

## Midwest Urban Bike Polo Leagues Gear Down for Bigger and Better Season

by Jake Newborn

Some of you may have seen the back-cover of Newsweek a few weeks ago featuring two guys playing bike polo in the park for a Toyota advertisement. Some of you may have read little blurbs in various online blogs and forums about Bike Polo. Some of you may even have a kid or friend who actually plays this fledgling action sport and most of you are asking yourselves right now "What the heck is this guy talking about...Bike Polo?" Well for those who don't know Bike Polo is basically street hockey mixed with cycling.

There are a few rules to the sport, which may at first sight appear chaotic. The first one being "No Footdown" meaning if your one of your feet comes off the pedal and touches the ground you can not be the next person to play the ball and you must ride to the side lines and touch a "tap in" point with your mallet. The other main rule is a goal can only be scored when it comes off the "business end" of the mallet (think croquet).

A game begins with each team of 3 lined up behind their goal and a ref shouts "3,2,1, Go" as players sprint towards the ball in the middle of the court. Games are usually played up to 5 points, but in tournament play can also be timed in an effort to get all the games played over the course of a weekend. Most of the other rules are more etiquette and



to be held in Madison May 3-4, 2008. On March 16th Milwaukee Bike Polo hosted The Milwaukee Messenger Invitational Bike Polo Tournament with 7 total teams registering from Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago. Team Pabst consisting of, Jake Newborn, Joe Burge, and Eric Crandall, took the Championship title in a 5-0 route of Team Schlitz from Chicago as the sun was dipping below the tree line.

Every other month or so a "friendlies event" is held where there is nothing at stake. This gives players get a chance to play on the same team with people from other cities and just have fun playing bike polo. Weekly practice games are held in each city on Sundays so if you would like to stop by and check out bike polo feel free. Due to weather, locations can change, so for latest information on court locations check on the websites listed below.

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This season both clubs along with teams from all over the country and world will compete in tournaments in Washington D.C., New York, Portland, OR, Ottawa, Ontario, Chicago, IL, and Toronto. This June Milwaukee and Madison are each sending 2 teams to the Cycle Messenger World Championships Bike Polo Tournament in Toronto for a shot at the title of Best Urban Bike Polo Team in the World! Both clubs are pursuing sponsorships to help cover registration fees and travel costs to compete in these tournaments across the continent.

So next time your walking through the park and you see some crazy guys and girls on bikes swinging mallets stop and watch for a minute, they may be practicing for a World Championship run! Maybe even stop and play. Mallets will be provided to newbies so just bring your enthusiasm and a bike!

For more information you can visit [www.madbikepolo.org](http://www.madbikepolo.org), [www.myspace.com/mkebikepolo](http://www.myspace.com/mkebikepolo), or email [mkebikepolo@gmail.com](mailto:mkebikepolo@gmail.com).

played up to 5 points, but in tournament play can also be timed in an effort to get all the games played over the course of a weekend. Most of the other rules are more etiquette and suggestions what to do, and not do, in the course of a game.

Mallets are constructed of aluminum ski poles used for handles and high density Polymer tube as the mallet head. The types of bicycles used can be whatever you have, but we highly suggest not bringing your 2008 Madone because it WILL be wrecked. What seems to be working well for most players is a low ratio (2:1 or less) single speed freewheel, or fixed gear steel road bike.

Here in Wisconsin there are two clubs, Madison and Milwaukee, that have built up an intense rivalry yet grown to appreciate the competition amongst fellow players and still become friends in the process. Since the Fall of 2006 there has been a semi annual tournament dubbed "The Bi-Annual Midwest Bike Polo Championships" with rotating host cities of Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago and participants from Detroit and Lexington, KY as well. Madison's team consisting of Jonny Hunter, Ben Hunter, and Kevin Walsh are defending 3 time champions. They narrowly defeated Milwaukee's Eric Crandall, Joe Burge, and Jake Newborn in a 3-2, 2-3, 3-2 best of 3 match during the fall 2007 edition. Look for these teams to meet again in the finals of the 4th BAMWBPC