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Quidditch club swept off Boston Common

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 09, 2012

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DAVID L. RYAN GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2008

The Boylston Berserkers, made up of Emerson students, played quidditch on the Boston Common.

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Wizards and witches of Emerson College have been broomed out of Boston Common, for now.

City park officials are barring the school's quidditch club — which plays a version of the sport popularized by the Harry Potter novels — from using the public space for games and practices until the students obtain a permit. In the meantime, barring some magical intervention, the club and its 200-plus players are searching for a new home in hopes of salvaging the season.

“Mostly, it is our fault, but we just feel disappointed,” said Bridget Hess-Mahan, commissioner of Quidditch at Emerson. “I think there wasn't enough communication between us and the parks department and within our group internally.”

The turf dispute speaks to the growing popularity of the sport among local college students, most of whom came of age during the Harry Potter craze.

Adapted seven years ago by students at Middlebury College

in Vermont, it is played at more than 300 universities and high schools across the nation and in a dozen other countries, according to the [International Quidditch Association](#).

In past years, the club's student leaders obtained the necessary athletic permit to use the space, city parks spokeswoman Jacquelyn Goddard said. But for the past year, the group has not sought permission.

Goddard said that last fall and again in June, park rangers approached a group of Emerson players and told them they needed a permit to continue playing. Permits are generally free and granted on case-by-case basis, largely based on availability.

The group tried to apply for a permit for this fall, she said, but miscommunication spoiled that effort.

In the version played by mere muggles, or those lacking magical abilities, two teams of seven players run with brooms between their legs, trying to hurl a slightly deflated volleyball — or quaffle — through hoops that serve as goals. Two other balls are thrown around to disrupt scoring.

The playing field is an oval, about 48 by 33 yards at its farthest points, according to the association. But players range beyond those boundaries, especially one neutral player who carries the coveted snitch, which is worth extra points and ends a match if captured.

At Emerson, the quidditch club formed four years ago, holding weekday practices and Sunday games on the Common through last spring, Hess-Mahan said.

Without a place to play, the club postponed its annual showcase event, in which freshmen and other students interested in joining are invited to watch teams compete, Hess-Mahan said.

The club's fall schedule is in limbo, and it is considering other options, including the Esplanade.

The club recently posted an online video asking the public to help with finding a new home.

"Once we find a field, we're just going to start our season and go on a week-by-week basis from there,"

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Hess-Mahan said.

Emerson spokesman Andy Tiedemann said because the Quidditch club is not officially recognized by the school, the college cannot assist the club's efforts to find space to play.

Otherwise, he said, "The city has been very generous with letting us do the occasional event on the Common."

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