

# BASIC BOCCE CLINIC

## ONLINE COURSE



### HISTORY OF BOCCE

*There are numerous versions of the history of bocce. The following summarizes several versions found on the Internet.*

Bocce is an ancient game, its birth lost in the shadows of antiquity. Some authorities claim it originated in Egypt about 5200 B.C.; others, that the game was started in Greece during the 6th Century B.C. The most reliable sources agree that Bocce, as we know it today, was played between battles during Rome's Punic Wars against Carthage, which started in 264 B.C. Soldiers selected a small stone called a "leader" and threw it first. Then larger stones would be thrown at the "leader" and the stone coming closest to it would score. The game provided exercise and relaxation for the soldiers. Teams were composed of two, four, six, or eight men and the score would vary from 16 to 24 points per game.

The game continued to be played until 1319 when Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV ordered its discontinuance as he thought that, because of its popularity, it would interfere with sports of a more military nature.

Years later the prohibition was lifted when the Medical Faculty at Montpellier, France, declared that Bocce was the best exercise to prevent rheumatism.

An interesting historical note on Bocce claims that the English Admiral, Sir Francis Drake, was informed of the approaching Spanish Armada while playing a game of Bocce. Drake, in his usual cool manner, replied: "First, we finish the game; then we have time for the Invincible Armada."

Bocce was played throughout Europe. Emperors, Admirals, Generals, poets, sculptors, scientists and men from all stations of life were active participants in the sport. It was a favorite with Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Bocce was a game played in the Italian Alps, early in the Christian Era, in which stones were tossed at a target stone--not necessarily to hit it, but to land as close as possible to it.

Bocce was a major amusement for Roman soldiers, who spread it through the empire. Balls were eventually substituted for the stones and they were usually rolled rather than tossed.

Italian immigrants brought bocce to the United States. Its original centers of popularity were New York City and San Francisco because of their large Italian-American populations. But, as newer generations grew away from the sport, bocce declined and seemed in danger of extinction in this country.

The sport experienced a small resurgence, mainly in California, during the 1970s and it's grown rapidly during the last decade. The center of the sport in the U. S. is Martinez, California, which has more than a thousand competitors in league play and many more who simply play for fun.

The U. S. Bocce Federation says there are about 1 million players in the United States. Outside of California, major centers of popularity include Chicago, Las Vegas, Memphis, New Orleans, Phoenix, St. Louis, New York and now Southwest Florida.

## **BASIC BOCCE GLOSSARY**

**Banking** - Throwing the bocce ball such that it hits and bounces off the sideboards towards the pallino.

**Bocce** - Proper name of the sport of bocce (never 'bocce ball').

**Bocce Balls** – Eight larger balls of 2 distinct colors, 4 each color.

**Frame** - The playing of all the bocce balls in one direction and the awarding of points. After points are awarded a new frame starts in the opposite direction.

**Hitting Foul Line** – The second foul line marked on the sideboards/court surface 10 feet from each backboard behind which the bocce balls thrown hard to hit and move other bocce balls or the pallino must be released. This allows for a running delivery to gain momentum on the ball.

**In Team** - The team who has the closest bocce ball to the pallino.

**League** - A league is a group of bocce teams playing a prescribed number of matches or games over a set period of time with records kept to determine a winning team.

**Measure** - The act of measuring the distance between the pallino and the bocce balls to determine which team's bocce balls are the closest to the pallino.

**Pallino** – A small ball used as a target ball for throwing the bocce balls.

**Pointing** - The underhand throwing action of a player to roll the bocce ball as close to the pallino as possible to score points.

**Pointing Foul Line** - The first foul line marked on the sideboards/court surface 6 feet from each backboard behind which the pallino and bocce balls rolled for point must be released.

**Scoreboard** - Numbers 1 through 12 arranged similar to a clock face with an arrow pointing to the score for the red or green team.

**Social Bocce** - Social Bocce is basically a group of people getting together and forming temporary teams for the day to play the game but not in a scheduled league or tournament play.

**Spock or Hitting** - A declared underhand bowling type hard throw directly at the balls on the court to purposely hit and move an opponent's ball or the pallino.

## **BASIC RULES OF THE SPORT**

The object of the sport of Bocce is for one team to get as many of their balls close to the pallino as possible.

The toss of a coin determines the team that throws out the pallino first and selects the team's ball color.

The first team member throws the pallino and then rolls the first ball as close to the pallino as possible. The pallino must cross mid-court mark, must be 12 inches from either sideboard and the backboard.

Next, a player of the opposing team rolls a ball and tries to get closer or "better the point". Each team must continue to roll its balls until it beats the point of the opposing team. The player must deliver the ball from behind the first foul line.

While the object is to get close to the pallino, it is permissible for a player to play the ball in order to knock away an opponent's ball. A player "hitting" or "spocking" the opponent's ball may go as far as the Spock Foul Line (second foul line) to deliver the ball. Likewise, a player may play the ball so as to knock or move the pallino toward another of their own team's balls.

The pallino is live anywhere on the court, except if it comes back behind the mid-court line or knocked out of the court, at which time the frame is dead and play begins again at the opposite end.

When all balls have been played, one team is awarded one point for each of its balls which are closer to the pallino than the closest opposing team's balls. Thus, a team may score 1-4 points for each end of play. If the closest ball of each team is equal in distance from the pallino, no points are awarded.

Balls are measured from the center of the pallino to the closest point on the front of the bocce ball.

The team that scores in one frame starts the next frame by throwing out the pallino and playing the first ball.

The game is won by the first team scoring 12 points.

### **BOCCE SKILLS, SHOTS, AND TECHNIQUES**

In the sport of Bocce there are specific skills involved to master a number of different shots, to develop a successful delivery technique, and to apply the strategies required to best play the sport.

The skill of delivering the ball is similar to reading the green when putting in golf in that each shot is different, the court is not perfectly flat, and the speed of the ball must be judged properly to place the ball exactly where you want it.

The basic shots are:

**POINTING** - placing the ball as close as possible to the target ball.

**HITTING** - purposely hitting opponent's balls or moving the target ball for your own advantage.

**BLOCKING** - placing your ball in a position to block your opponent from scoring points.

**BANKING** - using the side rails to change the angle of approach to get around blocking balls.

**SETUPS** - placing a ball in a location so that you or your team mate can hit it into a scoring position.

There are many styles used to throw the balls. They vary from an upright position to down almost on one knee position, a slightly lofted ball to a smooth release at court level, and standing still to running. There is a workable style for almost any physical condition.

One must employ excellent game strategy to win games. You must know where to initially place the target ball, when to use each of the various shots, which team player to match against each of the opponents, which team player to use for each shot, observing your opponents' weaknesses, observing how every ball rolls on the court, observing bank shot paths, and calculating the scoring risks for each shot you take. Bocce strategy is covered in the Advanced Bocce Clinic.

Bocce, as with all other sports, requires practice and playing often to develop good bocce skills.