

A STORIED SPORT

WITH THE ADDITION OF THE NEW EVENT LAWN, THE COUNTRY CLUB NOW OFFERS MEMBERS THE CHANCE TO TRY THEIR HAND AT BOCCE BALL.

BY ASHLEY RYAN

The game of bocce ball—pronounced “buh-chee” rather than “bah-chee,” according to Newport Beach Country Club Executive Assistant Danielle Sayer—is one that we don’t hear very much about. But

that’s all about to change as the club now hosts its own games of bocce ball on its new event lawn.

While it may not currently be the most popular game, Sayer says it has been around for a very long time. Forms of bocce ball can be

traced all the way back to 5000 B.C., when the Egyptians tossed polished stones in one of the oldest known games. “Any game that has roots dating back to 5000 B.C. is worth trying out,” Sayer says. But she notes that the version of the game that we



LEARNING BOCCE

According to Danielle Sayer, this unique sport can be played quite a few different ways, but the club will be playing with one in particular. “There are lots of variations,” Sayer says, “but the easiest way to play is called open bocce.”

Read on to find out the basic rules of the game.

To start, a member of Team A throws the smallest ball, called the “pallino” or the “jack.” This small ball acts as a marker for the rest of the game.

The same person that threw the smallest ball will then take a shot at throwing one of their larger balls as close to the pallino as possible.

Because the same player from Team A is currently the closest to the pallino—and therefore considered “inside”—players from other teams will take turns throwing their large balls until one of them gets closer and becomes the new “inside” player.

Once each player has thrown all of his or her balls, the player on the inside will be awarded points; the players that are not on the inside won’t receive any points. Each of the winner’s balls that is closer to the pallino than any opponent’s closest ball will count for 1 point.

Move to the other end of the bocce ball court and play the next round, choosing a new person to throw the pallino. Play additional rounds until someone reaches 12 points and is then declared the winner of the game.

know today resembles one played in Rome thousands of years later.

According to the United States Bocce Federation, the game spread through Europe, becoming so popular that it threatened to interfere with local security as military exercises went by the wayside in favor of playing bocce ball. This resulted in leaders from Spain and Italy banning it for years and doctors from France trying to discredit the sport before it eventually gained popularity again in Italy.

Though it is said that George Washington had his own bocce ball field at Mount Vernon in the 1780s, the game really gained traction in the United States after Italian immigrants brought it over in the 1900s.

Bocce ball is played with nine

balls in total: a small ball referred to as a “pallino” and eight larger balls (typically four red and four green). “Every ball must be the same diameter, same weight and made with the same materials,” Sayer explains, noting that tournament-grade bocce balls are between 100 millimeters and 115 millimeters in diameter. She adds that the larger balls typically weigh around 2 pounds.

The game is set to be played on the Oasis Lawn at Newport Beach Country Club, which was unveiled in July during an anniversary celebration of the clubhouse that opened last summer.

“We wanted outdoor space, other than the [golf] course, that could be utilized for special occasions and

enjoyed by our members,” Sayer explains of the new event lawn. Sayer also notes that reviews given during the anniversary party were overwhelmingly positive.

As the club continues to think of uses for the spacious lawn, Carlo Borunda and the rest of the golf shop team are getting ready to assist guests in playing bocce ball. Providing all of the necessary equipment, it will be easier than ever to play the famous international game locally.

“The simplicity of this game is quite appealing,” Sayer says. “Bocce is a game that has been enjoyed by endless generations of mankind. It brings friends and families together allowing them to unplug and enjoy time outdoors.”