



PETANQUE PULSE

Official FPUSA Newsletter

Summer 2026

Welcome to the Summer 2026 edition of *Pétanque Pulse*!

As we put this issue together, one thing became clear: our community has been busy. From the courts of Florida to the wine country of Sonoma, from a middle-school gym in Dallas to an international championship in Bulgaria, pétanque players across the country – and beyond – have given us no shortage of stories to tell.

You'll read about tournaments that tested players' skill and their resolve, including a National Singles and Mixed Triples played through torrential rain and muddy courts, where good sportsmanship carried the day. You'll meet members who remind us that this is a sport for everyone: a 99-year-old with uncanny accuracy, a 13-year-old quickly making a name for herself, and a math professor known on the court as "The Magician." You'll get to know a brand-new club finding its footing in Oregon, celebrate clubs welcoming new players through picnics, partnerships, and even a PBS television feature, and follow one member's remarkable week of medals on the international stage.

What unites these stories is the spirit that makes our pétanque family strong – friendliness, openness, and a shared love of the game. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed bringing them together.

Wishing you a wonderful summer of boules,

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Michelle & Heidi

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Federation News and Notes

Welcome to New Board Members

Heidi Davison was unanimously elected FPUSA Vice President in January, bringing experience as a regional counselor, leader of the umpire corp, sport committee member, and former Mayor of Athens. **Tina Lamas** of Atlanta Petanque League (APL) joined the Board as Southeast Regional Counselor, filling the seat Heidi vacated. We are fortunate to have such deep talents on our board.

Welcoming Alain Gimenez as Membership Secretary

We're pleased to share that **Alain Gimenez**, President of the South Florida Petanque Club (SFPC), has stepped into the new role of FPUSA Membership Secretary. Alain will be the point of contact for all membership-related business, including support with JustGo, member records, renewals, and new sign-ups. Michelle Dang continues as FPUSA Secretary, and the two will work together closely. Members and club administrators can reach Alain directly at membership@usapetanque.org. Please join us in welcoming Alain — we're grateful to him for taking this on.

New Membership Committee Formed to Support Members and Clubs

FPUSA has formed a new Membership Committee, chaired by **Mitzi Gimenez** (SFPC) and joined by **Rebecca Runze** (LAPC) and **Tina Lamas** (APL). This is a new but much-needed committee, created to focus on the people and clubs at the heart of our federation. The committee will explore new ways to support current members, help new clubs get established and thrive, and grow FPUSA membership across the country. Our thanks go to Mitzi, Rebecca, and Tina for taking this on, and we look forward to sharing their work in the months ahead. To connect with the committee, contact Mitzi at southeastcounselor1@usapetanque.org.

FIPJP Citizenship Requirement Now in Effect

The FIPJP has officially voted to require that all players representing a federation be citizens of that country, with the rule taking effect at the 2026 World Championships. Players will be required to present a passport at team registration. In alignment with this international standard, beginning this year only U.S. citizens are eligible to participate in FPUSA Qualifier events. The change is part of FIPJP's broader effort to align pétanque with Olympic-sport eligibility standards, and the FPUSA Board recognizes the real impact this has on long-dedicated competitors.

2026 Men's Triples World Championships Move to Thailand

The 2026 Men's Triples Pétanque World Championships have a new home. After Malaysia withdrew as host due to unsecured government funding, Thailand stepped in to host the event. The championships will now be held November 20–25, 2026 on the campus of **Khon**

Kaen University in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The USA is among 48 qualified nations competing alongside teams from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. A short presentation video about the venue is available at <https://kku.world/petanque>.

Congratulations to Team USA in Men's and Women's Doubles

Congratulations to **Christian Cazaneve** (Miami Petanque Club) and **Will Poire** (Mile High Petanque Club) for winning the Men's Doubles World Championship Qualifier; and congratulations to **Juanita Celix** (Seattle Petanque Club) and **Kasia Sliz** (La Boule New Yorkaise) for winning the Women's Doubles World Championship Qualifier. The events were hosted by Fresno Petanque Club and Carolina Petanque, respectively. Both teams will represent the U.S. at the World Championship (WC) in **Göteborg, Sweden (2027)**. Since the U.S. ranked in the top 16 from the last doubles WC in Rome (2025), the teams for the WC in 2027 are automatically qualified and will not have to participate in the PanAm qualification process.

For updates on all tournament winners, check out our website's ["In the Spotlight"](#) page and the [Tournament Results page](#).

Looking Ahead to the 2028 Juniors World Championship

FPUSA is preparing a selection process for the 22nd Juniors World Championship in 2028. The event is open to players 17 and under who hold a valid U.S. passport. A formal application process will launch next year and will include resumes, tournament history, coaching background, video submissions of pointing and shooting, and recommendations from coaches and club leaders. Parents or guardians of interested juniors are invited to contact **Janice Bissonnette**, National Sport Director, at nsd@usapetanque.org.

Bylaw and Procedural Updates

Two sets of bylaw revisions were approved this year. In January, the Board passed amendments creating equivalency provisions for board-position qualifications, opening the door for more competent, interested members to step into governance roles. In April, the Board approved a new Article VIII.C establishing a Junior Committee responsible for recommending junior team selections, with the Board retaining final approval. Article VIII.B was updated to reflect this new structure by removing "Junior" from the World Championship Qualification Tournament categories.

New Online Waiver System

FPUSA has launched a new online waiver system through **WaiverForever**, which provides a nonprofit package of 10,000 free waivers. Clubs can post the QR code at their terrain or share the direct link at <https://waiver.fr/fpusawaiver>. Signers automatically receive a confirmation email with their completed waiver, and a copy is sent directly to the FPUSA

Secretary – no scanning or mailing required. Paper waivers remain available for anyone who prefers them.

Grant Programs

FPUSA grant programs are back to support your clubs and promote the sport among juniors.

1. Club Matching Grant – Deadline: May 31, 2026

FPUSA has budgeted \$5,000 in matching funds to be awarded across qualified club projects this year. Review the program overview and application instructions [here](#).

Questions? Contact Neil McGovern, Chair of the Club Grants Committee, at norcalcounselor2@usapetanque.org.

2. Junior Program Grant – Rolling Applications

Funding is available to help clubs attract and retain junior players. Eligible clubs must have at least one active junior FPUSA member, an identified adult mentor, and a commitment to having juniors play in a minimum of 3 tournaments annually. Priority is given to equipment and programming that clubs cannot typically provide on their own.

Apply here: <https://forms.gle/dQtB34gLYHzMvliR8>

Questions? Contact Janice Bissonnette, National Sport Director, at nsd@usapetanque.org.

2026 FPUSA/CIEP Coaching Clinic

FPUSA will offer both Level 1 (October 19-22) and Level 2 (October 24-26) Coaching Clinics.

Les Boulefrogs Petanque Club of Virginia has kindly stepped up to host and support the event. The format gives current Level 1 coaches a path to advance while welcoming new candidates into the program. A brief interest form is available on the FPUSA website.

Questions can be directed to Janice Bissonnette (nsd@usapetanque.org) or Heidi Davison (vicepresident@usapetanque.org).

Umpire Camp 2 with Patrick Grignon

The second annual Umpire Camp with International Arbitre **Patrick Grignon** will be held September 16-20, 2026, at **Classic City Pétanque Club** in Athens, GA. The five-day program combines three days of classroom and hands-on instruction with two days of live officiating at the National Women's Triples and Mixed Triples Open. Space is limited to 20 participants. Contact **Heidi Davison**, Leader of the Umpire Corps, at heidi@heididavison.com to register.

Umpire Updates (new and promotion)

Jordan Fabre, Club Umpire, Thibodaux Petanque Club

Glenn Kelly, Club Umpire, Local 718 Petanque

Jessica Lehman, Club Umpire, Classic City Petanque

Rickamer Hoover, advance to Regional Umpire, Classic City Petanque

What Your FPUSA Membership Really Does

Your FPUSA membership is doing more for you than you may realize. Behind every match you play, every tournament your club hosts, and every newsletter that lands in your inbox is a federation working year-round to protect, support, and connect our pétanque community. Here's a look at the value that comes with being part of FPUSA.

Protection that lets you play with peace of mind

FPUSA recently secured an upgraded insurance policy that protects you and your club at every sanctioned event – not just tournaments. Coverage now extends to club events, social play, training sessions, court maintenance, and Opens, with excess medical coverage providing an additional layer of protection for participants and coaches. Your club can request a Certificate of Insurance for its local Parks & Recreation department whenever it needs one, and the full Insurance Overview is available in JustGo and on the FPUSA website. If your club ever had to source comparable coverage independently, the per-member cost would far exceed the price of membership.

A real pathway to becoming a better player, coach, or umpire

A serious developmental ladder is open to every member. Through a partnership with CIEP – the international training center based in France – members receive free training toward Levels 1–3 coaching licenses. FPUSA also works with Patrick Grignon, Lead FIPJP International Arbitre, to bring world-class umpire training to the United States and grow our umpire corps at every level. The Coach Finder in JustGo helps you locate certified coaches in your region, the new Player Rating System tracks your tournament results via PetanqueApp, and every club has access to a hand-measuring tool for boule sizing and a shooting template for skill work.

Funding to help your club grow

FPUSA invests in the clubs that make the sport possible. Club Development Grants help fund infrastructure like lighting and equipment, and Junior Program Grants are dedicated to building the next generation of players. Promotional banners and brochures are available to help clubs recruit, and the Sport Committee and Junior Program Advocates work continuously on the regulations and programs that move the sport forward.

Tools that make club life easier

Running a club or tournament has gotten a lot simpler. **JustGo** centralizes membership enrollment, renewals, and roster tracking; the JustGo Event Management tool and **PetanqueApp** streamline tournament registration and scoring. Your membership card lives in your digital wallet, and the Member Finder directory connects opted-in players nationwide. Club officials have access to live training, one-on-one support, and how-to videos. The FPUSA website has been fully refreshed, with updated pages for bylaws, regulations, umpires, tournament directors, and information on how to join or start a club.

A community conversation

The Pétanque Pulse brings club news, rules updates, and tournament results straight to your inbox. The same content is now available as a podcast on Spotify, Amazon Music, and Apple Podcasts – just search “Pétanque Pulse.” You’ll receive priority updates from FPUSA through JustGo, and every bylaw, financial report, and set of meeting minutes lives in the JustGo Documents tile, available to you any time. Transparency isn’t a slogan at FPUSA; it’s a folder you can open whenever you want.

A seat at the world table

Your membership ties you into something bigger than a single club. FPUSA is the sole U.S. representative to the **Federation Internationale de Pétanque and Provençal Games** (FIPJP), and as part of the World Pétanque and Bowls Federation, our sport is officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee. FPUSA sanctions over 30 Title Tournaments each year across our seven regions, and your membership is the only legitimate pathway to compete at the World Championships and Pan Am Qualifiers, supported by certified umpires at sanctioned events.

Explore what’s yours

The next time you sign into JustGo, take a few minutes to look around – the Documents tile, the Coach Finder, the Member Finder. Subscribe to the podcast. Bring a grant idea to your next club meeting. Your federation has built a wealth of resources, and they’re yours to enjoy.

Thank you for being part of FPUSA.



Jumelage

By Ed Porto, Petaluma Petanque Club

On July 9 of this year, about 20 FPUSA members will be hosted at the **Jules Le Noir Boulodrome**, the birthplace of petanque in **La Ciotat, France** (near Marseille). In 2017, the late **Jim Schwoebel** of Austin, Texas founded this “Jumelage” (translation: “twinning”) between FPUSA and L'Association Bouliste Jules Le Noir.

The club will have a banquet lunch for our group and local club members, followed by one of their nearly daily tournaments. Other activities in La Ciotat may unfold as well. The town is very “user-friendly,” it’s walkable, with beaches, a small harbor, great restaurants, and with the famous “calanques” (coves) along the coast nearby.

There will be tournaments nearly everyday in the area, including at both clubs in La Ciotat. During the week prior to Le Jumelage, some in our group will participate in the annual “Mondial” in Marseille, which is the world's largest petanque tournament. Roughly 4,000 triples teams are expected for the open (July 5-8) which follows hundreds of women's and juniors’ teams in their respective events (July 3-5).

There will be petanque players from all over Europe in the area who will be playing in **Le Mondial**. So this is a great opportunity to meet and play in a truly international setting in local tournaments and casual play.

It is quite an experience to play petanque at the place where it all began more than 100 years ago. Jules Le Noir Club is looking forward to this special event as much as the FPUSA participants are! They really make you feel welcome for making the journey to their hallowed ground. The hope is that this tradition will continue into the future for more members to enjoy. If you would like more information about the Jumelage, please contact Ed Porto (Petaluma Petanque Club) at edonkent@gmail.com.

Vive Le Jumelage!

Reflections from the Terrain

In this section, you'll discover inspiring stories, personal reflections, and unique insights that highlight what makes pétanque special and how this game connects us all. We open this section with a piece by Dorian Lucey of Gainesville Pétanque.

Pétanque Picked Me

By Dorian Lucey, Gainesville Pétanque

In memory of Greg Johnson August 1960 – December 2024

My Introduction

A flock of ibises wheeled through the air and landed in the retention pond. I was walking down to play my first game of pétanque. One fellow was over by the pond watching the birds; the other was finishing a fast-food breakfast. He told me he was tired from a tournament the day before, assured me I was in the right place, and introduced himself as **Greg Johnson**.

He set me up with loaner balls as other people arrived, and the games commenced. I surprised myself by exhibiting some prowess. Growing up I was always the last person picked in schoolyard games. My golf handicap is 46. When I skied, I ended up as a pretzel at the bottom of the hill. To find that I could actually participate in this game was a pleasure.

But the real surprise was the thirty amiable people around me, chatting and cracking jokes. Some even laughed at mine.

That was three years and nine months ago. I am the caretaker for my wife. On the morning of my first game of boules, she was in the hospital, and the human contact was a great relief. The game was a bonus.

Gainesville Pétanque is a very social club, though my circumstances keep me at its edge. I usually leave before the social break that follows the games. Still, I have come to understand what some members mean when they call Gainesville Pétanque their “pétanque family.” We have been together for members’ deaths, sickness, and surgeries; for weddings, graduations, and births. These highs and lows are part of the fabric of the club—and yes, this is my pétanque family.

The Social and the Game

At Gainesville Pétanque, pétanque is a game that happens during social intercourse. For two years it was a game to me as well. If I was having fun, I was playing pétanque. I took it seriously: I practiced every day, in parks, in the woods, on the club terrains. I learned to



Greg Johnson

throw a decent *plombée*, I could point, and eventually I realized that shooting was an integral part of the game, so I worked on shooting too. When I told my sons I was actually pretty good, the look of disbelief on their faces was priceless.

At some point I realized that when I walked off the terrain, I forgot the scores. I could dredge them up if I tried, but I had not been tracking. I concluded that I am not competitive. What matters to me is how I am playing and how I am supporting my teammates. If I am throwing terribly, I am not having fun, and I become self-critical. I made a mental note—which I always verbalize when I achieve it—that if my team gets to Low Bar Respectability (LBR), then even if we lose, we made the other team work a little. The bar is low: five points. I also celebrate if my team has six even when the other team has five balls in hand.

There is a lot in this game for everybody: social connection, an hour or two on your feet, mental strategy, outdoor air. Our modern world seems designed to isolate people from one another and from physical activity. Pétanque is a healthy offsetting remedy.

Beyond the Social Game

Greg Johnson was the first pétanque player I met. He was an electric and eclectic person—for some, more static than electric, with sparks flying. Greg wanted more than a social game. He practiced constantly, visited other clubs, and played in tournaments, and the Gainesville Club benefited as players from across the southeast returned the favor and came to play with us. He started “Early Bird Games” before regular club play, though they quickly devolved into more social games, especially during the long summer days.

Greg and I would meet, practice, and talk. Gainesville has forgiving terrains; Greg groomed them, and after a while so did I. We talked about reading the terrain, the impact of moisture on the soil, what it took to build a court properly. But mainly Greg wanted to talk about how to make the club more competitive.

I knew my own game had room to grow. Greg was my source within the club for the finer points. I enjoyed his company—I share the eclectic part of his personality, if not the electric.

I had been playing for about two years when the club had the chance to invite **Sönke Backens**, coach of the German Women’s Pétanque Team, to do a clinic. Sönke was in the country for the Amelia Island Tournament. Greg groomed the court to perfection. The clinic was a revelation for me. When Sönke said, “It is the palm and the joints of the two middle fingers that control the ball,” I changed how I held the ball from that moment. He also said, “After six weeks of productive practice, you should be ready for a tournament.” That phrase haunted me for fourteen months.

Greg and others from our club played in Amelia Island alongside Sönke. A month later, we were playing Early Bird pétanque when word reached us that Greg had died in a traffic accident.

My Transition

I had taken to pétanque like a duck to water. As a former slow-pitch softball player, I had the pendulum swing with backspin from the start, and I had been practicing diligently for two years before Sönke's clinic. Still, "productive practice" did not make sense to me. After the clinic, I decided I wanted to add a throw with a lower release point.

Sönke had introduced three simple drills—18 balls each for technique, pointing, and shooting. The 54-ball practice kept me focused and built a total game. My efforts at a lower release eluded me for fourteen months. There were occasional glimpses, the feel of the desired throw, but usually I was just repeating the same tiring attempts with no real success.

Then one day, in a club game, the situation called for it, and I could do it. My practice had been productive after all.

Around that time, a friend sent me a PDF of **Alain Gimenez's Essentials**. In a few pages, Alain aligned the thoughts that had been floating in my head. We later corresponded, and our exchanges reminded me of the ones I used to have with Greg. What I came to see is that pétanque can be a social game, but it is actually a sport. Like baseball and pickleball, it started as a social pastime and grew into something more. Calling it a sport means everything I had ever heard about sports—routine, visualization, focus, breathing, staying calm—comes alive within pétanque.

A second epiphany came from the French Federation's website. The English translation said, "observe the data from several distances." The original French used the word *donnée*. I had always been told that *donnée* meant "landing spot," but the word literally means "given"—data. The French for landing spot is *lieu d'atterrissage*, not *donnée*. The *donnée* is not the spot itself; it is the act of gathering everything that goes into choosing the spot—soil, slope, the position of the jack and the balls, the angles available to you. Now, when I stand at the head, I am actively collecting data, making a decision, and implementing the action. If the outcome falls short, either the data, the decision, or the execution did. It is a positive feedback loop. (I have shared this insight with fellow players and been met more than once with the look of someone wearing a tinfoil hat.)

The Final Piece

Five months after Alain set me on the "pétanque is a sport" path, my game was different but incomplete. I was developing a routine—I have never had a routine in my life—and it is still a work in progress.

Then **Heidi Davison** and **Al Davison** visited our terrain. They had been through the FPUSA-sponsored Umpire Camp and **FPUSA/CIEP** Coaching Clinic. I noticed a few things in their throw, asked about them, and learned about CIEP and the promotion of pétanque as a sport. Al mentioned that the throw is made up of five "gestures." I had never heard the concept. Back into research I went.

The five gestures, as I understand them, are: holding the ball; preparation—stepping into the circle, mentally focusing, settling the body; the pendulum, the backswing; the return of the pendulum, the forward swing through to the hip; and the wrist snap—the active unhinging of the wrist without any added effort, so that the throw is strong, straight, and true.

Going to the French helped me again. The original phrase for the last gesture is *le coup de poignet*—the flick of the wrist. Flick is suave and gentle where snap is abrupt. With that mental image, I could apply the action mindfully. The improvement was noticeable. A throw I had occasionally landed by feel became one I could reproduce.

This past weekend, a competitor watched me throw and said, “That looks like it fell out of your hand.” I patted myself mentally on the back—the ball had landed exactly where I wanted, and I thought, “That was soft fingers in action.”

Down the Road

I do not wash my car often. When I do and stand back to admire it, I always notice one spot I missed—a door edge, a streak on the roof, something I would never have seen until the rest was clean. The new throw has done the same to my game. Other parts now look unfinished.

My data collection feels cursory by comparison. My routine for choosing a landing spot was good enough for my old “government work” throw, but not precise enough for this new one. Shots I would never have attempted, I now try. Mental focus does not feel focused enough. Where I once shot at a ball, I now want to land three degrees left of center on the upper quadrant—and that requires a new level of attention. Breathing, which used to be a quaint activity I did if I remembered to, is now essential.

In club play, I do the best I can, but I also use the games for things I would never do in a tournament—high-risk shots, a nine-meter *plombée*, even playing with just two balls in a doubles game. Winning in club play is not as important to me as keeping the atmosphere friendly. One day there were five games on the terrain and three of them were *fanny* games. I was on the winning end of one. It was not fun for me, and I am sure it was not fun for the team on the other side. Finding the balance in club play continues to be elusive.

Greg used to say, “Pétanque is a simple game that takes a lifetime to learn.”

Greg, I am still learning.





Fanny: The Shrines, Rituals, and Unique History of a French Pétanque Tradition

By Lucas Lackner, Valley of the Moon Petanque Club

“Le jeu n’a pas d’autre sens que lui même.”
– Gallimard

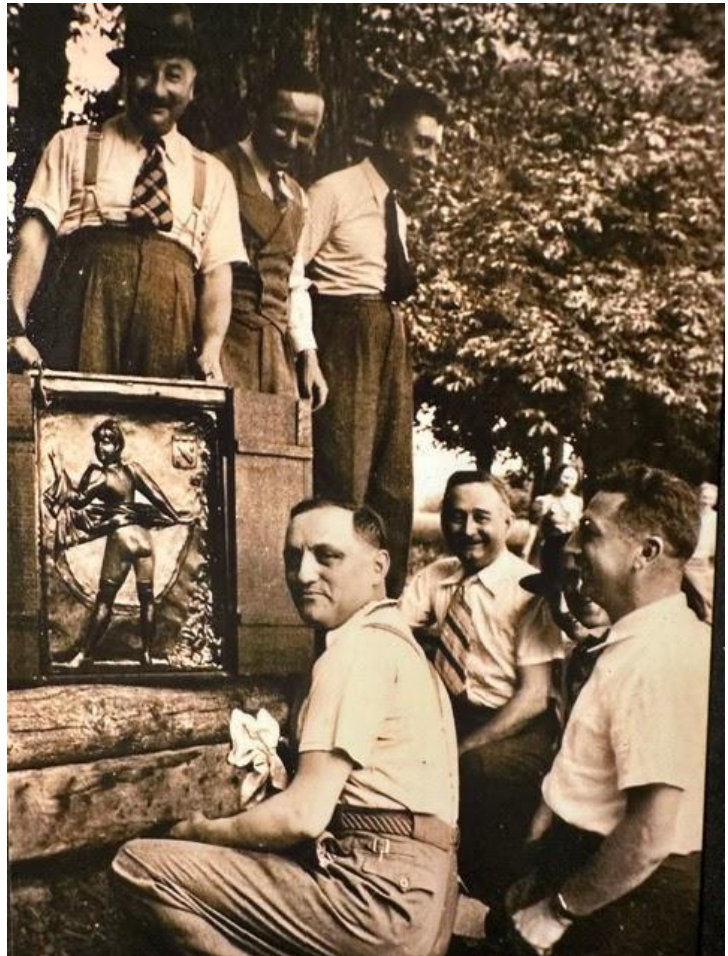
For millennia, the French have been renowned and admired for their refined culture, gorgeous landscapes, outstanding architecture, sophisticated fashion, sublime wines and cuisine, magnificent art, literature, theatre, cinema and music. But they are also known to sometimes flaunt a saltier aspect and a bawdy and somewhat cruel sense of humor.

Displayed within the innumerable small town and city clubs dedicated to the sport of pétanque, as practiced throughout the southern countryside of Provence, the ubiquitous images of a partially naked woman named **Fanny** have become the symbols of total defeat and utter humiliation. “Être Fanny” means that a team has lost a game by a score of 13 to 0.



Lucas Lackner (photo by Frazer Bradshaw)

Since the pre-World-War-One years of the early 20th Century, she has become the physical manifestation of the dread and mortification of nearly every serious player, and there are severe consequences meted out for such a profound drubbing. The losing party is often obliged to publicly kneel while kissing the bare gluteus maximus of this Goddess of Pétanque, as a small bell tolls to broadcast to the entire neighborhood the news that someone has royally screwed up. Then, as tradition dictates, the traumatized team is obliged to buy a round of drinks for the gloating victors at the local watering hole, which, conveniently, usually sits adjacent to the courts. The favored spirit of pétanque is generally pastis, the makers of which sponsor many tournaments, but wine, beer and other liquors are highly acceptable alternatives. Inebriation and fine charcuterie, cheese and bread seem to frequently accompany this lengthy pastime .



There is no scholar, historian or practitioner of pétanque who can say with absolute certainty what the true origins of the Fanny phenomenon are. Similar rituals certainly predate the invention of this specific game around 1907 in La Ciotat, a lovely town in the Mediterranean heart of Provence. The pétanque tradition asserts that there was a singular occurrence in the Bouches-du-Rhône region, shortly after the advent of the game, in which the mayor of a small town (perhaps La Ciotat) and his unfortunate partner lost a game zero-to-thirteen. The common practice at the time was for the vanquished party to enter the adjacent brasserie and publicly approach the kindly daughter or wife of the proprietor of this establishment, who was serving the food and beverages, in order to plant a kiss upon both of her cheeks as a consoling acknowledgement of their defeat, and then to purchase the round of drinks for the conquerers. The story goes that this particularly strong-willed woman held a grudge against the mayor, and, rather than allowing his lips to touch her face, turned her backside to him, raising her skirts above her naked derrière to reveal her other cheeks. The unpopular mayor obligingly and ignominiously kneeled and planted a loud kiss upon each nether cheek, whereupon the crowd of onlookers immediately erupted into jeering laughter and brazen mockery while furiously ringing the service bell,

demanding that the object of their derision buy a round of drinks for the entire throng of howling villagers. This, apparently, was the genesis of Fanny as the fierce and slightly vindictive Goddess of Pétanque.

Other older variations of the game of boules, such as Boules Lyonnaise and Bocce Volo, have celebrated such colossal defeats with similar rituals over their many decades, but the practitioners of pétanque have established shrines to Fanny in nearly every club throughout the South of France. These vary a great deal in size and extravagance. There are often small cabinets mounted upon the walls of cafés, or on trees or fences adjacent to the courts, with doors that open to reveal a ceramic, stone, wood or painted pair of nude feminine buttocks, sometimes concealed behind a small curtain, and accompanied by a sprung bell to be rung vehemently upon the kissing of the cheeks. There are freestanding sculptures and mosaic renditions rising from the sidelines. Some clubs bring their own unique bottoms to their events, swaddled in a specialized pouch or sack, carved from wood or marble like a small Rodin sculpture. Sometimes the tavern or hotel next to the piste will have an elaborate display inside, where gawking onlookers can jeer the hapless victims before imbibing, benefiting from the cruelty of the spectacle. It is all done with glee, humor and a wonderful sense of joie de vivre, a collaborative and amusing form of harmless shaming that is a Gallic specialty.



In the United States and many other countries that share pétanque as a passion, such as Vietnam, Laos and Algeria, all former targets of French hegemony, there seems to be a more puritanical and sober approach to the game. Fanny is frowned upon and is almost invariably absent from clubs and tournaments. Most American players seem unaware of Fanny as an integral aspect of French boudodromes, clubs, and rural courts, but even those who are familiar with the practice still choose not to acknowledge a loss of 0/13 with such conspicuous and raucous intensity.

I personally feel that it is a shame that, especially in the more liberal hotbeds of pétanque, such as northern California's Bay Area, little attention is paid to what is, after all, a rather charming cultural aspect of the sport among the hundreds of clubs and pistes spread throughout southern France. A shoutout must go to **Peter Gealey** and the **Noyo Yoyo Pétanque Club** of Mendocino and Fort Bragg, California, for keeping a splendidly crafted marble Fanny with them at club events, and for chronicling the appropriately comical match results photographically for their archives, and for all posterity to enjoy.

Too often these days, the rich cultural histories and accompanying rituals and details of life in the small towns of ancient civilizations are overlooked, neglected or forgotten. I began my pétanque journey as a small boy in the late 1950s and early '60s, playing in the Mediterranean villages of Provence as my family traveled broadly. My father was born in Paris in 1910, just after pétanque's initial creation, and fondly recalled his youthful experiences in the French countryside. My son, **Hadrien**, became a superb practitioner by the time he was ten years old, gracing the cover of the FPUSA annual magazine in 2014, playing tournaments and pétanque sauvage with me throughout the deserts, mountains, forests and riverbeds of all of the western states and British Columbia. A Fanny game was extremely rare between us, but, when it happened, the good natured sting and derision proved to be a hilarious and memorable form of bonding.



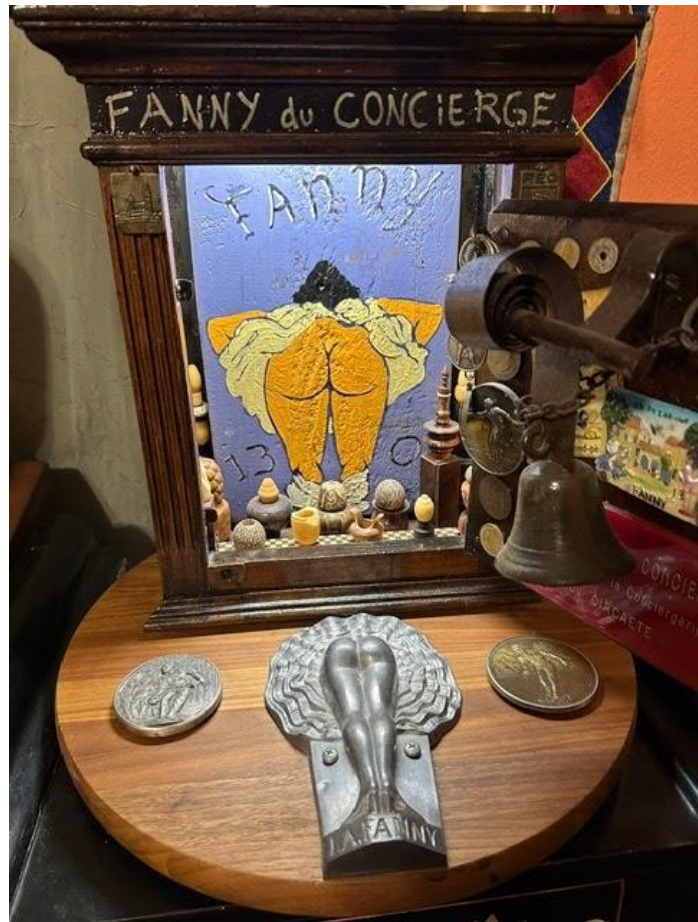
“... is this ritual ultimately misogynistic, though initiated by a woman? Is it about emasculation, though women are equally prone to losing a game catastrophically? Is it a framework for acknowledging or masking sexual desire?”

There are exhibits of the history and many diverse manifestations of Fanny in several French museums and private collections, and numerous books and articles examine this

unique and quirky tradition. One might feel inclined to explore the deeper psychological and cultural aspects of the overall practice. As a dear friend of mine points out, is this ritual ultimately misogynistic, though initiated by a woman? Is it a celebration of the power of femininity? Is it about emasculation, though women are equally prone to losing a game catastrophically? Is it a framework for acknowledging or masking sexual desire? These are themes that certainly invite deeper examination.

Over many years, I have assembled a vast array of relevant artifacts consisting of Fannies, memorabilia, balls, medals, pins, strange objects, books, articles, caricatures, hundreds of old cartoons, postcards and photographs, all forming a rich and extensive cultural and historical archive. Some of these items may prove uncomfortable to those of a delicate moral disposition, but I would be happy to share the contents of my collection with any pétanque scholar or fan who savors the French traditions and relics of what is, in reality, a truly bizarre, unique and individualistic sport. I frequently am amazed at the amount of time and energy that grown human beings, myself deliriously included, expend upon the ritualistic heaving of steel orbs at a minuscule spherical pig.

Vive La Pétanque!



Who started FPUSA?

By Stephen Ferg
FPUSA Member and author of "All About Pétanque"
blog
(petanque.wordpress.com)

It is a story now largely forgotten – a tale of two men, one French and one American, who could hardly have been more different, and whose paths shaped the federation we play under today.



Pétanque's American

story begins in the 1960s. In the years after World War II, a wave of immigration had given San Francisco a thriving French community of chefs and winegrowers. One of them was **Jean Bontemps**, a director of a French import/export business, who in 1959 organized **La Boule d'Or** – the second-oldest pétanque club in the country, founded just a year after the first. There were no English rules to play by, so Bontemps made his own translation of the French national rules. (These were the FFBJPP rules; the FIPJP had only just come into existence and had yet to issue any of its own.) His was probably the first English-language version of the rules ever written – and, true to his adopted home, he rendered it in *American English*. *Mène*, the word for an end or round, became "inning."

Then Bontemps came across an article in *Provence-Magazine* reporting that Canada was full of pétanque players. He had a thought: "Why not try to convince the Americans?" And so he set out, flying from state to state to promote the game of boules across the country. He helped found what is now the Pan-American Pétanque Confederation, which held the first North American Pétanque Championships – today *le Coupe des Amériques* – in San Francisco in 1962. By 1964, *Provence-Magazine* could report that Bontemps had visited 51 localities and raised an army of more than 11,000 licensees.

In the mid-1960s Bontemps left San Francisco for the Washington, D.C. area, where he founded two more clubs. Around the same time, an American was discovering the game from the other direction. **Alfred Levitt**, living in New York City, was a painter who traveled often to France, where he ran an art school in Provence – and that is where he first encountered pétanque. Back in the United States he met Bontemps in Washington, and on

returning to New York, he and his wife Gertrude founded the city's first pétanque club, *La Boule New Yorkaise*, in 1968.

A decade earlier, the world's first pétanque federation, the FIPJP, had been founded in Marseille. For its first dozen years it was spectacularly unsuccessful, but around 1970 a new French leadership committee breathed life back into the dying organization. Watching this revival, Levitt had an idea. He contacted the FIPJP to propose an American national federation under its aegis. There are suspicions that he overstated the number and size of clubs in the USA to win recognition – but whatever the truth, the proposal was accepted, and in 1973 the Federation of Pétanque, U.S.A., Inc. (FPUSA) was born. Alfred Levitt (right photo) was its first president.



The FPUSA grew to eight member clubs, most of them on the East Coast – but it could hardly be called a success, and the problem was Levitt himself. He was notorious for having an irritating, authoritarian, and aggressive personality, and he managed to antagonize almost everyone he dealt with. With the exception of the **Los Angeles Pétanque Club** and **La Pétanque Marinière**, the West Coast clubs simply found him too difficult and kept their distance.

Half the clubs in the country without a national home was an intolerable state of affairs – and Bontemps, still active in Washington, set out to fix it. In 1976, three years after the FPUSA's creation, he organized the **American Pétanque Association (APA)**: in essence, a national body free of Levitt's domination. Its clubs were mostly on the West Coast, and by 1986 the APA had grown to 14 of them – 50% more than the FPUSA.

For a decade the two organizations existed side by side. They weren't hostile, exactly, just separate. The APA repeatedly sought FIPJP recognition and was repeatedly refused, since the FIPJP would not acknowledge two national federations in one country – which meant APA members were locked out of international championships. The APA floated merger proposals too, but they always foundered on the rock of Levitt's prickly temperament.

In time it became clear that Levitt was an immovable obstacle. He was nearly 90, yet he refused to step down as president. Finally, in 1985, in a *coup d'état* whose details remain murky, he was forced out – and with the Levitt regime over, serious merger talks could at last begin.

His successor in New York, **Hans Jepson**, was a reasonable man. So **Robert (Bob) Morrison**, founder of the **National Capital Club de Pétanque** in Washington, simply boarded a train to New York City to meet him. Morrison remembers the negotiations as almost a non-event: he proposed that the APA clubs merge into the FPUSA, Jepson said "OK," and that was about it. The result, in 1986, was the national federation we know today. The APA was the larger body, but the FPUSA held the FIPJP's recognition, so the merged organization kept the FPUSA name. Jepson stayed on as president until new elections in early 1987, when **Joseph Ardagna** of the **Club de Pétanque of Portsmouth**, Virginia became the first president of the new FPUSA.

To celebrate, **Bob Morrison** and **Joe Acciardi** set to work in Washington on the country's first international pétanque tournament, the **Championnat International de Pétanque U.S.A.** — which Morrison financed out of his own pocket. It took place on the weekend before Bastille Day, 1987, on the **National Mall**, where players from the old APA and the old FPUSA could finally meet across the court, alongside teams from Canada and Europe. FIPJP president **Henri Bernard** was there, with 50 triples teams from the **United States, Canada, France, and Switzerland.**



So — who started the FPUSA? Levitt is the man who secured its certification from the international federation. But it was Bontemps who spent years crisscrossing the country, promoting pétanque from coast to coast, and whose APA made up the bulk of the reorganized federation. Jean Bontemps was the true father of today's FPUSA.



Hi, I'm Scott and I'm a Pétanque junkie... Hi Scott!

By Scott Seifer, Carolina Petanque

This is my story about recently finding and getting hooked on pétanque. To say I was hooked immediately would be an understatement. In January, my wife saw a Facebook post inviting anyone to join a group that plays a game I'd never heard of before at a local park, **Miller Park**, here in **Winston-Salem, North Carolina**. My wife is fully aware of my affinity for sports such as bowling, billiards, darts... that require precision and muscle memory and I'm so glad she saw and passed along the invitation. It's mid-January and on a mild Sunday afternoon I show up and am immediately welcomed by **Shirley Jones**. I intended to just observe, watch and learn about this mysterious sport, but Shirley wouldn't hear of it and handed me a set of boules and put me in a game. My decades of bowling and similar sports apparently came in handy and I didn't humiliate myself right away and, as they say, the rest is history. I immediately ordered a set of boules for myself as well as extra sets for my wife and 2 extra sets for any friends or family I decided to drag out there with me. Sadly, the weather turned cold and snowy for the next 3 or 4 weeks and I was itching to get back on the courts but had to wait for things to thaw out.

Here's where lucky timing came into play. Being a complete novice, I knew nothing about proper technique, strategy, etc, but it just so happened a **Pétanque Training** session was announced and scheduled for March 21 at my home court. It was perfect timing. The instructors were amazing - **Marc Quilici, Kathy Cline, Juan Hernandez, John Wilson**, and

Bill Cooke. The lessons, exercises and information were priceless for this newbie. Because I was so new, I didn't have any bad habits to break and I was able to absorb and immediately put into action the lessons I learned.

The group of anywhere from 15 to 30 pétanque players that show up every Sunday afternoon are so welcoming. They're encouraging, patient and willing to give pointers and advice during every game while also explaining the rules to someone who can easily be overwhelmed after first learning the game. It's a fun group, yet still competitive, which makes it that much more enjoyable.

I have absolutely found a home away from home and look forward to playing twice a week whenever possible. I've even signed up to play in a Memorial weekend tournament on my home court, which I am both excited and nervous to take part in.

Special shout-out to **Shirley Jones** and **Preston Myers**, the "ring leaders" of the Winston-Salem chapter of Carolina Petanque. They work very hard to encourage new players to join in the fun and are amazing ambassadors for the game.



My Week of Pétanque in Bulgaria

By Jean-Michel Poulnot, Valley of the Moon Petanque Club

This May, I had the incredible experience of competing in the **International Pétanque Competition in Varna, Bulgaria**, held May 12–19, 2026. The event drew **180 players from 25 countries**, most of them from across Europe – and the level of play was extraordinary.

My week got off to a great start on Wednesday, May 13. Paired with my fantastic shooter, **Didier Bernard** from Strasbourg, I won the bronze medal in Concours B, a field of 70 doublettes. We played eight games that day, from 9:00 a.m. all the way to 7:30 p.m.

The momentum carried into Thursday, May 14, when I teamed up with my Turkish partners, **Berkay** and **Huseyin**, to win the gold medal in Concours B – this time among 60 triplettes, again across eight games from 9:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Over the weekend, I played triplettes (60 teams) with **Philippe** and **Bernard** from Paris. Saturday went well, as we won five games and lost only one, but on Sunday we were eliminated in the morning by a team from Belgium. An excellent French team from Montpellier went on to win the event, defeating a team from Israel.

On Monday, May 18, I returned to doublettes (40 teams) in the afternoon, playing again with **Didier Bernard**. We won all four of our games and finished third on point differential.

This international competition was incredible, full of remarkably talented players. I learned a great deal about pétanque and made many new friends from all over Europe. I hope to be back in May 2027!





The Public Health Case for Pétanque

By Michelle Dang, Sactown Petanque

I spent more than thirty years as a nurse, but a lot of those years were not in a hospital. While I felt that I had made a difference in acute care settings, I discovered that I could make a larger difference as a public health nurse in the community, where the focus is on keeping people, and whole populations, well in the first place, not on patching things up after they have already broken. We call it upstream work.

Community health work also got me curious about something deeper. Knowing what is healthy is not the same as doing it. Why do people behave the way they do? That question led me to graduate study in human development. Behavior has many layered threads, none of them simple. But the research does give us clues, and one of the clearest threads runs through all of it. *People do better, on almost every measure that matters, when they are connected to other people.*

That brings me to pétanque.

My late father-in-law, **Jacques Sarafian**, played pétanque into his 90s. He was a longtime member of **La Pétanque Marinière** in San Rafael, CA, and the person who introduced me to the game. My husband and I would visit him on weekends at the courts and watch him play, and sometimes, we would get pulled into games and lively conversations with other players. Jacques showed up to those Marin courts week after week for decades. As he became more fragile later in life and moved near us, we would accompany him to the Mather courts in

Sacramento when he felt strong enough to go. What I did not expect was what came next. I found myself still returning to those courts after he was gone and became a pétanque addict looking for every excuse to throw boules. I now understand why he was so drawn to those courts.

What I noticed then is what I still notice on courts today. People show up, week after week. They play, argue about points and strategies, share food, ask after each other. That kind of steady, mutual presence is one of the most protective health behaviors a community can practice. What do you know? This is public health!



My father-in-law on the right, in shorts because he was always in shorts, 1989. (Photo by Martin E. Klimek, Marin Independent Journal.)

Fair warning. I like research, and I am about to share some. Bear with me, because it is actually interesting.

We all know diet and exercise matter. The third pillar, the one most people undervalue, is social connection. A landmark 2010 meta-analysis by **Holt-Lunstad** and colleagues pooled 148 studies and more than 300,000 participants and found that people with stronger social relationships had a 50 percent greater likelihood of survival than those with weaker ties. Harvard social epidemiologist **Lisa Berkman** has compared this level of mortality risk to other risks we all take seriously, including smoking.

The biology is not abstract either. Researchers have linked social isolation and loneliness to elevated inflammation markers in the bloodstream, with the isolation signal appearing more strongly in men in some samples. Chronic inflammation is a known driver of cardiovascular disease and many other conditions. The body responds to a social deficit the same way it responds to chronic stress, because that is essentially what isolation is.

Social connection also protects the brain. A 2021 study by neurologist **Joel Salinas** and colleagues, drawing on the longitudinal **Framingham Heart Study**, found that people who simply had someone available to listen when they needed to talk showed greater cognitive resilience. Their brains were functioning better than expected given their age and any underlying changes. A single good listener was associated with a real, measurable buffer against cognitive decline. Just one.

What may be even more striking is what the research says about whole communities, not just individuals. The protective power of connection is not only something one person extends to another. It is something a community holds together as a fabric. Researchers like **Ichiro Kawachi** and **Lisa Berkman** at the **Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health** have spent decades documenting that places with higher levels of social cohesion, the trust and reciprocity and willingness of neighbors to help one another, have measurably better health outcomes. Lower mortality. Lower rates of cardiovascular disease. Better self-rated health across whole populations, even after accounting for income and individual behaviors.



One of the most famous examples is the small town of **Roseto, Pennsylvania**, settled by Italian immigrants in the late 1800s. Beginning in the 1950s, researchers led by **Stewart**

Wolf were puzzled to find that Rosetans had heart attack mortality less than half that of the neighboring town of Bangor, despite eating a rich diet, smoking, and working in the slate quarries. A 50-year follow-up published in the *American Journal of Public Health* supported what became known as the **Roseto effect**: during the years when Roseto had especially strong family and community ties, its heart attack mortality was unusually low compared with nearby towns. As the community became more individualistic and abandoned close-knit structures, that advantage faded. The researchers argued that the town's social fabric, its multigenerational households, shared meals, religious and civic gatherings, and strong neighborly ties, may have been protective.

The frequency question is where it gets really practical for our pétanque world. A 2023 study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* followed 28,563 older adults in China, average age 89, drawn from the **Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey**. Participants were grouped by how often they socialized, from never to almost every day. In the first five years of follow-up, time to death was delayed by 42 percent in those who socialized occasionally and by 110 percent in those who socialized at least weekly. After five years, a clear threshold emerged. Only those who socialized nearly every day showed significantly longer survival, with time to death delayed by an astonishing 204 percent.

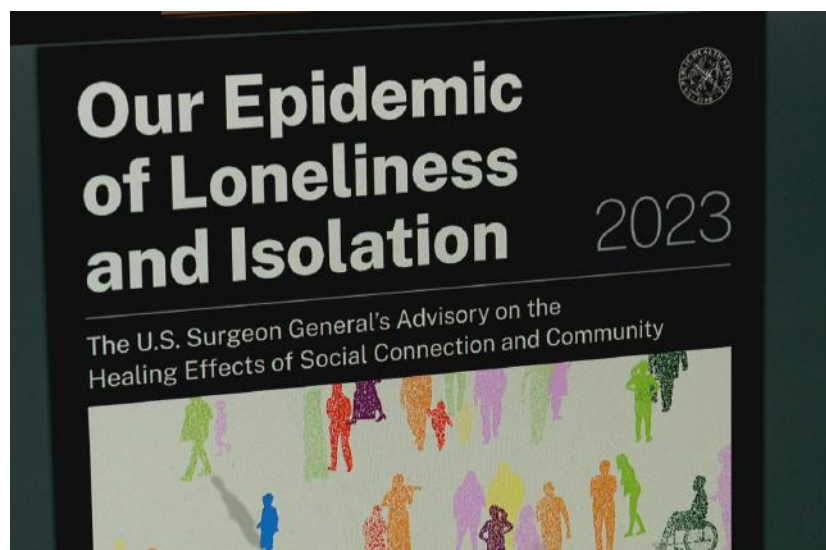


Stacey Linh, John Wilson, and Janet Torrico examining points in Greensboro, NC (2026)

This is why I keep coming back to pétanque as public health in action, a game that happens to gather many of the things the research tells us matter. Petanquers get three things at once: gentle, consistent physical activity, mental engagement through strategy and conversation, and a regular in-person social network that often stretches far beyond the court itself. Tournaments, club dinners, the coffee before and the wine after, the long debrief on a missed shot, the quiet visit when a member is going through something hard. All of it counts. All of it is medicine.

There is one more thing worth saying, especially from a public health nurse's perspective. The cost of building and maintaining these spaces is remarkably small. A few courts and somewhere to sit. Compared to the price tag of clinical care, hospital stays, dementia care, and the long tail of chronic disease that flows from disconnection, public courts are a bargain.

We do not have great tools for measuring what these spaces save us. Prevention has always been tricky to put a number on. You cannot count the heart attack that did not happen or the cognitive decline that was delayed by a year. But the U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 advisory on loneliness and isolation reported that social isolation among older adults alone is associated with an estimated 6.7 billion dollars in additional Medicare spending every year. If communities like ours are quietly offsetting even a fraction of that, the math on courts looks very good indeed.



But here is what I want to leave you with. The research above is usually written up as if longevity is a private benefit, something we each earn for ourselves by collecting friends and activities. The truth is more beautiful than that. My father-in-law playing into his 90s was not just about lucky genetics. He had a community, a routine, people who expected him to show up, and a reason to keep moving. Every time you walk onto a court, you are not just doing something good for your own heart and brain. You are part of someone else's health too. You are the friendly face who completes another player's week. You are the listener who keeps a friend's cognitive resilience intact. You are a thread in the social fabric that, across whole communities, is associated with people living longer, healthier lives. We do this for each other. So show up, play pétanque, and keep that Roseto effect alive!

(Michelle teaches community health nursing at California State University, Sacramento.)

Member Highlights

What makes our community unique is its members. They come from all over the United States and the world, and they lead fascinating lives. In this issue, we're pleased to share the stories of **Jamil Sopher** (National Capital Club de Pétanque), **Giuseppe Gadaleta** (La Pétanque Marinière), **Yvonne Law** (Atlanta Pétanque League), and, in a combined story, **Chris Martin** and **Avery Sollenberger** (Classic City Pétanque). We hope you'll meet them on the terrain one day – but until then, enjoy getting to know them here.



A Sixty-Year Return Jamil Sopher's Pétanque Story

By Michelle Dang, Sactown Pétanque

For **Jamil Sopher**, the path to the **National Capital Club de Pétanque** (NCCdP) spans two continents, three nationalities, and exactly sixty years.

The first time Jamil played pétanque was July 1951. He was eight years old, on summer vacation with his parents in Juan-les-Pins on the French Riviera. During the day, vendors worked the beach selling their wares to tourists. In the evening, after the vendors had packed up and the families had moved to the restaurants around the Pinède at the village center, those same vendors would gather to throw boules. Jamil and his family were having dinner at Le Perroquet when he first noticed them. He watched, fascinated, and one evening asked his father if he could join in.

“My Dad said, ‘If they accept you, yes.’” They did. Jamil played pétanque with them every evening for the rest of the trip. His parents bought him his first set of boules with the understanding that they would come out only on the Riviera.

The second time Jamil played pétanque was July 2011. In between lay a life.

Roots in Three Worlds

Jamil's father was an Iraqi Jew born in Basra. After his parents' marriage ended in separation, Jamil's grandmother returned to live with her family in England. Jamil's father eventually joined her there, where he studied at Cambridge in the 1920s. After the 1929 crash—when foreigners were told their welcome in England had run out—Jamil's father

asked to be deported to France instead of Iraq. “Best decision he ever made,” Jamil remembers his father saying.

In France, his father enlisted in the French army, drawn by the promise of citizenship, and was assigned as chauffeur to the only Jewish general in the army. When his service ended, the general opened doors for him across Parisian Jewish society: theater owners, restaurateurs, nightclub operators. Between 1934 and 1939, his father did well and returned briefly to Iraq to marry Jamil’s mother in 1938.

When war broke out, the family took the long way around—through Los Angeles, then New York, where Jamil was born just a few blocks from the French consulate. On the day Jamil was born, his father registered him for an *Acte de Naissance* at the French Consulate—and so, alongside his U.S. birth certificate, Jamil held dual nationality, American and French, from his first day of life.

After the war, the family split its time between New York and Paris, with Jamil attending school in the U.S. and spending summers in France. Those summers in Juan-les-Pins were when the boules came out.



Pétanque at Avenue des Invalides & Rue St. Dominique, Paris

A Career Across Continents

Jamil’s American path took him through Worcester Academy, Cornell—where he discovered squash, a sport that would shape him as much as pétanque later would—a master’s degree, and an MBA from Harvard, finishing in 1968. While at Harvard, Jamil followed closely “the impossible-dream Red Sox of 1967,” he notes with a smile.

With Vietnam in full swing and his future uncertain, he was driving on Long Island when he saw a sign for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. He pulled off the highway, walked into the dean’s office (after being turned away by the administrative assistant earlier in the day), and walked out with a direct commission as a Lieutenant junior grade in the U.S. Maritime Service. For the next two years, he taught meteorology and electronic navigation—subjects

he didn't know on the day he accepted his commission, but he learned them well enough to teach them by the time he stepped into the classroom.

After an unrewarding stint on Wall Street, he sent his résumé to the World Bank in 1979. Within months he was on a plane to Bangladesh, helping prepare a \$40–50 million water supply loan—a sum he could hardly imagine being responsible for at the time. The numbers grew from there: water projects in Sri Lanka, port and power loans in India, half a billion dollars in South Asian lending by the mid-1980s. In 1986 the Bank moved him to East Asia, where the work expanded into China, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and eventually Laos. Along the way he kept playing squash wherever he traveled, and once, in his early forties, made the quarterfinals of the Papua New Guinea national championship.



Nam Theun, Laos - The electric dam that Jamil identified and financed through his work with the World Bank

A Glimpse of What Was Coming

There is one place in his World Bank years where squash and pétanque crossed paths. In Vientiane, the capital of Laos, the French had left behind a small foreigners' club three miles outside the city. It had squash courts. Beside them, outside, was a pétanque terrain—the only place in the world Jamil has ever seen the two side by side. He played a match against an Australian, then walked outside and threw a few boules. He didn't know it then, but it was a preview.

The Day Everything Changed

Jamil married in 1981 and settled in Washington. He and his wife raised three children—one daughter and twin sons—and the two sons followed Jamil's passion and took up competitive squash. They were eventually recruited to Princeton. In late June 2011, after his twin sons' graduation, Jamil drove home. He felt a quiet sadness: his squash playing days were behind him, and now his squash spectating days were behind him too. What would he do?

That night, Jamil and his wife stopped at Le Chat Noir for dinner. On the table was a newsletter. The lead article was about the **National Capital Club de Pétanque** - “All of a sudden my world changed.”

“All of a sudden my world changed.”

Building a Welcoming Club

When Jamil joined NCCdP, he had thought of pétanque as having two tracks: a competitive track and a social track. Under the president of that time, the club emphasized the competitive track and put minimal interest in the social track. Jamil, in his own way, sought to build the social aspect. He wanted NCCdP to balance sport with friendship.

In 2015 he was elected president—by acclamation. His focus was straightforward: make this a welcoming community.

When he started, the club had about 25 members, and only three of them were women. “I knew women would soften the interaction among the members,” he says. By the end of his second year, membership had grown to between 60 and 70, with about 15 women. He credits much of the change to **Betty Moore**, a French member in her nineties whose warmth made it impossible for anyone to treat her harshly. “She’s the person who softened our club. She made it possible for people to want to join and play.”

The membership Jamil helped build reflects the city it lives in. Players have come from Thailand, Madagascar, Tunisia, France—many passing through Washington on diplomatic or development postings. Some worked at the IMF, some at the World Bank, some at embassies. In his Bank years, Jamil’s water projects in Sri Lanka helped cut waterborne disease from 42% to 3% in the Greater Colombo area, which holds about half of the country’s population; and in the Philippines, his project increased access to telephones from about 10% to 60%. In his pétanque years, he has welcomed the people who, around the world, carry such work through to its conclusions.

It is, in its way, the same vocation. Different tools—a loan document, a boule—but the same instinct: bring people together and build something that lasts.



Jamil's wife Lynn playing pétanque with Bob Morrison



A Boule in Two Languages

Giuseppe Gadaleta's path from volo to a national pétanque title

By Michelle Dang, Sactown Pétanque

It was October 2024 at a Lamorinda tournament, and a tall Italian newcomer had drawn sixteenth—barely making the concours bracket. He and **Hideko Matsunaga**, his wife and doubles partner, had never competed in a pétanque tournament before. He admitted, cheerfully, that he didn't really know the rules. In the first elimination round they were paired against the number-one seed. They won. By the end of the day, Giuseppe and Hideko had taken third place in the whole tournament.

There was something distinctive about the way he played. Giuseppe is tall, and when he sets up for a shot, he looks for a moment as if he's about to take a running approach—then settles into a complete, fluid swing that lifts the bouli high into a long arc.

Less than two years later, that same player—the one who didn't know the rules—was the 2026 United States national singles champion.

Of course, Giuseppe wasn't really a beginner. He was just playing a different game.

A Family Game in Sestri Levante

Giuseppe grew up in Sestri Levante, Italy, a fishing-and-resort town on the Ligurian coast between Genoa and La Spezia, in a family where boules came as naturally as bread at dinner. His father played. His brother played. The family lived close enough to the local club that Giuseppe was rolling boules by the age of six.

The sport he learned was *volo*—the Italian cousin of the French sport-boules played in Lyon, and the discipline he would carry the longest. By sixteen he had won a silver medal at the Italian junior triples championship, second in the country in his age group.

And then, as happens to many Italian sixteen-year-olds, life intervened. A girlfriend. New friends with other interests. The boules went into a drawer.

“Maybe ten or twenty percent keep playing all the way through,” Giuseppe says. “Some take a break. Some stop. Some come back.”

He would be one of the comebacks.

A Note on Boules

It helps, here, to know exactly which game we’re talking about—because the world of *boules* is wider than most American players realize.

The game most familiar to FPUSA readers is **pétanque**, whose name comes from the Provençal *pieds tanqués*, “feet planted.” The thrower stands stationary inside a circle and lobs or shoots a small steel boule six to ten meters.

In the older French tradition from Lyon—*boule lyonnaise*, or sport-boules—the throw is much longer, up to twenty-five meters; the balls are heavier and made of bronze; and the thrower *runs* into the throw. The Italian version of this game is **bocce volo**, essentially the same sport under a different name.

Most Italian regions, however, don’t play volo. They play **raffa**, the lane game most Americans associate with the word “bocce.” Only six Italian regions still play volo seriously.

Giuseppe plays all of them. But volo was first.



Giuseppe (front right) with his teammate and sport officials

A Sighting at Aquatic Park

Giuseppe moved to the United States at age twenty-four to study English. His grandmother and an uncle already lived here. He stayed.

He had not played volo in years, and American bocce had never tempted him. Then, one afternoon, walking past Aquatic Park in San Francisco, he stopped. People were playing volo. *His game.*

He walked over. The players were skeptical of the tall stranger who claimed to know their sport—until he began naming the great Italian volo players of the 1980s. He called his father in Italy and asked him to ship a set of volo boules across the Atlantic. By 2013 he was competing again.

The comeback was swift. At the U.S. national championships in Stockton, California, where no one knew him, he took four gold medals. In 2015 he represented the United States at his first volo World Championship, in Croatia. In 2017, in Morocco, he won an individual bronze—the first World Championship medal ever for an American volo player. He took a brief break, then returned for World Championships in Alassio in 2021 and Mersin in 2023. Today he is president of the **United States Bocce Volo Federation**, and in June 2026 he flies to Chile for the **Pan Am Games**, where the top three finishers will qualify for the October World Championship.



Giuseppe with his father (center) and brother (right)

“Giuseppe wasn’t really a beginner. He was just playing a different game.”

The Second Discovery

Pétanque came late, and almost by accident. In September 2024, on a trip home to Italy, Giuseppe was playing volo when two players from Genoa wandered over and began throwing pétanque in a nearby parking lot. He joined them. Back in California, he looked up the nearest pétanque club online. The first result was **La Pétanque Marinière** in San Rafael. He emailed the club’s president, **Christine Cragg**, joined up, picked up a secondhand set from a member—and entered the Lamorinda tournament a few weeks later.

The crossover from volo to pétanque, he is quick to point out, is one of the easier ones in the boule world. The shooting motion is already there. The body already knows how to find a target. What changes is mostly the geometry: a shorter throw, a lighter ball (his volo

boule weighs just over a kilo; his pétanque boule, 680 grams), and a terrain rougher and less predictable than the smooth volo lane.

“Pointing in volo is easier—the court is smooth, one style, no spin, no effect,” he says. “Shooting is much harder—the distance, the run, the coordination. In volo, many pointers cannot even throw the ball.”

Giuseppe sees his own path as part of a broader shift. In Italy, the traffic is increasingly one way—volo memberships shrinking, pétanque growing—and he is far from the only volo player to take up the smaller boule.

But the shape of a pétanque day is what he loves. The Swiss system, three games and lunch, then direct elimination—every player gets a real day of pétanque. In Italy, most volo tournaments are direct elimination from the first round. Drive two hours, lose your opening match, drive home.

The Long Game

Giuseppe still returns to Sestri Levante several times a year, where he plays both volo and pétanque. In the Italian Federation, which governs every boule discipline under a single roof, he holds two classifications: Category B in volo, Category C in pétanque.

His ambition for pétanque is plain: he wants to represent the United States. “I won’t quit before I get there.”

On that October afternoon at Lamorinda, none of this history was visible. There was only a tall, cheerful Italian newcomer who didn’t know the rules, Hideko at his side, and an unusually long arc on every shot. By the end of the day, an unexpected third-place trophy. Less than two years later, a national title.

There was, in retrospect, a whole life behind that arc.



Giuseppe and Hideko placing 3rd in their first pétanque tournament



Giuseppe winning Gold in the National Men’s Singles (2026)

Pétanque at Any Age

By Marilyn Appleby, President, Classic City Petanque Club



At the age of 96, **Chris Martin**, a retired marine microbiologist, joined Classic City Pétanque in 2023. A native of the northeast, he spent his early childhood in New York City before moving to rural Vermont, where he explored his love of the natural world, and later to Massachusetts, where he and his wife raised their four children.

Professionally he pursued an interest in the tiniest of organisms, especially those living in the oceans — work that took him on two research expeditions to the Antarctic. His true scientist’s mind remains insatiably curious about the world around him and all the people he meets.

Chris splits his time between Gloucester, MA, where he enjoys summer and autumn, and Athens, where he spends a milder winter and

spring near his daughter, **Janet Martin**. It was Janet and her husband, **Joerg Mayer**, who introduced Chris to pétanque and to the wonderful group of friends at Classic City Pétanque. He loved the challenge and immediately joined the club and bought boules.

Chris celebrated his **99th birthday** in January and continues to play regularly. A natural southpaw, he throws his boules right-handed with amazing accuracy, consistently flabbergasting onlookers with his enviably precise pointing skills! He often seems just as surprised as anyone, shrugging and grinning after yet another of his boules comes to rest nestled next to the jack.

On the other end of the age spectrum is **Avery Sollenberger**, a 13-year-old middle schooler. She started playing pétanque on New Year’s Day 2023 at Amelia Island with her grandmother, “Ranny” (otherwise known as CCP’s **Gail Hawkins**), and showed a natural ability from the beginning. In 2024, her Ranny introduced her to Classic City Pétanque, where members welcomed her with supportive and encouraging arms; she has since begun playing independently and benefited from a lot of great coaching.

Though Avery lives in South Georgia, she comes to pétanque with her Ranny whenever she can. Always cheerful and a fun addition to the club, her accuracy makes her a very in-demand player. A budding scientist who thoroughly enjoyed her science, art, and chorus classes this school year, Avery is relaxing after the end of school and will spend some time this summer on the Athens terrains.

Yvonne Law (Position: Middle Player)

By Eric Nicolas, President, Atlanta Pétanque League

In early 2018, **Yvonne Law** came across the Atlanta Pétanque League website while browsing the internet and, curious to learn more, decided to attend one of APL's regular Thursday gatherings at Douceur de France with her friends **Yves Andriana** and **Lila Rahalison**. That evening, she met fellow APL players – and the rest is history: Yvonne was instantly hooked on pétanque.

Born in Madagascar – where she never played pétanque – Yvonne immigrated to the United States in 1987 with her husband, **Kouok** (who doesn't play pétanque). After learning English, she earned a master's degree in mathematics and taught at the college level for many years – and impressively, at 78 years young, she is still teaching math today.

Yvonne says she plays pétanque to stay active and keep moving, and to stay in shape for weekend competitions she also takes aquatic exercise classes three times a week, which keep her back strong and game-ready.

On the court, Yvonne is easy to spot thanks to her contagious smile and joyful laughter. While her demeanor may appear relaxed, make no mistake – she is a fierce competitor. As Yvonne likes to say, “If you play, you want to win.” She also believes strongly in personal accountability: “You must first play well for yourself.”

Yvonne enjoys playing the middle position, where she can fully showcase both her pointing and shooting skills. Within APL, she is affectionately known as “The Magician” for her remarkable ability to move three boules with a single shot – it's not uncommon to hear opponents say, “It's Yvonne's turn now, let's see what she's going to do.”

You will often find Yvonne practicing on her own before or after games, always striving to improve. True to her background as a mathematician, Yvonne has a natural interest in numbers and formulas – she even suggested collecting game data and statistics to better understand performance, and as a result, APL has implemented a player ranking system based on game statistics and results. Yvonne is currently ranked 8th out of 56 competitive Atlanta Pétanque League players.

We are incredibly happy to have Yvonne as part of the APL family – she truly represents what we aim to cultivate as a league: friendliness, openness, and competitiveness.

Favorite equipment: La Franc boules – 660 grams, 70.5 mm diameter





News from Mid-America

From the Phillips Collection to the Piste: Lycée Rochambeau Discovers Pétanque

By Dominique Carlier, National Capital Club de Pétanque

It started with a student and a search engine.

Elias, a tenth-grader at **Lycée Rochambeau** — the French international school in **Bethesda, Maryland** — was helping plan a class field trip built around a simple theme: a day discovering France in Washington, DC. He found the **National Capital Club de Pétanque** website, reached out, and pitched the idea to his classmates. They voted. The motion passed.

On May 13, 2026, 28 students in white shirts and dark ties arrived at the park where the National Capital Club de Pétanque plays, in Arlington, VA — straight from a morning at the Phillips Collection, where they had been introduced to the French Impressionists. We were ready for them: myself,



Dominique, recently FPUSA certified coach Level 1, and six instructors recruited to assist — Ivan, Roger, Keith, Olivier, Jamil, and Yannick. The students spread out in the shade, lunches in hand, and listened — some skeptically, some eagerly — to a bilingual introduction to a game most of them had never played.

By 12:30pm, they were throwing boules.

Five NCCP instructors ran five ateliers, simultaneously: jack tossing, pointing from varying distances, reading the terrain, precision exercises, and shooting, while two of us floated around and kept an eye on the rotation flow, ensuring that everyone had a chance to experience all five. We emphasized safety throughout, following FPUSA Safety Guidelines. Many appreciated the precision of pointing. The shooting station drew particular energy — cones lined up as targets, students leaning in to watch each throw, an instructor demonstrating the clean arc of a well-executed *carreau*. "The cones are a great idea," said one of our experienced shooters afterward. He wasn't wrong. And you should have seen the smiles on the children's faces at the sound of that *boule-to-boule* impact! We cheered!

Forty-five minutes later, the ateliers gave way to something better: real games. Ten teams formed across five lanes, and just like that, 28 teenagers were playing *pétanque*. Measuring distances, debating points, groaning at near-misses.



Not everyone was immediately converted. A handful of students kept a polite distance. But most were genuinely engaged, and a few were flat-out hooked.

One of the chaperones got so caught up in it that he joined one of the teams rotating through the ateliers, and played a full rotation himself. There is a good chance we will see him back on our courts. And maybe he will bring his son – who was one of the 28 students.

They all left us at 1:45 PM, picked up by their yellow school bus, leaving behind the echo of boules on gravel, a great group photo in front of the NCCP banner – and the quiet sense that this may not be the last time we see Lycée Rochambeau on the piste.



The day worked because pétanque met them exactly where they were: a game with French roots, playable by anyone, requiring nothing but a good eye and a little courage. For a group of students already immersed in French culture and language, it wasn't a detour from their theme. It may have been the perfect beginning to a never-ending pétanque adventure.





Boulefrogs Reach Out

In February, **Les Boulefrogs Pétanque Club of VA** continued their outreach to attract junior members by hosting two pétanque workshops at an annual Richmond area schools event: **Le Congrès Français**. This gathering attracted middle and high school students of French from 17 area schools to a day of competitions and workshops devoted to the French language and culture.

The Boulefrogs taught a total of 54 students how to play, using indoor boules secured through an FPUSA grant in 2025. Given a wide array of choices of workshops, it is notable that most of these students signed up for pétanque as a result of our prior visits to their classes in various schools. The interest is there!

In May, our focus was on community outreach at our neighborhood's annual SpringFest, which brings local businesses, organizations and community members together for a day of fun in a park near our courts. Our booth featured our new flyers and



business cards, designed by members of the club's marketing committee, as well as FPUSA brochures.

Our booth was very popular and featured a demonstration area where we could have folks try their hand at playing "the most fun game you probably never heard of" for a round or two. The response was enthusiastic and the next day seven new faces showed up at our regular games as a result. Several have continued to come and we hope to add some new names to our roster soon.

The Carolina Petanque Memorial Day weekend yielded happy results for the club: **Grace Fuentes-Roberts, Bill Cooke** and Cherri Sutphin won 3rd place in the Panache tournament on Friday and **Bill Roberts** and **Karen Rankin** won 1st place Consolante in the Twist tournament on Sunday.

At the time of this writing, our two coaches, **Dan Koach** and **Etienne Melloni**, conducted free skills training for anyone interested, member or not. We'll let you know how that turns out in the next edition.



The group also hosted social events throughout the year, potlucks, informal contests, and free lessons for newcomers. They've welcomed local high school French students for a cultural exchange, using the game as a bridge between communities. It's this welcoming, open spirit that keeps players coming back and

makes the club such a great fit for the neighborhood.

We'd love to see some fresh blood on the courts. Membership is open to all ages and backgrounds. The annual dues are just \$40, which cover court maintenance and support club activities. But your first few games? Totally free. All it takes is showing up during a play session, introducing yourself, and letting the balls fly. "pétanque is one of those rare things that combines skill, strategy, and social connection," Ed says. "And once you try it, you're hooked."



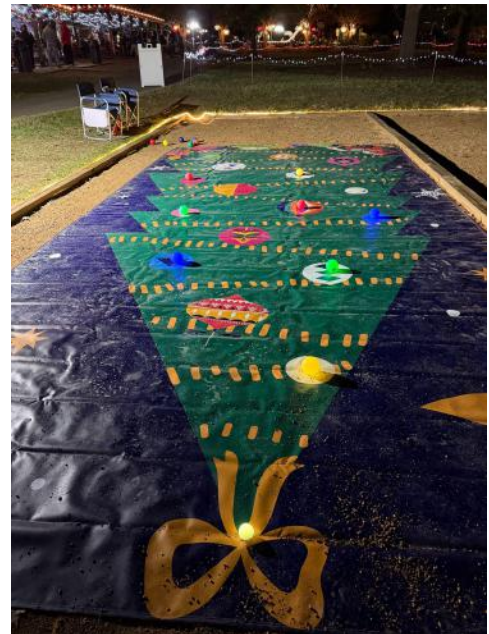


Updates from Carolina Petanque

Pullen Park Holiday Express

Our Raleigh pétanque players were invited to be a part of the 2025 Holiday Express event at Pullen Park in December of 2025. This event transforms Pullen Park into a winter holiday wonderland encompassing 17 nights with over 38,000 people in attendance. Our pétanque courts were transformed into a fun “trimming the tree” holiday game allowing us to teach the game of boule to young children and demonstrate pétanque on neighboring courts to adults and older children in attendance. Our part of the event was well attended and well received by the active children who enjoyed having a fun hands-on game to play. Over 20 volunteers participated to brave the cold nights and help make this event a resounding success.

[services/holiday-express](#)



UNC School of Journalism Story

Through a connection made at the Pullen Park Holiday Express event Carolina Petanque's Raleigh Group has recently been highlighted in a story as a part of Carolina Week. A student came out to Alliance Francaise in Raleigh to interview a couple of players and observe the game. We are grateful for their help in promoting the sport of pétanque!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jis7jg1T-Tg> (pétanque segment starts at 20:12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP9VKc8YyGc> (pétanque only segment)

City of Oaks Open at Pullen Park

Raleigh is excited to announce our first open at Pullen Park and the largest tournament held in Raleigh so far. The City of Oaks Open (held Saturday April 25th, 2026) was a select doubles or triples tournament utilizing all 6 courts at Pullen Park in Raleigh. We filled all the slots with 12 teams and over 30 people participating. This was the first tournament for many of the attendees. Registration was free to enter and included a picnic lunch on the grill in the park. We look forward to hosting future events here.





The 2026 Carolina Challenge – A Fantastic Weekend of Play, Food, and Community

Carolina Pétanque welcomed players from near and far to Winston-Salem over Memorial Day Weekend for the 2026 Carolina Challenge, held May 22–24 at the Miller Park Pétanque Courts. Three days of competition, camaraderie, and great food made this year’s event one to remember.

Players began arriving Thursday evening for open practice under the lights, with Carolina Pétanque members on hand to greet early travelers and warm up the courts.

Friday kicked off with **42 players** ready for a relaxed, social day of Panaché Triples. New teams formed each round, keeping the energy light and lively.

Breakfast and water were available throughout the morning, and lunch – generously sponsored by **Rendezvous Restaurant (Asheville)** – was a highlight all its own: gourmet burgers on brioche buns, hot dogs, caramelized onions, egg salad, watermelon-cucumber salad, chips, and gluten-free and vegan options. It was a feast worthy of a tournament opener.

Prizes for the day were donated by Pétanque America, and the beautifully crafted medals were designed by our own Preston Myers.

Friday Panaché Results:

- 1st Place: Dan Dolan, Bo Edwards, Scott Seifer
- 2nd Place: Catherine Diebold, Scott Harleman, Mary Jo Wilson
- 3rd Place: Grace Fuentes-Roberts, Bill Cooke, Cherri Sutphin
- 4th Place: Steven Turner, Mamy Ranaivoson, Mike Owens

Saturday brought a more competitive edge with 26 teams registered for the FPUSA Mid-America Regional Select Doubles. With bocce courts fully strung for overflow, play moved smoothly all day.

Light breakfast, coffee, snacks, and plenty of water kept everyone fueled as teams battled through the brackets.

Saturday Results:

Concours

1st: Juan Hernandez / Marc Quilici
2nd: “Nacho” Ignacio Martinez / Goyo Martinez
3rd: Michael Ratovoson / Robin Harvey

Consolante

1st: Rick Sweeney / Jeff Fabrizio
2nd: Michel Pujol / Valerie Hodson-Pujol
3rd: Catherine Diebold / Guy Diebold

Sunday wrapped up the weekend with the always-fun **Doubles Twist**, where players must partner with someone *different* from Saturday. The format encourages mixing, meeting new people, and keeping the weekend’s spirit of connection alive.

Light breakfast, coffee, snacks, and water were available throughout the day as teams played through the final rounds.

Sunday Twist Results:

Concours

1st: Michael Ratovoson / Raymond Nielsen
2nd: Michel Pujol / Sebastian Paccione
3rd: Greg Rutherford / Nick Verdile

Consolante

1st: Karen Rankin / Bill Roberts
2nd: Maggie & Rick Sweeney
3rd: Bill Cooke / Rodney Plachy

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to everyone who helped make the 2026 Carolina Challenge a success – from the volunteers who set up and cleaned up, to the scorekeepers, umpires, and players who showed up with great attitudes even when the weather turned wet.

Special thanks to:

- **Rendezvous Restaurant** for Friday’s incredible lunch
- **Preston Myers** for designing our custom medals
- **Pétanque America** for sponsoring prizes
- Everyone who pitched in, encouraged others, and kept the weekend running smoothly

Senior Games & Pétanque – Growing the Sport, One Season at a Time

For nearly a decade, Carolina Pétanque has been **proudly introducing pétanque to new players through the** Piedmont Plus Senior Games – and what a journey it’s been.

Our first appearance dates back to January 28, 2018, when we rolled out the game at the Senior Games Kickoff in Winston-Salem. From there, things took off. We hosted **The Grand Games** in February 2018, bringing grandparents and kids together for a joyful, cross-generational day of play. By June 2020, we were still going strong, using vinyl boules to keep the fun going.

In 2023, Pétanque America showcased their new indoor boules at the Amelia Island Open, and by early 2024, we were using improved indoor boules for Senior Games events – a huge upgrade that carried us through 2026.

Over the years, we’ve had wonderful support from dedicated volunteers like **Gail Dickerson** and **Eva Cowan**, who helped keep the program running smoothly. More recently, **Scott Harleman** has taken on the weekly “heavy lifting,” hauling 19 sets of indoor boules in and out of the van each Tuesday. And of course, our regular players continue to show up, set up, teach newcomers, and make every session welcoming.

We’ve also been lucky to have **Marc** from **Pétanque America** join us at multiple Kickoff events, demonstrating both soft and hard boules and helping us introduce the indoor game to curious newcomers. One year, Marc and Juan even brought the full play structure – a real crowd-pleaser.

Outdoor pétanque has been part of the Senior Games story too. For about seven years, we’ve offered the outdoor version alongside the indoor one. The first year, more than 50 personal invitations went out, and we had a fantastic turnout of around 30 players. Each year since, we’ve worked to bring in new faces – and we’re proud to see a few “returning non-regulars” come back season after season.

The long-term vision remains the same: outdoor pétanque as a statewide – and eventually national – Senior Games sport. It’s a big goal, but with steady outreach and continued enthusiasm, it’s absolutely within reach.

Next year, we hope to add the Indoor Panaché to the Senior Games lineup. Every season brings new opportunities, and every event introduces pétanque to someone who’s never played before. That’s the magic of this program – and why we keep showing up.

For more information:

North Carolina Senior Games: <https://www.ncseniorgames.org/>

Piedmont Plus Senior Games (Winston-Salem): <https://www.ncseniorgames.org/piedmont>

A New Friend Joins the Israel Family

Last summer we shared the loss of Sandy Israel, the beloved golden retriever who greeted players at RendezVous in East Asheville and at Carolina Pétanque tournaments for years. This summer there's happier news to report. Holly and Jesse Israel have welcomed a new addition: Shelley, who just turned one. She joins the family's older golden, Nacho, and is already settling into the pétanque life. We look forward to seeing both of them at the courts this season.



Nacho and Shelley, the Israels' two goldens, sharing a quiet afternoon nap.



Updates from Zanesfield Petanque Club

Zanesfield Petanque Club successfully hosted its annual Memorial Day tournament on May 24. While this was historically a three-day event, we were fortunate that this year's schedule did not include Saturday, when the park was impacted by a flash flood. Thanks to minor repairs completed within 24 hours, the tournament proceeded as planned. This year's event featured nine doubles teams from across the state, including five junior players.

Following three rounds of qualifying, Josh and Otto Kotsaris held first place (3-0, +26 differential), followed by Ronald Walls and Loren McCumber in second (3-0, +3 differential).



In the semifinals, Shannon Hodge and Mohamed Boulahoual defeated Team Kotsaris 13-6, while Team Walls defeated William Daniels and Sam Park 13-0. In the final matches, Team Hodge won the tournament by defeating Team Walls 13-12, and Team Daniels secured third place with a 13-7 victory over Team Kotsaris.



News from the Southeast

An Eventful Season at the South Florida Pétanque Club

From a paella-filled holiday party to a PBS television debut, the South Florida Pétanque Club (SFPC) in Lake Worth has packed more excitement into a few months than most clubs see in a year. Here's a look at a season that showcased everything pétanque has to offer: food, friends, fierce competition, and a little fame.

Kicking Off with Paella and Camaraderie

The season opened in style on December 4, 2025, with SFPC's Annual Membership Meeting and Holiday Party. Paella for over 100 members proved once again to be a popular membership benefit. Food – Friends – Fun – Pétanque!



Members enjoying the annual holiday party and paella feast

SE Regional Select Doubles: The Coldest Day of Winter – February 1, 2026

The first FPUSA tournament of 2026 was held in south Florida – or was it New Jersey? Hard to tell when everyone was bundled up against a windchill well below zero! SFPC handed out handwarmers that were warmly appreciated.



It was the coldest day of the entire winter, but bright sunshine kept spirits high as 22 teams competed for the medals. Tournament Director and Club President **Alain Gimenez** and Head Non-Playing National Umpire **Jo Ella Manalan** kept the games on time in order to

finish during daylight, and the winners posed proudly with their medals shining in the golden afternoon sunlight.

Group photo: 8:00 a.m., 19 degrees F!



Gold: Jerome Nicolas (SFPC) and Alex Canesse (Tampa) (left photo)

Silver: Frederic Penaranda (Ohlala) and Raymond Neilsen (Ohlala) (top right)

Bronze: Roland Rakotondramanana (Miami) and Songmi Keating (Miami) (bottom right)

Full results and dozens of photos:
[Regional 2026 – South Florida Pétanque Club](#)



Lights, Camera, Pétanque: SFPC on PBS

Just weeks later, the cameras rolled. **Nicole Malanga**, editor and field producer of South Florida PBS's "On the Town in the Palm Beaches with Frank Licari," read the Sun Sentinel's article on SFPC and reached out about featuring the club in an upcoming episode. **Frank Licari**, Nicole, and a camera crew came out to the park for the club's Memorial Tournament on February 23 and captured the spirit of pétanque on film.

Club members were invited to the pre-screening of "Palm Beaches 101" on April 16, where they enjoyed learning more about PBS in the community – and it was exciting to see the

club on TV! The episode aired on April 25. The 3-minute segment conveys the fun, camaraderie, and sport activity of pétanque at SFPC, and the club expects it will encourage new players to stop by and try it out. As this quarterly episode will also air at Palm Beach International Airport and in area hotels, it may even attract tourists to the sport who will look for a club near their own homes. Let's spotlight our sport whenever we have the chance!

Watch the segment, featured on the club's homepage: [News - SFPC on PBS](#)



Mitzi with Frank Licari (top left)

Pre-screening – club members in attendance (top right)

Video cover shot (bottom left)

Alain with Nicole Malanga (bottom right)



National Doubles Under the Lights – March 7 & 8, 2026

The season's grand finale came in early March, when SFPC hosted the FPUSA National Men's & Women's and Mixed Doubles. The event sold out more than two months in advance, obliging the club to redraw court lines and squeeze in 3 additional regulation courts for a total of 23. The additional 6 teams were confirmed more than 30 days out – the eyes were clearly on the prize!

Tournament Director Alain Gimenez and Tournament Manager Gilbert Mercier were joined by Non-Playing National Head Umpire Al Davison and Non-Playing Club Umpire Heidi Davison to oversee the two-day tournament, with a dozen playing umpires assisting. We all made sure to keep our toes and heels inside the circle!

Watching 92 players spread across the courts was quite a sight, and many spectators came to admire top players from across the U.S. Saturday's finals were played under new lights purchased with a 50% matching grant from the FPUSA Club Grants Program, and the party in the pavilion – though it began later than planned – was a big hit with the hungry, happy crowd. Sunday was just as exciting and also finished under the lights.

Men's & Women's Doubles, March 7

Gold: Men: Leo Fleitas (Miami) & Emile Boujeke (LBNY). Women: Kasia Sliz (LBNY) & Jesse Feldman (LBNY)

Silver: Men: Ed Porto (Petaluma) & Chris Tripoul (Ohlala). Women: Heather Crohn Bernard (LAPC) & May Singthayom (LAPC)

Bronze: Men: Fouad Lahnoune (Miami) & David Fournier (Miami). Women: Songmi Keating (Miami) & Dawan Sangasri (LBNY)

Mixed Doubles, March 8

Gold: Olivier Hidalgo (LBNY) & Dawan Sangasri (LBNY)

Silver: Ed Porto (Petaluma) & Shannon Hodge (Zanesfield)

Bronze: Kasia Sliz (LBNY) & Malcolm Hunt (LBNY)

We appreciated all the players who traveled to South Florida to participate in these three National Doubles championships. Congratulations to all the winners!





Updates from Manasota Boules!

There is a lot going on at Manasota Boules Pétanque Club in Sarasota! We have been welcoming a slow but steady stream of new members. Maybe they heard about our delicious themed picnics each month. Our Fête de Noël celebrated the holidays with a feast that included an authentic Bûche de Noël. January found us second-lining to our New Orleans Mardi Gras menu, including a Gambino's King Cake, a homemade Galette des Rois, and our own King and Queen for the day. Chandeleur was the theme for our February crêpe fest. In March, we found our pot of gold at the end of an Irish rainbow. A vicarious visit to Italy occurred in April, and then back to a good old American barbecue. Note: the French have given us more than pétanque. We recently saw the Statue of Liberty join us for a few rounds!

Each month at our picnic, we recognize anyone with a birthday that month. Happy Birthday is sung in multiple languages! Fun!

With all this going on, we still play a lot of pétanque! Sunday morning always brings out a good crowd. A lot of languages float through the air – French, Spanish, English, Italian, and even a little Thai! Partnering with the Sarasota Alliance Française has increased our membership and, for some of us native English speakers, improved our French, too! Multiple teams play after the traditional throw-out decides the teams. Second and third games of the day are either revenge rounds or winners vs. winners and losers vs. losers. All pray that there are no "fannies" involved.

Thursday morning brings out a smaller group. This allows for some time dedicated to our President Daniel's workshops, designed to improve our skills in "pointer plombé" and "tirer."

Daniel explains and demonstrates certain pétanque skills, and we have practice opportunities to build muscle memory.



Amidst all this fun, food, and frivolity, we have a few wonderfully skilled players who like to compete. We will participate in both the Florida Cup and the Anna Maria tournaments.

Stop by Manasota Boules if you are in the area – we love to welcome guest players!



For more information visit: <https://www.facebook.com/ManasotaBoules/>



Classic City Pétanque News

Diane's Spring Panache

Diane's Spring Panache, an intra-club tournament, was held in the early spring. Named in honor of long-time member **Diane Klonowski**, the tournament celebrates her life and contributions to Classic City Pétanque. Diane never failed to welcome new members into the club and always kept track of everyone making sure they were happy and successful; she was a good friend to all. She was warm and funny with a wry sense of humor and a great player. We all miss her and, through the club tournament, dedicate one Saturday in the spring to her memory and her love of the sport.

Southeast Region Mixed Triples

Classic City Petanque, for the fourth year, hosted the Southeast Region Mixed Triples Tournament. Twenty-four (24) triples teams, with players from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Virginia, and South Carolina, enjoyed a full weekend of playing at our beautiful terrain in near perfect weather. The level of competition was quite extraordinary. Many thanks to tournament co-directors **Rickamer Hoover** and **Jessica Lehmann** for organizing the event.

Link for photos:

[Wingate Downs Photography | Pentaque Tournament, 2026](#) Password : Athens



Athens-Clarke County, GA Employee Wellness Fair

Athens-Clarke County hosts a Wellness Fair for employees and retirees with the goal of promoting good health through proper diet, exercise, and prevention. Classic City

Pétanque is invited to bring the sport of pétanque to the employees, demonstrating that this is an excellent way to improve their physical and mental well-being. Indoor boules are perfect for a winter event held inside on a polished concrete floor. Employees can get the full experience of



throwing a boule and hoping it lands just where they aimed for. When they arrive in small groups the fun really starts as their natural competitive spirits light up. Club members enjoy sharing our love of the sport in the hopes of enticing some new recruits.



News from the Amelia Island Petanque Club

In April, AIPC held its annual Spring tournament with twenty-four teams competing in a select doubles format. The event was won by **Tom Kane** and **Fouad Lahnoune** with **Debby and Dale Reigle** placing second.

Prior to the tournament, shooting clinics were led by **Fouad and Hassan Lakhtar**. Money raised from the clinics will support Team USA's triples team headed for the World Championships in Thailand in November.

Registration opened on June 1 for the **2026 Amelia Island Petanque Open** hosted by our Club on November 13-15 and quickly sold out. The new waterfront park venue features include an open-air pavilion, picnic area, children's playground, restrooms, abundant landscaping, community green and a multi-purpose terrain for pétanque and other city-sponsored events. We will have some live music, clinics, a women's tournament on Friday and raffles. We are looking forward to seeing everyone! See ameliaislandpetanque.com for more information.

We are sad to announce the passing of long-time AIPC member **Eddie Edge**. A quiet and kind-hearted soul, Eddie was a lifelong resident of Fernandina Beach, a former employee of the Port of Fernandina, an avid fisherman and a staple at the downtown pétanque and pickleball courts. Thanks to the generosity of our club members and other friends of Eddie, we are proud to honor him with a memorial bench at our Central Park courts.



November 13 – 15, 2026
Registration opens June 1st

Pétanque • Live Music • Food & Drink

FRIDAY — Clinics / Women's Doubles Tournament

SATURDAY — Opening Ceremony / 5 Qualifying Games

SUNDAY — Bracket Play / Finals & Award Ceremony

Special Event Thurs — Clinics w/Marco Foyot & Christian Fazzino

DISCOUNTED RATES AT THE FOLLOWING HOTELS:

Courtyard Amelia Island • SpringHill Suites • Surf & Sand Hotel
Seaside Inn • Amelia Hotel • Hampton Inn (registrants only)

Hosted by the Amelia Island Pétanque Club

For more information:

ameliaislandpetanque.com/AIO



News from the Northwest

Love Thy Neighbor... And learn about their game!

By Scott Muir, Portland Petanque Club

At the **Portland Petanque Club**, we have the good fortune of sharing our pitch and our clubhouse with the **Portland Lawn Bowling Club**. While we have had surprisingly little to do with one another over the years, some recent changes in Portland Public Parks policy “opened the door” (read: required us) to work together under a new organization called the **Westmoreland Sports Alliance** to facilitate and resolve common issues about our venue with the Parks Department.

While it hasn't always been smooth sailing, current leadership of both clubs has worked to establish good relations among our members. One example of our success in doing so has become one of the most-looked-forward-to events of the year, “**Bowls and Boules: A Tournament of the Clubs.**”



In this fun-based competition, pétanque players are paired with lawn bowlers for two games of pétanque and then two games of lawn bowling. In an effort to get to know as many players as possible from each club, it is held as a panache-style tournament, switching partners each round. Individual results are kept for each player, based on win/loss record and point differential, and the top two players from each club square off in a final round playing 8 points of each sport. In the event of a tie at the end of that match, the winner is decided in a game of... corn hole!



The fun and goodwill this has generated, not to mention the opportunity to learn about and play a new sport, has created a new, friendly atmosphere on site, and it has even resulted in some cross-memberships. It just goes to show how much enjoyment there is to simply throwing (or rolling) things at other things and getting to know others who love doing just that!



Say "OPA!"...New Club In P-Town

The **Oregon Pétanque Alliance (OPA)** is the newest FPUSA club in Oregon. We play weekly on Sundays at the beautiful **Foothills Park in Lake Oswego** on the Willamette River, eight miles south of downtown Portland. Come summer, Wednesday late afternoons will be an added play day to coincide with the city's summer series of concerts in the park. Can you say "Pétanque Picnic"?!



The members of OPA are excited about establishing a second pétanque club in the Portland area. Although brand new, the club includes many veteran players, such as **Pascal Tissuer, Alexandra Tisseur, Wally Peppel, Neil Bastian, Celia Crittenden**, the **Agnesse family**, and the ubiquitous **Theo Snyder**.

Formed earlier this year, we're working diligently on completing all those fun, initial start-up chores, including the publication of our website, opaboules.org, due out shortly as a definite "work in progress."



We also see particular promise in partnering with local Parks and Recreation Departments to provide a welcome boost to our expansion efforts. We anticipate offering pétanque classes and clinics modeled after CIEP methods and practices sometime in 2027, taught by our two FPUSA/CIEP Level 1 certified coaches.

Those who attended last year's Sauvie Island Open Challenge may also be interested to know that the same production team has joined OPA and hopes to offer a similar tournament sometime in 2027. Stay tuned!

OPA extends a warm invitation to anyone visiting Portland. Let us know you're coming and we'll try our best to meet up and show off our new home.

The Port Townsend Open

Pétanque Tournament



August 7-9, 2026

The Fort Worden Boulodrome

Port Townsend, Washington

Hosted by
The Port Townsend Pétanque Alliance

Saturday, August 8: Select Doubles

and

Sunday, August 9: Select Doubles "Twist"

The twist: all players must have a different partner.

Team Entry Fee: \$50/day First Place payout: \$1500/day

Maximum of 38 teams

Event Schedule

Friday, August 7: practice play, skills competition, pot-luck dinner

Saturday, August 8: Select Doubles

Sunday, August 9: Select Doubles "Twist"

Format: 3 rounds of qualifying play followed by elimination rounds

For more info, contact the PTPA Sports Director: tomchallinor@hotmail.com



News from Central Thibodaux Pétanque Club – Spring 2026 Update

The past several months have been an exciting and active season for the Thibodaux Pétanque Club, filled with competition, travel, community outreach, and continued growth of the sport across Louisiana and beyond.

Our biggest event of the year, the **annual Mardi Gras Open**, landed on Valentine’s weekend this year with a festive “Love Is in the Air” theme – both on and off the courts! From the first boule thrown to the final parade float rolling by, the weekend captured the heart and spirit of South Louisiana hospitality, making this tournament one of the most unique and anticipated events on the national open pétanque calendar.

This year, we welcomed **44 select doubles teams** from across the United States and France, including legendary multi-time world champion **Marco Foyot** and his wife, **Angie Gleason**. Players enjoyed a spectacular weekend of competition, camaraderie, music, food, and celebration on the newly expanded terrains provided by the City of Thibodaux.

Friday’s festivities included open play, pointing and shooting competitions, and special pétanque clinics led by Marco and Angie – an unforgettable opportunity for both local and visiting players to learn from world-class talent. The evening concluded with a warm Louisiana-style after-party hosted at a local home.

The official tournament opening began with Parks Director April Courteaux presenting proclamations from Mayor Kevin Clement to the Krewe of Pétanque royalty, as we

affectionately call our group. **King Carreau**, Mark Rankin, and **Queen Fanny**, Kristy Anderson, proudly embraced their royal duties by leading a spirited “second line” procession, complete with white boule rags waving through the crowds as players marched to their court assignments.

And of course, no South Louisiana celebration would be complete without incredible food and music! The Boy Scouts prepared fresh jambalaya onsite for Saturday lunch, while the club served homemade chicken and sausage gumbo on Sunday with donated potato salad from Big Mike’s and rice from Gina’s Catering. Nicholls State University culinary students helped serve the meals on Sunday, adding even more community spirit to the weekend.

Saturday night brought the party to El Barrio Restaurant, which generously donated its patio space for a lively evening of music and dancing. Owner **Billy Stark**, club member **Bobby Pitre**, and a fellow musician kept the celebration going late into the night before Sunday’s dramatic finals. Congratulations to the **Open Champions Marco Foyot and Carol Verdile (Carolina Petanque)** – truly a “court love match!”



And because this is Thibodaux, the celebration did not stop there. Two Mardi Gras parades rolled directly past the courts, filling the weekend with beads, music, costumes, and cries of “Throw me something, Mister!” **No one leaves a Thibodaux parade – or a Thibodaux pétanque tournament – empty-handed.**

In March, several club members visited **La Boule Cadienne de Lafayette** for their Spring tournament. Five Thibodaux Pétanque teams represented the club with strong performances and outstanding sportsmanship. The fabulous hospitality – both during the tournament and at the after-party – was thoroughly enjoyed!



March also brought the **École Bilingue de la Nouvelle-Orléans Fête Française**, where several club members shared the love of pétanque with students, families, and the local NOLA community. The event provided a wonderful opportunity to introduce the game to new audiences while celebrating the strong cultural ties between pétanque and Louisiana's French heritage. Local NOLA players were encouraged to explore forming a new FPUSA club in New Orleans – stay tuned!



TPC on the road: Club members have been active outside our region, traveling to pétanque tournaments and gatherings in Lake Worth (FL), Sonoma (CA), Athens (GA), Fresno (CA), and Winston-Salem (NC), continuing to build friendships and connections throughout the growing national pétanque community.

Closer to home, the club recently hosted the **E. D. White School French Club** for an afternoon of pétanque instruction and play. Students learned the basics of the game while enjoying friendly matches alongside club members, helping inspire the next generation of players. Participants received official FPUSA pins and were encouraged to become junior members – again, stay tuned!



We are proud to announce that a club member, **Jordan Fabre**, has joined the **FPUSA umpire corps**. With his addition, the Thibodaux Pétanque Club now includes four certified umpires:

two club umpires and two national umpires, further strengthening the club's support for organized competition and officiating.

Coaching and player development efforts also continue through club members utilizing their **Level 1 FPUSA/CIEP Coaching** Certification to support new and developing players and encourage continued growth of the sport in our region.

Looking ahead, preparations are already underway for another busy season. The club will once again host weekly summer pétanque activities with the Thibodaux Recreation Department youth programs, introducing even more children to the game.

Finally, please save the dates for two major upcoming events:

- FPUSA National Men's Triples Championship – October 24, 2026
- Open Tournament – October 25, 2026 (details to follow)
- Mardi Gras Open Weekend – tentatively scheduled for February 7–8, 2027

The Thibodaux Pétanque Club continues to grow through competition, education, travel, and community outreach, and we look forward to another fantastic season ahead.

Laissez les bons temps rouler!





Nelson Ranch Pétanque Club Spring Select Doubles, May 17

On a muggy spring Sunday just north of Austin, Texas, 16 teams from all around the state came together for a day of pétanque competition. Teams from Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio battled it out under overcast skies to see who would take home top honors in the NRPC Spring Doubles tournament. After three qualifying games, a spectacular lunch, and three rounds of playoffs, the results were in. Top prizes were won by **Kimberly Lanski** and **Thierry Amisse** (1st Concours), followed by **Christophe Chambers** and **Rudy Vallée** (2nd Concours), **Amine Najah** and **Theo** (3rd Concours), and **Gene Bourgeois** and **Michael Kaufman** (Consolante). As usual, it was a great day of fellowship and pétanque fun in our corner of Texas.





Wilfried Alfopa (right) with students at Dallas International School

Pétanque Comes to the Classroom at Dallas International School

By Wilfried Alfopa, Dallas Petanque Club

On Tuesday, May 26, 35 seventh-grade students at **Dallas International School** got their first taste of pétanque, and they embraced it with enthusiasm. PE teacher **Mr. Mathieu Stenuit** invited the group to take part, and every student joined in. Some — especially the French students — were already familiar with the sport. The middle school principal and the After School Program director both stopped by to welcome the participants.

After an introduction to the basic rules and a demonstration of how to throw the boule, the students practiced doublette and triplete games, along with precision shooting. Because of the large turnout, the group played on the grass in an area near the track-and-field facilities rather than on the pétanque court the school built a few years ago with the help of National Honor Society students.

The response was encouraging enough that the After School Program coordinator and Mr. Stenuit hope to add pétanque to their activities beginning next school year. The school is

also considering developing a suitable playing area, which could give it three or four pétanque courts in total. We expect to share more once the school year wraps up — stay tuned!





Playing Pétanque at the Browning Hangar in Austin, Texas

By Marion Bermondy, Nelson Ranch Petanque Club

One of Austin's most distinctive gathering places is the **Browning Hangar**, a historic structure in the city center that stands as one of the last remaining links to the original municipal airport. Today, the Hangar still belongs to the city of Austin and serves as a rare civic space that is free, open, and accessible to everyone. More than a preserved landmark, it functions as a living public space where community groups, such as pétanque clubs, meet on a regular basis.

For pétanque players, the Browning Hangar has become an especially cherished home. The covered, open-air structure provides shade during the Texas summer, shelter during rain, and a welcoming environment for play throughout the year. Local pétanque clubs, such as the Legation Boules Club and Nelson Ranch Pétanque Club, have long used the Hangar as a regular venue, taking advantage of its decomposed granite surface and spacious layout to host casual games, instruction, friendly competitions, and more formal tournaments. The Hangar embodies many of the qualities that make pétanque special: accessibility, camaraderie, and the simple pleasure of gathering in a shared public space. Players from other Texas clubs and beyond love to gather there when they come to town. Occasional passer-byes will join in and eventually become "hooked" to the sport. Even a few unhoused people have joined in, learned how to play, and become part of our local "clan."

Although the city of Austin has planned on selling the hangar for many years, community members, such as our pétanque players, are constantly advocating the need to keep the Hangar a publicly accessible space for years to come. If you'd like to know more about the Hangar, and even help keep it open for all, use the [link](#) here.

News from the Northeast



Updates from La Boule New Yorkaise

At the start of 2026, La Boule New Yorkaise formed a new board: **Emile Boujeke, Kate Brideau, Evan Dawson, Steve Ginsberg, Patrick Hayes, Malcolm Hunt, Dana Jackson, Dawan Sangasri, and Kasia Sliz**. Since then, our free lessons in Bryant Park and Washington Square Park have started up, as have our Friday night melées and regular tournament season—this year sharing more of that schedule and Brooklyn courts with our friends at Local 718.

We're looking forward to the remainder of our tournament season and just opened registration for the US Open of Pétanque, Oct. 10-11, 2026 (register at labouleny.com).

On the national scene, LBNY has been representing: our member **Kasia Sliz** came in first in the National Women's Doubles with **Jesse Feldman** (Local 718), and **Dawan Sangasri** placed third with her partner **Songmi Keating** (Miami). **Kasia** also won the Women's Doubles Qualifier with her partner **Juanita Celix** (Seattle) - the team will represent the US at the World Championship in Sweden (2027). Meanwhile, in the Men's Doubles **Emile Boujeke** took first with his partner **Leo Fleitas** (Miami); and in the Mixed Doubles **Dawan** and **Olivier Hidalgo** took first, **Kasia** placed third with **Malcolm Hunt**, and **Emile** and **Shannon Robinson** placed first in the consolante.



2026

US Open of Pétanque

Oct. 10-11

Select Doubles
\$130/ Team

Pier A Park
100 Sinatra Dr.
Hoboken, NJ

Register at
www.labouleny.com



Photo by Andres Bravo

News from NorCal

Rain Couldn't Stop Play at the National Singles & Mixed Triples

Mother Nature threw everything she had at **Sactown Petanque** on April 11-12, but the players threw right back. Torrential rain pounded the courts throughout the National Singles and Mixed Triples, turning the terrain to mud – yet not a single competitor let the weather dampen their spirits.

As the downpour intensified, players and volunteers sprang into action. Canopies went up across the grounds, and club members grabbed brooms, and whatever else they could find to clear standing water from the courts before games began. The club provided hand warmers and extra towels, even players donated towels. It was a true display of community: everyone pitching in so the games could go on.

The conditions made for some unforgettable pétanque. With the ground so saturated, boules landed and stayed put exactly where they fell – no roll, no movement – forcing players to rethink their strategy and place every shot with care. A well-pointed boule was rewarded instantly, and a shot that found its mark stopped dead on contact.

Through it all, the sportsmanship on display was the real story of the day. Despite the soaked clothes, muddy boots, and challenging play, competitors kept their good humor,

cheered each other on, and reminded everyone why this community is so special. The rain may have soaked the courts, but it couldn't wash away the camaraderie.

Congratulations to all the winners, and a heartfelt thank-you to every player and volunteer who braved the storm to make the event a success!



Results

Men's National Singles – Gold: Giuseppe Gadaleta

Men's National Singles – Silver: Mikael Leclercq

Men's National Singles – Bronze: Mateo Kallel

Women's National Singles – Gold: Tish Harris

Women's National Singles – Silver: Stacey Linh

Women's National Singles – Bronze: Lisa Skerl

Mixed Triples – Gold: Tom Nguyen, Mateo Kallel, Mimi Kallel

Mixed Triples – Silver: PJ Mallette, Peter Mathis, Alexandra Tisseur

Mixed Triples – Bronze: Manu Le Bihan, Stacey Linh, Kham Chounlamany





Wine Country Open 2026: A Toast to the Season's Start

By Tim Wetzel, Valley of the Moon Petanque Club

The Valley of the Moon Pétanque Club hosted its annual Wine Country Open on April 24–26, welcoming players from across North America and beyond for one of the most anticipated tournaments on the pétanque calendar. The event sold out within six weeks of registration opening, drawing **64 doubles teams** from around the globe, with strong representation from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. For many first-time attendees, the combination of outstanding hospitality, beautiful surroundings, and high-quality competition made a lasting impression.

The festivities began on Thursday, April 23, with an informal gathering for early arrivals. Friendly games gave players an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, meet new competitors, and get acquainted with the courts before the tournament officially began.

On Friday, the Wine Country Open experience kicked into high gear. Players checked in, received their swag bags, and took part in pointing and shooting competitions while enjoying wine, snacks, and plenty of conversation. It was the perfect setting to shake off the winter rust, renew friendships, and celebrate the start of a new pétanque season.

The culinary offerings were once again a highlight of the weekend. **Chef Marco** treated players to generous spreads of appetizers and charcuterie on both Friday and Sunday, while Saturday's optional lunch featured his delicious taco feast. Sunday's optional meal brought back a perennial favorite—Gerard's famous paella—ensuring that no one left hungry. On Thursday evening, Moon Hollow Estate Wines hosted a wine tasting on Sonoma Plaza, and

on Saturday, after play, a social gathering was held for players near the courts at the historic Swiss Hotel.

Saturday morning opened with welcoming remarks, a moment of silence honoring members of the pétanque community who had passed away, and greetings from Sonoma **Mayor Ron Wellander**. With the formalities complete, competition began in earnest.

The guiding philosophy of the Wine Country Open is to provide a memorable early-season tournament experience that balances strong competition with an atmosphere that remains welcoming and enjoyable for players of all levels. To support that goal, Saturday's format featured completely randomized play, giving every team the opportunity to face a wide variety of opponents throughout the day.

Sunday marked the beginning of championship play. Consistent with the tournament's commitment to meaningful competition for all participants, every team was guaranteed a minimum of three games. The field was divided into upper and lower brackets, with 32 teams advancing to each. Following pool play, competitors were separated into four divisions before entering single-elimination bracket competition.

As the day progressed, the level of play continued to rise. The featured championship match showcased two powerhouse teams filled with accomplished veterans and proven champions. **Roland Rakotondramanana** and **Tom Nguyen** faced **Wolfgang Kurz** and **Emile Boujeke** in a thrilling final that entertained spectators with strategic shot-making, experience, and determination. After a hard-fought battle, Roland and Tom emerged victorious with a 13-8 win to claim the Wine Country Open title.



In addition to cash prizes, winners in every division received bottles of wine generously donated by our sponsors—including pétanque champion and winemaker **Peter Mathis**—as well as unique handcrafted ceramic medals created specifically for the event.

Special thanks go to Head Umpire **Bleys Rose**, assisted by **Janice Bissonnette** and **Ted Ricketts**, along with the many playing umpires who generously volunteered their time and expertise throughout the weekend. Thanks also to all the sponsors for their donations, including the many wonderful raffle prizes—too many to mention, but check out the shirt! They are a major part of what makes this tournament special.

By every measure, the 2026 Wine Country Open exceeded expectations. Many visiting teams have already added the tournament to their annual must-attend list, and plans are underway for another exceptional event next year.

The Wine Country Open is held annually on the last weekend of April and has sold out year after year. Registration for the 2027 tournament opens on January 2. If you plan to join us, be sure to register early—spots won't last long.



Rally Mêlée in Marin

By Sara Danielson, La Pétanque Marinière

On May 9, 2026 our regular monthly tournament at the **Pierre Joske Petanque Terrain** was turned into a Mêlée in a rally format. To explain what that means, I have to go back to June of 2024, when **CIEP** (Centre International d'Enseignement Pétanque) came to **La Pétanque Marinière** to do a three-day training session. [See Summer 2024 edition of Pétanque Pulse <https://usapetanque.org/newsletters.html>]

To prepare for the CIEP training session, our club had to purchase and fabricate various training props using PVC pipe, wooden blocks, motorcycle tires, orange cones, and other materials. These props were used throughout the weekend for training exercises. On the last day of the three-day training, the trainers organized a “Rallye Pétanque.” This consisted of performing training exercises to earn points which individuals earned on their own, as opposed to playing against another team as in a regular game. The Rallye format was very different, very fun, and good practice of the skills used in pétanque.

One of the participants in the training and a LPM Board Member, **Mark Toepfer**, proposed to our Board that we organize a **Rally in Marin**. For one thing, we got to keep all those tires and cones and specialized props, why not put them to good use? We tried our first Rally in May of 2025 and recently we had our **Second Annual Pétanque Mêlée Rally**.

Twenty-two players showed up for the Mêlée Rally. Although all points would be awarded individually, players were randomly paired with a partner to proceed through the activities together, along with another pair, forming a foursome. We likened it to a game of golf, where you have a partner with whom you walk the course, but your scores are written down separately and do not affect the scores of your partner.

Before partners were determined and announced, players had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the 10 activities and get in some practice. Then all the players gathered together and walked through the course, with the director, Mark Toepfer, explaining each activity and how to score it.



At each location there was signage to show the piste number, the name of the skill being practiced, a written explanation of the activity, and even an arrow to show players which way to proceed to the next activity. To make these signs, we just turned our regular scoreboards around to the back, which worked great.

After the introduction, it was GAME ON. Partners were announced, scorecards and pencils were handed out, and each pair was told on which piste they would start.

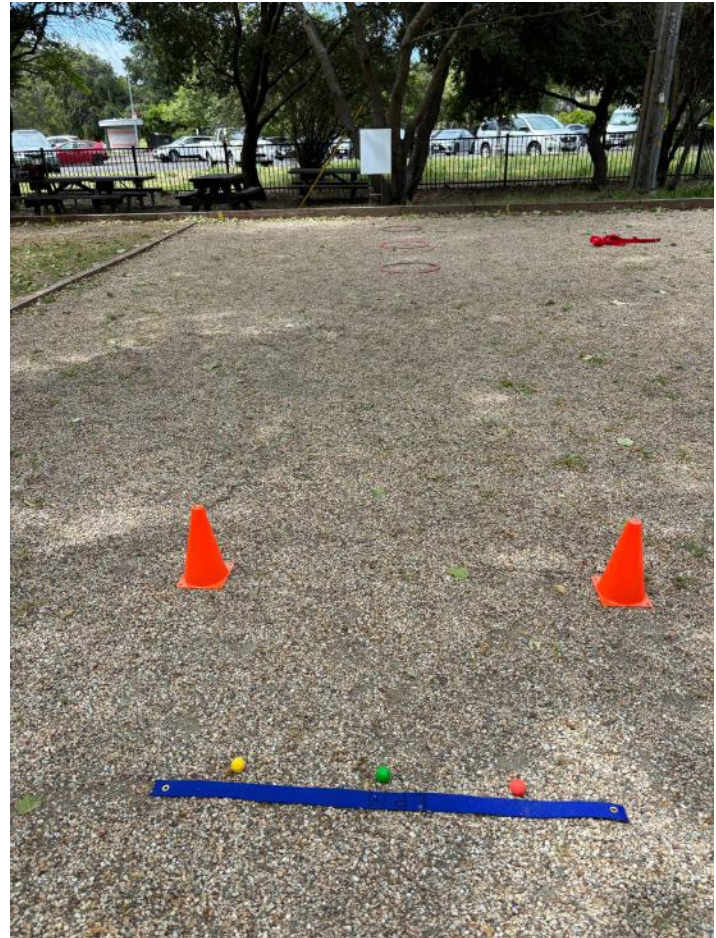
My partner and I started on Piste 8, *Boule Devant*. In this challenge, you had to roll your boule past orange cones, get your boule close to the cochonnet, but not go past it. (See picture for setup.)

During the activity you threw twice each from circles placed at 6, 7, and 8 meters from the line of cochonnets. Each boule you threw that met the criteria earned one point, for a total possible of 6 points for this activity.

After everyone in our group had completed the challenge and written our score on our scorecard, we went to the reporting table. Keeping track of the scores was quite a bit more complicated for our recorder, **Shama Kota-Gutheti**, and her able assistant, **Abby Danielson**. Each group was on a different activity each round, so the recorders had to find the names of the players and be sure to record the score under the right activity. This was done on paper at first and scores were later entered into a spreadsheet specially written by director Mark Toepfer.

There were a total of 10 challenges. They included two for cochonnet throwing (distance and accuracy), two for shooting (carreau and au fer), four for various aspects of pointing (hard surface flat pointing, plombée, promoting boules, and boule devant), and two that combined pointing and shooting.

The two that combined pointing and shooting had one pair of players in the foursome competing against the other pair for two regular ends. However, the setup for the ends had obstacles placed on the course that made for quite a challenge. The obstacles included wooden blocks, tires, orange cones, and random boules. (See pictures for setups. The setup is seen from the throwing circle.)



At the end of the 10 rounds the total points for each individual were compared and the top four advanced to the Finals. The Finals were two new types of activities, both using a grid format. One grid was for shooting, the other for pointing.

Each row in the grid was assigned a point value. The player with the highest score after pointing 3 boules on one grid and shooting 3 boules on the other grid, was declared First Place winner. The other three finalists came in Second, Third, and Fourth based on their points.



And the winners were (left to right):

Drew Lanter, First Place

Peter Wellington, Third Place

Bernard Passemar, Fourth Place

Ron Rohlfs, Second Place

The organizing committee for the Pétanque Mêlée Rally was **Mark Toepfer**, **Shama Kota-Gutheti**, and **Sara Danielson**. Assistance and grounds preparation by **Mike O'Leary** and **Joe Danielson**. We are still learning from our experience, changing and refining the activities and format, and looking forward to our Third Annual Pétanque Mêlée Rally.





Updates from Lamorinda Pétanque Club

We were very pleased to offer the **CIEP** skills training in October, 2025. The 31 participants learned a lot of new skills which they continue to incorporate into play.

We have 6 new members in our club, for a total of 80, and are again holding three **Intro to Petanque classes** through **Lafayette Parks and Recreation**. These were fun classes that yielded some wonderful new members. Lamorinda Petanque is always celebrating something: be it the enjoyment of petanque, teaching new members the game, or our members' birthdays.

Please come visit! We play Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at 1 pm and all day Sunday with a club mix at 2 pm.

Lamorinda will be home to several tournaments this year:

- FPUSA Mixed Triples - 6/21
- Founders Cup 7/5 (members and associates only)
- NorCal Interclub Tournament hosted by Fresno at Lamorinda - 7/26
- Lamorinda Cup - 10/25.

We look forward to welcoming you at one of these events!

Now that's dedication! Head Umpire **Bleys Rose** gets down to ground level for a close measurement, while bundled-up players look on under gray, rainy skies – proof that nothing dampens the pétanque spirit (Nationals at Sactown Petanque).



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Southeast: Tina Lamas (Atlanta Petanque League)

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