



ULTIMATE
HALL
of
FAME

New York KABOOM! huddles up at
the 1983 Club Championships in
New Orleans, Louisiana. Credit:
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The Ultimate Hall of Fame

Written by Suzanne “Suz” Fields

The mission of the Ultimate Hall of Fame is to honor the men and women, past and present, who by their deeds as ultimate players and contributors, and by the example of their lives, merit acknowledgement by all individuals involved in the sport of ultimate. By establishing the Ultimate Hall of Fame, we seek to celebrate the history, honor the heroes, inspire the youth, and preserve the legacy of the game of ultimate and the “Spirit of the Game.” Celebrate history, honor the heroes, inspire the youth, and preserve the legacy of ultimate and of the Spirit of the Game. ¶ How do you construct a hall of fame for a sport which, at the time of its inception — and to a large degree still today — doesn’t have comprehensive statistics on individuals, doesn’t have a consistent and well established set of media, and can have nominees that the voters don’t know and have never seen play? How do you properly recognize specific individuals in a team sport where the most celebrated measures of success are a product of collective achievement? ¶ These were the questions that beset the establishment of the Ultimate Hall of Fame and its evolution since it was founded in 2004. Recording the sport’s history is important, even if difficult; it allows us to celebrate and honor the heroes of our sport, those individuals who perhaps shined a little brighter or were the beneficiaries of greater attention due to an incredible set of teammates. Or, for the contributors, those who have done the heavy lifting to push the game forward over and over and over again. ¶ Steve Wulf, a Senior Writer at ESPN, once wrote: “The key to a hall of fame is who you invite. You don’t want to be too exclusive, or too inclusive...it’s a big responsibility. Each HOF has a different type of selection committee, as well as a different voting process and history, and mistakes get made. That’s to be expected, even welcomed for the sake of arguments.” ¶ The process for induction into the Ultimate Hall of Fame is not perfect, likely never will be, and it will never satisfy everyone. Over the past 15 years, the aim of those who have been the “keepers” of this process have asked for and listened to feedback, considered alternative strategies, and made incremental changes to the process, with lots of lessons learned along the way.

Telling our stories by honoring those who have been nominated and those inducted into the ultimate hall of fame preserves the legacy of the sport and the underlying philosophy of the spirit of the game. The character and the contributions of those selected celebrates and adds to the expression of the values held by this community.



Establishing A Hall of Fame



In 2004, Steve Mooney was appointed Alumni Director for the Ultimate Players Association. By this time, Mooney had already played ultimate for more than a quarter century, beginning when he ditched his competitive college soccer career and switched to ultimate at Wesleyan University in 1979. After college, Mooney moved to Boston and became a foundational piece for a series of teams in the city's open club scene, including Aerodisc, Rude Boys, Titanic, and eventually a Death or Glory program that won six consecutive national titles before Mooney retired from competitive play. By 2001, his playing was mostly focused on various reunion and masters teams.

Mooney was always the go-to guy — a leader both on and off the field (and occasionally even at the parties!). So when UPA Board member Joe Seidler called Mooney to see if he could be corralled into driving the effort to put together a proposal to establish an Ultimate Hall of Fame, the newly minted Alumni Director was in.

A Hall of Fame Organizing Committee was formed with Mooney as chair, along with Robert "Nob" Rauch, former Executive Director of the UPA, and Cindy Fisher, former Managing Director of the UPA. In August 2004, after iterating two or three versions, the committee delivered an initial proposal to the UPA Board of Directors that laid out a basic mission and objectives for the Hall:

Background:

The UPA was formed in 1979 and has crowned team national champions every year. However, very few players have been honored, and those only through the "Spirit Awards" and Callahan winners. There is no vehicle to also honor the many UPA players and developers of the organization who attained the very highest level of achievement as measured by their peers. And there is no mechanism to honor those deserving early players and developers of the sport prior to the formation of the UPA.

Established in 2004, the inaugural class of the Ultimate Hall of Fame included Suzanne "Suz" Fields, Irv Kalb, Tom "TK" Kennedy, Dan "Stork" Roddick, Larry Schindel, and The Wham-O "80 Mold". **Credit: USA Ultimate**



Objectives:

The Ultimate Hall of Fame will exist in order to honor and preserve the history of the game of ultimate. The objectives of the Ultimate Hall of Fame are to:

1. Celebrate the great players of ultimate.
2. Celebrate the individuals who helped create the sport of ultimate, as well as, those who further the development of the sport.
3. Promote the unique aspects of our sport, in particular ultimate's Spirit of the Game.
4. Inspire great play and fair play within the active player ranks.

The Board approved, in concept, of establishing the Ultimate Hall of Fame. It instructed the organizing committee to develop an operational plan to formalize the criteria, eligibility, and process for both a permanent selection committee structure and induction process to the Hall, as well as a budget and timeline.

The 2004 Club Championships would mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the UPA and the first official national championships. Plans were already underway to celebrate the occasion with an alumni gathering at the event as well as the launch of Ultimate History: The First Four Decades. The Board also charged the Hall of Fame organizing committee with selecting an inaugural class of inductees in time to be honored as part of the 25th anniversary festivities.

There was a sprint from August to October of that year to create a process to identify initial Hall candidates and gather information about them so that there could be a determination of who would be selected as the inaugural class. A total of 52 candidates were proposed and 12 detailed

The 2008-2013 Ultimate Hall of Fame Classes at the 2013 Ultimate Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Frisco, Texas. (Back Row) Michael Glass, Molly Goodwin, Kenny Dobyns, Dennis "Cribber" Warsen, Keay Nakae, Tom "TK" Kennedy, Jim Ingebritzen, Chris VanHolmes, Dan "Stork" Roddick, Robert "Nob" Rauch, Jon "JC" Cohn, Pat King, Christine "Teens" Dunlap, Brian "Murph" Murphy, (Middle Row) Nancy Glass, Christine O'Cleary, Wendy "Wendell" (Coates) Pinz, Tom Heimann, Mike O'Dowd, Carney Foy, Suzanne Fields, (Front Row) Shane Warsen, David Barkan, Frank Bono, Cliff Marhoefer, Tom "Timba" D'Urso, Jim Herrick. Credit: CBMT Creative



questionnaires were submitted and reviewed. The final selections were approved by the UPA Board, headed by President Kate Bergeron. The Inaugural Hall of Fame inductees included: Suzanne “Suz” Fields, Irv Kalb, Tom “TK” Kennedy, Dan “Stork” Roddick, Larry Schindel and Special Merit - The 80 Mold. About 70 adult alumni and 20 kids showed up for the Induction Ceremony and weekend-long party held in concert with the 2004 Club Championships in Sarasota, FL that fall. The UPA hosted a casual beach barbecue, an alumni tent at the fields, a pick-up game with some rickety knees, a “creative black tie” dinner on Halloween eve, and capped it off by presenting the Farricker and first ever Pufahl Spirit of the Game awards during the tournament finals. This organized Alumni presence at Club Nationals provided the opportunity to relive competitive memories, share loads of fun and laughter, and give witness, yet again, to the connections and the camaraderie of the ultimate family. Its success ensured it would not be the last.

Defining a Selection Criteria and Process

After the big launch party and induction ceremony at Club Nationals in October 2004, the real work began to operationalize the Hall’s process and procedures. Through the rest of that year and into early 2005, Mooney rounded up a cross section of ultimate luminaries from across the country, including the newly inducted inaugural members, to dive into working out the operational proposal for the Hall that would be submitted to the Board. This Organizing Committee included Mooney, Larry Schindel (‘04), Suzanne Fields (‘04), Dan Roddick (‘04), Kevin Walsh, Cindy Fisher, Joe Seidler, Finlay Waugh, Sholom (Eric) Simon, and Nob Rauch, along with input from Andy Borinstein, Jim Parinella, Steve Courlang, and Eric Zaslow. Credit the groupthink of this auspicious crew for creating the framework for the Hall by sharing their thoughts, research, and strong opinions via incredible and colorful email threads and conference calls.

The first step was to define a plan for who was responsible for owning the Hall process moving forward and, ultimately, selecting who is inducted. The Organizing Committee proposed a five-person Hall of Fame Committee structure made up of the UPA Alumni Director, three appointed at-large committee members, and a representative from the UPA board. Mooney, already serving as the Alumni Director, would begin a five-year term in the position; the at-large members — initially Borinstein, Courlang, and Parinella — would serve for three years at a time, after an initial stagger.

Next up would be defining eligibility for inclusion in the Hall. There was a lot of thought and analysis on who should be eligible and what qualifies as a Hall-caliber candidate. Who and what is recognized tells the stories of the sport and reflects the sport’s history.

Mooney believed that they could invent something different from the types of Halls seen in other professional sports — something as altogether unique as the sport it was to honor. “What if we had a Hall that didn’t recognize individuals, but cited everything else,” he suggested. “We’d nominate not one player, but groups, and concepts, and teams — the plays, cheers, t-shirts, icons, fields, tournament names, and training regimens. In the same mold that birthed a sport without MVPs, we’d mint a history mirroring our simple truth: Pass to score and unselfish play.”

The Organizing Committee settled on a proposal for three different types of inductees: players, contributors, as well as a “special merit” category that could encompass the “everything else” Mooney referred to. The eligibility guidelines for individuals was set as Masters age plus 10 years and to have been retired from active play in their primary division for a minimum five years.

There was also plenty of thought about the ideal size for the Hall and how many honorees to induct each year. Parinella did a rough back-of-the-envelope calculation based on the average number of teams per year, number of players per team, and number of years in each players’ career to guesstimate that there had probably been about 20,000 male players to play the sport from its inception through 2004. Comparisons to other sports included looking at about half a dozen Halls of Fame, as well as those already established for other disc-related pursuits like freestyle, disc golf, and guts. The results were all over the map. At the time, the NFL Hall of Fame had 195 members from a pool of 17,000 all-time NFL players. The US National Field Hockey Hall of Fame had just 38 members in 2004, despite there being approximately 700,000 field hockey players. Based on a number of similarities between the sports — everything from competition structures to growth rates to a shared goal of explicitly weighing a

A Different Kind of Hall

Written by Steve Mooney

Joe Seidler called as Mary and I put the kids to bed.

“Steve, I’ve been working with the board on the idea of a Hall of Fame. Henry and I thought you might spearhead the effort.”

I remember a few things about the process. Joe’s call, the early euphoria around the prospect of creating such an institution, the possibility of one day being nominated, and, of course, the Red Sox finally beating the curse of the Yankees the same night I walked the board through our proposal. This all made me giddy, but then nervous, sensing just how arduous the process could be.

“Take some time to mull it over and come back to us with a proposal,” Joe suggested.

For a few years prior, some of us shared the instinct that a Hall of Fame would be great for ultimate, a chance to market a maturing sport while celebrating players and teams who’d made it special. I thought that we could invent something different from the other professional sports of baseball, basketball, and football; something altogether unique.

“Henry, what if we had a hall that didn’t recognize individuals, but cited everything else?” I suggested.

“I love it,” replied Henry.

The sport of ultimate owes a ton to Henry Thorne. His unbridled enthusiasm for the game is legion, so his immediate passion for my idea excited me.

A vision for a different kind of Hall of Fame meant that we’d nominate not one player, but groups, and concepts, and teams — the plays, cheers, t-shirts, icons, fields, tournament names, and training regimens. In the same mold that birthed a sport without MVP’s, we’d mint a history mirroring our simple truth. Pass to score and unselfish play.

By coining a Special Merit category, we set out to make this a reality. Fifteen years later, that Special Merit category lives on, but woefully underrepresented.



Steve “Moons” Mooney talks about spirit at the 25th Anniversary Alumni Reunion “Creative black tie” dinner party and Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 2004 in Sarasota, Florida. Mooney would like to see the Hall use the Special Merit category to call-out specifics of ultimate culture, like the Flying Circus’ face paint. **Credit: Suzanne Fields**



DeDe Kobylarz Singer and Diane Hallinen (East Lansing, Michigan Fisheads) with the team’s catch-of-the-day on top of a pole at 1983 Easterns in Amherst, Massachusetts. **Credit: Dan Hylsop**

Today, I pen this remembrance with a reignited goal of making that early vision a reality. Thanks to the tireless work of some dedicated souls, we have something solid to build off of. A small but dedicated group brought tremendous energy to framing and launching a lasting Hall of Fame. A new group of equally dedicated people continue the work, but it’s not done.

We chose to create a hall that nominated both individuals as well as our unique character, like Wham-O’s 80 mold, and the Boro zone, both nominated in the process, with only the former winning enough votes for entry.

It’s not too late to believe in an even more colorful hall. Let’s celebrate the Fisheads who staked a real catch-of-the-day atop of spears. The Flying Circus’ glorious face paint. B.L.U. [Boston Ladies Ultimate] dressed, and painted, themselves blue. The Boro’s tireless championship zone. New York’s four-person play. The Rude Boys love of ska. The Spinsters dazzling spin art.

Yes, celebrate heroes like the indomitable Molly Goodwin, who went on to dominate in Boston’s tackle football league after retiring from ultimate with 11 national championships. Maybe her team’s name, Lady Godiva is deserving, as well.

With your help, let’s put some additional rigor in the Special Merit section of our Hall. Let’s formally call-out the specifics of culture, character, and community that made us who we are.

In this, our 50th year, what play, cheer, name, winning combo, or otherwise fabulous thing do you think we should enshrine for all time?

player's character alongside their on-field contributions and skill — the U.S. Lacrosse Hall of Fame was one from which the Ultimate Hall's Organizing Committee drew much inspiration. The Lacrosse Hall was started in 1957 and as of 2016, had inducted 425 players, coaches, and administrators — an average of seven inductees per year. The working group decided that the Ultimate Hall should induct up to five new honorees each year.

The last piece of the initial proposal was defining the actual selection process. The Hall's Organizing Committee acknowledged from the very start that there is no perfect answer, as they wrestled with a number of issues related to who had the best perspective for choosing worthy candidates, how much Spirit would be taken into account, and how to strike the right balance of transparency and anonymity for voters.

The Committee developed a three-step process for the annual Hall selection. First, nominations would be solicited from the UPA membership and alumni each spring to seed a pool of potential candidates. Second, the Hall of Fame Committee would select and vet a list of eight finalists from the pool to put forward as a slate of nominees. Third, each member of the committee, as well as all current members of the Hall, would be invited to vote for up to five of the finalists; the five highest vote getters that appeared on at least 60% of the ballots would be inducted. Every five years, there would be an official induction ceremony held in conjunction with an alumni gathering at the Club Championships, as had been the case in 2004.

All of this work was compiled in a proposal that was formally submitted for board approval by UPA Executive Director Nob Rauch. At a January 2005 board meeting, president Kate Bergeron presented the proposal and after a short discussion, the board unanimously approved the Organizing Committee's plan. The Ultimate Hall of Fame was on its way.

Jim Herrick plays with discs in San Diego, California. Herrick was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2005. Credit: Suzanne Fields



The Challenges and Evolution of the Hall's Process

As noted by the original Organizing Committee, a number of vexing issues with the process were readily apparent from the start and needed to be addressed. With the newly board-approved Hall plan in place, the first Hall of Fame Committee — by then referred to as the Vetting Subcommittee — kicked off in 2005 seeking to rectify an obvious hole in their membership: adding a woman to their ranks. Relatively quickly, Tiina Booth was brought into the fold to join Committee Chair Steve Mooney, at-large members Steve Courlang and Jim Parinella, and board representative Eric Zaslou.

To begin that year's Hall selection process, in July Courlang produced an initial candidate list of standout competitors — all men — from the '70s and early '80s to serve as an initial Peer Pool. For the Women, the beginnings were shaky as there wasn't a robust list of candidates. As the inaugural woman in the Hall, Suzanne Fields was drafted to compile a list of potential women to consider. It took until September to generate the beginnings of the Women's Peer Pool — 30 women from varied playing eras and inconsistent regional representation — but even those who were identified were difficult to track down or get involved. There was also an initial list of seven individuals to make up the Contributor Peer Pool.

The next stage of the process was for the respective Peer Pools to identify finalist candidates through an internal vote; those candidates would then be passed on to the Vetting Subcommittee to review and produce a slate of finalists that was balanced by region and playing era. From the start, Courlang was a huge proponent of basing the selection process solely on the opinions of the Peer Pool members. While this was a commendable aspiration for the selection process, the challenge was that the Peer Pools included competitors who often didn't know each other nor had the context to truly assess the Hall-worthiness of their peers. Courlang would quit the Committee over this issue in November 2005 and continue to advocate for basing the Hall's candidate selection on only on the Peer Pool vote. Of note, with few exceptions over the past 15 years, the Committee has followed the peer voters' recommendations.

Once the Vetting Subcommittee narrowed down the candidates to a slate of eight finalists, another key challenge in the early days of the Hall was realized: with such a small number of people voting on who gets inducted, each individual vote carried massive influence. Each voter had up to five votes, but candidates needed to receive support on at least 60% of the ballots to be inducted. When voters don't use all their votes, the results could hang on just one or two voters. In 2005, ten of the eleven eligible voters

cast their ballots, two of whom used just four of their votes. That year, three Player candidates were elected (Jon "JC" Cohn, Kelly Green, and Jim Herrick) alongside two Contributors (Kathy Pufahl and Sholom "Eric" Simon); the Special Merit candidate, The Founders, were inducted unanimously.

This same three-phased selection process remained relatively consistent until 2008, though it often came up short of electing the maximum number of candidates to fill all available annual slots.

After the 2007 voting process, the voters requested guidance on how to value Spirit of the Game as part of candidate career assessment. Up to this point, there was no objective criteria for how Spirit could or should be considered. With little to no data, and the dependence on subjective opinions from peers or opponents, the voters struggled on how to weigh that aspect of a candidate's playing history.

A Refinement Committee was established in 2008 to develop the requested guidance and provide recommendations on how Spirit could be incorporated in future evaluations. Each member of the committee — Hall members Tom Kennedy ('04), Dan "Stork" Roddick ('04), Ann Cohan ('06), and Nob Rauch ('06), as well as Open Peer Pool Coordinator Jim Parinella and prominent Open competitor Mike O'Dowd — was interviewed by UPA Board Representative Henry Thorne to better define Spirit in the context of candidate assessment. After reviewing and compiling all the answers, there seemed to be a consensus opinion on a Spirit of the Game definition to use throughout the Hall process focused on the themes of fairness, respect, and playing hard but with sportsmanship, while also recognizing that Spirit can be dependent on context and can be expressed in different ways.

The 2008 Refinement Committee chose two systems for gathering information about each candidate's Spirit of the Game credentials for use by Hall voters. The first was a simple three point Spirit rating used by the Peer Pool voters to rate the candidates. The second was a call to the ultimate community for input about the candidates, including the representation of Spirit in the candidate's play.

Instructions for the **Three Point Spirit Rating** included:

The goal of the three point spirit rating system is to provide the simplest channel possible for peers to inform HoF voters about this aspect of a player which was not provided in the standard "championships won" dataset. The Peer Pool is expected to evaluate candidates and make their selections using all of their knowledge of the players, including their thoughts about their spirit.

The three point spirit rating is added to the existing process to provide clarity around this aspect of a player. The Peer group is asked to rate each player on this scale:

1. The player's spirit significantly adds to his/her qualifications.
2. The player's spirit doesn't significantly add or detract from his/her qualifications.
3. The player's spirit significantly detracts from his/her qualifications.

Peers are also to be asked what that rating is based on, whether it's one or a small number of incidents from the heat of battle, repeated patterns, reputation, getting to know the player off the field, etc.

Interestingly, the spirit rating system was incorporated only in the Open Peer Pool as the Women's Pool did not see the need for it.

The **Call to Community** was formally established as a forum for anyone in the greater ultimate community to voice their opinions about the candidates via a survey shared by the UPA (and later USAU). The community is asked for candidate feedback, both laudatory and critical, that helps the voters know more about each nominee. The community is asked to share any information that would support or oppose that candidate's entry into the Hall. All feedback is kept strictly confidential and made available only to the voting members as part of their deliberations.

Both the Three Point Spirit Rating and the Call to Community were incorporated in 2009 and have been part of the Hall selection process ever since.

Maintaining Peer Pools

The underlying foundation of the Hall lies in establishing the respective Peer Pools as representative, contemporaneous groups that reflect different playing eras and includes those from all regions without over-representation from any one area. This continues to be an ongoing focus and critical for sustaining the overall Hall process.

When the Peer Pools were first established, word of mouth was the best — perhaps only — way to add to the list. Relentless communication was required to obtain accurate information for each member, including updated contact info. While Club and College Regional and Nationals rosters would have been great resources, up until 2000 these were collected on paper by the UPA and were unavailable as data sources for the respective Peer Pool coordinators at the time of the Hall's founding. While almost unimaginable today, not everyone even had an email address in the early 2000s. Before *Ultimate: The First Four Decades*, it was extremely difficult to find accurate history about individuals and teams. The publication of the book and the creation of the Ultimate History website was essential to supporting the work of the Hall.

For the women, apathy was apparent from the start. The Women's Peer Pool list was built slowly over time; initially, anyone who indicated any interest was welcome to participate. While the aim was regional and era balance, the lack of enthusiasm hampered that objective. And to exacerbate the problem, there was lots of turnover in the role of Women's Peer Pool Coordinator. From 2005 to 2010 there were four different Coordinators; for the five years following that, no one was willing to take on the role. To ensure that the Women's Peer Pool continued to operate, new Hall of Fame Committee Chair Suzanne Fields stepped in. Finally, in 2016 Gloria Lust-Phillips ('08) assumed this important position and contributed greatly to updating the Peer Pool membership.

For the Open division, after his term on the Vetting Subcommittee was up, Jim Parinella transitioned out of his role as Open Peer Pool Coordinator in early 2008 and Finlay Waugh stepped in. Waugh had contributed to the early Hall discussions in 2004-05 and understood many of the issues; in his new position, he instituted a number of important developments before the 2009 election. He advocated for and crafted a process to identify and segment the Peer Pool to work towards regional and era balance, to the extent possible. Waugh incorporated the new Three Point Spirit Rating in the 2009 vote, included the consensus Spirit of the Game definition with the ballot, and provided voters with the opportunity to provide detail behind their ratings. He gave voters the chance to identify their top three candidates under a "weighted

vote” to help differentiate the leading candidates. Finally, Waugh created a prioritized list of characteristics upon which the Open Peer Pool voters were to assess the candidates. These characteristics, in priority order, were: Fear Focus, Spirit, Leadership, Skill Breadth, Athleticism, Level of Competition, Longevity, (Field) Position Breadth, Championships, and Contributions.

The 2009 process resulted in just three new Hall members — two Players and one Contributor, none of which were Women. This disappointing outcome was the result of many factors, from the mathematical impact of a small voting pool, a growing trend for voters not to use all their votes, pronounced apathy from the women’s division, and lack of knowledge by the Hall voters of the candidates across the divisions.

This result inspired a closer look at the voting patterns year-over-year from 2005 to 2009, specifically to see how much the gender of Hall of Fame voters impacted the results. Surprisingly, when past votes were analyzed, it appeared that there would be one fewer woman in the Hall of Fame if voting had been strictly gender-based during that period.

This discovery and the persistent gap in women’s inductees prompted a campaign to rejuvenate the Women’s Peer Pool for 2010. Up to that point, the most common response from women when they were asked to join the Hall of Fame process was, “Hey, ultimate was something I used to do but now I’ve got other things going on.” Determined to combat this feeling, Catherine Hartley, the Women’s Peer Pool Coordinator at the time, crafted an impassioned letter intended to stimulate interest on the part of women to get invested in the Hall. She specifically called out that while many women had good reasons not to feel invested, the men from the early days of the sport were and it was leading to a serious underrepresentation of women in terms of both influencing the process and in being celebrated for their contributions to the sport. Unfortunately, before Hartley could even send her letter, she had to step away from the role. Her sister, Marie Hartley, a former Women’s National Director, assumed the Peer Pool Coordinator role and sent the letter anyway.

2008 Hall of Fame inductee Gloria “Glo” Lust-Phillips skies for the catch at the 1992 Club Championships in San Diego, California. In 2016, Lust-Phillips became the Women’s Peer Pool Coordinator for the Hall of Fame. Credit: Dan Hyslop





These steps did not address all of the issues and concerns, but they represented what could get accomplished with the available people resources and time remaining to implement the Hall process for 2015.

In advance of the subsequent Hall process in 2016, Murphy once again convened a working group to explore and recommend process improvements that would focus on continued outreach and update of the Peer Pools and fully “catching up” before the next Hall gathering and 50th Anniversary of ultimate in 2018.

Being “caught up” was defined as the ability to consider candidates for induction into the Hall in their first year of eligibility. The eligibility guidelines for player candidates were still Masters age plus 10 years and being retired from active play in their primary division for a minimum five years. To more clearly identify who was eligible, the working group defined a specific set of “peak playing years,” in combination with date of birth, as the focus for each of the 2016 through 2018 Hall elections:

Induct:	Peak Playing:	DOB: Open/Women
2016:	1992 to 1999	1973-76
2017:	1995 to 2002	1974-77
2018:	1998 to 2005	1975-78

Closer scrutiny of who was in the respective Peer Pools based on the “peak playing year” guidelines led to older Pool members “retiring” from participation and older candidates no longer being considered. There was some leeway for Peer Pool members on either side of the target years to remain involved to ensure a healthy succession. To validate competitive histories, prospective Peer Pool members and Hall candidates were asked to complete a short form to obtain personal data and playing career details so that the respective Pool coordinators could determine whether that person was eligible to participate or be considered a candidate.

The Ultimate Hall of Fame Class of 2016 at the 2018 Ultimate Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony in Del Mar, California. (Back row) Andrew Lugsdin, Paul Greff, Randy Ricks, Pat “Bagger” Lee, Stu Downs, Christine “Wags” Wagner. (Front row) Cindy Fisher, Jackie Watson Pierce, Amy Wilbur, Cat Pittack, Nicole “Sprout” Beck. The revamped selection process to let the Hall “catch up” chose an even number of male and female players along with two Contributor inductees. **Credit: Rodney Chen, UltiPhotos**

Beyond these years of focus, a number of additional “catch up” process adjustments were implemented in 2016 as well:

- Increase the number of Hall of Fame Player candidates considered each year with up to ten new inductees per year from 2016 through 2018, up from maximum of five.
- Balance the proportion of Open to Women candidates to the approximate percentage of men to women among USAU membership.
- Consider and vote on Contributor candidates separately from Player candidates.
- Expand the Hall member vote to two rounds — the first round to identify each voter’s top ten choices and then a second round to cast a simple Yes/No vote for each candidate on the final slate; two-thirds majority was still necessary for the candidates to advance to induction.

The results of the 2016 Hall process yielded five Women and five Open Players selected, along with two Contributor inductees. It was the most comprehensive induction class to date, an incredible and well-deserved honor for those 12 individuals and, to some degree, relief by the Hall voters and the Vetting Subcommittee that the process changes had the desired impact. Both Murphy and Keay Nakae were added as “consultants” to the Vetting Subcommittee and proved to be incredibly hard-working contributors to the overall process improvement efforts. Keay would further step in to co-coordinate the Open Peer Pool with David Barkan.

Addressing Gender Imbalance

The 2017 Hall process proved to be another seminal moment to further evolve the selection of new members, especially women. It became increasingly clear that the imbalance of Open to Women members was impacting the process in both obvious and subtle ways.

An important step in the annual selection process is a conference call inviting voting Hall members to review each final ballot candidate. Ahead of this Annual Call, the voters receive a series of candidate documents for review: the Player/Contributor Candidate Questionnaire, Reference Letters from teammates/opponents/coaches, and photos, as well as any input submitted through the Call to Community process. During the conference call, each division’s Peer Pool Coordinator provides a brief thumbnail of each candidate and then a time-limited conversation is open for anyone on the call who knows that person well, or has a memorable or significant experience with that person to share with the voters or respond to their questions about the candidate.

The ground rules for this call — much like Vegas — stipulate that whatever is shared on the call stays within the closed Hall voting group and is deemed confidential, given the potential to discuss sensitive candidate information. The conversations are respectful and insightful, with pros and cons shared by those who know the candidates best. In some cases, individuals are still working out past on-field interactions from 30 or more years ago. This group really cares and wants to get it right, are respectful of their Hall colleagues, and can be persuaded to see different perspectives. And due to the confidentiality of

the conversations, if any of the commentary is shared beyond those on the call and the breach is identified, the offending Hall member is banned from future participation in the Hall process. This ban has only been instituted once to this point.

Prior the 2016 Annual Call, there was a consistent imbalance in the discussions of the Open to Women candidates, with the majority of time spent talking about Open. Gender differences were evident in how men and women thought about and reflected on their “glory years.” While perhaps a broad generalization, the men appeared to remember every last detail of a point in a game played decades prior, and relived the emotions associated with that memory in recounting those moments. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to reflect; “Oh yeah, I remember that tournament, wasn’t it somewhere in Texas? Hmm, details are fuzzy – that’s something I did then and it was a great experience.”

The men respectfully listened to details about the Women candidates but, for the most part, weren’t in a position to judge their Hall of Fame-worthiness. The same could be said for the women assessing the Open candidates. This shift in knowledge of and familiarity with the other division’s candidates changed over time as the community grew larger. Due to the imbalance of Open to Women voters — in 2016, the Hall included 41 men and 21 women — Open members were the majority voting block and their votes could and did influence which women were inducted, both positively and negatively. On the flip side, the Women members’ votes on all candidates had much less influence on the end results.

While the concept that women should vote for women and men for men was recommended early in developing the overall Hall process, it was initially put aside as the number of total voters simply wasn't large enough to support it. By 2016, the number of inductees in the Hall — particularly women — meant this idea could be reconsidered and the issue was brought to a head just days before the scheduled 2017 Annual Call. The women voters wanted a separate call.

That summer, an initial women-only call was held in advance of the larger Annual Conference Call with great participation and an efficient, factual discussion of the candidates. A representative group of women from the “women’s call” then participated in the Annual Call with the men and shared the women’s overall assessment on the women candidates. This “informed” vote was the bridge to what was next suggested as a further refinement of the Hall voting process: strictly gender-based voting.

After the 2017 vote, with gender-based voting on the table, the Hall’s voting members were surveyed on their preference for fully separating the vote moving forward, along with input on other recommended process improvements. While not unanimous, the majority supported the move to gender-based voting, though there were some challenges to navigate before moving ahead with the change in the 2018 vote, including how Contributor members and candidates fit in the process.



Joanne Rosenblum and Ann-Margaret Shannon at the 1984 Fools Fest in Manassas, Virginia. In the annual Hall of Fame calls, the men appeared to remember every detail and emotion of a point in a game played decades prior while women were more likely to reflect on the overall experience. Credit: © 1984 Stuart S. Beringer

Ongoing Updates To Improve The Hall Process

Another change in 2017 was an update to the definition of “What Makes A Hall of Famer,” originally penned by Parinella in 2004. The rewrite was based in part on the characteristics articulated by Waugh that had been in use for the Open Peer Pool vote since 2009. The Open and Women’s Peer Pools, along with all the Hall voters, were surveyed to prioritize an updated set of Hall of Fame qualities and characteristics definitions crafted by David Barkan and refined by the Vetting Subcommittee. The resulting seven qualities identified for measuring player candidates were: Athleticism, Dominance, Leadership, Longevity, Team Performance, Spirit of the Game Under Pressure, and Stature.

A separate set of prioritized qualities was also created for contributors and included in the 2017 Call to Community survey and are part of the ongoing process.

The Hall process underwent even more change prior to 2018 voting. In addition to officially launching gender-based voting, the requirement that a player be retired from their primary division for five years prior to consideration was eliminated. The Women’s Peer Pool composition was thoroughly updated through the efforts of Pam Kraus ('17), then-current Women’s Peer Pool Coordinator Gloria Lust-Phillips ('08), and consultation from former USAU Board and Vetting Subcommittee member Gwen Ambler. As evidenced by the Women’s 2018 slate, that division is “caught up” — the age requirement of Masters plus 10 years is now in place as 2018 candidates include one woman still actively playing in Women’s and three candidates who retired from that division in 2014 or 2015 but continue to play Masters or Mixed. Additionally, the Open and Women’s slates of finalists had the same number of candidates — ten each.

A “look back” process was also instituted for 2018, as a special consideration in advance of the 50th Anniversary Celebration, to review those who may have been missed either due to falling short of induction as a finalist or may simply have been overlooked previously for a variety of reasons, including unanticipated and unidentified shortcomings in the selection/nomination process.



Tom "Timba" D'Urso and his teammates on New Jersey Glassboro State Ultimate celebrate winning their second championships at the 1980 Club Championship in Atlanta, Georgia. D'Urso was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2006. Credit: © 1980 Stuart S. Beringer

Celebrating the Members of the Hall

All of the changes from 2015 to 2018 culminated in a celebration of the sport's 50th Anniversary in conjunction with the 2018 Club Championships in San Diego. The weekend full of festivities included a Friday night dinner that served as the fourth Hall induction ceremony and was an epic gathering of perhaps the greatest collection of ultimate royalty ever assembled in one place. Like the inaugural event in Sarasota in 2004 and subsequent celebrations in 2008 and 2013, the event was well produced and well attended, USA Ultimate doing an excellent job of balancing the natural goofiness of ultimate players with the true gravity of the occasion. These quinquennial alumni gatherings have become a key element of the Hall of Fame experience.

Wrote Tom "Timba" D'Urso ('06) after the 2013 edition in Texas, "The commitment on the Hall's part to move this thing forward is outstanding. I don't think I could have looked into a crystal ball 35 years ago and believed what I saw occur this weekend."

More Work To Do

The challenge of crafting and executing a Hall of Fame selection process is ever-evolving. While some of the original issues plaguing the process have been addressed over the years, others have surfaced and require ongoing attention; candidate Spirit of the Game assessment and "electability," transparency of the process, confidentiality (ensure "do no harm" to personal relationships and reputations), revisiting of official Hall qualities and incorporating them into the voting process, and of course engagement of the ultimate community, Peer Pools, and Hall voters in nominating candidates and actively participating in the process.

Spirit of the Game, the underlying foundation of ultimate, continues to be a key component in the evaluation of the Hall candidates. Does an individual's past "bad behavior" — a subjective assessment and observation of past actions — override the possibility of being honored as a Hall member? So far, the results have shown that poor Spirit can keep a candidate out of the Hall...or at a minimum, delay Hall entry.

Transparency continues to be a work in progress; the desire is to balance information that would be valuable to the community with information that may prove to be hurtful to individuals. Rank orders are shared versus actual vote totals at various stages of the process. The addition of publishing the respective Peer Pool member lists and posting detailed process information have been steps in the right direction.

There is still plenty more to do to celebrate the great teams and other entities deserving of the Special Merit designation. Since 2005, the inductees in this category have included the two "official" discs and the Founders of the sport. The committee struggles each year to identify something or someone that

warrants induction into the Hall under this category; no "team" has been successfully voted in under this category...yet.

One of 2018's Ultimate Hall of Fame inductees, Dominique Fontenette, reflected on the importance of team by sharing a quote from Fury veteran Alicia White: "The beautiful part of our sport is that we can't do anything on our own." Citing Lady Godiva's incredible run of nine National Championships in the span of fifteen years from the late 80s to the early 2000s, Fontenette shared that "synergy and teamwork create true power; flashy plays don't equal championships." Teamwork still wins the gold. Sometimes the most celebrated team is not the one that wins it all but the team that best exemplifies that synergy. The 1982 Heifers were one such team, made up of nine players who traveled overnight from New York City to East Lansing, Michigan, rolled out of the back of the van, and played eight games in two days to reach the final of the Central Championships. Perhaps this is the type of team that should be honored in the Ultimate Hall of Fame!

Despite the checks and balances built into the process, the Hall will never be perfect and there will always be differences of opinion. The peer review process, while not perfect, has been a strength of the Hall selection. As issues arise, alternative solutions are explored and process improvements are developed collaboratively. The charge of the Vetting Subcommittee and Peer Pool Coordinators is to remain neutral and open to alternative ideas, keep the process moving forward, and maintain guardrails around potentially compromising information about candidates (i.e., raw vote totals, critical comments, etc.). Job requirements for Vetting Subcommittee members: Servant-leader, cat herder, caretaker, guardian, driver, encourager, defender, and occasional troll target.

Could we one day see the Hall graduate from a virtual one to a brick and mortar location? As WFDF president Nob Rauch described at the 50th Anniversary Celebration in October 2018, “We started this in 2004 and it’s still a virtual hall...we’re going to make the transition to a physical hall of fame. If you look at the exhibitions here, it’s just incredible the amount of stuff that has been gathered and is basically sitting in boxes. There’s so much more that can be done...If we can excite the local Maplewood group out of Columbia High School, many of whom are still living in the area, to really help us spearhead that with a little bit of direction – and if we can get a lot of financial support from the ultimate community – we should be able to get that going within the next five years.”

It has become glaringly clear and constantly reinforced that whether we’re dreaming of a physical manifestation of the Hall or just reforming the selection process, it is an incremental, multi-year effort. The willingness and availability to dedicate time to this ongoing process improvement effort is a challenge. Those involved with developing and sustaining the Hall have contributed huge amounts of time over the past 15 years to debate how to identify those who best represent and reflect what is valued in the ultimate community. Incremental improvements will continue to be forged by those who care about getting this right. It’s important work and a big responsibility.



Hall of Fame inductees, friends, and family pose for a photo after playing pick up at the 2008 Ultimate Hall of Fame weekend in Sarasota, Florida. Credit: Harvey Edwards

Teamwork Wins the Gold

Written by Dominique Fontenette

“What happened to your big hucks and layouts? Playing for Godiva made you just a cog in their machine.”

The captain of an opposing team said that to me at the Sarasota polo fields in 2002. Lady Godiva had just won its 9th national championship. I caught the winning goal on universe point to seal the victory. Despite the gold medal around my neck, this opponent’s words reverberated in my head.

Did adhering to Godiva’s system make great players less so? If so, why had Lady Godiva achieved so much success?

That night, I mentioned the comment to my frisbee idol and teammate, Molly Goodwin. She calmly reassured me, “Flashy plays don’t equal championships.”

Leaders of Lady Godiva understood that synergy and teamwork created true power. They were able to harness together the skills of individual players by developing a team philosophy and strategic framework based on selflessness, fundamentals, and consistency. What this system bred was a longstanding championship dynasty and a legacy of players who regarded each other as family.

A principle of the Godiva system requested that each player perform her role and regardless of her superstar capabilities, no one was required to be that superstar. We each strove to execute our fundamental skills and perform within our 100% calculated accuracy realm. We could be as creative as we wanted... so long as we stayed within the framework of the system.

For example, we strove to maintain brisk and continuous disc movement. We always threw the first open high-percentage pass option. Therefore, no one held the disc staring downfield waiting for her favorite receiver to get open. No one faked back and forth for several stall counts in order to throw her favorite break mark throw.

The system preached collaborative team defense. The mark held the most critical position of the defense at any given moment and practice reflected this emphasis. No one made a layout bid on the D unless they were 100% sure they would get the block. The value of maintaining an effective mark outweighed even the slim chance of being on the ground unable to hold the force and, as a result, leaving your downfield teammates defenseless against a break throw.

Techniques of clearing, recognizing, and creating space for each other were integral parts of the teaching and received just as much devotion as any other concept on offense.

Long time Godiva veteran VY Chow summarized it well. “I remember when people had to layout on D and the thrower would get told to throw better...or layout on D and be told to work on her positioning. Highlight reel plays were not applauded but made fun of...because it showed a lack of fundamentals.”

It’s through Lady Godiva’s system of play that I strengthened the skills of selflessness, field awareness, team-first mentality, and realized the importance of detailed fundamentals and consistency. And it’s these types of skills that I find are ubiquitous among players and teams that maintain dominance over many consecutive years.

As I fast forward to 2018, my fear is that as ultimate strives for legitimacy, these concepts and skills I hold dear to my experience in the sport are becoming second rate citizens to a highlight-reel mentality.

During the 2018 College National Championships, our club team cancelled practice. You could find each of us camped out in front of televisions across the city to watch our alma maters battle on the big stage. Thanks to the hard work of several media companies and



Dominique Fontenette (Seattle Riot) gets the D on Claire Desmond (San Francisco Fury) in the final of the 2014 World Ultimate Club Championships in Lecco, Italy. Fontenette was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2018. **Credit: Kevin Leclair, UltiPhotos**

USAU negotiations with ESPN, thousands of fans all over the world got to see ultimate at its peak of college performance in the US.

I noticed repeated mentioning of the Callahan award and also references to highlight videos. This type of coverage was not unlike hearing ESPN broadcasters discuss and build up the anticipated announcement of the Heisman trophy winner. My initial reaction was, “Wow! We’re becoming like the other mainstream sports!” But after watching for a while, my reaction shifted to a more ominous, “Wow...we’re becoming like the other mainstream sports.”

As any of my past teammates know, I’m no Buddha. I can be self-focused, rigorously critical, and over-analytical of my performance. I want to win. I love the increased availability of film footage and I get just as caught up in exciting highlights as anyone else. I’m no foreigner to loving moments when the camera preserves us doing something that looks halfway athletic that I can show to my mom. Without a doubt, I was flattered to be awarded the Callahan two decades ago. And anytime the broadcasters say my name within a positive light, my ego gets a tiny boost.

When I played in front of the IOC committee at the World Games in 2001 and 2005, my dream was that through increased exposure our sport would receive higher public recognition and the honor of being accepted into the Olympics. But now, with 25 years of hindsight to draw upon, I recognize that the most important things we get out of the sport are not contingent upon external validation, Olympic inclusion, TV network affiliations, sponsorships, or money. I’ve found that what matters most to me is the joy I find within the community and within the spirit of competition. And what has made a real difference in my life has been exercising empathy and the skills of negotiating conflicts and differences.

Watching a point in the women’s semifinals game of Stanford versus Dartmouth gave me hope. Stanford played a zone that forced Dartmouth to throw 245 passes to score. Players and coaches on both sides of these programs undoubtedly valued a team first mentality above all else. One team’s level of practiced cohesiveness matched another team’s coordinated patience and disciplined disc movement. These are the highlight reels that I wish could be captured on ESPN. It’s these types of skills that result in tournament titles, maintain high performing programs, and develop amazing people.

Quoting one of the great players of our sport, Fury veteran Alicia White, “The beautiful part of our sport is that we can’t do anything on our own. The skills we learn through our involvement in the sport also make us better people.”

Flashy plays don’t equal championships. Teamwork still wins the gold.



Robin Barney (Washington, DC Satori) dives down the makeshift slip 'n slide at the 1990 Club Championships in West Palm Beach, Florida. **Credit: Dan Hyslop**

