

QUIDDITCH AND ULTIMATE

Creating fields of the future
for up-and-coming sports

BY MARY HELEN SPRECHER



These are not your father's sports. Or your mom's, come to think of it, and they'd probably cause extreme confusion for plenty of other generations. For those who haven't seen Quidditch and Ultimate yet, it's only a matter of time before local clubs are asking to use your fields. Both sports are making tremendous gains in player populations at the college and club level, and parks and rec managers need to be ready.

In addition to the obvious advantages (increased field use and increased community involvement with the park), both sports can be leveraged on social media—and might result in some extra publicity for the park. In fact, outreach to local colleges and clubs to provide local play days or “open house” playing clinics might be an excellent avenue to involvement.

But no sport can be hosted without understanding the rules, so here are the basics:

QUIDDITCH

Quidditch, the game that originated in the *Harry Potter* books by J.K. Rowling, has been adapted as a mixed-gender, contact field sport. Its highest-governing body is the International Quidditch Association (IQA), and in the U.S., the sport is governed by the U.S. Quidditch Association. Major League Quidditch is a competitive league and hosts play in the U.S. and Canada.

The game includes a dynamic and varied group of players. Each of the two teams has seven players who must always play with brooms held between their legs. Players, and their role in the game, are as follows:



- The Keeper is responsible for guarding the goal.
- Three Chasers are responsible for trying to put the Quaffle (a volleyball) through the goal to score a point.
- The two Beaters, meanwhile, use dodge balls called Bludgers to disrupt the flow of the game by “knocking out” other players.
- The Seeker is solely responsible for catching the Snitch (a neutral player whose uniform includes a long tail attached to the back of the shorts with Velcro).
- The Snitch must evade the Seeker. When the Snitch is caught (the Seeker pulls the tail off the Snitch’s shorts—similar to flag football—to prove capture), the team with the highest score wins. Obviously, the duration of a match varies, but it is generally between 30 and 40 minutes.

The sport has a strong presence in this country; in fact, the 2023 IQA World Cup will be hosted in Richmond, Va. (World Cups are hosted every two years, and have been held in England, Canada, Germany, and Italy.)

In the *Harry Potter* books, the sport was played in mid-air by broomstick-riding athletes, but the real-life version is earthbound (of course)—although a bit of field magic may still be required to get things ready for a match.

According to the rules of both the IQA and U.S. Quidditch, the sport is played on a rectangular field, 60 meters (66 yards) long x 33 meters (36 yards) wide. Including the space outside the playing lines, the field is 66 meters (72 yards) long x 44 meters (48 yards) wide. Diagrams can be found on the websites of IQA and U.S. Quidditch.

Since few fields are built to hold Quidditch, games usually are hosted on rectangular fields built for other sports, such as soccer and football. Playing lines detailed in the diagram online at www.parksandrecbusiness.com, are usually marked with cones, although temporary lines may be used. Other options may include chalk lines or spray paint (provided the field is natural grass and the parks and rec department gives permission). For synthetic fields, check with the turf manufacturer for appropriate marking options.

Quidditch also uses three freestanding hoops for goals; these are placed on each goal line. The hoops are of different heights and diameters, as specified in the rules.

Detailed information on the placement of substitution areas, team benches, and penalty boxes can be found in the official rules, available on websites for both the IQA and US Quidditch.

ULTIMATE

Ultimate is one field sport you may have heard of, but not know the specifics of play. Ultimate—previously known as Ultimate Frisbee—is a non-contact team sport played with a flying disc.

As with Quidditch, Ultimate has few, purpose-built facilities, and is therefore played on other rectangular fields, such





as for lacrosse, soccer, or football. Its highest governing body is the World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF). In the U.S., the governing body is USA Ultimate. (In fact, USA Ultimate's website includes a great deal of information, including an interactive map to help locate clubs in not only a given state but a given section of each state.)

The game is like football: try to get the disc into the end zone and avoid making turnovers. However, players throw the disc to teammates (not run with it) to move it down the field. If a pass is incomplete, a turnover occurs, resulting in an immediate change of possession of the disc. Each game is 36 minutes, divided into two 18-minute halves.

Ultimate is unique because it relies on what it calls the Spirit of the Game, a philosophy that places the responsibility for fair play on every player. There are no referees; the players are solely responsible for following and enforcing the rules, even at the sport's World Championship.

The sport has two disciplines, each related to the specific playing surface. Ultimate, the traditional game, is played on a field. Beach Ultimate is played on sand. The dimensions for Beach Ultimate vary from those of the field game, which is the focus of this article.

According to the WFDF Rules of Ultimate, the playing field is 100 meters (109 yards) long x 37 meters (40.4 yards) wide with end zones 18 meters (19-1/2 yards) long at either end (included in the 100 meters (109 yards) x 37 meters (40.4 yards)). Diagrams can be obtained from the websites of USA Ultimate and WFDF, where they are listed in the rules of the game.

End zones are marked with plastic cones in a color that contrasts with the field. Brick marks are made at the intersection of two crossed 1 meter lines in the central zone, located a distance equal to the length of the end zone away from each goal line, midway between the sidelines; the rulebook suggests 18 meters (19-1/2 yards) from each end zone.

In terms of field surfaces, USA Ultimate's rules note, "The playing field and surrounds should be essentially flat, free of obstructions, and afford reasonable player safety. Well-trimmed grass is the recommended surface, and all lines should be marked."

And for those who really want to see the game played at its highest level, expect Ultimate Team USA to be a force in the World Games, coming up in Birmingham, Alabama in July 2022. **PRB**

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