Intramural Sports Draw Mass Participation At Va. Tech

BLACKSBURG—Football and basketball aren’t the only sports at Virginia Tech. Last year 12,854 students, faculty, and staff participated in 93 activities offered by the University’s Intramural Program and the numbers as well as the enthusiasm are growing.

The intramural program began in 1920 when director of the department of athletics and physical education, C. P. “Sally” Miles, initiated an athletic program which at that time included compulsory physical education classes. Four years later, M. Buford Blair came to Tech as physical director and head basketball coach. Blair’s program of “Mass Athletics” involved only three sports: football, basketball, and track.

Since “Mass Athletics” in the 1920’s, the intramural program has expanded from three sports to 95 activities this year. It has grown to include graduate students, about 50 per cent of the women on campus, and over 1,000 faculty and staff.

Director of recreation since 1967, Paul H. Gunston considers the program an “integral part of the total university.” It is designed to provide a relaxing social, as well as physical, diversion from strenuous school work.

“And when you consider the location of Blacksburg, and especially the lack of other recreational opportunities, you can see why intramurals are so necessary—and so popular,” Gunston said.

Enthusiasm for the team sports, which are officiated by students, is tremendous. This fall, 165 flag football teams were organized. But the most popular team sport by far, is softball. Last spring, the program logged in 446 teams.

Some fraternities arrange for their teams to arrive in Blacksburg a week or two before school starts in order to get in some practice before school and competition starts. By 4:30 every afternoon during schools sessions—particularly the warmer months—the drill field and other playing fields are crowded with enthusiastic participants and spectators.

In addition to the team activities, individual events are part of the intramural program.

Each year a number of outstanding intramural students are recognized as a result of achievements in the program. The “All Year M. Buford Blair Memorial” award goes to the individual who accumulates the highest number of intramural points, during the academic year. Last year’s champion was Wayne Regensburg, a June graduate in marketing from Mechanicsville.

Each individual sport has an annual University Champion whose name is added to the University’s Intramural Hall of Fame.