Derique Simon

Goal ball is team sport for the blind

Amy Rieth

Op-ed editor

Sophomore Derique Simon has been a natural at goal ball ever since he was introduced to the unique sport. Simon began playing goal ball in the sixth grade and currently plays a wing position. Goal ball is a team sport specifically created for blind participants, an aspect of the sport that originally attracted Simon to it.

“With goal ball, you do not have to rely on sight,” said Simon. “That and the competitive aspect of it are major reasons I like it so much.”

Goal ball was created in 1946 by Hanz Lorenzen and Sepp Reindle as a way of rehabilitation for partially or fully blind veterans of World War II.

Teams of three attempt to throw a ball embedded with bells into the opponents’ goal. The bells in the ball help the players locate it and allow them to predict the ball’s movement.

Players are positioned in front of a large goal that spans the entire width of the court and simultaneously perform both offensive and defensive positions. Every player is required to wear eyeshades and eye patches, masking techniques used to level possible differences in ability of sight. With the eyeshades and eye patches on, the possible advantage partially-sighted players might otherwise have is removed. Goal ball was first included in the Paralympics program in 1980 in Arnhem. It was the first Paralympic sport originally designed for disabled people.

Simon plays for the School of the Deaf and Blind team, the Hornets. He plays alongside Jordan Carnes, Jacob Cooper, Chase Hanna, Zion Johnson, and Jason Mendez. They are coached by Jane Weber. Weber has worked with Simon for two seasons and offered some insight on Simon’s role on the team.

“Derique is a team player and a good leader on the team,” said Weber. “He shows good sportsmanship and is a great role model for the younger players.”

He and the other members of his team practice one hour twice a week and compete in national tournaments, such as the 2016 USABA National High School Goal ball Championships. In these tournaments, Simon and his fellow Hornets compete against other teams in the United States Association for Blind Athletes (USABA) and the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind (EAAB).

The team has had some great wins and has made a name for itself on a national scale many times. When asked about his most memorable game, Simon cited one of these games almost immediately.

“My favorite game would have to be the game against Utah in the 2015 National quarterfinals,” said Simon. “It was a really tense game but we won in the last second one to zero.”