Broomball Continuing to Grow in Oswego and Beyond
By Ross Bentley
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Intramural broomball is without a doubt one of the most popular sports at SUNY Oswego. This semester alone, nearly 50 teams registered for the broomball tournaments in the Co-Rec and Men’s division.

But what makes broomball such a popular sport, and where exactly did it come from?

The grassroots of broomball relate back to the early 1900's in Canada, although there are few known facts about just how the game got started. Many experts believe that broomball was invented as a way to play ice hockey without having skates, and the first organized games of broomball were played with corn brooms pushing a soccer ball across the ice.

The first record of broomball in the United States came in Minnesota in the 1930’s, and it has been growing in popularity ever since.

Originally, broomball was played with ten players on the ice, but it since moved to eight, and now the six that we see regularly today.

According to the USA Broomball Directory, there are over 30 colleges who offer intramural broomball across 19 different states. There are also several dozen broomball leagues, including ones in Syracuse, Elmira, Queensbury, and Buffalo.

At SUNY Oswego, broomball continues to draw large interest every semester. According to the Assistant Director of Campus Recreation Scott Harrison, record of broomball at Oswego date back to the late 1970's, but it is possible the sport has been around the college for even longer than that.

“We are in a hockey community,” said Harrison. “I think broomball provides students with an opportunity to share in that hockey experience on the ice, where the Oswego Lakers teams participate.”

Today, broomball takes place at the Campus Center Ice Arena, but before 2007, students participated at the Romney Field House next to Laker Hall, the former home of Oswego Lakers home hockey games.

Part of the allure of broomball is that it is largely an unfamiliar game to students looking to participate. “What excites me about it is that in many ways is that often times everybody comes to SUNY Oswego with an even playing field. Everyone has the same odds,” said Harrison. “With broomball, you don’t necessarily have people coming here
with a lot of previous experience, so it becomes unique to their college experience, which makes it fun and brings people together."

The entire concept of running on ice without skates makes broomball equal parts exciting and challenging for student-athletes who participate in intramurals. While students may learn the ins and outs of the game by the time they graduate, and playing hockey as background will certainly help, students hardly ever excel at broomball when they first pick it up. "In broomball everyone is just okay at laughing it off if you aren't skilled at it, and having a good time, because no one has ever played it before," said Harrison.

While it's unlikely that any student will be going pro in the game, broomball at Oswego provides both a fun and unique opportunity to play an unfamiliar sport that is fun for players of all skill levels.

References:

