

Dec 2023 Gender Equity Forum Recap

This document summarizes the community forum we had on December 5th 2023. We are sending this so everyone in the BU community feels equipped to help us move forward, even if you were not in attendance. We had about 25 folks come out, including people from the board, forum planning group, college coaches, college players, long time community players, and even some brand new BU players. We started and organized the forum around consolidated data and responses from a survey sent out to current and former women and nonbinary BU players in November/December 2023. [See the linked graphic for a summary.](#) Using this as a guide, the following are takeaways and action items from the forum:

We are making a language shift for match up categories:

- Why? MMP (man matching player) and WMP (woman matching player) have low adoption
- Now what? We'll use [DiscNY's DOW \(defender of women\), DOM \(defender of men\), and DOA \(defender of anyone\) language.](#) DOA is primarily for gender-expansive players (trans and nonbinary folks)
- Someone's matchup category for the league/game/point does NOT denote their gender identity, preferred pronouns, sex assigned at birth, etc. It is just who you're matching up with during a game. So if you need someone to match up with someone across the line who wants to match up with women, say "we need a DOW." Saying "we need another lady/female/girl" is an incorrect, non-inclusive use of language in this context (e.g., nonbinary players or men may need to match up with women on some points, or women match up with men or nonbinary players depending on numbers and other player factors).
 - We discussed and are still trying to figure out how to implement the DOA. We do not yet have it in our infrastructure (we only have two gender categories for mixed), and due to numbers, people who would play as DOAs tend to get lumped into the DOW category.
- Implementation during leagues
 - Captains and players will work together to figure out defense matchup preferences before each game since it depends on who shows up.
 - During the game we'll use hand signals to establish gender match ups
 - DOW: left arm extended straight out to the left (like, signaling turning left on a bike).
 - DOM: left arm bent at the elbow, up and towards the head (like signaling turning right on a bike).

Results on the survey suggest we generally have a great community here! However, many women and nonbinary players feel ignored, excluded, or not respected as much as players who are men. To this issue we talked about:

- Our issues with retaining new players, and women and nonbinary players, all of whom are disproportionately funneled out. This is why we have low numbers! We need to continue to think about why that is, and how we as players, captains, and the board can change that.
- How we want women and non-binary players to feel: included and equally thrown to, trusted with the disc (whether experienced or not), an important part of the team, and welcomed/respected in leadership positions.
- How to make BU leagues more accessible and inclusive for new players, and how to keep players in the league. → We will implement Spring and Fall League as designated developmental leagues using some or all of the following ideas (TBD):

- Preseason: 1-3 weeks before the season starts, new players are invited to attend these “clinics” that teach the rules, terminology, and common strategies we use (e.g., setting the force, horizontal and vert stack, handler vs cutter roles).
- Experienced players come to help teach, boost numbers for drills and scrimmaging, and get to know new players.
- Use name tags to help establish names and pronouns.
- Summer and Winter Leagues can be the designated “competitive leagues” which are NOT advertised to new players.
- If we want to grow our community and keep players we value, it means noticing who we consistently throw to, cut for, etc. This means throwing to a new player over and over knowing that they likely won’t catch it, supporting them in handler roles, having them be initiating/active cutters (not just pushed to the rails), making sure various people are the center handler, noticing if you’re cutting off someone else’s cut, etc. By doing this, the new players improve skills, experienced players improve their ability to calibrate to the new players skills, and the whole team can gel.
 - Can we prioritize this message as a community – that we want new players to come and stay? Let’s show it in Spring and Fall Leagues.
 - In the long run, developmental Spring and Fall Leagues will help make Summer and Winter Leagues more competitive

Addressing safety on and off the field

- Dangerous plays are tricky to define, but we know it when we see/feel it.
 - Captains will discuss dangerous plays before league and stay vigilant during games to stop, correct, prevent, and use them as learning experiences.
 - We should also check in with our match ups during games. E.g., during close contact ask “did that feel safe for you?” Communicate ASAP.
 - We will try to make dangerous play calls more often, in order to normalize it like any other foul or pick. When in doubt, make a call, talk through it – you can always retract a call.
 - Sideline: don’t heckle dangerous play calls, we need to create a culture of safety.
 - Board will work to establish a definition for the website and possibly a handout.

Promoting inclusive language: How do we correct someone who makes a sexist remark or joke, misgenders someone, or uses demeaning language?

- DOMs correcting DOMs is powerful and helpful. Correct language as it happens, use modeling what you want to see/hear, and gentle nudges at all times (not just when women and nonbinary players are present).
- We will use mid-season anonymous feedback forms on captains for players to assess the culture and community they’re creating (e.g., promotion of inclusive language; discussing, confronting, and preventing dangerous plays; promoting equitable playing time; including new players).

Finally, the BU Board helps to organize our community, but they are not THE community – that is all of us. Please reply with feedback, suggestions, other ideas, etc. We need everyone to promote an environment and culture that makes everyone feel important on the field and in the community. We plan to have another meeting (with pizza!) to discuss how Winter League went, upcoming changes for Spring League, and assess how we are moving towards our goals.