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Theado's Thoughts on Beep Ball

Office of University Communications

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Theado's Thoughts on Beep Ball

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Office of University Communications

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I'll give you one word that describes playing beep ball: scary. I mean, you are blindfolded first of all, and how often does that happen in your life? Maybe we see hostages on TV or kidnap victims in movies, but when you're blindfolded, you cannot see. You feel helpless. And so it is very disorienting, and you are placed into position up at the batter's box, somebody pushes you up there, and you listen for the ball coming in, and then you swing. What happens next is you hear people shouting at you, either because you JUST BARELY MISSED hitting the ball, or, more likely, because you were so very, very far from hitting it that no one can believe you are that uncoordinated. But if you do happen to hit the ball, then you have to run.

Blindfolded. If you have never run while blindfolded, I invite you to try it, but be sure to have some friends to keep you from crashing into something hard and unforgiving. Because of this fear, I tend to run in a very protective manner that seems quite amusing to onlookers, but very practical to me. Playing in the field is no less disorienting. You know that the ball has been hit because everybody is hollering, and they are hollering something really helpful, like RUN!

But my overall impression, and this seems to be common to every sighted person who comes to play beep ball, is a sense of reliance on the "spotters" who are placed in the field to help guide you with their voices, to keep you on track, to help you know where to go. And you are so utterly reliant on them and their reassuring voices that you start to love them, no doubt about it. And then you come to realize that our blind people don't have spotters along their side when they are walking between classes, when they are heading up to the caf, when they are out for a stroll and doing what every other college student is doing, trying to meet people and make friends. And our admiration for them soars, for their powerful independence and their amazing grace just in going about their days. But this admiration does not prevent us sighted players from trying to win the game! Oh, no, victory is too sweet! But it is wonderful how everybody cheers for everybody else, and there I am in the field knowing that a blind student is up there at bat, and I can't see them, and I am cheering for them to get a hit. At that moment we are sharing an intimate world. You get very close in the dark.