

Students tilt to pinball as a college sport

The Hudson Dispatch, May 5, 1974

By MARK FINSTON, Reporter at Large

"We'd like to make this a varsity sport," the guy from Jersey City State College Was saying After all, varsity football started here as a club. And we're following the same procedure."

With that comment, the collegiate pinball national championship began, amid the flash of lights, the tinkle of bells and the swing of flippers.

Jersey City State challenged St Peters College, also in Jersey City, to the match. Montclair State College was also contacted to participate, but didn't respond.

Jersey State won the varsity match taking the coveted "Mr. P. B." trophy, symbolic of pinball supremacy.



Jersey City State College pinball players gather for a pep talk before taking on St. Peter's College opponents.

"Mr. P.B." is a paper-mache ball with a pin stuck through it. St Peter's took the junior varsity event. The match was played in the recreation room of State's Vodra Hall, since there are no pinball machines on the St Peter's campus.

"I'm in the college scene, said Gene Bannon, Jersey City State's assistant director of student personnel. "So I'm aware of what's going on. And I know there's never been a national pinball collegiate championship."

The captain of the Jersey City State team was Tom Shanahan, 21. of Union City, a senior majoring in media ecology.

I'veplayed in pizza parlors on Saturday nights." said Shanahan. "You have to develop quick wrists and steady feet."

St. Peter's coach, Ed Reuter (he's also assistant dean of students), was equally enthusiastic.

"We'd like to recruit players in Detroit, Chicago and Oakland;" said Reuter. "They're the only cities that can give Hudson County competition in pinball. We'll recruit in candy stores, pizzerias and pool parlors."

* * *

In a pep talk Reuter used a variation of "win it for the Gipper": "Win it with the Flipper."

St. Peter's captain, Rich Ensor, 21. of Forked River, a junior majoring in history and political science. analyzed, "You must be calm and use your weight to advantage to rmaniputate the ball."

There were 18 students on each team and there was none of that Little League discrimination: St. Peters had one girl, Jersey City two.

"The flashing lights, the clicks, the clacks – it really excites me," explained Jersey City State senior Paula Steinfeld, 21, of Jersey City.

"I think pinball should be sent to China," said State senior Michelle Demontreux, 22, of Weekhawken. "It's more American than ping-pong. Man is into machines here."

The teams went through training. Exercises in body english Wrist action.

* * *

School nurse, Janice Mark of Englewood, was in attendance: wheel chair (for weak knees), splints, stethoscope, blood pressure machine, ammonia. She treated only one person, however, one boy got a bruised palm when he slugged his machine after missing a shot.

"A little ice and an ace bandage and he went back in," said Miss Mark proudly.

Three machines were used: Wild Life, Flying Carpet and Airport. Actually, State owns five machines, but Paul Bunyon and King Tut are considered inferior by the experts.

There were talcum powder and towels and a hand computer to keep score and each team had a cheering section: "Go, go, go," and the variation, "tilt, tilt, tilt" plus the champ, "We don't tilt, hell no!"

The name adopted by the Jersey City team is the Gothic Wizards, St. Peter's is the Peacock Pinball Wizards. Wizards is a popular name in pinball circles because of the song, "Pinball Wizard" in the rock-opera, "Tommy."

For those who keep records of such things, and it is predicted there will be an increasing number, the Jersey City junior varsity won the Flying Carpet 4,005 to 1,509; but St. Peter's took Wild Life 211,230 – 146,130 and Airport 7,576– 6,260. Jersey City won all three



Pinball enthusiasts keep an eye on point totals.

of the varsity matches: Wild Life 178,930– 104,210; Flying Carpet 6,853– 5,886; and Airport 7,488– 4,990.

"Oh well, being number two in the country isn't t bad," said St. Peter's Ed Reuter. "And we only have one senior on the team. We'll be back strong." Both captains thought it might be a good idea to organize slot machine teams if such gadgets are ever legalised n New Jersey.

"We're open to all possibilities," said St. Peter's Rich Ensor.

"It sounds like a good idea," said Jersey City State's Tom Shanahan. "but the trouble with pinball machines is that its all chance. Body enlish and fancy footwork count for nothing."



St. Peter's College brought a special cheering team along to the tournament including Geri Duff, Susan Vena, Claire McAndrew and Dorothy D'Angelo.