

Hodag Disc

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Wasn't This Supposed to be a Rebuilding Year?

The Team:

Ten returning Hodags sit in a circle one evening, deep within the Memorial Union, silently waiting for someone to speak. They take turns staring at one-another, but there isn't so much as a cough for a few long moments. It is the first meeting of the 2001-2002 season, and no-one knows what to say; no-one knows what to do. "Well, maybe we should vote on captains," someone calls out. With a collective nodding of heads, everyone agrees. A few more moments pass. Pete Rank sips from his beer. "All right," says Bryan Paradise, "I nominated Pete and Zach awhile ago. Any other nominations?" Silence. "Uh, okay, well I guess it's Pete and Zach, then." Rank and Zach Morrison shrug their shoulders, and then turn to one another. "All right, that's cool," they say, almost in unison. "Well, what do we do now?" someone says. "Wait," Tyson Park calls out, "isn't Zach going to scare away all of the young players, though?" All ten players surrounding the table contemplate the implications of having Morrison run the team. "Well, who else is going to do it?" someone asks.



Captains Zach Morrison and Pete Rank discuss strategy during a timeout.

With thirteen players graduating, the majority being fifth-year veterans, including all but one member of last year's six-man decision-making board, the Hodags were ready for a major overhaul. Some feared that they would meet the same fate as Iowa had, falling off the face of the earth just a year after their first quarterfinal appearance since '97. But then something happened. One of the many great thinkers on the team hypothesized that the best way to replace 13 graduating players was, well, to add 13 new players. It sounded easy enough. A month later, the Hodags had selected 35 players to try out for the team from a pool of about 70 interested intramural players. Three weeks after that, the final roster was set at 25: 12 returners, 2 grads, 4 freshman, 4 sophomores, 2 juniors, and one Matt Bruss, who had been the Hodags' '00 Callahan nominee before mental problems resulted in him wasting a year of his life in Portland, Oregon.

The Hodags moved indoors, to practice for the winter. The new, horizontal stack offense was implemented and the players started running in circles. Twenty-seven backfield turnovers later, it was decided that perhaps an explanation of the offense was necessary in order for it to be run effectively. The transition into the new offense proved difficult, but a couple of weeks later, the Hodags had made progress. Suddenly, freshman phenom Jimmy McMurray was open every time the handlers would look up field. In fact, everyone was open. Zone defense was introduced and the offense scored nearly every time they touched the disc. But a week later, the zone started holding. Ryan Carrington started bending in ways that would make Gumby jealous, racking up blocks in the middle. The 2001-2002 Hodags were better than even the most optimistic prognostication, and drawing the number one seed at the big preseason tournament in Athens, Georgia, they were ready to make a name for themselves. With a healthy blend of veteran presence and raw talent, the Hodags would go 6-0 to take home the double-ended, golden plunger, or the trophy, as the tournament staff referred to it.

The Players:

The handling crew this year is led by Sr. Pete Rank and by Jr. Tyson Park. The Hodags are looking for Park to finally draw from his limitless potential, and have reason to be optimistic; he was brilliant at CCC, unofficially taking MVP honors in the Colorado win. The crew is supported by a few newcomers; Ryan

Carrington, Rodrigo Valdivia, and MacAlester graduate Alex Atterbury are all solid with the disc, whether starting, or coming off of the bench. The crew will also be helped by the hopeful addition of Sr. Hector Valdivia, currently in negotiations with management to return to the team.

The mids and deeps are led by CCC MVP Matt Bruss, and by Zach Morrison. Jimmy McMurray has been impressive early on, with his uncanny ability to be open, and as usual, Sr. Tyler Spindler is expected to catch every swilly, ill-advised huck that teammates put up for him. In addition, So. newcomer Phil Altman has also been impressive early on, making precision cuts and keeping a level-head. But it's the play of second year players Matt D'Amour, Andrew Brown, and Bob Kolstad, all expected to assume larger roles than they did last year, which is the real key to this squad. The Hodags clearly have the talent and experience in their veterans, but it's the depth of this unit that will dictate whether or not the Hodags can truly dominate for an entire tournament.

The defense this year is led by another group of veterans. Srs. Bryan Paradise and Pete Rank look to anchor a man D squad made up of, among others, the indestructible Jason Ludden, who

will lay out for absolutely anything, and Matt Pankratz. The Hodags will look for more big D's from newcomers Matt Ley and sophomore Joe Dombrow, each of whom have demonstrated the natural instinct to read the thrower's mind on more than a couple of occasions. In the zone D, with Jr. Mark Sweeney and Jr. newcomer Doug Rassier at the points, and with So. newcomer Matt Harris on the wing, opposing teams will have as many problems finding holes in the Wisconsin cup, as they will in finding open receivers downfield to throw to.

Finally newcomers Eric Kinzler, and freshmen Brian Frederick and Jim Igielski, have each demonstrated flashes of brilliance. With his speed and his forehand, Kinzler could be that player who steps up to add depth to the mid squad. Frederick, a gifted athlete, has the toughness and the attitude, and he could also be that player. In the 6'5" Igielski, the Hodags look to have found a dominant deep force. He can read, he can catch above his head, and he can leap. When these three guys become a bit more polished, watch out.

By Zach Morrison

Changing Scenes: A Former Hodag Adjusts to a New Team

We yell in unison, hoping to fire up for a scrimmage against our regional rival. Beavers! Beavers! Beavers! Rocks! Rocks! Rocks! It sounds weird. The orange uniforms seem out of place as well. And rain: it's January and I'm playing ultimate outside.

Such it is in a new program. Gone for me are the days of Hodag Love: the baby blue, U-Bay fields, the snowy winter. As a grad student with college ultimate eligibility left, I'm playing for Oregon State.

And it's certainly not Wisconsin anymore. We play outside all year, as the temperature rarely drops below 40. No more late nights at the McClain Indoor Facility. The West-Coast offense isn't just for pro football either: the teams out here huck with abandon, favoring a wide-open style to the more controlled dump-swing version that offered so much success last season in Madison. There is more focus on throwing and marking, less time on tactics. No more Opie and his wipe board.

I learned to play at UW and arrived at the right time: in two years, I was treated to back-to-back trips to Nationals. Oregon State hasn't been past regionals in recent memory. Going from a top-5 program to one that is constantly rebuilding is taking some adjustment. I have yet to find the right on-field chemistry with my new teammates yet.

But there is the same desire, the hopeless addiction that some of us have for ultimate. And of course, even 2,000 miles away, the love for a good party remains. Even though I feel like a bit of an outsider, confident but not fully involved yet, it's good to be playing. In a perfect world, I suppose I'd still be a Hodag. But the



Michael Bluhm throwing against Stanford, Spring 2001

nostalgia of Wisconsin ultimate will remain with us former Hodags as we move on.

Fortunately, I think I have convinced the Beavers that Madison in April is a fun place to visit, and hopefully there'll be some orange on hand at Midwesterns. Hodags, Beavers: in the end it really doesn't matter as long as I can still play the game I learned to love at Wisconsin.

See you on the fields.

Bulmer, UW Hodag '99-'01, OSU Beaver '02

Hodags Begin Season with Big Bang

Fall Tournament Allows Hodags to Spring Forward



With the arrival of winter to the state of Wisconsin, the Hodags traveled to Athens, GA for warm weather and game time against some of the nation's elite teams. Having spent only a month practicing indoors as a real unit, the Hodags were eager to try out their revamped offense and test the mettle of their Young Blood.

The trip started on a bad foot, as Tyson Park's car broke down in Memphis on the drive down. This might have been a harbinger of bad news for the

Hodags, but the teammates in that car rented a vehicle and arrived on time and rested behind the wheel of a brand new and sipped-up Pontiac Grand Am. This would become a metaphor for the team as a whole during the weekend. The Hodags would take an older version of themselves, break it down, and come out firing on new raging cylinders.

Saturday morning saw the #1 seeded Hodags fight a rebuilding and feisty UNC-Chapel Hill Darkside. Lack of action outdoors for Wisconsin became apparent in the Hodags' first possession, as Jason Ludden threw a pass neatly into a defender's hands. However, hard pressure by first-year Hodag Alex Atterbury forced a turnover, and Ludden was able to redeem himself with a score. The game flowed in that direction, with small mental errors by the Hodags being erased with spirited defense from all. At the end of the game the 15-6 scored showed two things: the Hodags were rusty, but dangerous, and they had an unstoppable team-destroyer in superstar Matt Bruss.



Captain Pete Rank looking for Freshman Rodrigo Valdivia up field.



Matt Bruss beats Ohio State's Kevin Reichert to the disc.

The next team on the Menu was last-seed Maryland. While the game was short and the Hodags dominated from start to finish, it exposed a weakness in the backfield of the Hodags offense. Handlers Hector Valdivia, Tyson Park, and others were responsible for a large percentage of the team's turnover. Since the Hodags rely heavily on swinging the disc to utilize both sides of the field, they regrouped to try and work on the miscommunications and streamline the movement of the disc. Final score however, was 15-7

The Chapel Hill and Maryland games showed for the first time what the Young Blood were capable of, as Jimmy McMurray, Jim Igielski, Eric Kinzler, Phil Altman, Matt Ley, Ryan Carrington, and Brian Frederick each tallied their first points in the Baby Blues.

Saturday's final game pitted Illinois against the Hodags for battle of the pool. The Hodags began sloppily, and Illinois' experienced handlers allowed them to get a scoring edge on the Hodags. With Illinois up 6-3 and looking to take a dominating lead into halftime, the Hodags endured their first gut-check of the season, and dug deep into their character to gel as a team. After switching their defensive set from man to zone, the Hodags rattled off several quick points to tie the game a 7-7, halftime at 8 points. Stretching for energy and intensity, the sideline encouraged their teammates into forcing Illinois to throw an intercepted pass in their own endzone to Hector Valdivia for the score and the momentum.

After half, the Hodags came out inspired and aggressive, and never relinquished the lead, taking the pool with a final score of 13-10.



Brothers Hector and Rodrigo Valdivia work the disc in the back field.



Captain Zach Morrison going up and over for the D.



Hodag primary handler Tyson Park pulling the disc after a Hodag goal.

After a night of rest and relaxation, swapping stories of “did you see my play?” and “what were you thinking,” the Hodags went to sleep knowing a little more about their strengths and limitations.

Sunday morning. Sore and tired, the Hodags suited up to play against Michigan Magnum in quarterfinals. Facing their first real national powerhouse, the Hodags looked a bit tentative at the beginning of the game.

Enter eternal freshman and team black sheep Tyson Park. Showing much promise and talent, Park has often been critiqued for his lack of discipline on the field and his childish behavior off it. But the first five points of the Michigan game became a coming-out party for the team’s new main handler. Showing poise and veteran skills, he threw the first five Hodag goals from a distance of greater than fifty yards.

Sparked by the incredible offensive output of their prodigal son, the rest of the Hodags followed suit, and slowly built a solid lead. With hot defense once again from the newly initiated, and calm nerves from Alex Atterbury and Rodrigo “Gigo” Valdivia, the Hodags put a quick end to any hopes of a Michigan comeback and won 15-10.

An aside: Matt Bruss outscored the entire Michigan team 11-10.

Semifinals. Four games played, and two more to go to win, but no one dared look past last year’s Nationals runners-up Colorado Mama Bird. Mama Bird had the most disciplined offense, prestige, and had beaten Wisconsin last year every time they’d faced each other, each time by only a few points. The Hodags were young, hungry, and ready for revenge.

There were many lead changes throughout, and Mama Bird was only down by one at half, 8-7. The pressure would not release and the Hodags had to steel their nerves and continue to score on offense, and place suffocating pressure on defense. With layout blocks few can conceive of by Captain Zach Morrison, and additional ones by Tyson Park, Hector Valdivia, and Matt Bruss, the Hodags kept Mama Bird backpedaling and refused to cave to the pressure.

With a key momentum swing for Mama Bird threatening to erase the Hodags’ one point lead, a throw tipped high by defensive gorilla Jason Ludden was brought down in the end zone by Matt “Just Call Me Callahan” Bruss. It was also in key moments of the game that newbies Joe Dombrow, Phil Altman, and Brian Frederick contributed with solid playing and veteran cool. By the time the whistle blew and the game was over 14-12, the Hodags had grown into a team that was a little more sure about themselves and ready to win their first tournament.

Although it was apparent that Colorado was the next best team at the tournament, Wisconsin still had to go through Ohio State Leadbelly for the sweep, and no one was counting them out yet. Fatigue played a big part in this game, as both teams looked slow and sluggish at times. Mexican Freshman Gigo Valdivia’s experience as a cross country runner in high school and his

bullish constitution allowed him to place heavy pressure on Leadbelly's main handler, harassing him with layout bids and forcing turnovers as the game progressed. The match-up of the game however, was between Leadbelly's Kevin Reichert and Wisconsin's mythical Atlas, Matt Bruss. Both held nothing back, and drained their bodies fighting for every disc. By the end of the game though, Wisconsin's deep bench and experienced players brought back the first of (hopefully) many tourney wins for this season. Final score 15-11, and a 6-0 record.

The Hodags came out hard and intense, but despite their early season success, they must try to not rest on their laurels and continue to fight to improve from practice to practice and game to game if they hope to be national contenders by the time May comes around.

By Hector Valdivia



Matt Bruss looking to move the disc against UNC-CH.

Tryouts 2K1

Tryouts were once again a great success. Each year the group of players trying out for the Hodags seem to get more athletic and have more experience playing Ultimate.

This year 70+ guys tried out for the team, which inevitably is made up of 20-25 players. This year there are 25 Hodags: 13 have been a part of the team over the past few years, 5 were members of the University's B-team and 7 have never played for the University.

Tryouts were held over a 5-week period and often included drills to improve throwing, catching, and cutting. However, the majority of the time was spent scrimmaging. As in past years, the players were divided into four teams headed by some of the seasoned veterans. Three weeks into the tryouts, the team was further divided into players that have the skill to play for the Hodags, which consisted of about 35 guys. This gave the officers a better chance to watch each of these players.

After seeing all the players, identifying their strengths, weaknesses, potential, athleticism, and other intangibles they might bring to the team, the five officers sat down in an intensive three hour session to decide which players will make the team. This was obviously the toughest part of the process, where it has to be decided what players will combine to make the best team. This year was particularly tough because there was a lot of parity between 12 to 15 players and only 5 spots in which to put them. This made the officers predict who will be the best players after five months of practice, and in some limited situations, who will benefit the program more by playing with the B-team for a year.

Listed to the right is the team that will be trying to win a National Championship. (© = team captain)

By Bryan Paradise

Name	Hodag Years	Year in School
Peter Rank ©	4	Senior
Zack Morrison ©	4	Senior
Matt Bruss	4	Grad
Matt Pankratz	5	Grad
Bryan Paradise	3	Law
Tyler Spindler	4	Senior
Jason Ludden	4	Senior
Hector Valdivia	3	Senior
Bob Kolstad	2	Senior
Mark Sweeney	2	Junior
Tyson Park	3	Junior
Andrew Brown	2	Junior
Matt D'Amour	2	Sophomore
Jimmy McMurray	1	Freshman
Eric Kinzler	1	Grad
Alex Atterbury	1	Grad
Jim Igielski	1	Freshman
Brian Frederick	1	Freshman
Rodrigo Valdivia	1	Freshman
Doug Rassier	1	Junior
Ryan Carrington	1	Sophomore
Phil Altman	1	Sophomore
Matt Harris	1	Sophomore
Joe Dombrow	1	Sophomore
Matt Ley	1	Junior

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PLAY ULTIMATE

Hodags Spring Schedule
 (subject to change)

Terminus 2002:		
March 16th-17th	Atlanta, GA	
College Easterns:		
March 23rd-24th	Wilmington, NC	
The Big 10 Tournament:		
April 6th-7th	Champaign, IL	
Midwesterns:		
April 13th-14th	Madison, WI	
College Sectionals:		
April 20th-21st	Madison, WI	
College Regionals:		
May 4th-5th	????????, ??	
College Nationals:		
May 24th-26th	Spokane, WA	

Long sleeve shirts \$8
 XL black Midwesterns 1999
 XL white Midwesterns 1999
 XL white Midwesterns 2001

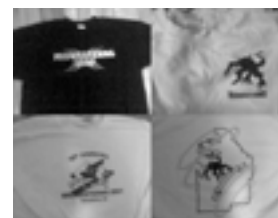
Short sleeve shirts \$5
 XL baby blue Midwesterns 1999
 XL white Midwesterns 1999
 L black Midwesterns 2000
 L white Midwesterns 2000
 XL, L white Midwesterns 2001

If you're interested in purchasing any of the listed items, contact Tyler Spindler at tlspindler@students.wisc.edu for additional information

Jerseys \$20
 L 2000-2001 (puma: baby blue w/ black pinstripes and black Hodag on the front, no number)

Discs \$8
 30 white Hodag discs

Hats
 Baseball (black) \$15
 Winter (black) \$10



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, Georgia and Illinois this year, the program needs all the financial help it can get. To make a donation of any amount, please make checks out to UW Ultimate Frisbee Club and send to:

Matt Pankratz
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 Madison, WI 53715

Thank you for your support.