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Underwater hockey team debut intrigues students

By **Dan Poster**

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There's nothing like swallowing a mouthful of chlorinated pool water.

"That's the taste of victory," said senior Tyera Eulberg, a magazine journalism and psychology major.

Eulberg isn't a competitive swimmer, though. She doesn't race, do ballet or play polo in the water. She does something far more abstract, something most people in this country haven't even heard of: underwater hockey. Yes, it really exists.

Eulberg and her boyfriend, Philip Hickey, 24, decided after years of playing the sport in such far-flung places as California and New Zealand that they were going to introduce it to a new crowd: Syracuse University students looking to get their feet wet in a weird aquatic sport.

"It looks interesting," said Kate Borkowski, a sophomore television, radio and film major. "I was a competitive swimmer. I want to try something underwater."

The game challenges players to push a three-pound puck around the floor of a swimming pool using a short, curved wooden stick.

"Individual strength is less of an advantage than it is in many other sports," Eulberg said. "The water nullifies pure mass advantage and emphasizes clever use of torque. Anybody can excel (at underwater hockey)."

Participants wear fins, masks, snorkels, protective gloves and headgear, all of which is provided at no charge to students. A swimming suit is optional-players can dive right in wearing denim and high heels, although quality of play may decline as a result, Eulberg said.

Eulberg and Hickey anticipate reluctance from the student body to try something as seemingly outlandish as underwater hockey. But they emphasize that the best way to check it out is to try it-the real action is only visible from below the surface.

"If we put a pineapple in the pool, we can say that SpongeBob lives there," said Michelle Redman, a freshman environmental biology major at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. "I'm random and so is this game. I'm very excited to join."

Whether it's the mysterious underwater goes-on, the great exercise or the

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sheer fun, there's something about the game that participants find appealing.

"Most people either love it or hate it," Eulberg said. "It's incredibly addicting."

The club, which is being financed largely by the Club Sports Association, will most likely be recreational, Eulberg said. But a team from Ottawa is ready and willing to come to Syracuse and play, if and when Syracuse's team feels up to it.

The SU community can expect lots of marketing and hoopla in the next few weeks for underwater hockey player recruitment as the club attempts to stay above water so that its members can go under it regularly.

"As soon as you see us for the first time," Hickey said, "you'll appreciate how crazy we are."

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