



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

White, a seventh-grader from Bryan, sneaks up on an opponent Sunday afternoon at Brazos Valley War Games. Although A&M groups frequently book the field, owner Denise White said a great portion of their business comes from the local community, especially businessmen.

The Paintball Wars

Simulated shootouts gain popularity among students

By Amy Uptmor
THE BATTALION

For some A&M students, nothing could be more fun and relaxing than taking a group of their closest friends out to the woods and shooting at them for about five hours.

Although paintball games have been around for over a decade, they have recently gained immense popularity, especially among college students.

Brian Castor, a junior meteorology major, said he and his brother started playing paintball three years ago after learning about it in a hunting magazine.

"My uncle saw paintguns in the back of a magazine and bought some," Castor said. "We eventually got a group of about 20 people together to play games."

And although athletic skills are not necessary to play paintball games, Castor said they help, along with endurance, for those who want to become serious about the sport.

"Endurance is a big part of the game," he said. "It's not unusual for games to go on for over an hour."

Paintball can be an expensive pastime for those who wish to own their own gear. Castor said a good gun can cost as much as \$500. There are also many other small gadgets for the true paintball connoisseur.

"You can even buy small fans that keep your goggles from fogging up," he said.

Those who don't feel like going quite that far can still have fun with the game, Castor said.

"It's real fun, you just have to have the confidence to jump out and shoot," he said, "and it helps not to be allergic to poison ivy."

Beginning paintball warriors in need of guidance can go to Brazos Valley War Games, the county's only paint ball battlefield. The current owners, David and Denise White and Charles Luza, have owned the field for the last two of its ten years. Denise White said the field has been quite profitable for them, given the

sport's increasing popularity and their desire to offer the best playing field possible.

"Business has tripled since we took over," White said. "We've reinvested everything so we could upgrade. We now have pump shotguns, and we hope to upgrade the guns again soon."

White agreed that endurance is the most important thing needed to play paintball.

"People usually stay out

there playing for four to five hours every time," she said.

Brazos Valley War Games consists of six to eight acres of playing tracks. Groups usually play football, fox and hound, offense/defense, and one of the field's more popular games, capture the flag.

"We have forts on each end of the playing field, and we divide the groups into two teams, mark them and put them in their forts to capture the flag," White said. "It's a blast. I get a lot of pleasure out of watching people have fun."

A minimum group of ten is required to play, although White said groups tend to range from 30 to 50 people.

A&M groups are constantly booking the field, she said, although many locals also enjoy playing paint ball war games.

"Some of our best customers are local businessmen," she said.

White said the field does not open on regular hours, but is open when groups make arrangements to play. Most groups prefer the weekends.

Sunday, the field hosted its largest group ever. Alpha Chi Omega sponsored a day of tournament play for A&M fraternities. Approximately 250 young men bombarded the field to play double-elimination rounds of capture the flag from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Gracy Salinas, a junior marketing major and organizer of the event, said the paint ball games are a good way to socialize.

"Paint ball war just seemed like it would be a lot of fun, and a good way to meet people" she said.

For those who are interested in playing their first paintball game, Castor said now is the perfect time to play.

"Paintball is especially good in the spring and fall," he said. "You can't get enough carbon dioxide for your gun in the winter, and you can just get heat exhaustion in the summer."



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—Brian Castor
junior meteorology major

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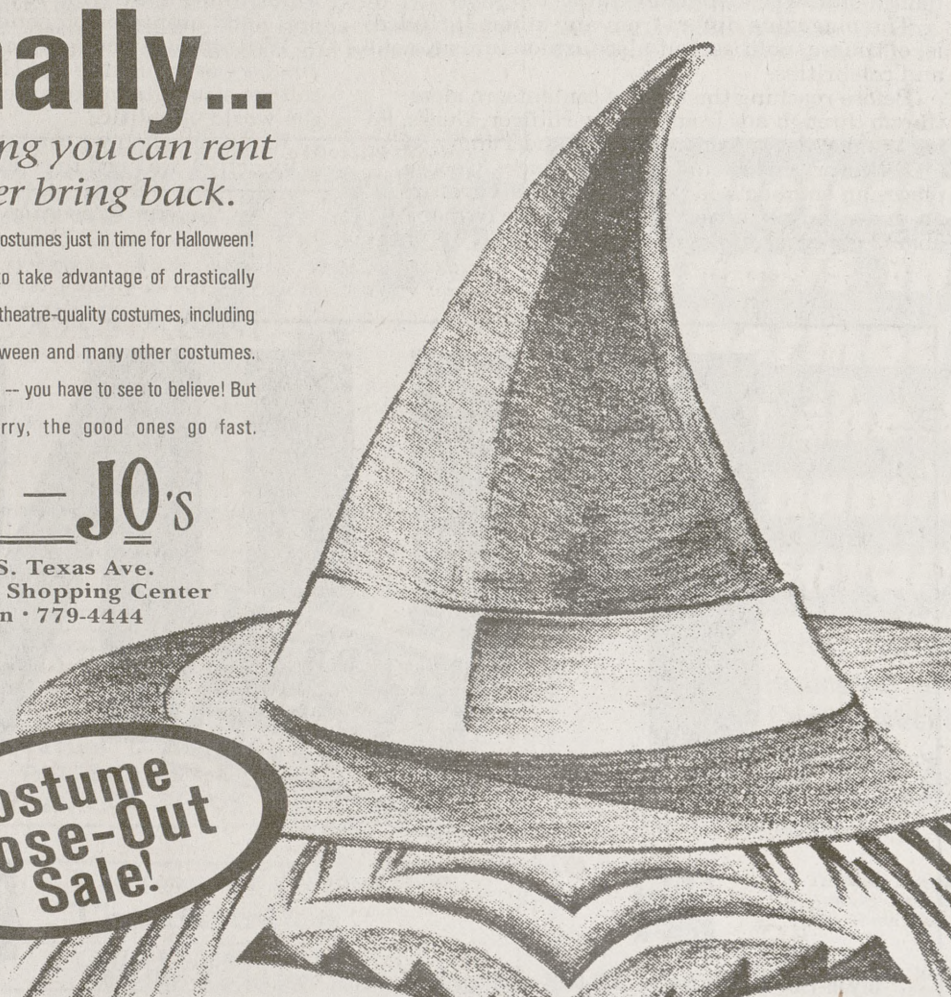
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