



“The nets get a lot of wear and tear. The dodgeballs do too—we replace the dodgeballs once a week. Even though they have the lifetime warranty on them, we’ve pretty much thrown that out the window,” Sampson notes. “If you have people throwing a dodgeball at 70mph against a wall for 16 hours a week, it kinda shows the wear and tear on the ball.”

That speed might sound exaggerated, but it’s radar-gun proven: in the LDL’s recent skills competition, a few hurled balls were clocked at speeds exceeding the big seven-zero. That much strength, channeled through a soft, foamy ball covered in a thin skin, can lead to some strange injuries—ones afflicting the throwers, not their shots’ intended recipients. After all, only so much energy can transfer from arm to a very light ball, and the remaining force has to go somewhere.

“We get spiral fractures in the upper-arm; that’s a big one,” Sampson says. “Other than that, there’s tennis elbows, pulled muscles, shoulders getting thrown out.”

“We had a girl, it was like her first drill in the first game of dodgeball,” Ford chimes in. “She’d played softball or something, but the ball was just so light that [she] underestimated [her energy and] she completely fractured her arm.”

Even with legal fallout from an injury safely signed away with a waiver, running a league of this size isn’t a cheap venture: jerseys need to be bought en masse, and dodgeballs need be replaced again and again—yet the bulk of the LDL budget is made up of a piddly player fee collected at the start of the year. Though the possibility of sponsorship lingers in the background—rumour had it that Molson Canadian was looking to sponsor the LDL a few years ago—it’s something that Ford sees as unnecessary for a recreational student league.

“I remember last year as a liaison, we had a vote of whether we would be doing any sponsorship deals, and I know this year as an Exec, we talked about it. One of the reasons that we don’t want it is because [dodgeball] is a student thing, and it’s this unique sport that we don’t want to dilute.”

And maybe keeping the dodgeball league as simple as the game itself is the way it should be, especially if it means “everything to everyone” in Lister. Though the floors are all rivals on the court, dodgeball’s a unifying force for all four towers, as Sampson explains.

“I think it’s cool [that] where Lister has to be represented, and everyone needs to be seen as visibly [united], they go and they put on their dodgeball jerseys.”

THE HOW-TO:

For the uninitiated/non-Listerites, the LDL doesn’t play the game like Vince Vaughn did in Dodgeball. Wipe from your mind the tiny teams, rubber balls, and Ben Stiller’s feathered hair: this is how Lister plays the game.

Each round of dodgeball is played out in a best-of-five format, with each team picking two of the four games, and the LDL exec pre-determining a “Game of the Week” that must be played. Teams can include an entire floor, but the maximum amount of players allowed to play each game is 18: eleven of one gender, seven of the other.

When the ref starts the game, teams charge the line and grab however many balls they can—including the ball of shame, a skinless, foamy puff that even the most herculean men can’t lob far, and which turns you into the laughingstock of both sides when you’re hit with it. All balls must touch the back wall before being thrown. A ten-minute time-limit is enforced for each game.

THE TERMINOLOGY:

Ball control: To prevent balls from rolling back to the rival team’s side.

Cross-court shots: Lobs from the other side of the court that unaware victims didn’t see coming.

Off the wall: Balls remain active until they hit the ground; if a ball bounces off the back wall and clips a leg, it counts as a hit.



“Everybody on your team can fill some role in some way. It doesn’t matter if you’re a star athlete who can huck the ball at 70mph or if you’re someone who’s had dance training and can weave around the balls. And because you’re living with and interacting with [the people] you’re playing with on a day-to-day basis, it creates a bond.”

CHRIS FORD