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This Isn't Child's Play

Courtney Linehan, REDEYE
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Adult kickball may look the same as the children's version, but it isn't quite the game you remember.

When kids play, games last until the school bell rings or Mom says it's time for dinner. And the number of players depends on how many people are around on a given day.

In the adult version, however, the rules are more concrete.

The World Adult Kickball Association has a 10-page rulebook that outlines everything from player eligibility to field specifications. Chicago Sport and Social Club provides a chart establishing the proper male-to-female ratio depending on the total number of players. A new league, ChicagoKickball, has a "Rule #0" that decrees there shall be no whining. It states kickball is, after all, "a game for 5th graders."

"You don't want to spend a day at work getting mad about work stuff and then get mad about kickball," said Jessica Statz, 28, one of ChicagoKickball's founders.

While it may be league officials who write rulebooks and set policy, don't think organization is involuntarily imposed on the adult kickball world.

Kate Brandes, who is in her third season playing kickball, said she's seen roster spreadsheets and Web sites dedicated to player statistics. She said pregame pep talks can be inspirational, and fantasy teams often are drafted over postgame drinks. And there's always a good debate over foul balls and fielding errors.

"You're more likely to have incredibly detailed, nitpicky conversations about rule violations," Brandes said.