

Hurling: The Fastest Game on Grass

The Irish are fairly imaginative when it comes to sports, and hurling is right up there with the more brutal pastimes to come out of the Emerald Isle. For the uninitiated, try to imagine a hybrid of rugby union and lacrosse, with a baseball as the main target of everyone's passions. The ball flies at 100 mph (and occasionally toward some poor sod stuck between rugby-style goalposts who has the unenviable job of trying to stop this blurred meteorite) and yes, you can whack other players with the stick ... so long as it appears like an accident (and the referee doesn't see you doing it).

There are more than 50 hurling clubs in the US, with the fastest game on grass represented locally by the Providence Hurling Club. As with many adventures involving the Irish, the club's origin story is right out of a movie. In 2014, an 18-year-old Irish-American gets inspired by his father to take up hurling, and through visits to Ireland discovers his life's calling and brings it back to RI. But this wasn't a Hibernian fantasy with Tom Cruise making a twit of himself in a scally cap, rather the real-life experiences of club co-founder, Michael Walsh.

"When I got back to the States, I discovered that my neighbor shared my passion for the sport," Walsh explained. "We would practice as often as possible, and then in 2015, we marched in the Providence Saint Patrick's Day parade as our official launch party."

Back then, there were only Walsh, his neighbor and club co-founder, Michael Kennelly, and two other individuals (who are still with the club). But each year the team has grown, and today supports between 20 and 25 regular players. They are doing well, too, competing in the Boston/Northeast Division of the US Gaelic Athletic Association, and winning all but one game in last season's fall league.

"We are a young, growing team and welcome anyone who wants to play a fast, exciting game," said Walsh. "Anyone aged 18 and over can contact us and become part of PVD HC!"

And you know what? I think I just might.

The PVD HC fall season starts soon! To join, grab your cleats and go to providencehurlingclub.com