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Students face off in foosball

Table soccer makes comeback among college students

By: **Josh Brodleit**

Issue date: 4/19/06 Section: [Entertainment](#)

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As the competitors approach Chico State senior Michael Giannattasio's house, a keg sits on the porch. Inside, a white board hangs tattooed with a playoff bracket. To the left, a television screen shows the overhead image from a camera placed atop the game table sitting in the neighboring room.



Media Credit: [Kyle Buis](#)
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Call it a sport; call it a game; call it nerdy; but no matter what you call it, table soccer still kicks balls.

Most people know the game as "foosball," an intense wrist-flicking, trash-talking battle that became widely popularized by college students around the country during the '70s and '80s.

Jim Waterman, a semi-professional foosballer and administrator of foosball.com, remembers his college days when he first started playing.

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membership, and I plan on using it.

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"I tell folks I majored in computer science but got my minor in foosball," he said.

Waterman played on intramural teams during his college years and even traveled to play at other schools. He said much of foosball's popularity had been wiped out by video games, but college students have always been attracted to the game.

Professional foosball player Larry "Euro-Foosin" Davis is president of the United States Table Soccer Federation and considers himself an authority on foosball history. He said even though professional table soccer is still popular, it's still known as an historically college sport.

"It's a faster moving, face-to-face, social game," Davis said. "You can have a beer and have a good time."

Foosball is one of the few games where players are right in the face of their opponents.

"It's as close as you get to a contact sport, but without contact," Davis said.

Foosball was at its height in the '70s, he said. Chico was a major stomping ground for more than a hundred local and national professionals during the annual Chico Tubing Festival, a foosball tournament followed by a tubing trip.

Davis said coming to Chico used to be more of a break than a pro tour stop.

"It was not only a tournament but a party too," he said.

But as much of a party as it was, professional foosball in Chico died out. However, students haven't given up the chance to beat their opponents in a friendly game of foosball.

Giannattasio recently bought and refurbished a used foosball table and organized his second foosball tournament Saturday afternoon.

"I've always wanted a foosball table," he said.

And now that he has one, Giannattasio has been making fliers and organizing day-long tournaments that have attracted 16 to 18 players and about 10 spectators.

He even plays '80s music during the tournament to put players in the atmosphere of foosball's prime era.

Sean Quinn, who played in the tournament, said he sometimes plays with his roommate for a 12-pack of beer.

"Honestly, I think it's one of the few games you can play when you're drunk," Quinn said.

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

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