

ULTIMATE

THE FIRST FOUR DECADES

ULTIMATE - THE FIRST FOUR DECADES

written and edited by

**Pasquale Anthony Leonardo
and Adam Zagoria**

**with foreword by Dan "Stork" Roddick
and Sholom (Eric) Simon**



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the birth of ultimate

written by: adam zagoria



The original Columbia High School Varsity Frisbee Squad featured the three primary writers of the original rules: Joel Silver, Jonny Hines and Buzzy Hellring. Silver appears on the far left in the black shirt and sunglasses. Hines is fourth from the left, holding a trophy augmented with parts of a car transmission atop Hellring's head. © Mark Epstein

Nineteen sixty-eight was one of the most tumultuous and transforming years in the history of the United States and the world. ¶ In January, the North Vietnamese Tet offensive brought the battle from the jungles to the cities, an event seen as a major turning point for the US attitude toward the Vietnam War. ¶ On March 31, President Lyndon Johnson gave in to political reality and announced that he would not seek a second term. Four days later, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated, triggering riots in 125 US cities that left 46 dead and 20,000 arrested, and put 55,000 federal troops on the streets of America. ¶ Student protesters took over Columbia University in April, shutting down the campus. The Grateful Dead managed to get through police lines guarding the gates and played on the steps in the middle of the campus. ¶ On June 4, Bobby Kennedy was gunned down by Sirhan Sirhan after winning the California primary. In August, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia with more than 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops, crushing the so-called “Prague Spring.” Later, at the Democratic National Convention, anti-war demonstrators clashed with the Chicago police, the US Army and Illinois National Guardsmen over five days. When the convention was finally over, the Chicago police reported 589 arrests had been made and 119 police and 100 protesters were injured. Without Kennedy or Johnson as the Democratic presidential nominee, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey in the November election. ¶ The world of music reflected these turbulent times. The Beatles visited India and released the year’s top album, the *White Album*. The Rolling Stones’ *Beggars Banquet* was moving up the charts. Simon & Garfunkel released *The Graduate Soundtrack* and the critically acclaimed *Bookends*. The rock musical “Hair” opened on Broadway. Cream disbanded. And The Band released its debut album, *Music From Big Pink*. ¶ Amid this furious pace of world and national events, most Americans were still going about their daily lives, working and living and playing, just trying to get by. In one small corner of the Northeast, the seeds of a new game—played with a Frisbee—were being planted.



maplewood, nj

In the summer of 1968, Joel Silver, a willful, talkative, highly intelligent teenager from South Orange, New Jersey, attended a summer program at the Mount Hermon School, a boarding school in Western Massachusetts (now known as the Northfield Mount Hermon School). More than a camp, it was an educational enrichment program for college-bound high school students.

There, Jared Kass, a 21-year-old Amherst College student working as a creative writing teaching fellow and a dormitory advisor, along with other student-teachers, exposed Silver to a still-evolving game played with a plastic disc. By that time, Frisbees, sometimes known as Pluto Platters, had become fairly common in American homes, with the Wham-O Manufacturing Company producing a variety of models, including the Professional model, introduced in 1964 as the first “high tech” model for the serious player, and the Master model.

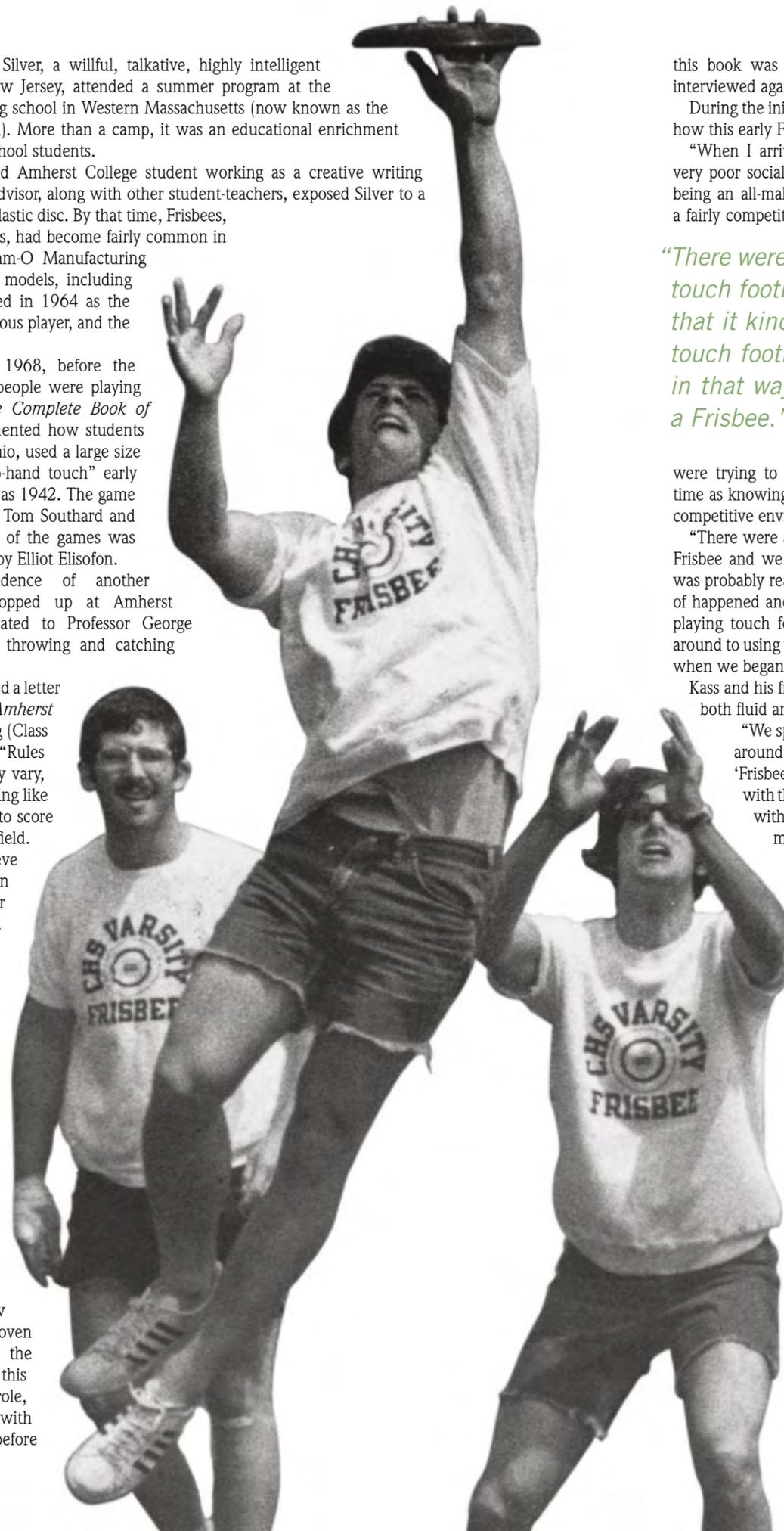
Even before the summer of 1968, before the invention of the plastic Frisbee, people were playing games with flying discs. In *The Complete Book of Frisbee*, Victor Malafronte documented how students at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, used a large size Ovenex cake pan to play a “two-hand touch” early version of Frisbee football as early as 1942. The game was created by brothers Bud and Tom Southard and dubbed “Aceball.” By 1950, one of the games was photographed for *LIFE* magazine by Elliot Elisofon.

Malafronte also found evidence of another flying disc game that had cropped up at Amherst College circa 1949. It was related to Professor George “Frisbie” Whicher and involved throwing and catching “a plastic or metal serving tray.”

In his book, Malafronte unearthed a letter to the editor in the January 1958 *Amherst Alumni News*, where Peter Schrag (Class of '53) describes the game, stating “Rules have sprung up and although they vary, the game as now played is something like touch [football], each team trying to score goals by passing the tray downfield. There are interceptions and I believe passing is unlimited. Thus, a man may throw the tray to a receiver who passes it to still another man. The opponents try to take over either by blocking the tray or intercepting it.”

A decade later, Kass and his friends at Amherst—Bob Fein, Richard Jacobson, Robert Marblestone, Steve Ward, Fred Hoxie, Gordon Murray and others—began playing a version of Frisbee football with a plastic disc.

Willie Herndon, a math teacher, filmmaker and Ultimate player from St. Louis who fell in love with the game while a student at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1970s, conducted a videotaped interview with Silver in 1997 that has proven invaluable in understanding the history of this period. During this interview, Silver mentioned Kass’ role, prompting Herndon to follow up with an interview with Kass in 2003—before



this book was developed. Both men were subsequently interviewed again on numerous occasions for this book.

During the initial interview with Herndon, Kass explained how this early Frisbee game came about.

“When I arrived at Amherst College in 1965, it was a very poor social environment, and not just in the sense of being an all-male school, but also in the sense that it was a fairly competitive environment,” Kass told Herndon. “We

“There were a bunch of us who knew how to throw the Frisbee and we also played touch football....I think that it was probably really in our junior year (1967-68) that it kind of happened and jelled—when we shifted from sometimes playing touch football or sometimes kicking a soccer ball around to using the Frisbee in that way. There was a moment when we began to play a team game using a Frisbee.” –Jared Kass

were trying to figure out how to be friends at the same time as knowing that you’re in a hothouse, an academically competitive environment.

“There were a bunch of us who knew how to throw the Frisbee and we also played touch football...I think that it was probably really in our junior year (1967-68) that it kind of happened and jelled—when we shifted from sometimes playing touch football or sometimes kicking a soccer ball around to using the Frisbee in that way. There was a moment when we began to play a team game using a Frisbee.”

Kass and his friends liked the Frisbee game because it was both fluid and fun.

“We spent a fair amount of time throwing Frisbees around and wound up playing what we called ‘Frisbee football,’” Fein recalled. “One could not run with the Frisbee. One tried to throw it to teammates with the idea of getting it caught beyond the goal markers. The defending team could not strike the Frisbee holder but could race to knock down or catch a thrown Frisbee. If the pass was incomplete, the defender got the Frisbee where it fell.”

Added Kass: “I think we understood that the beauty was to keep the Frisbee moving and that that’s what it was about. If you were running with it, then how could somebody stop you? It had to become a contact sport. So [we decided] it was okay to take a couple of steps to position yourself, but basically you couldn’t travel by running.”

The group often played anywhere from five to seven people per side, in a variety of locations on campus. They also played “to a set number of points,” Kass said. As with other pickup games, “there were no referees,” Jacobson added. “We relied on self-regulation. But no one was taking anything very seriously so there was little need to call infractions. There were few rules, only common sense and a spirit of fair play were needed.”

Sometimes the games would even feature impromptu debate and discussion between plays, recalled Jacobson.

“Are you sure that you didn’t advance beyond where you caught the Frisbee?”

“Didn’t Shakespeare address that point?”

“What would Proust have thought?”

One day while playing Frisbee on the green of the Webster circle behind Amherst’s Frost Library (he is not certain precisely when), Kass had an epiphany. It was the same epiphany he would enjoy later in life while doing other things, such as singing Jewish prayers. But on this particular day, it came while he was running for the Frisbee toward a

shimmering set of trees that served as the goal line.

“I remember one time running for a pass and leaping up in the air and feeling the Frisbee making it into my hand



As early as the 1930s, students at Amherst College played a game with a metal cookie can cover. Courtesy of Amherst College Archives and Special Collections



Tom and Walter “Bud” Southard invented a game with a disc, similar to touch football, in Lakewood, Ohio in 1942. The game, known as “Aceball,” was first played with an Ovenex cakepan, and five people per team, at Kenyon College in Ohio that year. *LIFE* Magazine photographer Eliot Elisofon snapped photos of the game at Kenyon in 1950. Eliot Elisofon, *Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*

two first national championships

written by: adam zagoria

The mid to late 1970s was a critical period for the sport of Ultimate. On the field, Rutgers had become firmly entrenched as the top team in the nation, having won the unofficial national championship in 1974. As Ultimate continued to grow and evolve during 1975, the Scarlet Knights remained the team to beat. ¶ Yet during this same era, as more and more people picked up the game, strong teams also developed at a variety of schools in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic: Cornell, Penn State, Hampshire, Tufts, UConn, Williams, Wesleyan, Bucknell and Glassboro State in New Jersey. Ultimate also began to flourish in the Midwest, at Michigan State and Kalamazoo College, and on the West Coast in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. As the game spread exponentially, regional and national championships developed in fits and starts. The first Central Regional championship took place in the spring of 1976. The first East-West championship, pitting the champions of the two coasts, took place in 1977. A year later, it was repeated, again under the auspices of the International Frisbee Association (IFA). And by 1979, the country had been split into five regions, laying the foundation for the first Nationals championship tournament. ¶ Off the field, Larry Schindel, the one-time Columbia High School “general manager,” worked tirelessly to track all the new schools and teams, singlehandedly keeping and continually updating a central list of captains. He developed and promoted the annual East Coast Captains’ Meeting, which allowed Ultimate players from across the nation to meet for regular discussions of scheduling, proposed rule changes and other issues facing the sport. ¶ Behind the scenes, a handful of key people, including Schindel, Dan “Stork” Roddick, Andy Klein, Tom Kennedy and others, began to lay the groundwork for a national organization that united the sport’s many enthusiasts under one rubric. Because of the efforts of these individuals, Ultimate boldly moved away from its connection to the IFA and toward formation of its own governing body, the Ultimate Players Association.

With thousands of fans looking on at the Rose Bowl, Doug Newland looked to throw in the East-West All-Star Game in the 1976 World Frisbee Championships.

📷 Courtesy of Dan “Stork” Roddick / IFA photo

THE FIRST NATIONALS

In April 1975, the first organized Ultimate tournament was played at Yale University. Eight teams participated in the Intercollegiate Ultimate Frisbee Championships.

Rutgers and Hampshire were given the top two seeds, respectively. Rutgers showed up wearing soccer cleats and black and red vertically striped jerseys with numbers.

Later, when Rutgers visited Tufts on their annual spring road trip, the Tufts players would respond by wearing yellow T-shirts all emblazoned with the No. 3. They also wore the numbered shirts when they played in the 3rd annual Tufts-Hampshire Mother's Day Classic.

"We decided to all wear the same number in response to Rutgers wearing shirts with numbers," recalled Jim Pistrang of Tufts. "I wanted No. 6, [co-captain] Ed [Summers] wanted No. 3, and we went with Ed's choice."

But at the 1975 Ultimate Frisbee Championships, Rutgers beat Tufts and Cornell before meeting Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), a surprise winner over Hampshire, in the final. After trailing 22-21 with four minutes to play, the Scarlet Knights and their vaunted zone defense rallied to win their 29th straight game, and their second national championship, 26-23. (Headlines sometimes referred to it as their third national title, although the 1973 championship title is disputed by some at Columbia High School.)

Both that tournament and the Mother's Day event were mentioned a month later in a *TIME* magazine article, which referred to Ultimate as a "spoof of big-time sports."

Hampshire junior, can play alongside her male classmates. While the younger brother of one player talks excitedly about pro franchises some day, most players would agree with Hampshire co-captain Dave Dinerman when he says, "Too much competition will make this the kind of game I wouldn't want to play."

THE FIRST EAST COAST CAPTAINS' MEETING

By the fall of 1975, Ultimate was being played by 53 junior high school, high school, college and club teams on the East Coast, according to one of Schindel's documents. Schindel noted that another dozen had "unconfirmed status," and that still others were playing on the West Coast. That November, Schindel sent a typed letter to all those contacts on his list advising them of an "important meeting" that was to take place on December 22 in Maplewood, New Jersey.

Despite a massive snowstorm, 56 representatives from 32 teams, including Michigan State, attended the meeting, according to a signup sheet. The captains discussed several topics, including the rules of Ultimate, the role of the IFA, the potential for a championship in the upcoming season and the schedule for the new season.

For several years to come, the meeting would be held in Maplewood over Christmas vacation because the majority of college captains lived there, and that is when they were home from school.

Sholom (Eric) Simon, then a freshman at Michigan State, suggested that if the 1976 national championship were truly to be representative, it shouldn't be an invitational like the 1975 version.

"Go run your own championship," he was told by Dinerman, the Hampshire captain who would become the tournament director of the 1976 Nationals.

Cooler heads prevailed before the meeting got out of hand and it was agreed that the Midwest would hold its own "regional" qualifier, from which three teams would advance to the 1976 national championship—in the East. That tournament, the first regional qualifier, was held at Kalamazoo College in early spring 1976, with five teams.

Rule changes were also discussed and when the 6th Edition rules were approved in February 1976, the 15-second stall was introduced to prevent teams from closing out games by simply holding the disc. The field remained 60 yards long, but the end zone was standardized to 30 yards; the end zone had previously been "as long as possible," according to the 4th Edition, the last set of true Ultimate rules before the "Hot Spot" variation. Wham-O and the IFA ultimately agreed to distribute the new rules, marking the first time in the history of the sport that it received outside backing. The rules stated that, "The Wham-O Master is the official Frisbee flying disc to be used in tournament play."

RUTGERS EARNS A THREE-PEAT

The 1976 Ultimate Frisbee Championships were held over the weekend of April 23-25 at Hampshire College and co-sponsored by Amherst, UMass and Hampshire. The invitation indicated that the event was "Sponsored by the IFA." Wham-O had come out with the G-series and for the first time, a Master-G disc was used.

Rutgers' captain Irv Kalb was carried off the field by his teammates after Rutgers won the 1976 Ultimate Frisbee Championships at Hampshire College. It was Rutgers' third straight national title.

David Cohn



The Tufts team in a 1974 team photo. The team later put the No. 3 on the back of every jersey, in part to mock the Rutgers players, who each wore numbered jerseys as a sign of how seriously they took the game. The T-shirt logo shown in the top left corner was designed by Ed Summers. Courtesy of Jim Pistrang

"At the Tufts-Hampshire tiff, the first Frisbee was thrown out by the grandmother of one of the Tufts players, Mildred Cunningham, a little old Planned Parenthood lady who proceeded to give away LOVE CAREFULLY buttons and tell other spectators that she was 'glad the boys are doing this—there're so many worse things they could be doing,'" the article read.

"Most Ultimate Frisbee players agree—not necessarily for the same reason. There are, in fact, few other sports that Hampshire high-scorer Steve Hannock can play with his hair spilling down his back and an ever-ready can of beer handy on the sidelines. Or that Maggie Hirsch, a

Top RPI, 26-23

Frisbee team nabs 3rd straight national title

The Rutgers Ultimate Frisbee team stopped Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 26-23, this weekend in the final round of the National Championships, and thus captured its third successive national-wide crown.

The Yale Invitational tournament had brought together

the top eight squads in the country, with the Knights enjoying the first seed and Hampshire College the second.

Opening the action with a Friday contest against Tufts, the Scarlet had little trouble in minding the platooning opponent, running away with a 36-11 romp. Paralyzing

sharp zone defense into numerous turnovers, the Scarlet used a 12-1 second half spurt to run away from the 19-5 halftime bulge.

Irv Kalb paced the attack that day with four goals and nine assists.

Facing Cornell in the second round activities, the Scarlet started sluggishly but had exploded

midway through the first half with a 14-2 scoring streak. A 16-6 halftime lead was stretched into a final count of 30-12, a much finer Rutgers performance than the early season 26-16 win over the Big Red had been.

Kalb, with a neat 20 of 20 passing accuracy, again led the way. Dan "Stork" Roddick tallied ten goals and Al Samone handed out eight assists. Milt Hadiks and Ken Buchanan sparked the defense with ten and nine interceptions, respectively.

The two wins set up the championship match with surprising RPI, an overtime winner from Yale and a one goal victor over Hampshire. And Rutgers wound up needing all of its fine 73.6 completion average for the finals.

After see-sawing through the whole game, RPI found themselves leading 22-21 with just four minutes to go. The Knights responded with a tying tally, and then regained possession around mid-field. A series of short passes and a 40-yard Hing by Simone to the leaping Al Bonapane set up an easy pass to Roddick for the clinching score.

The Knights held on from there, and registered a 26-23 triumph, their 29th straight win and third consecutive National Title.

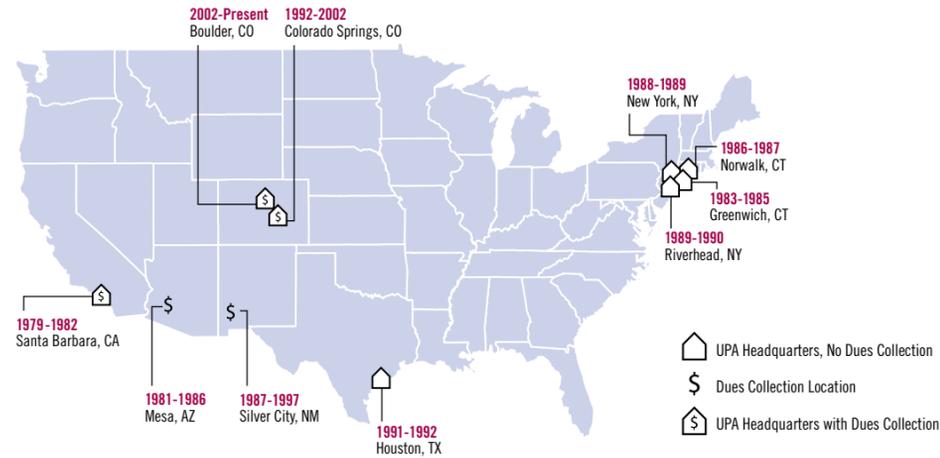
Rutgers will, anticlimactically, conclude the season this Sunday in a dual contest with Delaware.



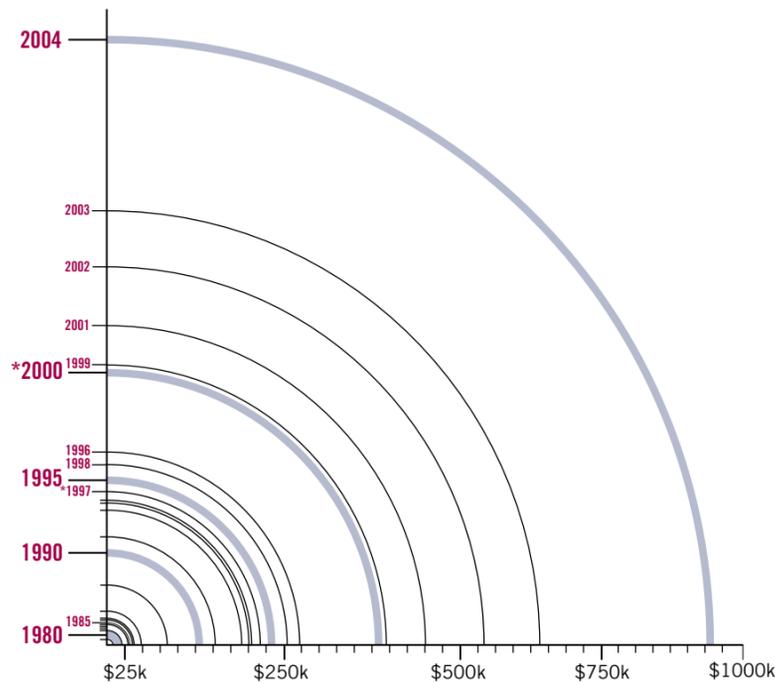
The Rutgers National CHAMPIONSHIP Frisbee squad, starting in the front row from left to right: Al Bonapane, Stu Cass, Dan Doyle, Steve Lyons, and Don Cain. Second row: Coach Bob Eberle, Gary Stranz, Irv Kalb, Tim Del Russo, Dave Smythe, Al Simone. Third row: Dave Marcell, Milt Hadiks, Dan Roddick, Tim Gockel, and Ken Buchanan.

Rutgers won another national ch Knights' third straight title, bu straight title. Courtesy of Dan "Stork" Roddick / IFA photo

UPA Headquarters



UPA Annual Budget

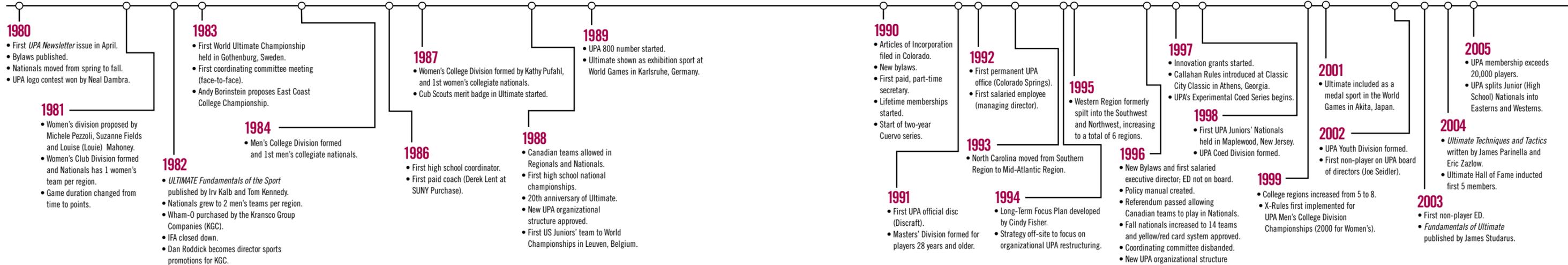


UPA Annual Budget

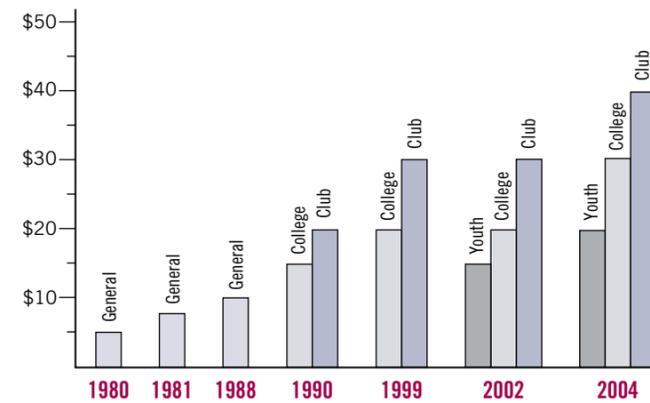
1979	\$7,500 (IFA)	1993	\$202,000
1980	\$10,000	1994	\$209,000
1981	\$22,500	1995	\$237,000
1984	\$29,000	1996	\$273,000
1985	\$31,000	1997	\$223,000*
1986	\$38,000	1998	\$253,000
1987	\$50,000	1999	\$395,000
1988	\$55,000	2000	\$380,000*
1989	\$88,000	2001	\$460,000
1990	\$131,000	2002	\$538,000
1991	\$153,000	2003	\$610,000
1992	\$191,000	2004	\$900,000

* indicates a reduction in budget

History of UPA



UPA Member Dues Amount



UPA Administration

Kennedy, Tom "TK": National Director and Treasurer 1979-1980; National Director 1981-1982

Fields, Suzanne: National Director, Women 1981-1984

Foy, Carney: Treasurer 1981-1988; Finance Director 1988-1997

Murphy, Brian: National Director, Men 1983-1984

Pufahl, Kathy: National Director, Women 1985; Women's Director 1986-1988; Managing Director 1989-1990

McGivney, Gary: National Director 1986-1987

Rauch, Robert "Nob": National Director/Executive Director 1988; Executive Director 1989-1990

Dambra, Neal: Executive Director 1991-1992

Licata, Mark: Managing Director 1991

Fisher, Cindy: Managing Director 1992-1996

Rains, Roger: Executive Director 1993 (partial)

Goodfriend, Steve: Executive Director 1994 (partial)

Larrison, Holly: Executive Director 1995 (partial)

Byrne, Bob: Executive Director 1996-1999

Guietz, Michael: Managing Director 1996-2000

Gray, Joey: Executive Director 2000-2002

Hammerly, Sandie: Executive Director 2003-present

Disc Model Used

Note: The East and West tended to use different Frisbee models until around 1978 when everyone began to use the 80 mold.

