

Do-it-yourself sports

Three and a half years ago, senior art and design major Amy Miyajima was fresh out of high school and wondering what to get involved with at NMU. Previous experience in martial arts and a life-long interest in Japanese culture led her to a fluorescent flyer for budo taijutsu, an ancient Japanese martial art that is offered at NMU as a club sport.

“Budo has taught me a lot about Japanese history and ninjas,” said Miyajima, who is now the club’s president. “I hadn’t really known too much about ninjas except what I saw on cartoons, but now I know that it all stems from Japanese people who were forced into guerilla warfare. I’ve also learned how to use traditional weapons and various defenses.”

Like Miyajima, many NMU students find club and intramural sports that cater to their interests. Sport clubs offer social, recreational and competitive activities for students of all athletic abilities. NMU’s current sport clubs include alpine skiing, budo taijutsu, crew, cycling, dance team, figure skating, volleyball, lacrosse, men’s track and field, and men’s and women’s ice hockey, rugby and soccer.

Intramurals are short-term sports—the “season” is usually the length of a semester—that are available to students, faculty, staff and community members age 16 and older who have recreation passes for the PEIF. Unlike sport clubs, intramural participants compete only against other on-campus teams. Available intramurals include flag football, ice hockey, ultimate



Frisbee, indoor soccer, table tennis, dodgeball, volleyball, softball, racquetball, broomball, kickball, floor hockey, basketball and toplet.

Brian Gaudreau, associate programming director in the intercollegiate athletics and recreational sports department, said that participation in club and intramural sports has increased over the past three years, with 4,277 participants in intramural sports and 325 in clubs.

“Students are coming from more athletic backgrounds and looking for something to extend their high school sports experience. Those who are not ready to compete at an intercollegiate level can take advantage of the clubs and intramurals,” he said.

Tricia Sheldon, assistant programming manager, added that the club and intramural sports offer students a great opportunity to meet new people.

“We advise all incoming freshmen to participate. It takes a load of stress off if they can find a network

of people to count on. The exercise is an obvious benefit, and they can have fun at the same time, too,” she said.

Sport clubs and intramurals differ from intercollegiate sports in that they’re entirely student-led. In order to begin a sport club, a group of students with a particular interest meets with Gaudreau and goes through the sport club manual. They must then give a presentation to representatives from the other sport clubs, who will vote and decide whether the new group should be accepted.

If the club is accepted, the process isn’t over. A stack of paperwork, including composing a constitution, becoming a registered student organization on campus, and determining funding, must be completed. Although they are ultimately grouped into the same category, not all sport clubs are the same.

“A lot of the sport clubs don’t compete at all,” said Gaudreau,

“Like water skiing and snowshoeing clubs that we’ve had in the past—they’re content to just meet and do things together as a group of friends.”

Intramural sports have a deep-rooted history at NMU, especially broomball. Broomball has been played here for more than 20 years, and has become the most popular intramural. Cassie Webb, a junior exercise science major, participated in broomball to help her train for the crew team.

“Broomball is pretty much the sweetest thing ever. Crew uses it as a jump start into spring training because the game is all sprinting and requires much arm strength to swing heavy wooden brooms around,” she said.

While she believes that club sports bring friendship, teamwork and honor to the university, Webb said that her experience with intramural sports has been just as important.

“Intramurals are a better chance to just have fun and socialize. They aren’t time consuming, and most



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Broomball has been played at NMU for more than 20 years, and has become the most popular intramural sport. This match took place at Winterfest in 1977.

teams don’t have scheduled practice; they just play once a week. With a sport club, you have to dedicate a lot more time to practice and competition and also pay dues. Clubs still involve fun and socializing, but they’re a lot more serious.”

Changes in facilities and schedules have caused the intramural program to evolve. About 15 years ago, Gaudreau said, intramural games were mostly played outside

with the latest game being played at about 4 p.m. Now with the Berry Events Center and the PEIF, most of the games can be played indoors, and with more students taking night classes, it is not unusual for games to last until after midnight.

Another major change in the intramural program is the inclusion of co-rec leagues that allow men and women to play on the same team. “They know they want to play together, and it’s more fun that way,” said Gaudreau. “The women are just as hardcore in competing as the men.”

Starting this semester, intramural players in certain sports can also anticipate being broken up into “A” and “B” leagues for the first time to balance competition between players of different skill levels.

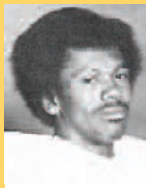
While intramural and club sports continue to evolve, the enthusiasm, sportsmanship and camaraderie of the players will remain at the heart of these endeavors.

—Becky Kratz

FIVE INDUCTED INTO NMU SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Five former Wildcats were inducted into the NMU Sports Hall of Fame during the Homecoming festivities.

The Class of 2006 includes:



Zachary Fowler, '82 BS
Football
1975 Associated Press Honorable Mention All-American
Led NCAA championship team in receiving yards



Gwen Jackson, '83 BS
Women's Basketball
1980, '81 SMAIAW II All-State
1981 AIAW II All-Regional
Ranks 16th NMU all-time scoring with 1,192 points

Denise Porath, '80 BS
Field Hockey
NMU records in career (43) and single-season (31) goals
Selected for U.S. Olympic Development Team



Bret Williams, '84 BS
Alpine Skiing
1980 All-American
NMU's only NCAA alpine skiing champion (1980)



Jerry Wright, '61
Men's Basketball
Named 1961 NAIA Third-Team All-American as a freshman

