding. A one-base error by center fielder Vinna Mancinelli '83 to open the frame seemed to unravel pitcher D'Christina, who walked the next three batters. A sac fly brought in a second run. Then with two outs another walk loaded the bases again, and the Polar Bears' cleanup hitter did just that, slamming a three-run double to left.

MIT powered back in its half of the second on back-to-back leadoff doubles by Todd Huffman '83 and Steve Williams '82. Later in the inning Steve Lahasky '83 added a bases-loaded double, for a total of three runs in the inning.

The game got out of hand in the top of the sixth. With none out and the score 5-4 Bowdoin, D'Christina tired, walking the first man, and running the count to 2-1 on the next batter. D'Christina gave way to Mike Snyder '84 who finished the walk, induced a popout to short, then surrendered another two walks and two singles before being replaced by Dan Ferguson '83. Ferguson got out the inning, but not before Lahasky let a ball roll through his legs at third, scoring the last two of the four runs.

Due to this week's snowstorm, MIT's games with Harvard, Babson, and the University of New England have been cancelled. The games with Harvard and Babson will be rescheduled.

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