

Badminton more than just 'backyard' fun

By Mary-Lynne Rice
Reporter

Since its origin in India centuries ago, badminton has been popular around the world. At the summer Olympics, it will be featured as a spectator sport for the first time. Yet only recently has badminton begun to catch on in the United States as a competitive — not only recreational — sport.

About 40 tournament and recreational badminton players, members of the Texas A&M badminton club, meet for weekly practice and travel to competitions at Southwest Conference and other area schools monthly. Expenses are covered by university funding for extramural sports.

Although badminton, a racquet and shuttle game, is often popularly perceived as slow-paced backyard recreation, a little competitive practice proves otherwise.

"Most of our members are beginners, but they expect some really competitive, tiring games," said Rick Doan, senior engineering technology major and badminton club president. "They're not surprised when they start to play, but some of them are amazed at the tournament players."

Many of the best players graduated last year, Doan said, leaving the club with the challenge of rebuilding its experience. Still, they

have strong competitive players, he said, who brought A&M a first-place trophy in men's singles and second place in men's doubles at the tournament held here last fall.

One tournament remains for the club. It travels to Arlington on March 19 to end its competitive season. Doan said he expects the club to fare well, with a chance to win men's singles and doubles and women's doubles events.

"We can really compete in men's singles," he said. "With doubles, we're still trying to work out the teams. The players are working on getting used to each other."

Junior business major Jerry Luna,

a badminton player for two years and one-year club member and competitor, won first place in Class B (college division) competition at Baylor. But competition was not his reason for joining the club, he said.

"The only reason I joined was just to keep in tune with the bird," he said. "I do go to tournaments and I play competitively, but I also need the playing time and experience."

Doan said most members of the club, like Luna, join for the practice and recreation.

"The recreational players come up just to play around," he said. "They're looking for a night when they can just exercise."

Kick-off team list chopped down to 65

By Joe Jimenez
Reporter

In a list posted at Kyle Field, 65 participants survived the first cut for next year's 12th Man Kick-Off Team.

Approximately 215 students tried out for the team last week, Chris Massey, a graduate assistant and the coach in charge of the team, said.

"We usually have about 200-240 students go out for the team," Massey said. "I think we would have had more participate this year, but we had a late notice put in *The Battalion*."

Monday, the members ran 40-yard dashes and agility drills.

The agility drill consisted of a square marked with orange cones at the corners.

Each side of the square measured 10 yards.

Participants began at a corner and ran backwards until they reached a corner.

They would then sprint forward at an angle to the opposite left corner.

Next, they would run backwards to the next corner where they would end the run by sprinting to the opposite right corner.

Massey said there is a misconception about 40-yard dash times.

Speed is not all the staff is looking for, he said.

"Members need to have agility so they can go down and avoid the 230-pounders who are trying to block them," Massey said.

Field hockey an unusual combo of warm- and cold-weather sports

By Tom Eikel
Reporter

Field hockey is like ice hockey without the ice and soccer without the leather ball and fan violence.

In fact, field hockey is an exciting, fast-paced combination of the two, and is one of the many extramural sports played here at Texas A&M.

"It's almost exactly like soccer," acting club manager Asif Qureshy said.

Field hockey has the same player positions as soccer and utilizes the same types of defenses.

But instead of kicking the ball, wooden sticks are used.

The sticks are shorter than those used in ice hockey, and the heads are much smaller, giving players greater control, he said.

It's a foul if the ball touches anything other than a player's stick or hands.

The ball used in field hockey is about the same size as a baseball, but it's a little heavier, has a hard

plastic cover and travels a bit faster, he said.

"It hurts a little when they hit you," he said.

Even with protection such as shin guards, Qureshy said players do get hurt.

Usually such injuries result from being hit with the sticks.

Field hockey is similar to ice hockey with the exception, of course, that players run instead of skate.

As in ice hockey, each team has a heavily padded goalie, most of whom wear masks, he said.

In field hockey, the goals are 7 feet tall and 14 feet wide.

Goalies have sticks too, but rarely use them, Qureshy said.

He said most shots blocked are from the knees down.

Goalies are the only players allowed to kick the ball.

Some of the same rules used in ice hockey and soccer are used in field hockey as well, such as those for offsides and passing.

As can be imagined, rules that penalize rough play are strictly

enforced.

"You get a couple of warnings, then you get kicked out," Qureshy said.

One or two dirty players can be found on every team, he said.

"We used to have one, but he's gone now," Qureshy said. "He was a real expert at this. Five minutes into the game he'd be sitting on the bench."

"But he was good to have on your team," Qureshy said.

Field hockey can be played either indoors or out, but rules differ between the two.

When playing indoors, there are seven members on each team, and unlimited substitution is allowed because the pace is faster and players don't have much time to catch their breaths.

Indoor matches last 30 minutes and have fewer high shots and passes.

Games played outdoors have two 35 minute halves and 11 members per team.

A&M's field hockey club currently has 13 members.

members of this year's team.

To make next year's team, current members must go through try-outs again, Massey said.

This is the first year Jeff Mink, a junior biomedical science major from Waco, is trying out for the team.

"This is a great tradition at A&M," Mink said. "No other major institution in the United States has a program like this."

The next cut should be announced by noon today.

Approximately 40 students should be on the list posted at Kyle Field, Massey said.

The 40 will participate in the spring training with the scholarship athletes.

Spring training will begin on March 21 and last for five weeks. Practices during the five weeks will be held Monday through Thursday,

with the Monday practice at night.

"We'll have a late practice on Mondays because of labs," Massey said.

The number of participants who will make the fall practices has not been decided, Massey said.

"A lot will depend on how well these guys look in the spring," he said. "It also depends on how many Coach Sherrill wants to take."

Sixteen of the remaining 65 are

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