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# The Sport of Mentschen

For boys, Ultimate Frisbee puts perfect spin on teamwork, camaraderie  
Story and Photo by Justin Katz

**T**he Pikesville Ultimate Disc Association held its championship match of its boys' league, ages 7 to 12, on June 9, ending its six-week season.

Ultimate Frisbee, which requires only an open field, a Frisbee and orange cones to play, is a unique sport using the "spirit of the game," which dictates that players call their own fouls and resolve conflicts among themselves. For most levels of play, no referees are used. However, the PUDA has taken that concept and used it to instill values in some younger players.

"They're typical young people playing a sport, they want to beat their friends and gloat," said Mike Myers, head coach. "But anytime something is unfair, they'd complain. What I've seen in these past few weeks though is less gloating and more positive sportsmanship. They are congratulating each other, win or lose. No sore losers, no sore winners."

The league is run by the JCC of Greater Baltimore and partners with the Greater Pikesville Recre-

ational Council, USA Ultimate and Boy to Mensch to help teach the boys skills such as teamwork and conflict resolution.

Boy to Mensch, a federal grant directed toward young Jewish men, partners with Jewish Women International in Washington, D.C., and the Counseling Helpline and Aid Network for Abused Women in Baltimore.

"[Boy to Mensch] is trying to help boys develop a healthy masculinity and the skills to have good relationships," said Rabbi Shmuel Fischler, director of outreach and advocacy of CHANA who is also a licensed social worker.

"Some of the families are using the Boy to Mensch tools in their homes, such as communicating with empathy instead of anger," said league commissioner, Brett Weil. "Essentially, it's combating the selfish desires that could overtake a person and helping the family increase peace and cohesiveness in the home, so they can live together in greater harmony."

In addition to Weil and Myers,

the league has several other coaches who have years of experience playing Ultimate, one of whom is Clay Collins, who has coached at the collegiate level and played at the professional level.

"It's a grassroots game that is developed and run by people who are entrenched in the community," said Collins. "The more kids play it when they're younger, the more it will develop in the future, which is great."

PUDA's league is open to everyone, including the Orthodox community because the schedule does not interfere with Shabbat or any Jewish holiday. Games are also scheduled later to accommodate school dismissal times.

Debbie Vogelstein was looking for a sports group for her 9-year-old son, Elan, to play in but initially only found a flag football group that met at a catholic school, and practices conflicted with Passover and Shavuot. After hearing about the Ultimate Frisbee league, she was quick to sign up.

"At the end of every game [Elan] is soaked in sweat and has a big

**Members of the Pikesville Ultimate Disc Association in action during the championship and playoff matches at Wellwood International Elementary School.**

smile on his face," said Vogelstein. "It's very competitive, and the coaches are totally immersed. Brett is right there on side of the field, giving tips."

The combination of an Orthodox-friendly schedule and team-building exercises make for a successful season, and there are plans to begin promoting a Girls Ultimate program, said Weil.

"The schedule is very important to me; if they didn't cater to the Orthodox, we couldn't participate," said Michelle Sharaby, whose son Sar-Shalom, 12, plays in the league. "I'm happy he's running around and exercising. I'm happy with the sportsmanship they're trying to instill in the boys, and I hope they can continue to offer it." JT

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