



Adults get kick out of kickball

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By [Charlie Patton](#)

The people behind the World Adult Kickball Association like to promote their game as a "contact" sport.

They aren't talking about the kind of contact James "Oz" Oswald, 37, had with the ground when he tried to dive headfirst into home plate during a game at Jacksonville's St. Nicholas Park last season.

"I'm very competitive," said Oswald, who operates a valet service and often wears a kilt and makeup to the games. "I dislocated my arm for this sport."

No, the kind of "contact" they are talking about occurs after a hard night of kicking a ball. Players in the Atlantic Division of World Adult Kickball head to the Burrito Gallery downtown for some post-game partying.

"The game attracts its fair share of hotties - and offers a fresh-air alternative to Match.com," declares one recent news release.

"I met my wife through kickball," said Monty Mims, a 31-year-old apparel sales representative. "She's a kickball groupie."

As he spoke, Mims was refereeing a game between the Thundercankles and Mele's Marauders, part of last week's opening night of the 2009 winter season of play in the 16-team division.

A second Jacksonville league, the 12-team St. Johns Division, begins play today at Patton Park off Hodges Boulevard.

Mims, who is a member of Surrender the Booty, was dressed accordingly, in a pirate hat.

The idea of an adult kickball league that combines a beloved childhood sport with some friendly post-game mixing began 10 years ago in Washington.

Play in Jacksonville began in 2006 with four teams and 86 people, said Karen Williams, a marketing manager for EverBank who coordinates the two Jacksonville divisions.

A member of Commotion from the Ocean, one of the Atlantic Division's stronger teams, Williams said she considers the league "mainly a social organization."

"You are reconnecting with your childhood," she said. "It becomes like a family."

Greg Corcoran, 35, who is president of the Atlantic Division's board of directors, said he joined because he "wanted something where girls and guys could do something that wasn't so competitive. It's better than just having a drink."

First baseman for the Mudville Mullets, Corcoran works in public relations for JEA. He came to opening night in a curly blonde wig.

"As president, I had to do something ridiculous," he said. "I think I've accomplished that."

Many participants talked about the low-key attitude of most players as a big part of adult kickball's appeal.

"Typically it's not intense at all," said Darwin Porter, a 30-year-old intern architect at the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southeast.

But not everybody shares that sentiment.

"It can be high-key," joked Brian Jones, 27, of the team Off Constantly. "I'm very competitive."

So is Kellen Miller, a 27-year-old mechanical engineer and captain of Cobra Kai, Jacksonville's defending champions.

The team is named for the villainous martial-arts bullies from the movie "The Karate Kid."

"That's us," said Miller, a former soccer player at Stanton College Preparatory School.

"They are the evil empire, the team everybody wants to beat," Corcoran said.

Amanda Webb, 28, a lawyer, joined the Atlantic Division a couple of years ago because she "really wanted to meet other younger professionals."

A resident of Neptune Beach, she will play this season on a new team, Kickin' It Old Skool, in the St. Johns Division, of which she is vice president.

Even the most competitive teams "can't take it too seriously," Webb said.

"You are, after all, kicking a big red ball."

The league has grown in popularity to the point that all 28 teams had full rosters of at least 20 players more than a month ago, Williams said.

But it's possible the World Adult Kickball Association, which has two eight-week seasons a year, each followed by playoffs, could add more teams in the future or have openings on existing rosters, she said.

Anyone interested in being on a waiting list can e-mail her at karen@kickball.com. For more information about WAKA, go to www.kickball.com.

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