

Good **GAME**



WITH TWO-THIRDS OF THE STUDENT BODY ENJOYING MORE THAN 20
INTRAMURAL AND CLUB SPORTS
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, FROM TAE KWON DO AND BODYBUILDING
TO NORDIC SKIING AND WATER POLO, OLES FIND WAYS TO STAY FIT,
HAVE FUN AND COMPETE, ALL FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME.

By **Kelly Wilson '07** PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM ROSTER

To sing or play an instrument in one of the many musical ensembles offered at St. Olaf, student musicians must have exceptional talent. To compete at the highest level of NCAA Division III sports, students must be great athletes. But intramural and club sports are for everyone.

St. Olaf offers 33 different intramural and club sports, either men's, women's, co-ed or open, meaning both men and women may join. Mike Ludwig '01, assistant athletic director and sports information director, says he is astonished by how many students get involved in intramural and club sports. "The games and events are very welcoming and offer students who don't compete in varsity athletics a chance to keep active, though many of the varsity athletes also compete in intramurals."

Intramurals and club sports are a great way to meet new people, visit other campuses and balance academics with recreation.

"We have teams that just play for fun against other teams that also just play for fun, and we have competitive teams that play against teams with a similar mindset," says Kevin Cook '96, director of intramural and club sports, director of skiing (Nordic and alpine) and three-time All-American alpine skier (1994–96). "Our students stay fit, have fun and compete, but for the joy of it, not as an extra stressor in their lives."



JUST FOR KICKS

The thought of kickball may dredge up memories of schoolyard humiliation — but not for St. Olaf intramural kickball players. Erin Johnson '07, a member of the Hellcats team since her sophomore year, says the sport is all about lighthearted, energetic competition. "Kickball gives me a mental break. I get to have fun and I'm able to release energy while playing," says Johnson, who's majoring in studio art, art history and women's studies.

Kickball, a staple of elementary school recess, draws upon the basic concept of baseball: The offense must advance around the diamond from base to base and reach home plate to score, without being forced out at a base or tagged out with the ball by a defensive player.

But instead of hitting the ball with a bat, players kick the large rubber ball into the field off a roll from the pitcher. Johnson, who played four years of softball in a recreational league in her hometown of Hawthorn Woods, Illinois, welcomes the modifications. "It's softball with tweaked rules," she explains. "We play inside, so if the ball hits the ceiling or curtain it's a home run. But I understand the basic mechanics of softball, and since kickball is so similar, it's very enjoyable for me."

Perhaps it's the familiar, easy-to-follow rules or the nostalgic associations that make kickball one of the most popular intramural sports. Or perhaps it's the thrill of a high-intensity contact sport, one that allows the defense to pummel an offensive player — below the waist — who is caught in limbo between bases. According to Johnson, whose team won the 2005 campus kickball championship, misdirected kicks or throws rarely result in serious injuries, just bruised egos and ankles. 🐾

ERIN JOHNSON '07: "I like being with people who I'm not with every day, getting active, moving and having fun, all at the same time."

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Basketball legend Michael Jordan once said, "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."

Elyse Erickson '09, who plays on the intramural women's basketball team the Shockers, believes in that notion. "I love the team part of basketball. We form relationships while playing, and we have to depend on each other," says Erickson, who comes from Orono, Minnesota.

A family studies major who wants to become a motivational life coach, Erickson says the communication skills and perseverance that basketball requires are among the greatest benefits of participating in athletics.

But even serious athletes need to take a breather sometimes. As Michael Jordan also said, "Just play. Have fun. Enjoy the game." Luckily, St. Olaf offers that opportunity. "Intramurals gives me a chance to play a sport I love without having to worry about practicing or a major time commitment," Erickson says.

Basketball attracts creative people as well as competitive ones. Traditionally played with two teams of five players attempting to drive the ball down court and shoot it through a hoop to score, the game can be tailored to meet any circumstances. "That makes it friendly to all kinds of players," Erickson says.

Any basketball hopeful can pick up the game, improving his or her athletic ability and learning some life lessons. "Every sport develops who we are," says Erickson. "Because of basketball I can handle other obstacles. I have the confidence to make it through." 🏀

ELYSE ERICKSON '09: "Intramurals provide a nice outlet for competitive people who don't play intercollegiate sports."



SLIPPING THE DISC

Bob Sanders '08 is passionate about ultimate Frisbee. His love for the game began his first year of high school when he picked up a Frisbee disc. He's been captivated ever since. "Being on the field when your team gets a flow going, seeing the disc glide down the field from player to player — it's beautiful," he says.

Ultimate Frisbee combines aspects of soccer and American football and requires speed, endurance and agility. The offense must advance down the field to score in the end zone by tossing the disc from teammate to teammate as they "cut," or run, across the field. The opposing team attempts to take possession of the disc by knocking it to the ground or intercepting a pass.

"Every game's a challenge, not just against others but against yourself," says Sanders, a physics and mathematics double major. "A cutter should never stop sprinting. Every change of direction is a potential opportunity to get the disc, so it's very physically challenging. It's also mentally challenging because when we're on offense, possession of the disc is the single most important thing in the game. Every throw has to be 100 percent."

Sanders heads his own team, Off With Yogurt, and also plays with the Berzerkers, the St. Olaf Ultimate Frisbee team. In the summer, he throws with the Madison Ultimate Frisbee Association league in his hometown of Madison, Wisconsin.

Sanders loves the community atmosphere and physical intensity that ultimate Frisbee offers. He has sprinted in bare feet and has taken dives in street clothes just to complete a pass. "I will play ultimate whenever I can, wherever I am," he says. 🏆

BOB SANDERS '08: "Seeing the disc glide down the field from player to player is beautiful."



JAKE BOYCE '08: "Cycling gives me a sense of accomplishment. When I finish a race, I feel really good."

SHIFTING INTO HIGH GEAR

"Cycling's just one of those things I've come to love: getting out, getting in great shape, getting away from the stress of school and enjoying the wind on my face and the road under my tires," says Jake Boyce '08, a German and management studies major from Duluth, Minnesota.

Though the club was formed only two years ago, its members are seasoned cyclists. The team trains by covering 20 to 30 miles daily, riding south toward Faribault into the wind and returning to Northfield with the gusts at their backs (on a good day). The more trying the conditions are in practice, the better. Cyclists must learn to battle steep uphill grades and 40-mile-an-hour winds, sometimes all at once. "It would be so easy to quit," says Boyce, who is president of the St. Olaf Cycling Club. "We've got to fight that, push through it all until we cross the line."

On weekends, the club's skills are tested in competition. A typical collegiate race involves 30 to 40 cyclists, but the types of races vary considerably. There are road races, in which every biker races for him- or herself and the first to cross the finish line wins. There are criterium races, where cyclists ride a short loop for 45 to 60 minutes and are judged by the number of laps they complete. There are also basic time trials, where time is the only opponent.

The St. Olaf club placed second in the North Central Collegiate Cycling Conference at the end of its second year. It's an impressive feat, especially among more experienced teams from Carleton College, Nebraska State, Kansas State, the University of Kansas, Iowa State University, North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota.

Riders of all skill levels participate in the club; its mantra is one of collective improvement. "Cycling requires training, a commitment. There's a strategy involved," Boyce says. "We work as a team." 🏍️

GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT

It's no wonder that Maria Wentworth's intramural sand volleyball team is called Da Feet. The 6-foot St. Olaf junior from Menomonie, Wisconsin, rarely stops moving.

A double major in sociology-anthropology and studio art, she feeds her competitive appetite by playing on the St. Olaf women's lacrosse team as well as playing tennis and golf. She's also participated in Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, spending a week pedaling more than 470 miles.

Her penchant for activity is her greatest asset on the volleyball court. "Playing sand volleyball, there's more of a need for scrappiness," she says. "Since the sand slows your speed, jump and agility, you end up having to dive for more balls."

Like traditional indoor volleyball, sand volleyball requires a lot of communication and improvisation. It's a mental sport, so the ability to recover from pitfalls is important. In volleyball, "killing" or "tipping" are just two ways to score a point on an opposing team. Volleys that drop on one side or are hit out of bounds either forfeit a repeat serve or grant a point for the opposing team.

"A point is a point, whether it's the biggest kill or the littlest set tip," says Wentworth. "Having court vision, knowing where to aim and setting up plays make games dynamic."

As a captain, Wentworth guides her teammates toward better execution of the sport. "The best part is when the team comes together and improves. I don't just want to win," she says. "I want people to play well, dive, dig, bump, set, spike. That's a rush. That's why I play." 🏐



MARIA WENTWORTH '08: "No matter how hard you hit the ball, or how amazing your serves are, strategy makes the game fun."

LEARNING ABOUT LACROSSE

For Mackenzie "Jack" Macintyre III '07, a co-captain of the St. Olaf lacrosse team, the distinctive history of lacrosse sets it apart from other sports. The game, which requires players to use netted sticks to pass a rubber ball down the field in an effort to score in the opposing team's goal, draws its roots from Native American practices.

"Lacrosse served many spiritual and social purposes, from offering gratitude for healthy harvests to honoring members of the tribe and interacting with neighboring tribes," Macintyre explains. "Native American lacrosse fields were sometimes miles in length and often involved very brutal, sometimes lethal, play." Body contact and checking with the stick remain in the modern version of the game, though both are contained by rules and officiating.

Macintyre, who is majoring in biology with an Asian studies concentration, is from Colorado Springs, Colorado, where lacrosse is more popular than in Minnesota. An accomplished player who was a top scorer this season, he prefers to focus on what the game has given him: "Lacrosse has provided me with the opportunity to remain active during college and establish lifelong friendships with teammates."

Co-captain Eric Busse '07, a chemistry and mathematics double major from Woodbury, Minnesota, knows the challenges of balancing academics with athletics, especially in a competitive conference.

"We play an intercollegiate schedule, without the time commitment of varsity sports," he says. The team belongs to the Division A Upper Midwest Lacrosse League and battles the University of Minnesota-Duluth, St. Cloud State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Iowa State University, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Marquette and Minnesota State University-Moorhead, all of which are much larger schools.

Busse understands that challenging top-ranked teams requires a decisive strategy, similar to those used in soccer, hockey and basketball, as well as athletic ability and agile hand-eye coordination that enable lacrosse players to check their opponents' momentum.

Serving as a captain is giving him additional responsibilities. "Leadership is relatively new to me," he says, "but I'm learning fast." 🦁

KELLY WILSON '07 is an English major with a concentration in media studies who has competed in ultimate Frisbee and intramural volleyball.



JACK MACINTYRE '07 (left): "I love to share my passion for the game with my teammates."

ERIC BUSSE '07 (right): "We play an intercollegiate schedule, without the time commitment of varsity sports."

**LEARN MORE
about intramural and
club sports at St. Olaf:**

**STOLAF.EDU/RECREATION/
INTRAMURALS**

**STOLAF.EDU/RECREATION/
CLUBSPORTS**