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UMM athletes garner first place national co-ed dodgeball trophy

Summary:

(October 12, 2005)-Does life really imitate art? One might ask the seven athletes who captured a first-place trophy during the National Dodgeball League Dodgeball World Championship September 23-25 in Las Vegas. The only team that competed from Minnesota, The Mullet Removal Team from University of Minnesota, Morris won \$3,000 and first place in the coed division.

The team is comprised of Adam Sullivan, Dillworth (UMM senior) Randi Peterson (UMM women's head basketball coach) Amy Van Arkle (friend of Randi) and Nate Oakland (UMM women's assistant basketball coach), all of Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Iowa Aaron Thompson, Fertile (UMM men's assistant basketball coach) Lori Sylvester (sister of Aaron) Chris Butler (English), Cleveland, Ohio.

Just as in the popular movie, "Dodgeball," the championship team members agree that the experience was a "true underdog story." Rising from the loser's bracket on Friday to the winner's circle during championship competition on Saturday and enduring intense opposition from their competition, the UMM team saw parallels between the movie and their own tournament experience.

Although the group has played in the intramural dodgeball league at UMM for a couple of years, they have played as a team for merely three weeks. Thompson saw an ad for the tournament on the National Dodgeball League mailing list to which he subscribes. So, strong competitors all, the team entered "just for fun." Twenty-two teams competed from states such as California, New York and Alaska.

"When we found ourselves in the loser's bracket, we decided we needed a strategy," said Peterson. The most obvious solution came easily: the team needed to win more matches to get to the finals. So they began to watch how other teams played.

"They kept the women on the opposing team in as long as they could," said Peterson. "When men on one team outnumber the women on the opposing team at the end of a match, by measure of sheer strength, the men have the advantage." In addition women became the blockers for the men on their own team to keep men playing longer.

Ultimately, the Mullet Removal team won by defeating the team from Alaska that had originally placed them earlier in the loser's bracket.

"It was ultra competitive," said Oakland something all of the UMM team agreed got their juices going. "I was fueled by the thought of winning."

Butler, at 36 the oldest member of the UMM team, was energized. "I can't remember being that pumped."

Are there future plans for dodgeball? "Yes," agreed the Mullets. "We'll need to return next year to defend our title."

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