

Walking Football puts a spring in your step regardless of age

Catch: Bill Wallace, Frank Coogans and Mike Preston love soccer and are starting a Walking Soccer group to keep fit and have fun despite age and injury. Picture: Gene Ramirez.

Walking football is a variant of association football that is aimed at keeping people aged over 50 involved with football if, due to a lack of mobility or for other reason, they are not able to play the traditional game. The sport can be played both indoors and outdoors. Walking football was devised, during 2011, by the Chesterfield F.C. Community Trust. Coverage of a session on Sky Sports News led to several other clubs taking up this version of the game. It has since become a current craze in many UK communities and clubs.



Though based on association football the key difference in the rules from standard football is that if a player runs then they concede a free kick to the other side. This restriction, together with a ban on slide tackles, is aimed both at avoiding injuries and facilitating the playing of the sport by those who are physically disadvantaged.

The manner in which the sport is played promotes cardiovascular fitness whilst producing the least stress on the body. It also assists participants maintain an active lifestyle and meaningful social connections, something men find more difficult to women as they grow older, research has shown.

In walking football the game was originally played without goalkeepers (though goalkeepers now play in some variations) and, crucially, the ball must never be kicked above hip height. Different footballs are used in the indoor and the outdoor variations of the sport. When played indoors, a size 4 futsal ball is used. Outdoor games involve a traditional football. The size of the pitch can vary to suit different locations. The length should be from 20 to 40 yards and the width between 15 and 30 yards.

The sport came to wider public attention in July 2014, when Barclays Bank aired a television advertisement featuring walking football to promote their services.

See useful links here: <http://www.walkingfootballunited.co.uk/untitled-c1nhz>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-18380173>

<https://youtu.be/yUB8TTrbwZo>

<http://www.society-of-sports-therapists.org/index.php/public/article/mick-quinn-lauches-walking-football>