

GIRL FIGHT!

Angry women, pounding each other with pillows. The Canadian craze has hit New York, and it ain't pretty

By **ABBY LUBY**

Two women are lunging and slamming pillows at one another. One gets whacked in the head, stumbles — then is rammed in the stomach and falls to her knees.

"Get her down!" a man yells from the audience.

It was the pillow fight of a lifetime, part of the first foray into New York by the Toronto-based Pillow Fighters League. The Canadian craze showcased 22 women at the gritty Galapagos Art Space in Williamsburg last Saturday to a sold-out crowd of men and women in their 20s and 30s.

Don't mistake this new sport for something out of those innocent high-school slumber parties. The fledgling league is for serious women only. Getting in requires auditions and interviews, and for those accepted, the routine is rigorous training and martial arts practice.

"Training keeps the combats real and competitive," said Matt Harsant, associate producer of PFL. "When folks hear 'pillow fight,' they think childhood sleepovers or dancing girls in negligees. Our fights are a sport with rules, real fights and real women. But it's still fun, and that's part of the appeal."

Ranging in age from 22 to 39, PFL ladies have ring names like Vic Payback, Boozy Suzy, Polly Esther, Betty Clock'er, Sister Resister and Eiffel Power — she's 6-feet-2.

Ursula Anvil, 22 and a full-time seamstress, wears a gold lamé muscle body suit.

"My character is molded after old circus performers. It's fun to play the bad guy," she said.

NOT YOUR USUAL PILLOW TALK

Exorcising rage is common in the ring. Take angry waitress Polly Esther. "She's a waitress in real life," said Harsant, "and she can channel that anger in the ring, saying what she wants to say at work. It's a crazy, cathartic experience."

Sister Resister, whose real name is Zoe, came to the league because of newfound self-confidence after she lost 100 pounds. "When I'm fighting, I think about all the snobby girls from high school I used to hate," she said. "They call me a dirty fighter."

Rules for the five-minute bouts are enforced by two referees, said Harsant: "You can execute any defensive move, punch, kick, smother or use a submission hold as long as the pillow is at the point of contact." If no one is pinned after five minutes, the three judges choose a winner based on style and stamina.

"You can be creative," said Kat, a tough PFL fighter known as Sailor Gerri. "One woman once did a cartwheel and swung her pillow. That impressed the judges."

And if the pillow-brandishing ladies inspire a gal in the audience?

Amateurs wanting their moment of fame can fight for three minutes during intermission in Karaoke Pillow Fighting. On Saturday, a red-headed newbie named Orange Crush got walloped by a blond dubbed Jersey Girl.

"I need to work out more," said Orange Crush after her defeat.

"You could be swinging so hard a lip gets split and pillows are torn in half," said Gerri. "But we put on a good show for the audience, and at the end there are no hard feelings. Some of us hug after each match."



DOWN AND DIRTY Sailor Gerri polishes off Roxxy Balboa at Galapagos in Brooklyn.

STEVEN SUNSHINE