



# Gotcha!

In the world of paintball, it's splat or be splatted

By LEAH TEMPLETON  
Staff writer

Splat! Whoosh! Blam! No, these are not the sounds of Batman beating up the villainous Joker, they are the whizzing sounds of paintball war.

Paintball began in 1981 and has slowly grown to one of the most popular and challenging outdoor activities around today. This multi-million dollar sport has players all over the world competing in amateur and professional tournaments. Paintball has also taken over the Internet. There are



numerous catalog companies and Web pages that reveal playing tactics and where to get the best gear.

Bryan-College Station has even been stung by this growing trend. Many stores in the area are selling paintball supplies, and Rowdy's, a large paintball facility in Bryan, has become the place to play. Texas A&M students have even formed a paintball club.

Bill Crawford, owner of Rowdy's, said his facility makes sure to keep paintball wars exciting and challenging.

"We have five different fields available, each with their own personality," Crawford said.

The fields lie in a creek bottom with many valleys and wooded areas.

"The Outback is a heavily wooded field approximately 600 feet by 300 feet, while the Speedball field is narrower with 48 or so barricades."

Since each field has a different set up and degree of difficulty, there are always surprises.

"You may be successful in one field, but not another. They can be mentally challenging," Crawford said.

However, there is one field even Crawford said he does not like to venture into.

The Valley is in a heavily wooded area and is surrounded by hills. Because of this landscape, only experienced players are allowed in there.

Crawford said it can get pretty creepy in all of those trees. "It gives the feeling that Jason is right behind you," he said.

As far as group playing, Crawford said "the bigger the better." Regulation-style play is a five-man or ten-man team, but a five-man team is ideal to set up tactical situations.

Three-on-three or four-on-four is also permitted.

There are also different types of games to play with paintball wars. Besides basic tag, Crawford said the most popular is "capture the flag," where one person stays to guard the flag and the rest of the team goes out onto the field.

Rowdy's also takes safety into consideration and provides protective gear for all participants. Normal paintballs can travel up to 285 ft/sec, but the guns are set at a slightly slower speed for kids and nighttime play. Also, children have to be over 10 years old to participate.

Crawford said the paintballs can sting, and Rowdy's motto is "Come out and have a welt of a good time."

Crawford also said to come dressed in tennis shoes and prepare to get dirty.

"It's rough, muddy, rugged and fun — your adrenaline goes through the roof."

Rowdy's also provides two refs per field who are there to "keep it safe." Crawford said the referees are just a precaution.

"Players can do pretty much whatever they want, the referees are just there to set the limits."

Rowdy's uses only high-quality field paint that is never more than a month old.

Crawford added that this is the ideal time of the year to play.

"Winter is a good time because you can pad up and you won't be too hot."

Rowdy's offers a group discount of \$10 per person, but only if a customer uses the equipment there. Reservations are also needed, and large groups such as sororities, fraternities and churches are welcome.

Many people have also taken to buying their own paintball gun and supplies.

Andy Harris, an employee at Academy, said he has seen a lot more interest in the sport.

"There has been an increase in the popularity of paintball, mostly with the youth and guys," he said.

Harris also said there are guns for beginners and more advanced players.

"We've got five or six different models that run anywhere from \$49-\$199," he said, "the \$49 gun being the entry-level guns most kids buy, and \$199 is the tournament-grade-style gun."

Paintball has become such a wide-spread game that in fall of '96, a paintball club originated at A&M.

Mark Breedlove, president of the paintball club and a junior finance major, said he thinks the key to paintball's success is that any athletic level can play.

"It's become so popular because it is something anyone can do," Breedlove said.

The club, which is sponsored through Brazos Valley War Games, has 50 dues-paying members. Besides playing in tournaments, they enjoy just playing for fun.

"Every three weeks we go out and play as a club," Breedlove said. "Most people in the club play at a recreational level."

Breedlove also added that students do not have to own their own equipment to be a member.

So, whether playing in the backyard or at a tournament level, paintball is the sport anyone can play. Just be ready for a challenge and willing to get a little dirty.

## ROPIN' THE WIND

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo offers students business contacts, chances to further journalism skills

By BRANDI BALLARD  
Staff writer

Aggies are known far and wide as being bull-raising farmers, and while that myth does not always stand true, some students are bringing some truth back into the name of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has invited Texas A&M students to participate in assisting with some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes on at the rodeo.

Students are given the opportunity to either

work in the technical field or in the journalism field.

Karie Fehler, a junior agricultural journalism major, went last year as a technical staff assistant.

"There are two guys in charge of the cameras. We just assist them in setting up the cameras all over the Astro Arena and Astro Hall," she said.

Although the students do not actually get to work in the Astrodome, Fehler said it was a lot of fun.

There are closed circuit televisions set up around the arena showing live footage of different events going taking place.

Students man these cameras and later the footage is used for promotions.

Chelsea Gamble, a senior journalism major, went for training on Sunday.

"I got really excited this weekend," she said. "It is going to be re-

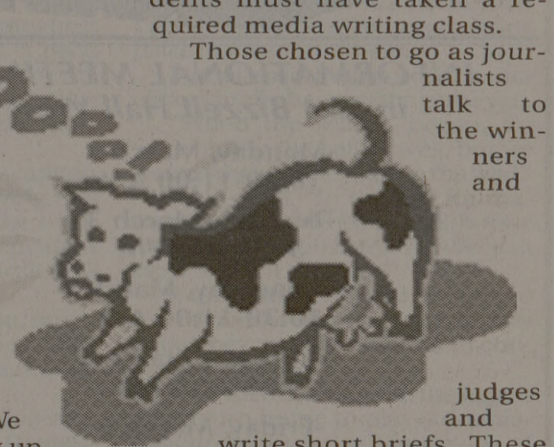
ally interesting. It is going to be a really good way to make contacts."

Bryan Wallis, a senior journalism major, is also excited about his first time at the rodeo. He learned about the work program through his television productions class.

"I am looking into going into some kind of television production after graduation, and this will be really good experience," Wallis said.

Students can also participate in the journalism aspects of the Livestock Show and Rodeo. Students must have taken a required media writing class.

Those chosen to go as journalists talk to the winners and



write short briefs. These are put on the Associated Press Wire and then sent to the winner's hometown newspaper.

Last year was the first year for the Web site and it had over 1.5 million hits. This year, the site had 1.5 million hits within the first two weeks in January.

"This is a great opportunity with world-wide exposure," Fehler said.

Fehler said that everything she writes this year goes into her portfolio with Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo letterheads.

PLEASE SEE **RODEO** ON PAGE 4.



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CAUGHT UP (R) 12:15 2:30 5:10 6:00 10:20 12:35

DARK CITY (R) 11:50 2:20 5:00 7:30 10:00 12:25

GOOD WILL HUNTING (R) 11:00 1:45 4:35 7:20 10:10 12:45

GREAT EXPECTATIONS (R) 12:15 2:45 5:15 7:45 10:15 12:45

\*KISSING A FOOL (R) 11:30 1:55 4:15 7:00 9:40 12:00

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL (R) 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:30 12:30

PALMETTO (R) 11:10 1:50 4:25 7:25 10:15 12:40

REPLACEMENT KILLERS (R) 2:30 5:45 8:00 10:15 12:30

SENSELESS (R) 11:30 1:40 3:50 7:00 9:15 11:45

SPHERE (PG-13) 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50 12:35

THE APOSTLE (PG-13) 1:05 3:55 7:05 9:55 12:40

THE WEDDING SINGER (PG-13) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:40 10:25 12:50

THE WINGS OF THE DOVE (R) 3:10 11:00 8:00 9:00

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