

Tuesday, May 9, 2006

Get your kicks and nostalgia

An adult league, featuring the kickball you played as a child, is registering teams for spring and summer.

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The Orange County Register

Dodgeball bounced back into pop culture about three years ago, triggering a swell of local leagues, a Ben Stiller cinematic romp ("Dodgeball: An Underdog Story"), and a Game Show Network series, "Extreme Dodgeball," with Hollywood and sports celebrities hurling and hopping over the Rhinoskin ball.

Now adults are going back to elementary school for yet more recreational inspiration, this time with kickball.

The decade-old World Adult Kickball Association (WAKA) is registering new players and teams and staging pickup games. Its Web site, www.kickball.com, lists 11 Southern California geographic divisions, including four in Orange County: Central (Irvine), Coast (Newport Beach), Orange County (Orange) and Surf City (Huntington Beach).

The spring/summer season begins as early as June 19 in some divisions. The average cost is \$65 per player per season. That covers registration, field and equipment expenses and T-shirt.

More than 22,000 adults nationwide have joined WAKA, many ages 25-35. (You have to be at least 21 years old and have valid health insurance to play.)

"This is a game that is social, fun and competitive without being as intense as, say, a rec basketball team," said WAKA executive Orion Walker, 32, of Los Angeles. "Kickball is one of those games that you don't forget."

Few students get past fourth grade without experiencing this physical-education classic whose blend of soccer, dodgeball and baseball takes place on a softball diamond.

Think of two teams playing baseball. But a pitcher rolls the ball - a red, rubber WAKA-logo, 27-inch circumference playground ball inflated no more than 1.5 pounds per inch - from the mound.

Batters don't swing, they kick the ball for offense, and fielders catch fly balls, make plays at a base or peg runners below the shoulders for putouts.

Getting around the basepaths - orange cones stand beside the bases - to stomp home scores runs. Three strikes - un-kicked balls rolled through the 1-foot strike zone surrounding home plate - or four fouls equals an out.

There are some rules allowing bunting (baby kicks) but prohibiting leading from or stealing bases and outlawing "bouncies," the aerial pitches that fly in more than a foot above home plate.

Games are five innings, without extra innings. Ties count in the divisional standings.

Teams, most with wacky names ranging from Huntington Beach's Mobile Homies to North Hollywood's Pregnant Cheerleaders and Awesome Helicopter Ninjas, have from 12-26 players. Eight to 11 players, including a minimum of four women, must take the field.

In June, WAKA will hold an open tournament in Los Angeles, where West Coast teams can compete for the Regional Cup.

But for the beginning kickballer, the next two months of open play is a good place to begin.

The Huntington Beach division has a June 12 pickup game at the Edison Community Center field, and the Irvine division is

setting up games before its season starts on Sept. 11 at Harvard Athletic Field No. 6.

For information, visit the Web site, www.kickball.com.

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