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Foos paradise

In Boise, foosball is much more than a 'stupid bar game'



Brad Talbutt

Charlie Parker, aka "Father Foos," and a dozen highly motivated competitors at the Dutch Goose's weekly draw-your-partner foosball tournament.



Related Links

- [Thrive's Foosball Photo Gallery](#)



Additional Images

Photos by Brad Talbutt

Tim Cisners is the Boise Foosball League coordinator for the Valley International Foosball Association, which oversees rankings and competitions.



Photos by Brad Talbutt

A casual foosballer at first, Jarod Ferguson says he was "hooked" after playing in his first tournament. He has since competed in tournaments in Colorado, Utah and Las Vegas.



Additional Information

[How to get good: Five foosball tips from Father Foos](#)

1. Before practicing anything else, practice ball control. Just move the ball between the men until it becomes second nature.
 2. Practice one pass and one shot until you get it perfect before moving on.
 3. Be consistent. When learning a shot or a pass, shoot it or pass it the same way every time.
 4. Go to a large tournament and watch the pros play. Your game will jump another level just by osmosis.
 5. Be a sportsman. Compete with ferocity but always respect the rules and your opponent. Always show grace in losing.
- For more tips, Father Foos suggests checking out the "Tactics and Strategies" section on IdahoFoosball.com.

Talk the talk: An incomplete guide to foosball lingo

Rainbow: Also known as an "aerial," a defensive shot where the ball is caught on a man and flipped through the air.

Brick: In defense, to be "like a wall" rather than a "sieve."

Camping out: For a defense to predict and arrive at a hole before the offense shoots at it.

Dink: A light and fairly slow shot, timed so the defense vacates a post when expecting a power long-shot.

Foosball widow: A spouse/significant other who is left alone while the player is out playing.

Foos-shark: Somebody you should have looked up in the USTSA rank listings book before you put money on the table, even though they looked drunk.

Goalie delight: When the goalie scores, as a reward the next ball is dropped into play in his or her defensive zone.

Hear birds: When a cheap shot has occurred. ("Do I hear birds? Cheap, cheap ...")

Razzle dazzle: Also known as "Saturday Night Foosball," a flamboyant style of play showing off the talents of the players for the audience.

Tournament-hardened: Someone who is experienced in competitive play.

For the full glossary of terms, visit www.foosball.com.

Where it's at: Foosball in Boise

The Dutch Goose (3515 West St., 342-8887) is Boise's hub for competitive foosball. Four regular events are held for everyone from casual foosballers to seasoned veterans:

Tuesday night open draw (7:30 p.m.): No handicaps or special considerations to ability. The tournament to play if you want to advance your game. \$5 entry fee.

Thursday night pick-up games (no set time): Hone your skills while enjoying dollar beers. No fee (tables are 50 cents a game).

Saturday night amateur tournament (6:30 p.m.): Catering to new players, this tournament is designed to give newbies a venue to learn the game. \$5 entry fee.

Super Saturday (all day): Monthly event begins at noon with singles tournament, followed by draw-your-partner at 2 p.m. and bring-your-partner ("no two pro" rule in effect) at 5 p.m. \$10 entry fee.

For a comprehensive list of foosball hot spots throughout the valley, visit IdahoFoosball.com

Chad Dryden

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If pool is the football of bar games, foosball is, as one look at the table confirms, the soccer. Like football, pool's popularity is unwavering; but foosball, like soccer, has a way of ebbing and flowing within the American consciousness. It peaked in the '70s, then all but disappeared when Pac-Man came to town; but thanks to "Dazed and Confused" and other '90s nostalgia trips, the foos came kicking back and hasn't stopped since.

At the Dutch Goose (3515 W. State St.) on a Tuesday night, that much is clear. In the back of the bar, the pool and air hockey tables are noticeably vacant, the arcade games left to entertain themselves. But hovering over two Tornado foosball tables, 20 men — and two women — are fixed intently on miniature soccer players with single, grooved wedges for feet. Welcome to the Goose's weekly draw-your-partner foosball tournament.

The tournament ends in dramatic fashion. Charlie Parker, aka "Father Foos," and his partner pull a "double dip" — coming back from the losers' bracket to defeat the top team from the winners' bracket in two straight matches. There are no hard feelings; such triumphs are celebrated by all in the way gentlemanly sport is pursued more for its showcase of skill than its validation of victory. If every human has their "thing," it's evident, for the two dozen people who play at the Goose twice a week, that foosball is their thing.

But why foosball, and not pool or darts or Golden Tee? Parker, who runs IdahoFoosball.com, explains.

"I love the game because of its intensity," says the Boise resident, who's been playing foosball — aka table soccer — for 34 years. "You actually have an opponent trying their best to stop you from doing what you want to do most — get that damn ball to go into their goal. Can you imagine playing darts and your opponent was allowed to move some object between you and the board while you were trying to throw your dart?"

It's that battlefield mentality that draws people, both young and old, to foosball. Unlike pool or darts, where, in spite of their competitive nature, players take turns, foosball puts both teams on the table at the same time, jockeying for control of a ball that can reach a speed of 75 mph. Foosball may seem simple — especially when you see drunken amateurs mindlessly spinning their rods, a big no-no among serious foosballers — but it takes dexterity, methodology and commitment to master the game.

"People ask me, is it a game or a sport?" says Tim Cisners, Boise Foosball League coordinator for the Valley International Foosball Association, one of two governing bodies (the United States Table Soccer Association is the other) that oversees rankings and competitions. "It's both. It is a stupid bar game in some ways, but the training and time involved make it a sport. It takes a certain mentality to keep coming back."

Despite its dedicated (if fringe) following, foosball is invariably trumped by pool in all areas. A pool table is a given at a bar, but you have to find a foosball table. People watch televised pool tournaments all the time, but you never see foosball on TV (except on "Friends" reruns, and that doesn't count). Pool movies are abundant, but foosball has just one: "Long Shot," a 1981 film starring Leif Garrett that features a stunt cameo by then-world champion Johnny Lott.

Yet foosball is not without its celebrities (American Todd Loffredo, "foosball's greatest player," according to VIFA's Table Talk magazine; Belgian Frederico Collignon, "the only guy in the world who makes a living playing foosball," Cisners says) or its cash. Each year, the Boise Foosball League sends players to Vegas to compete in USTSA and VIFA international tournaments, which combine to award \$150,000 in prize money annually.

Boise foosballers are hoping to host their own scaled-down version of Vegas this year. League organizers are working on an Idaho state professional tournament, slated for summer, that would pull players from

neighboring states to compete with Idaho's best. If the league can land sponsors, Parker said the tournament could boast a purse of up to \$5,000.

Along with drawing out-of-staters to Idaho, organizers aim to develop homegrown talent through the weekly tournament nights and an in-the-works intermural league of area businesses (Parker and Mike Veit, a Hewlett-Packard employee, are also developing in-house tournaments at HP; Veit says about 40 employees regularly play at lunchtime and Friday afternoons). If there's any prevailing philosophy, it's exposure — not exclusivity. That's what newcomer Jarod Ferguson of Boise discovered at the Goose last year. Like many foosballers, he started playing casually as a way to kill time over a beer, then graduated to competitive play, hitting state tournaments in Colorado and Utah and the Vegas internationals.

"After that first tournament, I was hooked," he says. "Now my kitchen table is a foosball table."

Businesses interested in becoming sponsors or submitting intermural teams should contact Charlie Parker at 384-1951 or charlie@idahofosball.com.

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