

USF FOAM FIGHTING CLUB CREATES LASTING FRIENDSHIPS

OCTOBER 27, 2014 TAYLER CADDY



Photo by Tayler Caddy

Dirt clouds rose from the ground as a group of young men battled on the lawn, their swords hitting the bodies of one another with dull thwacking sounds. While most participants wore street clothes, one combatant looked like a knight straight from medieval times in a belted gray tunic with black pants and boots. He deflected attacks with his shield as he jumped and jabbed at enemies with his sword.

Bystanders watched the unusual scene with looks of amusement and wonder. But for the modern-day knight, Glen Greenberg, it was just another day doing what he loves.

Greenberg, 20, began the unofficial USF Foam Fighting Club in 2013 when he decided to bring his adolescent obsession to campus.

He claimed it all started about six years ago with a show on the Discovery Channel.

“In half an hour, my jaw was on the floor,” Greenberg said. “As my parents put it, it was the only thing I ever put initiative into, so they supported it in full, 100 percent.”

The name of the game is Dagorhir. Founded in 1977, the live-action combat game based on medieval themes and J.R.R. Tolkien lore involves players fighting one another with light-weight foam weapons, or boffers. Attacks on an opponent must be made with sufficient force, and all players are held to an honor system to acknowledge good, solid hits. When a player has “lost” two limbs, they are considered “dead,” and therefore out of the game.

Greenberg had led a group of Dagorhir fighters in his hometown of Boca Raton, but found himself with only his swords and shield for company when he came to USF. So he decided to go out and find people to fight with in a rather unconventional way.

Chase Brown, 19, a business administration major and club member, recalled seeing Greenberg outside of Castor Hall on campus last year.

“He literally stood up on the table and said, ‘Come fight me!’” Brown said.

Greenberg’s efforts weren’t in vain.

“Slowly, one by one, people actually went up to this crazy guy yelling up on the bench, and said, ‘Sure, I’ll give it a shot.’” Greenberg said.

Since then, the group has grown to nearly 20 members. The club practices at Castor Lawn on Wednesday and Friday afternoons and never fails to draw a small crowd of spectators.

Brown said they are always open for new members, and encourage bystanders to join the fights.

“A lot of people come up to us and are like, ‘I saw the movie Role Models! Is this kind of like that?’” he said. “And we say, yes, definitely, but less magic, more fighting.”

In reference to live-action role play, the group emphasizes that Dagorhir is more live-action than role play. While Dagorhir players can wear costumes, or garb, and create characters and backstories for themselves, it doesn’t affect the way they fight or how the game is played.

The group hopes to be approved by the university as the official USF Foam Fighting Club, so they can use facilities on campus and receive funding to create or buy extra weapons for walk-on players. They would also like to do demonstrations at Bull Market, particularly around midterms and finals week, to help students release stress and to get the club’s name out around campus.

The group is quick to mention that its unofficial club status hasn’t affected on-campus activities.

“Campus security, teachers, administration, everyone loves us,” said Roman Guinazzo, 19, a business administration major and long-time friend of Greenberg.

Members have never gotten into trouble for fighting on-campus, or while toting their weapons to and from practices.

“We actually have campus security and the university police come out and watch us on their off time,” Greenberg said.

In the end, the group insists that fighting Dagorhir is all about having fun with others. Whether someone wants to fight, help make weapons or garb, or just hang out and watch, members encourage them to get involved.

“We try to incorporate everyone and make it a very diverse populace, because that’s what it is. It’s meant to bring the community together,” Brown said.

Guinazzo agreed: “It’s a really close-knit community. Once you’re in, you’ve got friends for life.”

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