

RGBB Sport Do you have the Boules to play Petanque?



The first of the RGBB 2008 sports events took place at Arabian Homes on Wednesday 21st May. On a superbly prepared pitch over 40 members and their guests attended the RGBB Boules tournament.

competition. After a mixture of concentration and leg pulling Owain, Helen and Fflur Raw-Rees were the victors in a tight final against Gary Richardson, Tony Scott, and Steve Wilson.

The event proved to be fun and entertaining for all involved, with teams of three taking part in a knockout

Any mischievous comments concerning the victorious team being led by the Chairman and the runner up team being led by the Board Member for Sports were dismissed merely as sour grapes!

What is Petanque?

Although the British Pentanque Organisation website claims evidence that two balls and a jack were unearthed in the sarcophagus of an Egyptian Prince of the 52nd Century B.C., many others disagree about the games origin. We do know however that ancient Greeks and Romans played a game resembling pétanque. The Greeks used round stones ("spheristics") and the Romans used wooden balls covered with iron. Whilst the Greeks favored brute strength by throwing their balls as far as possible, the Romans preferred skill. Thus, the Romans could be considered the inventors of the jack or "cochonnet", but whatever the truth, the reality is that something similar has been around for a very long time.

During the Middle Ages boules players were called "bouleurs" and the game became so popular in the 14th century, first Charles IV, then Charles V forbade it, preferring that their subjects spend their time in more useful pursuits such as archery. Later however, in the early 16th century, boules players found favor in the eyes of Pope Julius II. Seeking to turn the Holy See into an Italian power, he brought together the best bouleurs of his state to form a redoubtable company of rock throwers. They shone in play against the French, the Venetians and the Spaniards.

In 1629, boules was outlawed again: angered by the competition they faced from boules, the manufacturers of paumes (the precursor of tennis) conspired together and succeeded in having the game forbidden. The ban on the game was flouted, however, and people met to play boules in secret, especially in monasteries. In fact, the monks were the first to build covered pétanque pitches!

The ban was finally lifted a few years later but it was only in 1907 that pétanque as we know it was born. Its name comes from the provençal "pèd tanco", which means "feet together". The concept of the game of pétanque is simple and similar to bowls, i.e. resting your boule closer to the jack than your opponent. However, instead of rolling wooden bowls over an immaculately maintained lawn, pétanque is played on an easily maintained area of fairly level 'stony' ground, with metal boules rolled or tossed to the jack.

Many members and their families who were not participating in the tournament came along to support the players and enjoy the BBQ and later in the evening watched the European Cup final on the big screen provided by Arabian Homes.

Our thanks go to Graham Ferguson and Gary Mackender and the rest of the support team at Arabian Homes for providing the RGBB with the fantastic facilities on the evening, and for all of the hard work that went into preparing them.

If you have ideas for future RGBB sporting events, contact Gary Richardson on: 0558 188 893.

