

 Chicago Reader

## CHICAGO 101

A user's guide to the city for newbies and lifers alike

### Sports

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## For Players

Games you can play

By Chip Dudley

September 22, 2006

**THERE ARE LOADS** of ways to display your awesome skills in Chicago, and there's no reason to stick to the big four of football, basketball, hockey, and baseball.

The Chicago Park District maintains six public **golf** courses. Weekend greens fees for nine holes at the [South Shore Cultural Center](#) (7059 S. South Shore Dr., 773-747-6250) on the south side and at [Columbus Park](#) (5701 W. Jackson, 312-746-5573) on the west side are a paltry \$15.50. If you want to go a full 18 holes, check out [Jackson Park](#), another south-side course (6401 S. Richards Dr., 773-667-0524), for \$25.50. None of these courses are like a country club, but then none are dog tracks either. Jackson Park, in particular, is a real steal. With a couple of holes well over 500 yards and one par three that plays at 210 yards; it'll test the mettle of the weekend duffer. [Waveland, aka Sydney R. Marovitz](#) in Lincoln Park (3600 N. Recreation Dr., 312-742-7930), on the other hand, while appealing because it's right on the north lakefront, is best avoided, unless a five-hour round of nine holes is your cup of tea. A better option on the north side is the nine-hole [Robert A. Black](#) course in Warren Park (2045 W. Pratt, 773-764-4045): the pace is quicker and the greens are generally better kept. If you want to practice, check out the driving ranges at [Diversey Harbor](#) (141 W. Diversey, 312-742-7929) and [Jackson Park](#). The sixth course, at [Marquette Park](#) (6700 S. Kedzie, 312-747-2761), charges \$16.25 for nine holes and also has a driving range.

If you like to combine competition with serious drinking, there's always **darts**, and the steel-tipped-dart scene might be right up your alley. Though most of the heavy-duty dart bars, like **Di's Den** (5100 W. Irving Park, 773-736-7170) and the **Family Bar** (6340 W. Irving Park, 773-685-8134), are on the northwest side, places are cropping up closer to the lake. **Mullen's on Clark** (3527 N. Clark, 773-325-2319), the [Nisei Lounge](#) (3439 N. Sheffield, 773-525-0557), the **Blarney Stone** (3424 N. Sheffield, 773-348-1078), and **Cody's** (1658 W. Barry, 773-528-4050) are all excellent places to get in a game of [cricket](#) or [501](#). There's almost never a charge to use a dartboard, and most bars will allow you to use their house darts in exchange for an ID. If you want to get good, however, consider purchasing your own darts either online or at one of the many bars that sell supplies. The **Windy City Darters** ([windycitydarters.org](#)) run all levels of leagues and tournaments throughout the year. There's a \$24 annual fee to join and it's \$18 for any season you want

to play. If you're lucky, you'll find a bar to host and pay your team fees. The Windy City Open, an international dart competition that draws the best players in the world, [was held here](#) September 14-17.

With pool tables decorating virtually every barroom in town, it's easy to get up a game if you have an ID and a pocketful of quarters. Famed as a location for Martin Scorsese's *The Color of Money*, **Chris's Billiards** (4637 N. Milwaukee, 773-286-4714) has dozens of full-size tables, [funky, old-school charm](#), and even bleachers for when the pros come to town. **Marie's Golden Cue** (3241 W. Montrose, 773-478-2555), dark and grimy to the core, is cheap, and if you want to polish your game there's no better place to practice your stroke in peace. Finally, for \$20 you can join the local chapter of the **American Poolplayers Association** ([chicagoapa.com](#)), a league that runs games four nights a week all over the city.

Chicago doesn't lack for venues when it comes to bowling. At [Diversey River Bowl](#) (also known as Rock 'n' Bowl, 2211 W. Diversey, 773-227-5800), Guns N' Roses and AC/DC accompany the action. Rates vary according to the day of the week, but expect to spend \$20-\$35 hour, depending on the day, and look for specials like \$1 games on Monday afternoons. If you're looking for something a little cheaper and more sedate, then consider [Lincoln Square Lanes](#) (4874 N. Lincoln, 773-561-8191). This grungy second-floor space above a hardware store charges \$4 to roll a game and \$3 for shoes. The bar has a view of all the lanes, the perfect place to drown your sorrows after yet another gutter ball. Last in what is by no means an exhaustive list, if the itch hits at 3 AM, don't despair. [Waveland Bowl](#) (3700 N. Western, 773-472-5900) is open 24 hours and features 40 lanes, electronic scoring, and a full bar. The place rocks even on Christmas.

If team sports float your boat, the **Chicago Sport and Social Club** ([chicagosportandsocialclub.com](#)) has got most of them covered for the 21-and-over set, including two local favorites. The first time I played **16-inch softball**, my buddy Roger, a native north-sider, told me: "Keep your fingers spread wide or you'll be sorry." Several days later I stood in the middle of a downtown field with an acorn sized lump on my thumb knuckle. [Practically unknown](#) outside the Chicago area, [16-inch](#) is played without gloves, using a ball whose circumference is four inches more than that of the normal orb. After a few innings the ball becomes soft and mushy, and only the heaviest hitters can send it more than a few hundred feet. The advantages are obvious: it's cheaper because you don't need a glove, and because the ball doesn't travel you can play in the smallest of public spaces. It's also a great coed sport. Through the Chicago Sport and Social Club it's \$85 to play, and team fees range from \$750 to \$1,300. Or if that's a little too pricey, go to a sporting goods store and get a ball and a bat and invite your friends to the park. Do yourself a favor, though, and keep your fingers spread wide.

Who doesn't love **dodgeball**? It's not only a guilty pleasure; it's become a [serious competitive endeavor](#). Chicago Sport and Social runs a coed league that plays seven games per season, including a single-elimination playoff. Teams consist of four men and four women, though the rules can be relaxed every now and then. The team fee is \$700-\$800 and the individual fee is \$85. As my friend Kevin says, "It's really just about getting up on Sunday and getting rid of your hangover by hitting some strangers really hard with a ball." Я