

The Social Whirl

The game of boules, otherwise known as pétanque, is perhaps the sport that is closest to French hearts. Similar to British lawn bowling or Italian bocce, the French version is traditionally played with metallic balls on a dirt surface beneath plane trees, with a glass of pastis at hand.

Oribase, a Greek physician around 300 A.D. wrote of a game played by throwing balls at a stationary target. Although he did not give a name to the game, the rules are nearly identical to the French game. It is believed that the game spread across Europe because the soldiers of the Roman Empire played it for entertainment and exercise.

An official Boules court is a stretch of hard, bare earth thirteen by three meters, roughly forty-three by ten feet and Graham Fergusson at Arabian Homes managed to provide the perfect venue in May this year for another of those RGBB 'events'.

The first player, or team, draws a circle with a shoe heel just outside the playing field. From within the circle, the cochonnet (or 'Jack' in English) is tossed towards the other end of the field. It must travel at least six yards, but no more than eleven yards. This ball becomes the target for the rest of the game. When all boules have been tossed, the game is over. The winning team gets one point for every boule of theirs which is closer to the cochonnet than the closest boule of their opponent.

Sounds easy enough doesn't it - until you try! Anyway, Shafi turned out as well with another spread and good fun was had by all. For those of you who missed out, I'm sure we'll do it again soon.

