

Roller Hockey...



Cumberland Raiders To Host National Championships

June 26, thru July 1, 2005



*Above: Curtis Deter,
Team position, #1 Front Spot*

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Fast and Furious

The Cumberland Raiders will be hosting the United States National Hardball Roller-Hockey Championships at the Cumberland Riverside YMCA from June 26 through July 1, 2005. This championship event is expected to draw approximately 50 teams from across the country and hundreds of visitors to Allegany County. The host team, the Cumberland Raiders, is well known as one of the premier hardball roller-hockey teams in the nation.

The Raiders enjoy a history of success having won their first Senior Gold National Championship in Salem, Oregon, in 1973 and adding since then six additional titles to their credits. Other Raiders divisions have also captured national championships including: Pee Wee (1), Midget (2), Freshmen (1), Junior (3), Senior Bronze (1) and Senior Silver (2) and Womens. Success for the Raiders has translated into national and international competition for team players. Members of the Raiders have been selected to represent the United States national team on a number of occasions. Team USA is an all-star team that requires try-outs at the national level. During March 2005, the Raiders' Pat Ferguson and Matthew Price represented Team USA in Montreux, Switzerland—Ferguson as a coach and Price as a player.

*Right: Jesse Elkins,
Team position, #1 Front Spot*

Roller-Hockey is more popular in Europe and South America than in the United States. European teams are often professional and their events draw large crowds. Conversely, United States teams are generally organized around amateur clubs who play for the enjoyment of the sport and exercise. Cumberland resident Duane McMinn a Raiders player and certified referee, points out that Spain, Italy, and Portugal have highly competitive teams and large fan turnouts. "Portugal is one of the biggest supporters of roller hockey.

Crowds of 5,000 spectators are common over there. Argentina also has a large fan base." While the Raiders do not draw thousands of fans to games, they have enjoyed a winning tradition and a devoted local following.

*Above: Pat Ferguson,
Team Position, #3 Back Spot*





Cumberland Raiders 1961 Team

Front row, left to right: Ronald Hendrickson, Eugene Ross, Ivan McDaniel, Gary Hendrickson, Richard Ross, and James Brant. Back row, left to right: Coach Clifford Ross, Dave Arrington, Ronnie McCoy, Jim Paddleford, Bob Park, Donnie McCoy, Bart Deneen, Ralph "Jeep" Ferguson, and Pro-skater, Paul Weisenmiller.



Gene Ferguson (black shirt) during a team skirmish with Bob Cooper (yellow shirt). Gene's team position is #4 Back Spot and Bob's team position is #2 Front Spot.

According to Cumberland resident Gary Hendrickson the Raiders started in 1959 at the Moon Glo Skating Rink on Bedford Road, Cumberland, and their first game was played against Bedford, Pennsylvania in 1960. Instrumental in the team's founding and success was Moon Glo owner "Jeep" Ferguson, and in more recent years, his son Pat, has served as both a player and coach for the Raiders. Gary Hendrickson is the only player to remain affiliated with the Raiders as a player or referee since the team's inception, having started playing the sport at the age of 14. Hendrickson noted one major change in the game since his involvement, which was the introduction of a hard rubber ball instead of a puck resembling one used in ice hockey contests. That change occurred in 1962 for the Cumberland Raiders. Some roller-hockey clubs have instituted other changes like the use of inline skates, but the Raiders league favors the traditional quad roller skates. All teams use wooden sticks that resemble those used in field hockey and all



The camera catches a ground up view of Miranda Wiseman during a shoot off.

Roller Hockey offers fun and competition to all age groups. The sport starts with Pee Wee teams, ages nine and under; Midget teams, ages 10 to 11; Freshmen, ages 12-14; and Junior, ages 15-17. Most teams are co-ed until Senior teams, which have no age limit.



Members of the Midget team show their skill during a practice skirmish. Left to right: Dalton McIntyre, Talia McCrory, Mark Collins, and Dominic Walters.

teams continue to abide by two, twenty-minute halves at the Senior Gold level.

For those unfamiliar with hardball roller-hockey, the game is a fast paced event featuring four floor players on each team, two designated for the defense and two for the offense. One goalie protects the net for each team but his range is strictly limited. Due to the speed of play, defensive players often perform offensive roles, similar to ice hockey. In certain situations, all players except the goalie can act as an offensive player. Duane McMinn also points out that roller hockey shares strategy similarities with basketball.

The National Hardball Roller-Hockey Championships will see the Raiders fielding teams at many levels while some qualifying clubs will only be playing in

selected divisions. Cumberland will be well represented on the Riverside YMCA concrete surface by players, coaches and certified referees. Gary Hendrickson and Duane McMinn will serve as two of the six referees officiating the competition when the ball drops on June 26th. Other residents affiliated with the Raiders have been busy with administrative and organizational details associated with hosting the event. While this is a national championship, don't expect championship admission prices, only a nominal admission fee will be charged to watch the competition. Come and enjoy! ♻️