

THE SPORT OF PÉTANQUE

Games using balls and a small jack can be traced back to Egyptian times or even before. All similar modern games have been based on these earlier sports, with changes being made either due to the countries in which they were played or by the development of new manufacturing techniques which in the 20th century allowed the balls, of whatever size, to be manufactured in steel rather than wood. In Europe even now there are several sports fairly similar to Pétanque.... Jeu de Provençal (the game from which Pétanque was developed) and Boule Lyonnaise played primarily in France, Bocce played in Italy, and of course Green and Crown Bowls played extensively in Great Britain.. Currently there 70 countries affiliated to the Federation International de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal, the world governing body for the sport.



So why does Pétanque have such a wide appeal ?

There are several reasons but possibly the main reason is that few sports can offer such a wide range benefits to players of both sexes over a very wide range of age groups, and on equal terms. It can truly be called a sport for all the family.

The concept:

The sport can be played by teams of three players (triples), two players (doubles) or a straight head-to-head between two single players. The object of each end is to get more of your boules closest to the jack than your opponent (each one that is closer scores one point) and the team/player to score 13 points first wins the game.

Cost:

Compared to many sports the initial cost of the purchase of boule is fairly modest and the maintenance of any formal playing area is very cheap. A good amount of raking and perhaps just a little weed killer once a year.

Playing surfaces:

Unlike most sports Pétanque can be played on a very wide range of surfaces. The only guidelines are that the surface should not be so flat that a player can roll a boule dead straight or so soft that when a boule lands it sinks into the surface. Grass is not an option to play on.



Bodily strength:

Pétanque is a game of skill and tactics. Whilst in every sport a body that is physically fit will perform better than one that it is not it is the techniques of throwing a boule and not the bodily strength of the player that will determine success or failure. There are two disciplines for a player to master although of course within each discipline there are a number of shots that can be developed.



Pointing:

When a player tries to place his/her boule close to the jack. It sounds easy but when one realises that the surface that the game is played on is normally fairly uneven it can be quite a challenge.



Shooting:

When a player throws his/her boule through the air with the object of removing an opponents boule and hopefully replacing it with one's own boule. However the beauty of this sport is that after only a very short time a new player can master sufficient skills to be able to enjoy a friendly game. To become good is the same for every sport ... practice.

Playing level:

Pétanque is a sport that can be played socially between a group of friends, or it can be a very competitive sport. It is up to the individual player to determine what they what to get out of the sport. Much of that decision will depend upon that individuals commitment of time and what their ambitions are.