

Alex Samargia

John W. Fountain

Fire of Fun Within Competition

Electricity illuminated the echoes of Roosevelt students and staff. Shoes squeaking against the glossy wooden floor, and thuds from balls hitting bodies.

Dodgeball has been a major sport-like competition normally played in middle and high schools, on the contrary to its origin. Over two-hundred years ago, dodgeball was played in Africa, and it was deadly. Instead of foam and rubber balls, they would use rocks and saw it as an intense workout for the tribes.

After being taken over to America, Phillip Ferguson created official rules of dodgeball in 1905 and rocks became leather balls.

Flash forward to 2024 in the Roosevelt University Goodman Center when student led organizations such as The Torch, SGA, CHESSAC and SAFAC hosted the first ever Roosevelt University Dodgeball Tournament. This included student organization teams, teams of friends, sports, and a special faculty team.

Regina Buccola, interim dean of the College of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences was a member of the faculty team who played the winning student team.

"The teams all enthusiastically cheered for one another and maintained health senses of humor when on the court engaged in play," Buccola said. "The stakes for camaraderie were high, whereas genuine competitiveness was low."

Reaction noises of "ohs and ahhs" were infectious throughout the crowd in attendance. Friends and supporters of the teams interacted with the competitors through cheers, (and sometimes playful boos).

Organizer and Journalism and Media Studies major, Paulina Czapryna described the atmosphere as "super exciting". Czapryna started preparing for this event back in December 2023 in hopes to get students involved.

"The event was super fun to plan, working with Kayla (Linsner) and Kyle (Decker) has been a great time and everything went overall smoothly," said Czapryna.

Not only did Czapryna advertise, and told everyone she saw, she also created a previous buzz and excitement around the event, which helped in involvement.

Members of the Roosevelt Laker Band were present to get the crowd warmed up in between games. With eleven teams who competed, the word truly got around the school.

"I feel like the school was involved more than it normally is," Czapryna said. "Especially with having different teams from organizations and athletics. It was nice to see a lot of people coming together to have fun."

Recently Roosevelt organizations have seen a dramatic drop in event and meeting attendance and involvement, which is causing uncertainty among those fighting for more involvement.

There was a slight boost in involvement among students once the pandemic decreased, but now it has seemed to drop to a new low. Buccola describes why student involvement is a necessity.

“Students’ involvement in on-campus activities, whether they be academic or social, is a vital part of building their sense of connection to the University community. Feeling a sense of belonging and connection supports students’ well-being and supports their academic work as well. Given that many of the people a student meets in college will become part of their future professional network, these social opportunities also have value for future career goals.” Buccola said.

The smiles were contagious that night. The feeling of a Friday night spent with peers outside of a classroom ignited a sort of nostalgia. The type of feeling during a high school football game, or a middle school pep rally. Concessions of popcorn, water, and girl scout cookies were provided.

What was unique about this event compared to past student org events was the sports aspect. Many school events relate to well, school. Dodgeball was different, it invited those in athletics to show their skills while friends mingled, and organizations networked.

Ava Swanson, a psychology major said, “I’m hoping RU continues to want to include more events like these. There’s a ton of events that circle around specific majors, but the fact we got to come together to have a sports outing was a great addition for students.”

“Ten seconds left!” Czupryna shouted into the microphone during the championship student game. The audience watched intently as one last player was left on the opposing side of “Team Bobby”. With one last thud, team Bobby had won.

With the help of SAFAC, the organizations were able provide \$20 Target gift cards to each player on the winning student team. As well as play the team of faculty.

Buccola hopes for this event to become annual, “It was a very fun way to get groups of students who may not regularly take advantage of the wonderful resources in the Goodman Center into that space and got everyone moving on a chilly early spring evening when we might not have gotten exercise otherwise! I relied on my undergraduate institution for most of my social events on the weekends when I was in college. I think the more activities like the dodgeball event that we can support at RU, the better. College involves a lot of hard work, but ideally creates many happy memories of fun time with friends as well.”

The simpleness of dodgeball was able to remind those that competed and attended, that Roosevelt is a space of connection and camaraderie. It helped those of different majors, sports, or hobbies to come together and celebrate another spring semester.