

Club sports offer more than athletics

Members of club sports say business experience is a benefit.

By Marilyn Payne
Staff Writer

The University's 49 club sports attract between 1,500 and 1,600 students each year.

Most of the programs are year-round and approximately two-thirds of teams hold tryouts, according to Jason Halsey, director of club sports.

From Olympic sports, including men's and women's soccer and volleyball, to more unconventional clubs including modern extension and monkey kung fu, UNC offers a variety of options in club sports for students with different interests.

"It's an opportunity to con-

tinue athleticism beyond high school or discover new sports they may not have had the opportunity to be a part of before," Halsey said.

But the club sports program is more than just athletic opportunities. The program's structure invites students to take on planning and leadership roles they may not have previously had a chance to hold.

"All (of the clubs) are explicitly student-run organizations — from creating budgets to establishing goals and plans, running practice to making all travel arrangements — all things you'd do if you were in a business setting," Halsey said.

Some of the teams have budgets as large as \$40,000, so involved students spend time doing more than just participating in athletics.

"You're involved in a lot more

of the logistics, which I think is a really important skill to learn," junior anthropology and global studies double major Molly Hrudka said.

"No matter what field you're going to go into in the future."

Hrudka, who served as co-president of women's soccer during her sophomore year and is a member of club sports' Executive Council, has taken advantage of the non-athletic opportunities club sports offer.

"The way the program is set up is designed for students to get out what they put into it," Halsey said.

Freshmen typically try out for teams and are members of the club sport for a year before they take on leadership positions in their sophomore and junior years.

"The students who really care about the sustainability of club, those are the ones that become primary officers, captains and presidents," Halsey said.

"The retention factor is extremely high, and this is the reason many students came to or stayed at UNC."

Teams compete in regional and national competitions in addition to planning the events, but also gain social benefits from involvement.

"It's a different group of friends that you're with in a different context," Hrudka said.

"You're not in class with them, and you don't live with them. It's a group of people that you can

really relax with and do an activity with. I thought that was really important in high school — it doesn't have to stop just because we're growing up."

Club sports are also a good mixture of both competitive atmospheres and social atmospheres.

"I feel like it's a really happy medium between intense competition and having fun with your team. Club sports does a really good job of promoting both," Hrudka said.

"It's not at the varsity level, but it's still a competitive level and also has organizational structure and skills."

Hrudka encourages first-year students not to be discouraged or concerned with their level of talent, but rather to try out because of the different talent levels that exist within each team.

The structure and progression of the club sports program is also built on a strong foundation of new students.

"It is critical that first years get involved as soon as possible," Halsey said. "But there are always opportunities. Students may be a little overwhelmed at first, but a few months in we still offer opportunities."

"Club sports is a great opportunity for first-years to come in and be adopted into a great, small community at Carolina."

Contact the Sports Editor
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DTH FILE/MELISSA KEY

Students play ultimate Frisbee in a game at Hooker Fields. UNC offers both men's and women's teams of ultimate Frisbee.



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Junior David Spanos (left) practices with senior Devon Haas (right) for an upcoming ballroom dancing club competition.

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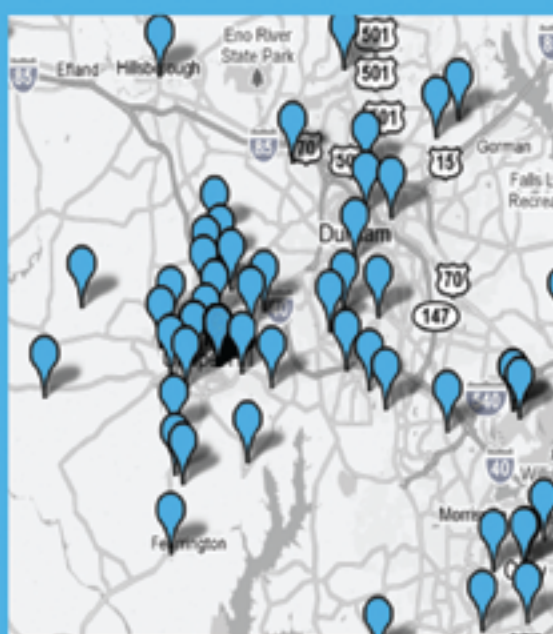
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