

Morven Park Ultimate Frisbee By Taylor Gilman



Thursday night—it has finally arrived. Time to lace up the cleats, don the green jersey, and fill up the water jug. What does that mean at Morven Park during the summer? No, not a strange new equestrian event where cleats are involved. Neither a chukker of polo nor a hike through the wooded trails along the ridge. Most certainly not a tour of the mansion—wearing cleats in there might get you in trouble!

Thursday nights during the summer at Morven Park mean ultimate frisbee. The summer season of the Morven Park Ultimate Frisbee League is played on the pristine natural grass fields within Morven Park's Athletic Field Complex, with pick-up games and instructional practice for youth players on Tuesdays, as well as league games on Thursdays.

What is ultimate frisbee? It is neither watching a dog catch a frisbee nor trying to throw a disc into a chain basket. Those disc related endeavors are known formally as playing fetch and disc golf, respectively. Disc golf, while sometimes confused with ultimate, is much more similar to golf (hence the name).

Distinguished by a 175-gram flying white plastic disc, ultimate frisbee is a fast-paced, non-contact, 7 v 7 sport that is a unique mix between soccer, basketball, and football. Created at Columbia High School in New Jersey in 1968, it now has over 7 million participants in 56 countries. All you need to play is a frisbee and markers for end zones. The basic rules and principles are simple.

- Ultimate is self-officiated, meaning there are no referees, players are expected to make fair foul calls and discuss the outcomes. The principle behind this is 'Spirit of the Game'.
- You are prohibited from running with the frisbee.
- Like in basketball, you set a pivot foot when you have the disc.
- Like soccer, there is non-stop running involved during each point.
- Like football, you cut to get open.

- The aim is to score goals, worth one point each, in the opponent's end zone. You do so by passing the frisbee between teammates until your team reaches the opposing end zone. Normally, games are played to 13 or 15 points, with a time cap, similar to soccer.
- Turnovers occur when the defending team intercepts or knocks down the disc (without fouling the offense) or when the offense drops the disc, throws it into the ground, or out of bounds.
- The playing field is a total of 110 yards long and 40 yards wide, with a 70-yard regulation surface as well as 20-yard end zones.
- Play begins with a 'pull' by the defending team, like a kick-off in football. Once one team scores (whether it be the offense or defense), the next point begins with a pull, so on and so forth, until the score or time cap is reached.

Ultimate is a sport designed for all ages, with playing levels ranging from local pick-up all the way to the World Games, and playing it provides exercise and fun no matter the level of play. It has been recognized by the International Olympic Committee as well, putting it one step closer to being in the Olympics.

Now—back to the beginning. The cleats are laced up, the jersey is on, and the water jug is full. The freshly cut grass at Morven Park awaits. Time to get onto the field and toss some plastic!

Morven Park Sports offers flag football and ultimate leagues during the summer, spring, and fall. If you would like to see what ultimate is all about, sign up for one of the leagues at www.morvenparksports.org.