

It's golf — but not as we know it

by Kate Druett

Take a modified frisbee, an obstacle-ridden fairway and a tricky target and what do you end up with?

Disc golf is a sport many New Zealanders have never heard of yet in the United States entire television channels and radio stations are dedicated to it.

Given the lack of local knowledge it could be considered surprising that New Zealand disc golfing champion Simon Feasey has just won an international disc golf tournament.

The Western Springs resident was invited to attend the Kaohsiung Disc Golf Tournament in Taiwan in March — an event considered a preliminary for the World Games.

He says disc golf is a lovely sport.

"It fits in perfectly with Kiwi culture — New Zealanders have known frisbees forever."

Disc golf has a similar concept to ball golf. The aim is to get a plastic disc from the tee area to a target in the least number of throws. Each consecutive shot is made from the spot where the previous throw landed. As with golf, difficult terrain, trees and bush can make life awkward for the disc golfer.

"Being lanky and having long arms helps," says Feasey.

Disc Golf committee member Bob Gentil says disc golf arrived



NICE PULL: Simon Feasey lands a shot at the Kaohsiung Disc Golf tournament in Taiwan.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMON FEASEY

in New Zealand in the mid-1970s along with other disc sports. The committee is part of the New Zealand Flying Disc Association which is the national body responsible for all disc sports in New Zealand.

This year New Zealand disc golf celebrated its 27th anniversary.

In his fifth year as New Zealand Open Champion, Feasey says it is a game for everyone. "You don't need to be a super-athlete or a member of an exclusive club. In New Zealand it is a very relaxed and sociable sport.

As well as having its own form of game etiquette, disc golf

has its own language.

"Nice pull" is a compliment on a good drive rather than the success of a night out and if you're offered "a line" don't be concerned, it is merely about knowing where the target is. For more useful terms look on www.discgolf.co.nz.

Feasey was introduced to disc golf by an Ultimate Frisbee team mate seven years ago. He says it was "the start of a big adventure".

Gentil describes Feasey's style as "very relaxed" with a "natural ability to throw a long way".

Since discovering the game he has played several times at

the World Champs in America (where the game is professional) and placed fifth at the World Games in Japan in 2001.

He is also a regular on the New Zealand circuit and hopes to participate in June's "Crater Cup" which is held at One Tree Hill.

The "Crater Cup" course is described by the disc golf website as having "treacherous terrain" and "huge elevations", designed by "fit young men with knees that worked well".

As well as playing the sport at top level, Feasey is a member of the Disc Golf Development Committee and designs disc golf courses.

He says courses can be set up anywhere.

Waiheke Island has one of the only permanent disc golf courses in New Zealand. Overseas courses have been successfully established within public parks, providing people with cost effective and fun leisure opportunities, Feasey says.

He has approached the Auckland City Council with plans for disc golf courses for Auckland's public parks. Initially ideas were met with an enthusiasm, he says, but since then the council has not acted further.

"Put courses in and people will come and play," Feasey says. "I'd love to see the council utilise parks more, it's so unobtrusive to the parks and such a great sport."

The council's assistant recreation planner Bernie Mabbs says while it hasn't yet been explored in great depth, the council is looking at helping sports like disc golf.

A review of the sport and recreation strategy is underway and the council is involving sports people to "work together to find the best solution".

A final strategy should be completed by September.



Simon Feasey

PHOTO: KATE DRUETT

The sport of spitting

by Theresa McCracken

Spitting on the sports field has become unpopular but referees say banning it is impossible.

Gordon Dickson, who has refereed soccer and rugby widely in the Bay of Plenty and Auckland, says spitting will never be completely absent from sport.

"Players could be getting rid of dirt or grass out of their mouths," he says.

"You can't prevent it and it's usually an involuntary action where players are just clearing their mouths."

Alison Davidson, a junior coach for Mt Eden Hockey, says she rarely sees players spitting at each other or on the turf any more.

"I have occasionally witnessed boys spitting on the turf and have come down very hard on them, and explained the serious health risks, especially [if it is an] artificial surface," she says.

She feels spitting is more of an issue in rugby and league. "Lucky for the sport of hockey, they do not emulate the rugby and league players we see on TV."

Rugby player Grant Angell says spitting could easily offend.

"In some cultures, spitting is a real disgrace. Spitting at someone is the ultimate insult," he says.

Some sports fans have spoken out in recent years about player etiquette and spitting habits.

Players differ on whether spitting is okay on the field but most agree spitting at another

player is a huge no-no.

Angell says spitting isn't nice for spectators to see but in the heat of the game that is the last thing players are thinking about.

"I try not to do it in front of spectators but sometimes you just do it without noticing," he says.

Most schools now have a code of practice for sport, which includes a no-spitting rule.

St Peter's High School's code makes it clear that spitting on the field, especially at players, isn't acceptable.

"Show respect to the spectators by not spitting or swearing," says the school's code.

The Accident Compensation

Corporation (ACC) also says spitting isn't acceptable.

"Unhygienic practices, such as spitting, should be actively discouraged, especially in areas where the team sits on the sideline, where equipment or drink bottles are placed, or in the changing rooms," says an Auckland City document on ensuring safe sports environments.

The issue is heightened by diseases like meningitis and hepatitis being spread through saliva.

There are no punishments for spitting on the field in higher level sport but if players spit at each other, penalties can be imposed.



CARTOON: MARC CHECKLEY

Auckland's top yacht clubs go head to head over new training scheme

by Lauren Bartlett

Controversy is brewing between two top Auckland yacht clubs over the training of talented sailors.

Yachtie Graeme Sutherland is proposing a new scheme to provide boats and training for sailors over the age of 20 at the Royal Akarana Yacht Club.

But a source close to Team New Zealand says he has strong reservations about the programme which may take support away from the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, the club to which Team New Zealand is connected.

Another member of the RNZYS, training manager Guy Pilkington, agrees.

"I don't think it's the smartest idea — it will split an already small market, and could make it more difficult to get sponsorship for yachting," he says.

However Richard Macalister, the commodore of the Akarana club, thinks the new programme is a good idea.

"Human nature is to retain the status quo — but if you want to achieve change you have to risk that," he says.

Sutherland came up with the idea after leaving the youth squadron team at the RNZYS, which members must leave at 20.

"When teams come out of the squadron, they're pretty much

out on their own. If you wish to carry on you have to buy your own boat.

"If you go in with two others on a \$60,000 boat, that's still \$20,000. It's a tough way to go unless you've got backing."

He felt there wasn't any serious training facilities that allowed freedom for sailors aged 20 to 25 that also provided training for international regattas and offshore events.

"It's aimed at sailors who wish to take their sailing seriously and to the top level. It's about being skilled in other areas of yachting. There's more to sailing than just knowing how to sail."

The AUT student, who spent last year in Spain sailing the B boat for the French K-Challenge syndicate, believes there is not enough opportunity for young people to form their own teams to participate in races such as New Zealand's Auckland to Bay of Islands 'Coastal Classic' race.

"You can get experience on other people's boats as crew, but it's not the same as doing it yourself."

Sutherland chose to present his idea to the Akarana club because he has been coaching there, and he felt that their status as a top offshore boating club would be an advantage.

"Grant Dalton said the Volvo had got its mojo back.

"This programme will help train people to prove it."