



Opposing teams high-five each other after a round of dodgeball at the White Plains YMCA. SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Dodgeball league a hit

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WHITE PLAINS — WHAP!
The “Gator Skin” ball smacks against the back wall of the YMCA gym and is quickly grabbed by a player, who whirls around and hurls it at the man who threw it at her in the first place. The volley-ball-sized orb hits him in the leg. He frowns in frustration and begrudgingly walks to the sidelines. He’s out. The woman smiles briefly in triumph, then gets hit on her shoulder. She’s out too.

The gym is packed with 20-, 30- and a few 40-somethings, wearing team T-shirts and cheering one another on as they duck, jump and dive to avoid getting hit, or fire the balls at their opponents, trying to hit them and take them out.

Welcome to Big League Dodgeball.

“It brings back the eighth-grader in you,” said 35-year-old Vinny Nicoletti of Hawthorne, a

member of “Not in the Face,” one of 12 teams in the White Plains Division of a league that also hosts divisions in Nyack, Purchase and Connecticut.

The divisions compete once a week, with each co-ed team playing two 10-minute games for bragging rights before retiring to a local tavern to toast their victories, drown their defeats and make new friends.

“It’s all about socializing and meeting new people,” said league President Maurice Reep, 36, of Larchmont. A concert pianist and piano teacher, Reep started a popular Big League Kickball league in Croton-on-Hudson in 2008, which quickly expanded and now boasts 1,200 players in divisions in New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. He came up with the dodgeball idea after several kickball players mentioned that they wished there was something to do indoors during the winter.

Teams consist of 10 players,

18 and older, with no more than six on the court during a game. Made up of groups of friends or co-workers, the teams pay a \$750 registration fee. Individuals can register for \$80 and be assigned to a team during the registration period. The White Plains Division is sponsored by the Wicked Wolf Tavern.

“What’s fun is that you don’t need any athletic ability to play,” Reep said. “Anybody can play dodgeball, and we’re doing it for fun. There’s no disgrace in getting hit or in losing a game. Every once in a while you’ll see a really competitive match, but you can’t take it seriously — we’re talking about a children’s game that we all played in grade school.”

LEARN MORE

To find out more about Big League Dodgeball, visit www.bigleaguedodgeball.com. Check out www.bigleaguekickball.com to learn more about Big League Kickball, which is now open for registration.

The league uses foam-filled “Gator Skin” balls that have enough heft to throw fast but “don’t hurt when you get hit,” Reep said. “We have almost no injuries, and it’s a pretty good workout. You get pretty sweaty and out of breath.”

Mostly, the players say, it’s fun.

“It’s not just fun, it’s a lot of fun — I mean, look at this,” said Gina Bertozzi of Ossining, nodding toward the organized mayhem on the court.

A 36-year-old accountant at a law firm, Bertozzi said there’s plenty to like.

“You get to be a kid all over again for a while, then you go out afterward and eat and drink. What more do you want?”