

# The “Ultimate” Sport

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Walter Fredrick Morrison was not a physical education instructor, but his invention of a plastic flying disc in 1948 (known today as a frisbee) has led to the development of Ultimate at high school, college, national and international levels.

Ultimate originated at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey in 1967 and spread rapidly on the college level through the initiatives of former Columbia High School Ultimate players. By the end of the 1973-74 school year approximately twenty-five teams had been organized. The concept of a tournament was introduced in 1975 and the nations top eight teams met at Yale University for the intercollegiate Ultimate Frisbee Championships. Rutgers University defeated Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the final game 28 to 24. Rutgers dominated play in the mid-seventies as they went undefeated in forty-five consecutive games.

Reflecting the sports growth, in 1977 the country was split into Western and Eastern regions each holding separate championships. The winning teams, Penn State University and the Santa Barbara Condors met at LaMirada, California for the first East-West game. Santa Barbara was declared to be the first champion from a truly national draw of teams as they defeated Penn State 32 to 14.

A major historical step in Ultimate development came in 1979 when the Ultimate Players Association was formed to organize, promote and direct the sport of Ultimate. One of the first acts of the Ultimate Players Association was to split the nation into five regions and coordinate championships in each, leading to a national champion. Presently the regions are the North East which represents 20.5 percent of all Ultimate teams, the Mid-Atlantic with 17.9 percent, the South with 22.3 percent, the Central with 16.7 percent and the West with 22.3 percent. Teams in the Eastern United States are predominantly college-oriented and the Western United States characteristically are dominated by club teams in local communities.

Various tournaments are sanctioned each year by the Ultimate Players Association. High school tournaments started in 1986 while college and national tournaments have been drawing hundreds of teams every year since 1981. Last year's world championships were represented by twelve countries.

As can be seen, the growth of organized Ultimate play has been steady and fairly rapid. The geographic spread has been quite dramatic and rule changes have come and gone which have had major impacts on the sport. The 1988 season will mark the most active and widespread competitive play in the history of Ultimate. Ultimate has the potential to develop on the Olympic and professional levels as spectator interest continues to grow.

