

Giving foosball a new life

JACKIE LAY
Regina Sun Community News

Foosball is making a comeback, thanks to Paul Gee and Jack Hood. "We play so much foosball that I want to make sure everybody knows about it and everyone can be invited to play," said Gee, a Regina foosball enthusiast, who adds that his goal is "to help promote it to make it a better game for all of us."

Not since the 1980s has the game been so popular. If these two men have their way, it will continue to gain momentum.

So what is foosball?

It is a table soccer game that involves two or four players. Teams shoot the ball at the opponent's net. The shooters are attached to metal rods that protrude out the sides of the game table with handles that turn. There are specific shots to the game, which requires hand-eye co-ordination.

Gee and Hood started an informal foosball league in Regina last June.

The league meets for tournaments at The Break pool hall on Tuesday and Thursday nights beginning at 7 p.m., and Sundays at 3 p.m.

Both men started playing foosball as teenagers in the '80s and fell in love with the game.

In 1985, Gee and Hood met at Guys and Dolls while playing foosball. Since then, the two have become great friends. Together, they have worked to see foosball gain popularity in Regina.

The idea for the league came from a tournament the two attended in 1986 in Vancouver.

"We got out there and we just got smoked," said Gee. "We thought we were pretty good. We didn't realize there were these shots and techniques and a lot of finesse to the game."

"We liked the idea of an organized group of people getting together on a weekly basis, honing their skills," said Hood. But they felt, at the time, the idea to start a league wouldn't work in Regina.

After the '80s, there was a lull in foosball, said Gee. Nothing was really going on in Canada except in Vancouver.

That changed last year when a friend of Gee's from Calgary e-mailed him and said Saskatoon had a foosball Web site and league.

Last October, Gee and Hood travelled to Saskatoon and played in the Canadian Open Foosball Tournament.

"I said, 'Look, we need to do something here,'" said Gee.



BRYAN SCHLOSSER / Regina Sun Community News

Jack Hood and Paul Gee have renewed their old love of playing foosball

Gee and his partner from Calgary took second place for semi-pro doubles in October.

"It's exciting, especially when you're in a tournament and it's down to the last goal and you have possession," Hood said. "It's really thrilling and your heart is going, 'I have to score and if I don't, they might have a chance.' It has a bit of an adrenaline rush at the competitive level."

"I guess that's why we got this thing started. Because we like playing so much we thought, 'Hey, if we can start something organized and go to weekly tournaments, it will draw those same people with the same interests to a common place to play,' where everyone who comes out can get better."

Gee went to local bars looking for people playing foosball and invited them to their first tournament.

The first Sunday tournament attracted 22 people. From there, the league grew to running tournaments three times a week.

Then, Daenna Currie, Gee's girlfriend, designed the Web site (www.reginafoos.com).

The Web site helped the group gain

momentum by allowing anyone interested in foosball to communicate on the message board.

To most people, foosball is just a game where you spin the men on the rods around and that is all, said Gee. But, he added, the game can get quite complicated and can lead to big prizes such as the \$65,000 total prize payout at a tournament two weekends ago in Las Vegas.

"We're looking to expand the locations in the hopes of attracting teenagers to play as well," said Gee, who noted that if you can start getting players who are 14 or 15 learning the game of foosball, it will help the game grow.

It's a great way to meet people. The game attracts people of both genders, all ages and all walks of life.

The league is always looking for new members. Right now, it is lacking in female players.

"It doesn't matter what your skill level is, come out and learn," said Gee. "Don't be discouraged. There's ups and downs to the game." Gee noted that as long as you practise, you can get better.

For more information, visit the Web site or call Jack Hood (596-9793) or Paul Gee (591-0427, evenings).