

Splat!



Derek Demere, THE BATTALION
Adam Baldwin, a junior environmental design major, practices his marking at Rowdy's Tactical Games, a paintball activity center in Bryan.

Paintball fanatics shoot for adventure

By MICHAEL SCHAUB
 THE BATTALION

Pool halls, bowling alleys and video arcades: Bryan-College Station is flush with things to do on the weekend. But Denise White of Brazos Valley War Games said the establishment she helps manage offers something a little different. "You can shoot at your friends," White said, "and get away with it." Brazos Valley War Games is one of many paintball fields popping up around the state. "We start from age 10," White said. "And we've had 50- and 60-year-old men out there playing." The Bryan establishment is in its fourth year of operation in Bryan. "I've seen a whole lot of popularity, especially with women," White said. "In the last few years, women are playing paintball like crazy." The "extreme sport" consists of teams armed with "markers" (they are never called guns) filled with solid brightly-colored paintballs that splatter on impact.

The goal is to mark as many members of the opposing team as possible before time runs out.

Dean Sanders opened a paintball field in his hometown of Longview. Although it started as a private facility for him and his friends, Longview Paintball Sports now draws players from all over East Texas.

"It's something new," Sanders said. "People like to have an adrenaline rush when they play."

The popularity of paintball has grown significantly in the past few years, Sanders said.

"We do a lot of church groups and company groups," he said. "Everyone can get involved, no matter what their age or gender is."

Sanders said his fields are modeled after courses in such cities as Pittsburgh, Chicago and Orlando.

"The harder the fields are, the more people like them," he said.

Sanders' daughter April Sanders, a senior sports management major, became involved in paintball after her father opened his fields in Longview.

"I'm not that good yet," she said. "It's the most fun when you get with a group of friends."

Sanders said she plays against her younger brothers when she goes to Longview on weekends.

"My younger brother goes to tournaments with my dad," she said. "I play with my (youngest) brother, who's eight, and he's pretty good. The neat thing is, no matter what your age is, you can play just as well."

Playing paintball might be a cathartic game for players, but Dean Sanders said running a paintball field is not all fun and games.

"There are a whole lot of rules," he said. "People shouldn't play unsupervised or without referees. They should wear all safety gear."

Getting hit with a paintball can sting, so it is necessary to wear a face mask to protect the eyes, he said.

The field should be properly built to ensure safety for the players, Dean Sanders said.

"We play on fields that are groomed, not on 'renegade' fields," he said. "Paintball is a very safe sport when it's held in those circumstances. It's not as prone to have injuries as other sports."

White said the Brazos Valley War Games' fields offer variety for players, especially since the establishment moved to a new 15-acre land plot four months ago.

"We have a 'nature field' with big ravines," White said. "You can walk up on a team and they won't see you."

Courses can range from the quick and intense to the slow and strategic, she said.

"Our speedball courts are fast and furious, but the nature field is more like playing war," she said. "We're not even halfway done expanding yet. We're adding some new fields in the

next few months."

Dean Sanders said his fields emphasize thinking above brute force.

"It's not about war games," he said. "It's not a militia thing. I like to call it a combination of chess and tag."

Despite the hard work and slow beginnings that paintball field managers face, running a paintball facility has its rewards, White said.

"I love it, I really do," she said. "A lot of people get bored in life. But I like being and working with people."

Dean Sanders said sticking it out in the beginning pays off in the end.

"It's real hard to have a field that's totally self-supporting," he said. "It's hard to find the time to build a field, and there's not a lot of money in it in the beginning."

Paintball aficionados could pay up to \$300 for a marker of their own, April Sanders said, but markers are always available to rent at the fields.

"It can be an expensive sport," she said, "but if you get into it, it's well worth the money. This is something a lot of people enjoy doing."

"People like to have an adrenaline rush when they play."

Dean Sanders
 Owner of Longview
 Paintball Sports

A little help from friends

SI program helps students 'peer' into world of better grades

By MELISSA PRICE
 THE BATTALION

While some students find it difficult to attend their scheduled classes on a regular basis, other students attend extra classes — for no credit. The Supplemental Instruction (SI) program, an academic assistance program designed to help students who need extra help outside of the classroom, relies heavily on its leaders. SI sessions, which are held three times a week for 50 minutes each, are led by undergraduate students who have taken the course before and have made an A or B in the class. Andrew Forcina, an SI leader for Political Science 206 and a sophomore petroleum engineering major, said the program is usually implemented in large, core-curriculum classes with large concentrations of freshmen. "With a classroom of 250 students, it is sometimes difficult to ask questions during lecture," Forcina said. "In the classroom, you're one person with 250 others, but in an SI session, you're with 10 other students — it's less intimidating and more interactive." Forcina said SI leaders do not simply

reteach the material, but rather lead group discussions in which students are encouraged to actively participate. He said the number of students who come to SI sessions varies, but there is usually a large increase in student participation as tests approach.

Forcina said the program is designed primarily to help students learn good study and test-taking skills.

"The SI program is successful because the focus is on the students," Forcina said. "It's not about what the professor wants or what the school wants — we're concerned with the best way to help the students learn the material and to use these skills in their future classes."

Judy Priddy, an SI supervisor for the last two years, said the sessions are free and attendance is voluntary for students. She said although the professor does not see who is attending the sessions, the SI leaders and supervisors work closely with the professors involved.

Priddy said recent statistics have shown that the SI program is successful and growing in popularity. In Fall 1996, 6,216 students attended SI sessions. This means more than 48 percent of the students who were enrolled in classes participated in the program. In Summer 1996, almost

70 percent of students enrolled in the participating classes attended. Priddy said the success of the program is primarily measured by students' academic improvement.

"The students that attend SI on a regular basis tend to score one-half to a full grade point higher than those who don't," Priddy said. "Attending SI sessions are guaranteed study time for students — they are learning the concepts and not just learning how to pass the next test."

Melody Miller, an SI student and a freshman general studies major, said she started attending SI sessions for History 105 because she thought getting daily reviews of the material would improve her understanding of the concepts. She said the SI sessions helped her focus on the most important material and improve her study and time-management skills.

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