You make the shot, they shoot the drink

By Tessa Wong

You shoot, you score, your opponent chugs down a cup of lager.

Beer pong, a popular American drinking game, has finally landed on our shores – and is fast gaining fans.

The game is an adapted version of ping pong, and is a highlight of student-run bar Frujch at Singapore Management University (SMU), where beer pong tournaments are a guaranteed crowd-puller. Its second and most recent, at the start of the month, drew as many as 60 competitors and supporters.

“It’s an easy game, and a fun way for students to socialise,” said SMU undergraduate Shermeen Tan, who runs Frujch with two other classmates.

To play, 15 half-filled cups of beer are arranged to form a triangle on each side of any type of rectangular table.

Two teams take turns to throw a ping pong ball into their opponents’ cups. If a ball lands in a cup, one member of the opposing team has to drink it. The team which finishes drinking all its cups loses.

The game’s origins are unclear, but a recent New York Times article suggested it may have been invented at Ivy League university Dartmouth College “years ago”. In the last few years, it has become wildly popular among colleges in the United States.

Because players have to quickly down a significant amount of alcohol during each set, however, college officials are concerned that it encourages binge drinking.

In fact, at least five US colleges have banned on-campus drinking games including beer pong.

Still, local fans doubt the game will lead to social ills here.

Compared to peers in Europe and the US, “young Singaporeans aren’t as crazy about binge drinking”, said Mr Clarence Heng, 23, a business undergraduate whose team won a case of Heineken after coming out tops in the last Frujch beer pong championship.

“We have a more conservative culture, and we tend to drink in moderation.”

Others say it is just like any other team sport. “I like how there’s an art to playing it, you need to have good ball-throwing technique to play it well,” said 22-year-old Wong Yang Wei, another business undergraduate.

As classmate Justin Chow, 21, summed up: “It’s fun, it brings people together, and you get to drink cheap beer.

“Nothing bad about it at all.”

Beer pong – a great way to play, or more like pickling your liver? Tell us what you think at styouth@sph.com.sg