

Boccie Ball

Boccie (and there are any number of name variations) is a ball sport belonging to the boules sport family, closely related to bowls and pétanque with a common ancestry from ancient games played in the Roman Empire. Developed into its present form in Italy, (where it is called bocce, the plural of the Italian word boccia which means "bowl"), it is played around Europe and also in overseas areas that have received Italian migrants, including Australia, North America, and South America, initially among the migrants themselves but slowly becoming more popular with their descendants and the wider community. The sport is also very popular on the eastern side of the Adriatic, especially in Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina. In southern France, the sport is also popular and known as Boule Lyonnaise.

Bocce is traditionally played on natural soil and asphalt courts 90 ft in length and 8.2 to 13 ft wide. Bocce balls can be made of metal or various kinds of plastic. Unlike lawn bowls, bocce balls are spherical and have no inbuilt bias. A game can be conducted between two players, or two teams of two, three, or four. A match is started by a randomly chosen side being given the opportunity to throw a smaller ball, the jack, from one end of the court into a zone 16 ft in length, ending 8.2 ft from the far end of the court. If the first team misses twice, the other team is awarded the opportunity to place the jack anywhere they choose within the prescribed zone.

The side that first attempted to place the jack is given the opportunity to bowl first. Once the first bowl has taken place, the other side has the opportunity to bowl. From then on, the side which does not have the ball closest to the jack has a chance to bowl, up until one side or the other has used their four balls. At that point, the other side bowls its remaining balls. The team with the closest ball to the jack is the only team that can score points in any frame. The scoring team receives one point for each of their balls that is closer to the jack than the closest ball of the other team. The length of a game varies by region but is typically from 7 to 13 points.

Players are permitted to throw the ball in the air using an underarm action. This is generally used to knock either the jack or another ball away to attain a more favorable position. Tactics can get quite complex when players have sufficient control over the ball to throw or roll it accurately.

A boccie player of note is Umberto Granaglia (May 20, 1931 – December 13, 2008), who was awarded the honor of "Player of the Twentieth Century" by the Confédération Mondiale des Sports de Boules. Between 1957 and 1980 Granaglia won a record 13 World Championships, 12 European Championship titles, and 46 Italian National Championships.

Well, if you followed all that, you're more focused than I am! [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/bocce>]

