

Bags & Bocce

NOW IN ITS SECOND SEASON, THE BAGS & BOCCE LEAGUE SHOWDOWN OFFERED A CHANCE FOR MEMBERS TO SHOWCASE THEIR CORNHOLE AND BOCCE BALL SKILLS WITH A LITTLE FRIENDLY COMPETITION.

BY ASHLEY RYAN



A little good-natured rivalry never hurt anyone — in fact, sometimes it's what makes things exciting. That's definitely the case for the Bags & Bocce League Showdown, now in its second year at Newport Beach Country Club. The 2024 iteration of the tournament, which features both cornhole and bocce ball, took place Sept. 19 through Oct. 24, showcasing members' skills on each Thursday on the Oasis Lawn.

Read on to discover more of why the contest has been so popular and what it entails.

A FRESH START

Last year, in the spring, Bianca Gillett, director of recreation and fitness at NBCC, helped create this tournament in hopes of getting more use out of the club's bocce ball courts. Making it an annual event has generated a lot of excitement around the club.

"We had NBCC members asking us, borderline begging, to do another year of Bags & Bocce," Gillett says. "And when we said yes, it was not difficult to fill the teams with members who wanted to participate again and new members joining for the first time."

Cornhole and bocce ball were played simultaneously each Thursday evening, allowing for more participation with higher numbers of members being able to stay engaged at once. Most aspects of the event have stayed the same, trying to encourage the same feel as last spring.

"It was a great success last year, so we made sure to improve on areas that could see enhancement and keep the good parts," Gillett notes. Some changes that were made this year include a slight change in the format of the games, improvements to the food and drinks offered during the competition and



a television showing the Thursday Night Football game each evening.

Gillett herself was a team captain, yet again, which entails keeping in communication with the members of her team throughout the week. In addition to checking on who can and can't make it to that week's games, she — just like the other team captains — is responsible for keeping team morale high and determining the order in which members will play which game.

"I am known at the club to be pretty competitive, so I like to stir the pot and see the competition going," she adds. "Also, our members are very, very competitive so it isn't difficult to do this. It's all fun, of course."

ALL IN THE DETAILS

Another person responsible for keeping things running smoothly is Veronica Alarcon, the club's recreation manager. She was overseeing the tournament, including the bracket, which

had a side for cornhole and a side for bocce ball. There were four teams, so each of the two sports ranged from first through fourth place each week. A point system awarded the highest number of points to first place, of course, with third place earning the least amount and fourth place earning zero.

"At the end of each night, the points would get totaled and we'd see who had the most points in first place and who was in last with the least," Gillett says. "It was anyone's game."

The event was held for two hours each Thursday, with the first 20 minutes dedicated to arrival and warmup before the first round took place. Two rounds were played each night for each game, so that all four teams were playing at once, with an intermission in the middle. The kitchen made pizza and salad each week for members to enjoy while playing; beer and wine was also served, along with water. As mentioned, guests could watch football on the television during

the competition while dart boards offered an additional game to play during any downtime.

Winners were able to enjoy complimentary spa services and dinner at NBCC. "More importantly: bragging rights and the pride from winning," Gillett adds. A plank is being made each year with the name of the winning team, and the most current winners have a group photo displayed above the list of planks inside the club.

"Most of the same members returned this year and brought their friends so it really was a large group of friends getting together, hanging out while playing games, getting pizza and salad, drinking wine or beer, watching tv and talking," she explains, adding that the other teams were out to take the first place title from her team as they were the reigning champs from last year. "You could easily feel the buzz if you were out at the Oasis Lawn on Thursday nights."