

Frisbee, the superlative workout?

Ultimate frisbee is one of the world's fastest growing team sports. **Vicki-Marie Cossar** gives it a whirl

FOR the past hour I've been running around a pitch trying to catch a flying object while dodging five women who look like they want to wrestle me to the ground. I'm exhausted, my fingers are sore and bleeding, I've got some cracking bruises – and it's all from a game of ultimate frisbee.

What is it?

Only officially recognised by the International Olympics Committee in 2008, it's now one of the fastest-growing team sports in the world. An estimated seven million people in more than 75 countries play the game, while in the UK nearly 15,000 are part of a registered team. It's no wonder: frisbee is cheap (all you need is a plastic one), easy to play and gives you a brilliant workout in the fresh air.

Great Britain are ranked third in the world (go Team GB!) so I've come to train with the women's team to see what the fuss is about.

The rules

A bit like netball combined with the tactics of American football, it takes place in an area roughly the size of a football pitch. Each team of seven is divided into handlers, who stand at the back of the pitch to 'pull' (a long throw) the frisbee to their team-mates, known as cutters. These then try to pass the frisbee into the scoring area at the other end of the pitch. Once a player catches the frisbee they must



come to halt within a few steps and have ten seconds to pivot and throw it on. Should the frisbee drop to the floor, the opposing team take the next throw.

The workout

You've got to be pretty fit to play at Team GB level but, for a beginner like

me, it's a great workout as I'm constantly changing speeds and direction. It's non-contact (they don't actually wrestle you down) but competitive and lots of fun. Of course, there's a knack to throwing and catching, so for anyone who's dropped a frisbee on the beach in front of a hot guy, there are two official ways to catch it: the crocodile (slapping your hands together when the frisbee comes to you – yes, you'll look silly) and one-handed (best left to the pros).

Playing with the pros

After learning the basics, I spend some time practising with GB women's captain Jenna Thomson. I master the back-handed throw and both types of

catch, only dropping the frisbee a handful of times. I even take a dive on one occasion.

I feel smug when the girls suggest a mini game but boy, did I underestimate the speed and power of the experts. These ladies don't mess about. It takes experience to know where the frisbee will land, so I find myself running about like a headless



Ultimate challenge: Vicki-Marie learns how to play and catch a frisbee from Britain's women's team – then joins in a game PICTURES: DANIEL LYNCH



chicken. However, I'm inspired as I watch the girls dive head first and take vertical leaps in the air.

Playing at this professional level might be out of my league for now but I can't wait to take my new-found skills to the park. And at least I won't fluff that catch the next time a hot guy walks past.

The World Championships of Ultimate Frisbee are in London from Friday to July 18. For tickets or information about clubs in your area visit ukultimate.com/club_ultimate

GEE WHIZZ ULTIMATE FRISBEE FACTS

- The word frisbee is actually trademarked by an American toy company, so the sport is often just referred to as 'ultimate'.
- The game has no referee and it's up to the players to settle disputes.
- It dates back to 1967, when students at an American school created what they named the 'ultimate sport' with a frisbee.
- To decide who plays first, a frisbee disc is tossed in the air and captains call 'odd' or 'even'.





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