

New Sporting Teams Emerge as Victors in 2012's Blessed Culture and Sports Fest

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Kimisei Miyake from New York "lays-out" for the disc in an ultimate frisbee game against DMV.

The seventh annual Blessed Culture and Sports Festival (BCSF), which took place at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) from August 8-12, 2012, was the largest and most competitive in the history of the event, according to organizers. Players and spectators from all over the country joined together to cheer on more than 50 teams competing in Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Soccer, Volleyball, Tennis, and Table Tennis. More than 500 people were present for the entire five days, with that number swelling to more than 1,000 on Sunday, making 2012's BCSF one of the largest gatherings of Unificationist youth in the country. The following is a report on the sporting events of this year's BCSF.

Men's Ultimate Frisbee



A member from the Georgia team (orange) snatches the Frisbee from a member of the Connecticut team (green).

Eight teams participated in the men's Ultimate Frisbee tournament: seven returning teams from D.C.-Maryland-Virginia (DMV, District 1), New York (District 2), New Jersey (District 3), Connecticut (District 4), Ohio (District 6), Chicago (District 7), and California (District 12), and a first-time team from Georgia (District 5). New Jersey, which took home first place in the past three BCSFs and was expected to continue the trend this year, lost to DMV but still managed to win a third-place victory over Connecticut, the only team that had defeated them in the round-robin tournament. The Ultimate Frisbee final between DMV and Ohio on Sunday after Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM) Sunday Service was the most-watched sporting event of the week with more than 300 spectators. DMV, which had ended its round-robin game with Ohio three days prior in a tie, ended the first half of the game 5-5 and ultimately claimed first place with a score of 13-7.

DMV team co-captains Shinyul Taylor and Mattheo Eisenbart attributed the win to their team's unity and dedication, as well as the two practices per week that they had mandated for the team for the past seven months. Taylor also noted the amazing level of sportsmanship this year, especially from the New York team, which had struggled with that aspect of the game in previous years.



A member of the New Jersey claims the Frisbee mid-jump over her New York/GPA opponents.

Women's Ultimate Frisbee

This year's women's Ultimate Frisbee tournament included three teams: New York/Generation Peace Academy (GPA) (District 2), New Jersey (District 3), and Ohio, which sent a women's team for the first time. Each team played against the other two on Saturday and, despite an intense cheering squad, Ohio was eliminated from the tournament after losing to both New York/GPA and New Jersey. The women's finals took place on Sunday after LLM Service. More than 150 people watched the game, and New Jersey beat New York/GPA 8-3.



Masao Okano from Massachusetts blasts past a DMV player in the first game of the tournament.

Soccer

Five teams battled on the soccer field this year, starting off the five-day event in a modified round-robin on Thursday and Friday. Teams this year came from DMV (District 1), New York (District 2), New Jersey (District 3), Connecticut (District 4), and Canada (affectionately known as "District 13"). Both New Jersey and Canada sent soccer teams to BCSF this year and, despite a crushing loss to the veteran Connecticut team on Friday, the Canadians managed to hold their spot in the tournament.

Matt Dumont from New Hampshire, who co-captained the New York team, said he was "proud of the team because it consisted of players from both New York and New England who were able to unite and bring a full team to the competition." Dumont's team (also known as "New Yorkland" because of the large number of players from New England) took home third place after a loss to the Canadians.



Volleyball athletes from Ohio and Camp Lovin' Life link arms for a friendly post-game photo.

The final between Canada and the undefeated Connecticut team consisted of two 40-minute halves that ended in a score of 1-1. Despite two 10-minute overtimes, the game was still tied and the decision came to a penalty kick shootout. Under the extreme pressure of the situation and hundreds of watching eyes, the

Canadians came out on top, scoring four out of their five kicks.

Matt Quantz, soccer coordinator and first-time BCSF participant said, “The entire tournament had a great atmosphere about it. All the teams were very competitive and showed their passion for the sport. I was secretly rooting for the Canadian team the entire time, because they were the new kids on the block; I loved the energy and team spirit that the Canadians brought to the field. They seemed to really enjoy BCSF and I hope they come back next year to defend their title.”

In addition to the regular tournament, there was a lighthearted soccer game between BCSF staff and LLM Headquarters staff on Saturday. Players included Reverend Joshua Cotter, vice president of HSA-UWC; Jaga Gavin, LLM national youth pastor; Jin Kwon Kim, director of BCSF; and Andrew Love, New York LLM Pastor and comedian-extraordinaire. Despite intense cheering from the crowd, both teams were exhausted after two 12-minute halves. The humorous game ended with a score of 1–1.

Love told *Unificationnews.com* later that, “Rev. Cotter is like a shark in sheep’s clothing. He’s a warrior after all these years. He and Luke Higuchi [president of Survivors Against Forced Exit] really surprised me.”



Daniel Heller, from New York and playing for the Camp Lovin' Life team, jumps up for a spike against Evan Anderson from Minnesota.

Volleyball

With a total of 16 volleyball teams, competition was fierce, partly because of the absence of last year’s BCSF champions from Florida. This year’s competitors consisted of the following: two DMV teams (District 1), a New York team (District 2), two New Jersey teams (District 3), two teams from New England and one from Connecticut (District 4), two teams from Ohio (District 6), a Chicago team and a Michigan team (District 7), one team from Minnesota (District 8), a California team (District 12), a team from Canada (District 13), and a Camp Lovin’ Life team, which consisted of staff from the high-school and middle-school summer camps.

Teams played three games each on both Thursday and Friday, allowing seven teams to advance into the quarterfinals on Saturday morning. The Ohio A-team lost in the semifinals but still managed to claim third place. The volleyball final, which took place after the soccer final on Saturday afternoon, was an intense three-game match between the second-place winners from last year, New York, and Connecticut, which included 6-feet-7-inches-tall Jason Tobkin, who played volleyball for Ohio State University. Despite Tobkin’s height and experience, New York claimed the title of this year’s BCSF champions thanks to their own two giants, Aaron Mickler and Chunky Wright.



With a total of 16 teams, competition in Volleyball was fierce, partly because of the absence of last year’s BCSF champions from Florida.

Basketball

Nine teams competed in the BCSF's Basketball tournament this year, including three teams (A, B, and C) from New York (District 2), a team from New England (District 4), Minnesota (District 8), Texas (District 9), Seattle (District 10) California (District 12), and Canada ("District 13"). From Thursday to Saturday, each team competed in the round-robin tournament with all the other eight teams. The semifinals and finals took place on Sunday.

For semifinals, California played against New York C, and New York C won. New York A played against Seattle and lost. New York C and Seattle were in the finals, and New York A and California played for third place, which California won. Seattle won two out of three games in the final against New York C. Approximately 50 people watched the final game; the court was so crowded that people were watching through the windows from the outside.

Hyo Nam Heller, who played for the New York team in 2011 and had received second place just as he did this year, said, "This year, teams were very wild and intense, but the sportsmanship was really good."



Francois Lacroix (front) from Canada and Evan Anderson from Minnesota warm up before their game.

Tennis

According to Tennis coordinator Karlsun Allen, the Tennis tournament was organized into a modified round-robin, meaning everyone played at least three people. Based on the win-loss ratio, the seeding for the semifinals was decided. Thirteen males and one female, Claire Lacroix from Canada, played in the men's bracket, while four females competed in the women's bracket.

"This year, a Canadian family took over," said Allen. "The final two in the men's final were Miro and Francois Lacroix. Miro won 6-2. In the women's final, Mie Lacroix beat Young Gi Kim 6-4. The defending champion from last year, Evan Anderson from Minnesota, was defeated and unseeded. It was an exciting year for tennis."



Maryland emerged victorious in men's Ultimate Frisbee, defeating three-year reigning champion New Jersey.

Table Tennis

Twelve competitors participated in this year's Table Tennis tournament. Each played four games in total during the round-robin tournament on Thursday and Friday to be seeded into the semifinal on Saturday. Netta Johnston from Alabama secured a spot for District 5 on the podium when she beat Namhoon Kim from Bridgeport for third place. In an exciting final, Elijah Whitmore from Bridgeport captured his third straight BCSF first-place victory as he beat his fellow District 4 competitor, Misha Greene from New Hampshire, who took home second place.



BCSF welcomed its first international team when Canada sent representatives to compete in sports.

Other

On Saturday, following the soccer finals, several intramural sports were organized, including a small game of dodge ball, flag football, and a five-kilometer run.

The winner of "Team Spirit," a competitive category that was instituted this BCSF, was Ohio (District 6). As he did the year before, Pastor of District 6 Rev. Michael Lamson had driven from Ohio to New York in an RV to support the 60 or so youth from his district participating in BCSF and proudly took home the Team Spirit Cup.



Trophies for various sports decorate the awards table.

BCSF 2012 Sports Results

Men's Ultimate Frisbee:

1st - District 1 DMV
2nd - District 6 OH
3rd - District 3 NJ

Women's Ultimate Frisbee:

1st - District 3 NJ
2nd - District 2 NY
3rd - District 6 OH/GPA

Men's Tennis:

1st - Miro Lacroix
2nd - Francois Lacroix
3rd - Patrick Cook

Women's Tennis (Intramural - no medals):

1st - Mie Lacroix
2nd - Young Gi Kim
3rd - Yu Jin Kim

Basketball:

1st - District 10 Seattle

2nd - District 2 (C) NY
3rd - District 12 California

Volleyball:

1st - District 2 NY
2nd - District 4 CT
3rd - District 6 OH (A)

Soccer:

1st - Canada
2nd - District 4 CT
3rd - District 2 NY

Table Tennis:

1st - Elijah Whitmore
2nd - Misha Greene
3rd - Netta Johnson

5-Kilometer Run (Intramural - no medals):

1st - Colin Savage 16:47
2nd - unknown
3rd - Minori Minagawa 20:56
4th - Sumire Minagawa 20:57
5th - (lost name and time)