

Hodag Disc

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End of the "Opie" Era

The past four years in Madison there has been one name that every serious player and most casual players know. That name is "Opie." Jonathan "Opie" O'Connell, a native of Boston, came to Wisconsin and immediately began to play for the Hodags. In only his second year, he would find himself elected captain of the Hodags. Under the direction of Opie, the Hodags developed from a team that could barely throw and catch to a team that would be regarded as one of the elite teams in college Ultimate. His impact was felt by each and every player that had a chance to learn under his tutelage. The vast improvement of many players can be attributed greatly to Opie's willingness to do anything to make his teammates better. His patience with and encouragement of young players, his intensity during games, and his spirited play make him not only an excellent Ultimate player, but also a great person. For this reason Opie took fourth place in the voting for the Callahan



Award, given out to the best Ultimate player in college.

Below is a short list of the accomplishments of the Hodags as a team in the past two years:
2000 Mardi Gras Champion, 2000 Terminus Semifinalist, 2000 Great Lakes Open Finalist, 2000 Midwesterns Semifinalist, tenth place at 2000 College Nationals, 2001 Stanford Invite Semifinalist, 2001 Easterns Semifinalist, 2001 Midwesterns Semifinalist, Quarterfinalists (5th-8th) at 2001 College Nationals.

After four successful years, three as the Hodags' captain, Opie and twelve others were ushered out by graduation this past spring. This has left the Hodags without their leader and many of his disciples. The few remaining disciples that had a chance to play with and learn under Opie look to carry the team once again into the nation's elite and continue the excellent reputation of the Hodags. This may be the end of the "Opie" era, but it is the beginning of another.

By Bryan Paradise

Spring Recap 2001

This past spring the Hodags participated in three tournaments prior to the College Series to help improve their chances of qualifying for and playing well in the 2001 College Nationals Tournament. The goals of attending these tournaments were as follows:

- 1) To allow every player to show his talent in competitive situations
- 2) To allow chemistry to develop between players
- 3) To develop effective offensive and defensive strategies
- 4) To play high quality teams that would help the Hodags to establish reasonable goals during the 2001 College Series
- 5) To have fun

Stanford 2001 Invite

The first tournament was the Summer Invite held in Palo Alto, California just outside of San Francisco. This tournament is regarded by many teams as the best tournament in the west. It features a mere sixteen teams from throughout the whole country who are allowed to play because of their reputations as high-quality teams. The Hodags were accepted into this tournament and ranked tenth overall in the tournament. They were placed in a four team pool with UC-San Diego, UC-Davis and the University of British Columbia. Following are short summaries of the games.

Game 1: Hodags vs. UC-Davis

The Hodags got a chance for an upset right away as they faced the seventh seed in the tournament. However, they had to overcome the fact that this was the first time this spring that they had a chance to play a game outside on grass against another team. This fact became apparent early as UC-Davis rallied for a 3-0 lead, but the Hodags under the consistent play of their handlers Matt Anderson and Eric Moore and some high flying plays by Bert Kang and Hector Valdivia stormed back in the second half to win 13-9.

Game 2: Hodags vs. UC-San Diego

Another chance for a Hodag upset, but this time it was against the second seed in the tournament. The Hodags, now rid of the nerves associated with first games, came out with confidence and intensity. After trading the first few points the Hodags decided to play some zone defense against UC-San Diego and the game became a blowout. The zone defense, centered around Pete Rank, Nate Franz, and Zach Morrison, befuddled UC-San Diego and resulted in a 13-6 win for the Hodags.

Game 3: Hodags vs. U-British Columbia

A victory in this final game of pool play would guarantee first place in the pool and consequently a bye to the quarterfinals. It also would give the Hodags a chance to rest some players and give other players a chance to show their skills. The game stayed close as the Hodags couldn't quite pull away despite the seemingly apparent difference in talent between the teams. In the end it was the six second half goals by two veterans, Bryan Paradise and Lee Swingen, that finished off UBC. Final score, 13-11 Hodags on a Callahan (defensive) goal by Lee Swingen.

Quarterfinals: Hodags vs. Stanford

This game featured the tournament host (and perennial nationals qualifier) Stanford against the Hodags, who wanted some national respect. The game started out with the teams trading points mostly because of some incredible defensive plays by Zach Morrison. The Hodags seemed to rally around the intensity of Zach. The shocking emergence of Michael Bluhm and a host of others rallied the Hodags and sent Stanford back to their dorms 13-8.



Michael Bluhm throwing a high release backhand against Stanford

Semifinals: Hodags vs. UC-Santa Cruz

The Hodags would now have to go up against another formidable west coast team after a very emotional victory over Stanford. The Hodags, after falling behind by a few points, never seemed able to bring up the intensity enough to pull even with UC-Santa Cruz, and fell 9-13 in their first loss of the season.

The players, after the tournament, had a week off for spring break. Some returned to Madison, most enjoyed the west coast. Some players used their vacation to do some backpacking, others spent their time in San Francisco, and still others visited relatives or prospective employers. This tournament not only provided the Hodags with a sense of confidence and national respect, but also with some great memories.

12th Annual COLLEGE EASTERN

March 24th
and 25th,
2001



Wilmington, NC

Wilmington. Following are short summaries of the games.

Game 1: Hodags vs. Duke

The Hodags came out of the blocks slow in this game. Whether that was due to overconfidence or having virtually two weeks off, no one knows, but either way Duke jumped out to a commanding halftime lead of 8-4. The Hodags fought back, with contributions from every player, and ended up overcoming the deficit and cruising to a 15-11 victory.

Game 2: Hodags vs. UNC-Wilmington

The Hodags faced UNCW here, and a substantial amount of wind, which meant this would be a game decided by which team could break the other's zone defense by scoring goals upwind. The Hodags, led by an excellent handling core (Jonathan O'Connell, Eric Moore, Matt Anderson, Wei Lu, Michael Bluhm, and Michael Konopka), were able to break down UNCW's zone defense. With the exceptional play zone defense of their own, the game soon became a blowout. Final: 15-5 in favor of the Hodags.

Game 3: Hodags vs. Brown

The Hodags ran into a slightly more experienced and patient team in Brown than it had in UNCW, and as a result their offense was unable to score as often. The seemingly unbreakable defense discovered it had some holes. The Hodags traded points until late in the game when Brown went on a little run to win 13-15.

Game 4: Hodags vs. Colorado

The Hodags would face one of the toughest teams in the country in Colorado (by many opinions the toughest at this point in the season). Colorado had a great deal of experience stemming from many players that had been playing Ultimate for at least four years. The Hodags, however, did not succumb to Colorado early as they traded runs in the first half, with Colorado taking a one-point halftime lead 8-7. Despite some incredible plays by everyone including some improbable ones by some less experienced players, Tyson Park and Andrew Brown, the Hodags fell to Colorado 11-15.

Pre-Quarters: Hodags vs. UC-San Diego

This was supposed to be revenge according to UC-San Diego, but the Hodags had other plans as they once again refused to let UC-San Diego develop any offense by playing zone defense. As was the case in the first meeting, UC-San Diego could not break the zone effectively and fell to the Hodags in a blowout 15-7.

The next tournament the Hodags played in was Easterns, which is held in Wilmington, North Carolina and is commonly known as the most competitive tournament (with the exception of Nationals). The Hodags went into this tournament as the third overall seed and were placed in a power pool of five teams. Also in the pool were Colorado, Brown, Duke, and UNC-

Quarterfinals: Hodags vs. Cornell

Cornell had the reputation of being a scrappy blue-collar team, a compliment usually paid to the Hodags because of their patient offense and lack of a great deep game. This game would come down to which team could make the best use of its talents and keep up its intensity throughout the game. The game, although close, never seemed to panic the Hodags as they constantly relied on their main deep threat Tyler Spindler to score goals. The Hodags ended up winning 15-12 and made their second trip to the semifinals in as many tournaments.

Semifinals: Hodags vs. Colorado

Colorado and the Hodags would once again trade runs in the first half (as in the first game), which resulted in a one point Colorado advantage at half, 8-9. The Hodags, despite some gutsy plays by everyone, were unable to capitalize after getting turnovers, possibly due to the effects of playing six games the last few days. Colorado went on to win 13-17, but the Hodags once again proved they belonged among the nation's elite teams.

The final tournament for the Hodags before the College Series was Midwesterns, a tournament that gathers many of the best teams in the Midwest, including both college and city teams. The tournament is organized and hosted by the Hodags. This past year was probably the best run

Midwesterns in recent years despite the large field of 40 teams in Madison and some extreme weather conditions on the first day. Midwesterns ran smoothly because of the immense amount of work that some individuals put forth (most notably

Michael Bluhm and Matt Pankratz). The Hodags were placed in a pool of five teams as the third overall seed in the tournament. The teams they would face during pool play were Chicago (Club Team), Indiana (Club Team), Winona St. University, and Iowa University. Following are the summaries of the games.



Game 1: Hodags vs. Iowa

The weather conditions, which included wind gusts up to 60 mph, determined how the games would be played this first day of the tournament. A team's ability to play zone defense and consequently zone offense would play a large part in determining which team would win. The Hodags had to take on Iowa first, and despite some problems in the first half that led to a 6-7 Iowa lead, the Hodags came back strong to win the game 13-9.

Game 2: Hodags vs. Indiana (Club Team)

This was a game in which the Hodags wanted to prove that they could beat experienced teams with patient offense and intelligent play. This is exactly what happened as the Hodags dominated a small part of the Indiana club team 13-6.

Game 3: Hodags vs. Winona St.

This game is a friendly rivalry common between a bigger, stronger, older brother and a scrappy younger brother. The game is always close, but the older brother always manages to win. The

Hodags have been the older brother for some time now, mainly due to the fact that they have much greater depth and have a mental edge over Winona St. The game was in fact close, 13-10, but the Hodags nevertheless prevailed.

Game 4: Hodags vs. Chicago (Club Team)

This game would present the challenge of playing older more experienced players that could run despite their age, typically 25-30. Some of the players were even ex-Hodags, which incited a sort of unwritten grudge match, with pride on the line. Chicago seemed to be favored by the wind, which slowed the game down and allowed their experience to overshadow the Hodags. The Hodags ended up losing a closely contested game 11-13. Some mention has to be made of the exceptional play of Rob Wagner, who made great offensive and defensive plays.

Prequarters: Hodags vs. Carleton College B team

This game served purely as a warm-up game for the Hodags who cruised to a 15-3 victory and advanced to the quarterfinals. It was a blowout that featured a lot of young players and a lot of quick goals. The game went by so fast that few players were completely warmed up.

Quarterfinals: Hodags vs. Michigan

REVENGE!!! Michigan defeated the Hodags three times the previous year and with a full Michigan squad back, and the Hodags

only losing one player, this game was exactly what the Hodags wanted. The game was over before it started as the Hodags came in pumped and determined. The game started with a 4-0 lead for the Hodags, which eventually turned into a 8-1 halftime score and 15-4 final. This game was absolute proof that work during the off season can make a huge difference.

Semifinals: Hodags vs. Carleton College

Like the Winona St. game this is much like a sibling rivalry, only in this case the Hodags are the younger brother that has earned very few victories against the perennial powerhouse of Carleton College. This game started exactly as the Hodags wanted, a 3-1 lead behind some great individual plays. The Hodags maintained this lead until half to remain ahead 8-6, but then the big brother started to assert himself. After the Hodags failed to convert from twenty yards from the goal to go up 9-6, Carleton scored a quick goal making it 8-7. This swing in momentum caused some careless decisions by some veteran Hodag players, and Carleton ended up winning 15-13, but not without a scare.

The Hodags met each and every goal they had for attending these pre-College Series tournaments, especially number 5, which is precisely why each of us plays the game of Ultimate.

By Bryan J. Paradise

College Nationals 2001

Hodags 2000-2001. A team brought together in the fall for one common goal. Show the Nation in the spring that we are a powerhouse to be dealt with, qualify for the College Championships, and play out the season in one hot weekend. Fall short of that, and graduate half the team in disappointment.

Though the season began early on, with tournaments in Georgia, California, North Carolina, Madison, and Iowa, our eyes were on one city alone: Boston, MA, host to the national championships. The road to qualify for the Natties started in Madison, WI, at the always-amusing Sectional Tournament. The top 5 finishers would qualify for the Regional Tournament to be held in Iowa City 2 weeks later.

A taste of what Sectionals has been in the past: last year the Hodags ended a game against Whitewater with a World's Greatest throw by Jason Ludden for the score to clinch the victory, 15-1. Sectionals began as it often does for the oppressive Hodags, with a clear 13 or 14-point victory over a flaccid opponent, most likely another UW branch. The day continued accordingly, with the Hodags downing opponents with Gusto. Sunday's semifinal game featured Steven's Point bowing down quietly after a brief fight, and a finals victory against our own B-team. The only notable fact of the weekend was our veteran Bryan Paradise being directly responsible (i.e. tipped it) for the only upwind goal scored on us by another team.

Having jumped that hurdle, Wisconsin went to Regionals as the second seed behind CUT, and looking for a victory or strong showing against them to qualify for Nationals. The Hodags proved to be victims of their own sectionals lethargy, barely snaking past Winona State 15-13 in semis, then getting their underpants handed to them by CUT in finals 15-6. The Hodags once again had to play the

Winona State Experience to qualify, and once again, despite some bad play, the Hodags managed to squeeze out a victory 15-12. On to Boston for Nationals in three weeks!

The Hodags were seeded 5th of the 16 teams, putting them in a pool with 16th seed Upenn Void, 9th seed UNC Wilmington, and our regional rivals, Carleton CUT.

Friday morning saw the weekend start off with a match against Upenn. The first goal of the tourney was a forehand huck from captain Opie O'Connell to a fully horizontal Hector Valdivia in



the endzone. As the Mexican flag waved on the sidelines, the Hodags never looked back, putting Upenn away with little sweat. The Hodags then had time to watch a stunned CUT lose to Wilmington 16-15. While the rest of the teams could scarcely believe it, the Hodag machine licked its lips, knowing that they would be playing a tired and drained Wilmington in their next game.

The game began quickly, as Wilmington scored the first point with ease. The Hodags answered back in turn, and then placed their tenacious zone defense down with the game tied 1-1. Resident Bezerker Rob Wagner made the Wilmington offense work for every throw, making the second point last better than 15 minutes. The offense played steady but showed signs of wearing down. Just when it seemed that the defense was giving up, Rob



Wagner turned on his Hulk powers and found in him the strength to double his speed and fear factor. Two throws later, Wilmington turns it over and the Hodags break their back by scoring to make it 2-1. From this point on the Hodags never stopped playing zone defense and Wilmington never stopped turving the disc, as we scored a Nationals-unprecedented 15 straight points to win 15-1. Final embarrassment came courtesy of Mark Sweeny, who scored a Callahan (defensive) goal in Wilmington's endzone on a tipped pass.

The Hodags were now poised to beat CUT and take first in their pool. Or so we all thought. Like children who never learn their lesson, we came onto the field and hung with the boys from Carleton only to deflate in the second half and lose 15-8. By point differential, that score would have put us first in their pool, assuming Wilmington beat Upenn. However, Wilmington couldn't secure a victory over UPenn, leaving us 2nd in the pool over all.

Saturday morning's pre-quarter match vs. the geeks from Harvard set the tone for the rest of the day. Having stripped the Harvard Red Line of disc and lunch money, the Hodags could not close the game and saw Harvard prolong the game an extra 7 points. It may have proved to be the difference in the Hodags' quarterfinal game against Oregon.

With the entire senior class pumped for this game and the rest of the team fired up to win, Oregon's intense defense and the Hodags' poor decisions left them spectators, losing 15-8. The loss was a team effort as everyone took part in throwing the disc out of bounds or to the opposite team. Although not as close as they would have liked, the Hodags were satisfied with what they had accomplished throughout the season and looked forward to the night's tournament party.



Having lost to Oregon EGO in the game, the Hodags were not about to lay down and let the west-coasters take party honors. Led by a dancing Hispanic and Beer-stuffed Midwesteners, Wisconsin showed Boston how to have a good time.

Sunday saw the sadness of defeat replaced by that mysterious element, Hodag Love. Everyone shared stories from the year, and looked forward to another season wearing and representing the Baby Blue. Those that graduated pledged not only emotional support in the future, but also hefty monetary help, remembering how much it sucks to pay for plane tickets around the country.

By Hector Valdivia

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PLAY ULTIMATE

Hodags Hit the Web

Early in the fall of 2000, an idea was conceived that would give "Hodag Love" to people around the world. "We felt it was necessary to let fans and potential future teammates learn as much as possible about the team," spoke current website designer/maintainer Tyler Spindler. On January 1st, 2001, the first day of the new millennium, the new Hodag website was born.

The website has a brand new design, and with that, a fresh, new look. Splashed with baby blue (the Hodags' signifying color), hundreds of pictures and pages of text, this site lives up to the Hodag hype. Within the website, which is located at <http://www.hodags.org>, you'll not only find pictures of players, but entire biographies for each current team member. Tournaments the UW Ultimate team has attended are listed as well as the results and write-ups from those tournaments. In case you're interested, take a gander at the history of Hodag Ultimate. There you'll find summaries of past Hodag seasons and the little known article "History of the Hodag". Other information that can be found

online includes the upcoming tournament schedule, practice schedule, and team contact information. You can even find this article available for download since we have electronic versions of all of our newsletters available online.

In the coming years the site will be continually updated and improved. One major addition to the Hodag website that will be available in the spring is a secure section devoted to online purchasing of Hodag shirts, hats, and discs. All profits from the sale of Hodag gear bought online will go to the program to help pay for travel, lodging, practice facilities and tournament fees. Other future enhancements will include short video clips of the team in action and a "Hodag of the Month" section. Beginning in the year 2002, a player will be chosen each month who has been improving and excelling in their play. That Hodag will be given the honor to be called the "Hodag of the Month". So come and visit us in the digital world at <http://www.hodags.org>... you won't be sorry!

By Tyler Spindler

Supporting UW-Madison Ultimate

Unlike other college sports, ultimate is not funded solely by the university. UW players must pay expenses for travel, lodging, practice facilities and tournament fees. And with the UW scheduled to attend tournaments in North Carolina, Louisiana and California this year, the program needs all the financial help it can get. To make a donation of any amount, please make checks out to Matt Pankratz (Hodag Treasurer) and send to:

Matt Pankratz
 1227 Regent St #R
 Madison, WI 53715

Thank you for your support.