

LOCAL LEAGUE SPOTLIGHT



THE RISE OF ULTIMATE IN INDIANA

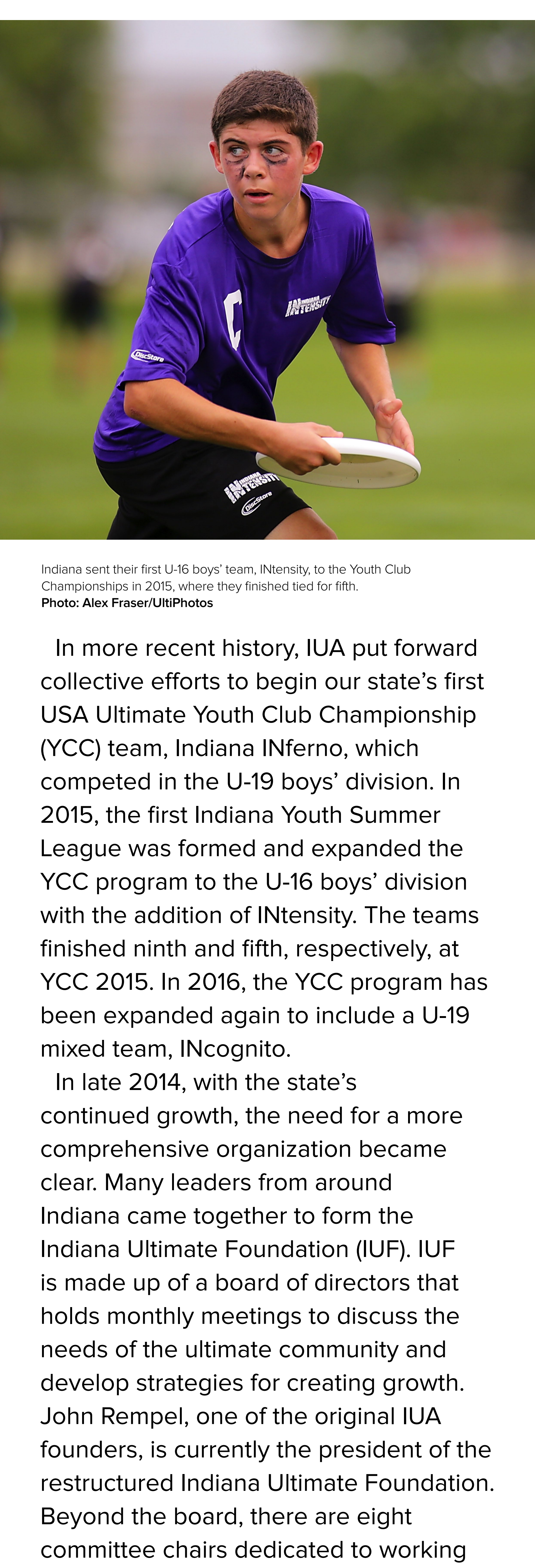
By: Alex Hutton

The Indiana Ultimate Association (IUA) was formed in 1990 by David Hasbrook, Dave Adam and John Rempel to help organize and grow ultimate in the Indianapolis area. IUA set out to establish a coed adult recreational league to recruit talent for the competitive men's club team, the Indy Eagles, with an additional goal of establishing a women's club team. Indiana's ultimate growth began with the four-team Indianapolis Summer League in 1990 at the Kuntz Stadium practice field.

The summer league alone has grown from those four teams to over 250 players spread among 16 teams that play games from mid-May to the beginning of August.

Eventually, IUA began running the city's recreational leagues, adding winter and fall indoor playing opportunities, and started to focus on developing youth ultimate in the state.

Led by Al Geisler, the Indiana Ultimate Association hosted its first High School State Championship in 2007, which served as a probationary year. The first USA Ultimate-sanctioned Indiana High School State Championship took place in Noblesville on June 14, 2008, with just three teams. Indiana now has over 15 high school teams, most of which have coaches with a high level of playing and coaching experience.



Indiana sent their first U-16 boys' team, INtensity, to the Youth Club Championships in 2015, where they finished tied for fifth.
Photo: Alex Fraser/UltiPhotos

In more recent history, IUA put forward collective efforts to begin our state's first USA Ultimate Youth Club Championship (YCC) team, Indiana INferno, which competed in the U-19 boys' division. In 2015, the first Indiana Youth Summer League was formed and expanded the YCC program to the U-16 boys' division with the addition of INtensity. The teams finished ninth and fifth, respectively, at YCC 2015. In 2016, the YCC program has been expanded again to include a U-19 mixed team, INCognito.

In late 2014, with the state's continued growth, the need for a more comprehensive organization became clear. Many leaders from around Indiana came together to form the Indiana Ultimate Foundation (IUF). IUF is made up of a board of directors that holds monthly meetings to discuss the needs of the ultimate community and develop strategies for creating growth. John Rempel, one of the original IUA founders, is currently the president of the restructured Indiana Ultimate Foundation. Beyond the board, there are eight committee chairs dedicated to working on specific needs within our community, as well as a dozen volunteers. IUF became a USA Ultimate Affiliate in 2015.

IUF sees that the hard work put in by so many volunteers is essential to the success of this sport we all love. I cannot tell you how many conversations I have had with parents who are thrilled their child has found something they are so passionate about. And those parents are more than willing to help drive players, provide food and water, and support teams in any way they can.

IUF has developed excellent relationships with three local field facilities, including Grand Park in Westfield, Ind., for summer and fall events (especially larger USA Ultimate events), Indianapolis World Sports Park for smaller IUF events like tournaments and leagues and clinics, and Fair Oaks Dairy Farm—a new relationship with 16 fields of excellent quality located between Chicago and Indy.

This year, IUF is hosting many exciting events that will go a long way towards promoting Indiana ultimate, as well as the sport in general. Tournaments include the Indiana High School Warm-Up, Indy Invite for high school and college teams, the Great Lakes College Regional Championships, and even the USA Ultimate TCT Select Flight Invite! IUF has begun efforts to run Learn to Play clinics with local Boy Scout troops in central Indiana and plans to host several GUM clinics to expand girls' ultimate in Indiana. Talking with local athletes of all ages, I can tell the interest and anticipation is growing.

From my personal experience working with IUF, I can testify to the amount of work that is put in to make all these things happen. IUF now oversees a number of high school teams, clubs, leagues, tournaments and more, thanks to the many wonderful people who have full-time jobs outside of their work with IUF, yet are still dedicated to the vision our organization has for the growth and development of the sport of ultimate.

If you are interested in learning more about the mission of IUF, please check out our website at IndianaUltimateFoundation.com.