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The Sport Of Goalball

By Stephen Michael Kerr

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How would you like to have a three-pound ball the size of a basketball fired at you at 50, 60 miles an hour, and you have to hurl your body in a diving attempt to stop it while blindfolded?

This isn't some fraternity initiation prank. It's a real sport played by blind and visually impaired athletes all over the world. The game is called Goalball, and it's not for the fainthearted. In a recent article from the Herald Palladium (Michigan) newspaper, Nikki Buck of the U.S. National Goalball Team described the sport as "kind of like dodge ball but in reverse."

In 1946, Hanz Lorenzen of Austria and Sepp Reindle of Germany invented Goalball as a way to help rehabilitate veterans blinded during World War II. The game was first introduced to the world at the 1976 Paralympics in Toronto, and has been a Paralympic sport ever since.

The game is played with three players a side facing each other across a court nine meters wide and 18 meters long. A heavy string taped to each end of the court marks the area, or zone, the players can use to orient themselves to the court. They do this by feeling the string with their hands or feet. Each zone has three orientation lines that each player can use to make sure they are lined up properly.

A basketball-size ball with bells inside is used so players can hear it when it's thrown. The object of the game is to throw the ball in such a way that it rolls over the opposing team's goal line. Don't let the word "roll" fool you; players can put amazing speeds of 50 miles an hour or more on their throws. The defensive players listen for the ball, and attempt to block it with their bodies by diving on the floor. Once the ball is stopped, that team takes control of the ball and may attempt a throw of their own.

The main defensive player on a team is the center. He or she is the main defensive player, and is responsible for defending a majority of the court. The center is placed in the middle of the court in front of the player's zone, and is flanked by two other players who play the wing positions. The primary job of the wings is to provide scoring. The center usually stops the ball, and passes it to one of the wings for a throw. A team also has three other players who can be used as substitutes during the game. All players, regardless of their degree of vision, must wear eyeshades, or blindfolds, while in the game.

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A Goalball game is played in two 10–minute halves, with a three–minute intermission between halves. Should there be a tie at the end of regulation, the two teams play two additional three–minute overtime periods, and the first team to score is the winner.

Over the years, Goalball has become one of the most popular sports for the blind. Various tournaments and championships are held each year around the world. In the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games this past September, Denmark defeated Sweden to capture the men's gold medal, while the U.S. took the bronze. In the women's division, Canada captured the gold by beating the U.S., while Japan won the bronze.

If you'd like more information on Goalball, visit the International Blind Sports Federation website at:

<http://www.ibsa.es>

You can also check out the site of the United States Association of Blind Athletes:

www.usaba.org

Stephen Michael Kerr is the publisher of Adaptive Sports & Recreation, a free ezine dedicated to promoting sports for people with disabilities. You'll read fascinating articles about baseball for the blind, wheelchair hockey, and other similar sports. To read previous issues, visit:<http://archives.zinester.com/41809>

The Sport Of Airsoft vs. The Sport Of Paintball Part I

By PJ Ace

As the Sport of Airsoft grows in popularity today, many enthusiasts of both the Sport of Airsoft and the Sport of Paintball have debated over the differences and similarities, in the comparisons of both sports. Questions eventually come to the following: Which sport is better? What sport is more cost effective? What is the difference between Airsoft guns and Paintball guns? Finally, which sport is geared toward a larger demographic of people? I will briefly examine both sides of the Airsoft and Paintball argument and hopefully come to an opinion on which sport is emerging and which sport is fading out.

The initial argument between the Sport of Airsoft and the Sport of Paintball has been the cost differences between each sport. However, if you take a closer look at the costs for each sport you will find that both sports have an initial investment. For both sports, if you want to get completely decked out in every form of equipment available you are looking to spend up into the hundreds of dollars and sometimes into the thousands. There are variations in the pricing, but let's say you use tons of ammo in Airsoft and not so much (which I think is unlikely) in Paintball then you will spend more on ammo for Airsoft (again this is very unlikely). This money can be spent over a period of time if you are not seriously trying to compete in the sports.

Most people continue to talk about the costs and how one sport is cheaper than the other but it

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depends on what you want and what you are looking for in each sport that will actually determine what you will spend. This includes everything from the gun, equipment and ammo, to the upgrades. In other words, either sport can be relatively cheap or relatively expensive, it all depends on you.

So if the money is not so important (well it's important to most, and trust me I am all about getting the best for my money) what are the differences between the sports that one can draw a clear contrast about? What makes one sport different from the other? One of the major differences are the guns for each sport.

All Paintball guns, also known as "Markers," have a similar style and look, only varying in specifications rather than in styles. There's not much more to the variations except the quality and effectiveness of the Paintball guns. There is hardly any diversity or character when it comes to each gun simply because they are made to specifications.

Airsoft guns have 1:1 scale replicas. This means they actually look like the real thing, so much so that all the guns come with a federally mandated orange tip. It is interesting to note that these guns also come with metal components making even the weight of the replica guns very similar to the actual gun. Plus, you can find many of the guns that you would have some interest in using, like an M16, Sniper Rifle, or an AK47. Some would say this is scary, but others (including the Airsoft enthusiast) would consider this a great way to own an arsenal that is not lethal, nor illegal for that matter.

I know the reader might be saying that as far as cost's are concerned, "one cannot draw a conclusion on which sport out does the other," but as we have looked into the matter deeper we have found that realistic attributes can make a big difference in what you would want to participate in. In fact it makes all the difference for me!

In this part one of The Sport of Airsoft vs. The Sport of Paintball we have concluded that that money or cost has no bearing on whether the Sport of Airsoft is better than the Sport of Paintball.

PJ Ace is a writer and administrator for

, a site that specializes in airsoft

and paintball.



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