

Hodag Disc

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Hodags Reload

Add six new players to experienced group

After graduating one player from a team that finished tenth in the nation last year, the Hodags came back to school this fall excited to have a big season. With 12 seniors coming back, and a skilled group of juniors, everyone knew the team was deep and talented.

What they couldn't have imagined was what a group of

FALL TRYOUTS talented players they would find when they showed up at tryouts. Over 60 players came out to play ultimate this fall, and it soon became obvious that a number of players were not only going to improve the Hodags, but have an immediate impact. Last year, Bob Kolstad and Mark Sweeney were

integral parts of the UW's B team, leading them to a third place finish at Sectionals. Both spent their summers tearing up the midwest club circuit. Mark played with the Minneapolis team Money Shot, and Bob practiced with the Madison team, traveling with them to a tournament in Kentucky. Both are primed to be impressive weapons out of the stack this spring.

Andrew Brown and Matt D'Amour plan on bringing some youthful energy to the team. Andrew, a sophomore, played last season with UW-Whitewater, and came to the Hodags ready to take on college ultimate at the nationals level. Matt, a freshman from Edgewood high, has already shown why everyone expects him to lead the Hodags in the future.



Senior Wei Lu marks senior Jonathan O'Connell during fall tryouts. (UW Press)

The Hodags could not believe their luck when they saw Michael Konopka and Itai Gurari at tryouts. Both had already been *captains* of other quality college programs, Michael at Rice University and Itai at Washington University of St. Louis, and had played four years of ultimate. After coming to the UW for graduate school, both are sure to make immediate impacts.

Hodags travel to Athens, GA to face nation's best

by Bryan J. Paradise

Georgia in December. The perfect chance to get out of the of Wisconsin cold, right? Wrong. The Hodags did get to play against high profile teams in a great tournament, albeit in the cold.

Game 1: NC State vs. Wisconsin

The Hodags came out strong, jumping out to an early lead. The defense was stellar, limiting NC State's best player to only a few touches. The Hodags took an 8-2 halftime lead with strong play from the captains to the rookies. Despite a sloppy second half, the Hodags ended up winning 15-11.

Game 2: ECU vs. Wisconsin

The Hodags came out strong again, taking half 8-1 after showing a great zone defense led in the middle by captain Nate Franz. The Hodags got numerous turnovers near the goal and capitalized immediately, taking away any thoughts ECU had of an upset. Hodags 15-4.

Game 3: Colorado vs. Wisconsin

This game was picked to be the most competitive game of the day. Colorado, the tournament's top seed, against a deep, athletic Hodag team. Both teams began trading points. The Hodags' handlers answered the Colorado challenge by shredding the defense all the way to the goal.

High light of the first half was Andrew Brown

catching his first

of what is sure to be many UW goals.

As the daylight began to diminish, the Hodags saw another first year Hodag come up big. Itai Gurari's full layout stab for a goal, probably the best individual play this tournament, tied the game 9-9. The Hodags took a 10-9 lead, but gave up 3 straight points to lose 12-10.

Quarterfinals: Florida vs. Wisconsin

This game started exactly how Florida wanted

it to. After Wisconsin scored on its first possession, Florida ran off 5 goals in a row mostly using deep throws. The Hodags started playing for real and went on a run of their own to take half 8-6, on an upwind goal caught by Pete Rank. The second half was one the Hodags will never forget. After trading a couple of points, they went up 10-7, then could not find a way to score. Florida tied it 10-10. The Hodags went

up 11-10, but despite some great play by Erik Gessert, the Hodags could not overcome the six turnovers they committed on the last two points and Florida prevailed 12-11.

The Hodags left Georgia very optimistic about the season. With added depth and experience, some key offseason acquisitions, and added determination, the Hodags are hoping to contend for the title.



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PLAY ULTIMATE

Hodags help Madison club to 12th place finish

Every year, Club Nationals features the best teams in the nation. Rosters are filled with experienced veterans and fantastic athletes. Many of the teams have been together for four, five, even ten+ years, traveling around the country trying to improve their team for Nationals.

In Madison, the situation is a little different. The team changes a lot from year to year, and has to battle to even qualify for Nationals. Fourteen college players played on Madison's club team this fall, far more than any other team at Nationals. Many teams feature no college players at all, so the Hodags that traveled to Sarasota were excited to bring a youthful presence that other teams could not match. With such an inexperienced team, it was no surprise when the Madison team heard that it had been ranked dead last, sixteenth, despite going 4-3 at Nationals the year before.

Every game at the tournament is a battle, and it took the Hodag members of the team a few games to realize that. Madison started out getting beat badly by Seattle, 15-3, and then by the returning champions, Boston, 15-7. They started out down to Houston in the final game of the day, but pulled it out 13-12. By

winning a game, they had done more than everyone expected, and the ocean waves and sun felt warmer than ever.

The next morning Madison was ready for more, trouncing Colorado 15-9, and earning them a 12th place finish. Subsequent losses to Minneapolis, New York and Washington D.C. could not taint what Madison had earned as such a young team at the big show: respect.

Maybe if players stuck around for eight or nine years, Madison could form a team of veteran players and compete for the National title. But this fall, 14 Hodags filled in where there weren't veterans- and did an admirable job of it.

Supporting UW ultimate

The Hodags are funded in large part by the donations of the friends of relatives of players, and by alumni of the team. The money help the team to afford travel, lodging, practice facilities and tournament fees. Donations can be made in any amount by making checks out to: *UW-Madison Ultimate Frisbee Club* and mailing to:

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Contributors: UW Ultimate is an official Recreation Club Sport of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thanks to David Berge and everyone at Recreation Sports for their un-ending dedication to UW Ultimate. If you have questions or comments, or know someone who would like to be added to the subscription list, please email Jonathan O'Connell at jkoconne@students.wisc.edu or