Flag football team reaches semifinals

By Jim Ruttenberg
Lantern sportswriter

The 11th Annual USF&G Sugar Bowl National Invitational Flag Football Championship was held in New Orleans from Dec. 28-31. For the tenth time in eleven years Ohio State sent teams from its Intramural Flag Football league.

The Eunuch Pigs, Independent A champions, and the Ohio State Braves, Independent A runnerup, made the trip to New Orleans representing Ohio State.

The Eunuch Pigs, who made it all the way to the semifinals before bowing out of the competition, was making their fourth straight trip to the flag football championships.

"It was just a great time," Don Peterson, member of the Pigs, said. "We had a great team and we really played well down there."

Peterson, a senior from North Canton, said the competition was tough but playing in Ohio State's Intramural league really helped.

"I think we were prepared better then some of the other teams we faced," Peterson said. "We knew the rules, how to play the game and how to be successful."

Peterson credits the Pigs success over four years to a great work ethic. The Pigs would practice twice a week, studying the game and working on plays that would be successful.

"We ran up against a lot of teams at Ohio State that weren't really organized," Peterson said. "If more teams took it more seriously, they would be more successful."

Bruce Maurer, Director of Intramural Athletics at Ohio State, made the trip down to New Orleans. Maurer feels playing in the Ohio State Intramural league gave the Pigs an advantage.

"You get very good competition in our Scarlet and Gray Division," Maurer said. "I give the Pigs a lot of credit. They really played well down there."

There were 109 teams from 39 states competing in New Orleans this year. The field was narrowed down from 109 teams to 64. The Pigs won five consecutive games to reach the semifinals where they finally lost to eventual champion Florida. It was the best finish of any team from Ohio State since the competition began.

"We were the only team north of the Mason-Dixon line to reach the final 16 teams," Peterson said. "The southern teams always play better then the teams up north. We are still very proud of our finish."

The Pigs lost to champion Florida 28-20. The Pigs were leading the game, 20-19, with a minute remaining, but surrendered the winning touchdown.

"Usually the team that has the ball last wins the game," Peterson said. "I only wish we had the ball last in that situation."

The Pigs also put two players on the All-American team, another Ohio State first. Dean Jack, a defensive back, and Pat Davis, a wide receiver, both were named First Team All-Americans.

The Pigs trip down to New Orleans was not funded by the University. With the help of the Len Immon Buick car dealership the Pigs were able to raise the money to make the trip.

"The Pigs should be extremely proud," Maurer said. "They were the best Ohio State ever sent down."
OSU flag football refs among the best

By Krissie Roman
Lantern sports writer

Recognition does not come often for flag football referees, but for four Ohio State officials the chance to be recognized came after years of hard work and dedication.

Andy Esker, Mike Fuller, Matt Rezac, and Phil Schoch each received All-American honors at the National Intramural Flag Football Competition (NIFFC) in New Orleans over the holiday break.

Out of nearly 80 officials who refereed flag football games, only seven students were chosen to go to New Orleans. OSU selects 16 officials to officiate the New Orleans qualifier at the Woody Hayes Athletic Facility. Each arbitrate two games and eight work the championship. Out of the eight officials, some are chosen depending on how many positions are allocated to by the NIFFC.

Joining the four All-Americans in New Orleans were Douglas Moore, Bob Stinson and Joe Vulpio. All three received the All-American honor in 1993 and were automatically selected again.

Associate Intramural Sports Director, Bruce Maurer, said OSU sends more officials to the flag football championship than any other school. "Our officials are highly qualified," he said. In fact, out of 19 crews working the NIFFC, six out of seven OSU officials were chosen as crew chiefs.

The tournament began on Dec. 27 with a four hour meeting for the officials. Football action began Dec. 28 and ended Dec. 30.

After the tournament, each member of the crew votes on who they think is the best on the crew along with a staff of 10 people. The staff then selects the top 20 as All-Americans. As part of the honor, the 20 All-Americans get to officiate an exhibition flag football match at the Super Dome before the Sugar Bowl.

Maurer said mechanics is the most important criteria for deciding who will referee the OSU championship game. "Officials will make the right call 99% of the time if in the right place," he said.

Other criteria are included in the decision process. The first is poise and confidence on the field along with non-verbal communication cues. The second is the officials physical appearance. The third is judgment in making the right call. The fourth is the knowledge and study of the rules. The fifth is pure dedication and not just for the sport of football either, and the sixth is the communication and interpersonal relations with other officials, teams, coaches and spectators.

All of these skills develop over a period of a couple years. It takes officials a few years to adjust to different game situations.
Flag Football team brings national championship to OSU

By Douglas J. Guth
Lantern Sports Writer

The 1996 football season was one of mixed emotions for Ohio State, as the Buckeyes finished second in the national polls after rallying to defeat Arizona State 20-17 in the Rose Bowl.

Unknown to many fans in the Columbus area, another football team from Ohio State was vying for a national championship, although on a slightly smaller scale.

The OSU Raiders, a twelve man squad whose ages range from 21 to 34, won the national flag football championship in an annual 82 team competition held in New Orleans. The victory marked the first time in the 19 year history of the contest that a team from a northern state took home the trophy.

'Anthony Kendrick, a worker at the OSU Medical Center, was impressed with the level of competition in New Orleans, and said the excited atmosphere was comparable to college or even the pro ranks.

'We played some of the best teams from colleges all over the country,' Kendrick said. 'The atmosphere before and during the games was incredibly intense.'

'Eric Smith, 29, agrees.

'Nobody wanted to go home a loser,' Smith said. 'All of the teams we saw were organized and took the games very seriously.'

'The road to the title game at the University of New Orleans was a long and winding one, as the Raiders competed simultaneously in two leagues throughout the fall months. They tore through the Buckeye Regional 'A' League and the Nike regional to both earn a trip to bayou country and get a bid so the trip was paid for.

While in New Orleans, the Raiders played eight games in four days, finally and ironically beating a team from the University of Florida for the trophy. They also played an exhibition game at the Superdome, and saw the national championship rematch of Florida-Florida State in the Sugar Bowl.

Smith believes that a measure of school pride was involved, particularly in the fact that his Raiders defeated a team from Florida.

'The guys from Florida were not happy a team from Ohio won it all,' he said with a chuckle. 'We're proud to bring the title to Ohio State.'

This is not the first time the Raiders have tasted success. The team has been together for five years, and competes in many flag and contact leagues throughout the year.

'We have won everything in Columbus, and have lost only a few games total in the last five years,' Kendrick said.

The reasons for the Raiders' dominance are many.

'Many of us have lettered in football and track while in high school, so the raw talent and speed is already there, but there is more to it than that,' Smith said. 'Each year we come to understand the game a little more, and the combination of this understanding and our abilities brings us success.'

During the season, the team gets together as much as possible, practicing plays and running defensive sets. These practices are organized as any college or pro squad, and it seems to pay off on the field.

'We even have a playbook,' Kendrick said. 'We are completely organized and everyone knows where they're supposed to be.'

Although this season has just ended, the Raiders are already looking forward to upcoming challenges, and plan to compete in a contact league held in Washington D.C. in the fall.

Along with Kendrick and Smith, the other members of the OSU Raiders are: Paul Arnold, Ernest West, Perry Beideman, DeShawn Marshall, Otis Smith, Jude Mormon, Cornell Barton, Mike Rupasky, Eric Johnson, Darryl Crumseil, and Mark Jones.