



History of Bocce Ball

Bocce Ball is based on one of the most primitive concepts in sports history: throwing an item at an inactive target. The Egyptians are credited for the origin of the sport. Instead of the fancy modern balls that we use today, the Egyptians used polished stones. A painting dated back to 5200 B.C. was discovered in an Egyptian tomb depicting this primitive game in action. Even though the game has evolved and changed greatly over the years, the overall goal of trying to toss an object as close to a target as possible still remains.

Bocce ball history continued to evolve and in the year 800 B.C. the game of bocce made its way to Greece and then on to Rome. The Romans are credited for giving it the name which we know it as today. "Bocce," is derived from the Latin word "bottica," which means "boss." The Romans were the first culture to play the game in a way resembling the way it is played today. They introduced the concept of using rounded bocce balls as opposed to uneven rocks or stones. The Romans often used coconuts as makeshift bocce balls. This evolution toward round bocce balls continued and eventually balls were carved from the trunks of olive trees. Bocce was more popular than ever, and it even had the endorsement of European rulers. Emperor Augustus, Galileo, Queen Elizabeth I, and Sir Francis Drake were all known to be bocce enthusiasts.

The game of bocce spread through Europe like wild fire. At the beginning of the 14th century, Emperors of nations throughout Europe began to ban the sport and the popularity of this beloved pastime grinded to a screeching halt. The leaders of these nations believed that bocce was too much of a distraction and that citizens should be more focused on providing service to their respective militaries. Although contradictory, many emperors did not have the willpower to obey their own laws. It is even rumored that English Admiral Sir Francis Drake refused to stop a game of Bocce when he was informed that his country was being invaded by the Spanish Armada. Drake stated *"First we will finish the game, then we will worry about the Spanish."*

The ban on bocce spread throughout Europe and even stricter penalties were introduced. The Republic of Venice viewed the bocce as a gateway to gambling. As a result, fines and prison sentencing were issued to anybody that was caught playing this illicit sport. The Catholic Church also saw danger in this popular sport, and condemned the participation of it. Initially the fear of punishment deterred European citizens from

indulging in their beloved activity. But as with any physical outlet that offers recreation, relaxation, and competition, bocce eventually overcame the tarnished reputation that it earned. Once again bocce flourished all over Europe and it was became a favorite sport of men and women of all ages.

Despite all of the commotion overseas, America still had not been introduced to the amazing game of Bocce. The game of Bocce was introduced in America by the French, and it was played primarily on short cut grass. It is rumored that George Washington built a bocce ball court at the top of Mount Vernon in the late 18th century. Americans took quite a liking to the game and accepted it with open arms. By the late 1940's, Bocce World Championship had been established - a proving ground for people all over the world to showcase their Bocce skills and love for the game.