Ultimate Frisbee soars on UT campus

When kids are asked what they want to be when they grow up, lawyers have made up the top 10 list for decades. On the other hand, I think it's safe to say professional Ultimate Frisbee player has yet to crack the "What I Want To Be When I'm Older Top 100," but Michael Kapoor may one day grow up to be both.

"It may not be the biggest activity for the people in the legal community," Kapoor said, jokingly.

Kapoor is a second-year law student at the University of Toledo. Five years ago he created the Ultimate Frisbee team at UT.

Now he's in his final year of eligibility and is pull double duty as a player/coach for the Toledo Spartans.

Before he says goodbye, Kapoor is pleased his case is in favor of a unique sport, which has survived four decades.

"I started in the 1960s, a lot of hippies played it out in California," Kapoor said.

The tie-dye and sunflowers may be out of style, but the popularity of Ultimate Frisbee is on the rise. Ultimate is being played at 460 colleges and universities nationwide, 35 of which are in Ohio.

"I think it's now on the verge of really catching on," Kapoor said. If you've never played Ultimate before, the concept is quite simple. The game is played on a football field or area of equal distance. The end zones are wickets. Two teams of seven make up the offense and defense. The objective of the game is to advance the disc from one player to the next without dropping it until you reach the endzone.

"It's a combination of soccer and football," Kapoor said.

Former high school athletes are dropping in the disc and picking up the disc. Kapoor says ex-basketball players and cross-country runners find the transition easy and enjoyable because of the constant movement the sport requires.

"I think the athlete profile is starting to dominate the hipsters," Kapoor said.

Even with its mainstream sport support, Ultimate continues to be mistaken for disc golf and is still dealing with 1960s stereotypes.

"People always mistake the sport and are like, 'Ultimate?' That's that game with the Frisbee and the log," Kapoor said.

Ultimate is no picnic at the park with Frisbee. The game is played in all types of weather. Kapoor said the team recently played a tournament in Cincinnati where wind chills were below zero. Bows of lightning are Mother Nature's only way of interrupting a game of Ultimate.

"I've played in games where people just don't talk before," Billman said. "Games have been intense."

The jury is still out if Ultimate Frisbee will one day become an official NCAA-sanctioned sport. Kapoor says sports like rugby are closer to earning varsity status. He thinks Ultimate Frisbee is at least 10 years away from reaching NCAA approval.

As college students wait their turn, the Ultimate Players Association is ready to take on the world.

Kapoor says the U.S. Ultimate National Team recently lost a tough match to Japan. The two nations are becoming rivals on the field, leaving some to speculate the summer games could be in the future.

"There's a push to get into the Olympics," Kapoor said. "Well see that before we see NCAA."

Not bad for a lawyer and a bunch of hippies.

Ryan Fowler is a weekend sports anchor for WNO-TV NBC 24.
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Kapoor is a second-year law student at the University of Toledo. Five years ago he created the Ultimate Frisbee team at UT.

Now he's in his final year of eligibility and is pulling double-duty as a player/coach for the Toledo Savages.

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"It started in the 1960s, a lot of hippies played it out in California," Kapoor said.

The tie-dye and sunflowers may be out of style, but the popularity of Ultimate Frisbee is on the rise. Ultimate is being played at more than 400 colleges and universities nationwide, 35 of which are in Ohio.

"I think it's now on the verge of really catching on," Kapoor said. "If you've never played ultimate before, the concept is quite simple. The game is played on a football field or area of equal distance, though the endzones are wider. Two teams of seven make up the offense and the defense. The objective of the game is to advance the disc from one player to the next without dropping it until you reach the endzone.

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Ultimate is no picnic at the park with Fido. The game is played in all types of weather. Kapoor said the team recently played a tournament in Cincinnati where wind chills were below zero.

Bulls of lightning are Mother Nature's only way of interrupting a game of ultimate.

Toledo Savages' team captain Benji Billman is a seasoned veteran of the sport and has played since high school. He knows how passionate ultimate players can get come game day.

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