



Bocce's Flair Week Provides Welcome Relief From August Doldrums

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Roll Call Staff

A splash of flair enlivened August for nearly 1,200 bocce players as the local league celebrated Flair Week.

Now in its fifth year, the DC Bocce League includes many Capitol Hill devotees looking for something different to do after work. Teams dressed up for Flair Week for a chance to win a \$100 bar tab at Pour House.

Beyond the casual fun that comes with playing the game — many participants sip beer and other drinks while they play — Flair Week simply complements the relaxed feel of an already relaxed sport, at least the way it's played here.

In bocce, a small white ball called a pallina is first thrown down the playing area. The D.C. league uses an area five paces wide by 25 paces long.

The team with the ball closest to the pallina gets one point for each of its other balls that are closer to the pallina than the other team's closest ball.

League games last an hour or until a team gains 16 points.

During the season, league organizers give away different prizes from week to week, but the flair competition is unique.

"The whole concept of Flair Week kind of originated on its own," said Sarah DeLucas, one of the founding members of the league. "Several years back, we had a team called the Flying Malindas who decided to wear capes to a game, and it kind of grew from there."

The DC Bocce League plays two seasons each year: one in the spring and one in the summer. Different divisions compete across Washington; there are two leagues on Capitol Hill, one in Adams Morgan and one in the West End.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Flair Week transformed Garfield Park into even more of a spectacle than the usual weekly convergence of the Capitol Hill bocce divisions.

Hill divisions pit two rounds of 24 teams against each other in one-hour matches, followed by a post-game happy hour at Pour House, the official DC Bocce League sponsor.

The atmosphere is casual, with players often paying equal amounts of attention to their beverages and team conversation as to the actual game.

This year's flair did not disappoint.

The Capitol Hill games on both Tuesday and Wednesday brought out a number of teams with Halloween-worthy displays. Although light rain on Tuesday seemed to put a damper on creativity, the flair still managed to emerge.

One team that aimed to please was the Baci Bandits. Made up mostly of staffers from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the team used its assigned T-shirt color — Carolina blue — as a springboard for its flair.

Team member Alex Post said the Bandits thought about dressing as the theatrical trio Blue Man Group but decided against the idea. “We thought about painting our faces and arms blue, but because of the risk of rain we decided not to.” Instead, the team settled on “a blue soup theme.”

Assembling several minutes before the game's start, the nine-member team assisted each other in decking themselves out in all things blue: streamers, eyeliner, and, in one case, even blue wings.

We Make Your Balls Uncomfortable, which was dealt a chocolate brown color this season, decided to use the competition to remake its team T-shirts. Before playing Tuesday night, the team members spent two hours beading and redesigning their shirts.

Plan (B)occe was a little less ambitious, settling on a flair choice suitable for the Hill. Teammates Amanda Foster and Danielle Duffy struck a quintessentially political tone with their choice of health care and presidential campaign buttons.

Several teams used their team names as inspiration for their flair. Bocce Set Me Up attached photos of former D.C. Mayor Marion Barry to hats worn by team members. To try to improve their chances, the members also handed out lollipops.

Bocce Babes, an all-female team of bocce veterans, took a more flamboyant twist, with members dressing up in bright neon outfits. “We were going for a '70s/'80s rainbow extravaganza,” said team member Melissa Porter, who works on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

One team tried to give an athletic twist to its throwback flair. Bonzi Bocce Kittens decked themselves out in 1980s exercise outfits, complete with sideways ponytails, leggings, and oversized sunglasses.

“We had divine inspiration for this flair,” quipped one member. “Today, the '80s are making a comeback.”

The Tuesday night team that ultimately came out on top was Bocce Told Me She was 18, Officer. Outfitted to match their name, the team featured sleazy men, a cop, and schoolgirls.

About half of both Capitol Hill divisions chose not to dress up.

“I totally forgot that it was happening this week,” said a surprised Blake Adami, who also works as a legislative assistant to Rep. John Culberson (R-Texas). Although Adami plays with the team Drunken Debocery, he was quick to point out that the team draws no inspiration from any Members' offices.

At the Wednesday Hill division meeting, the weather was not as much of a threat.

Team Measure That S*** sought a successive win to its flair dominance of the previous season. This season, players dressed up in flexible rulers from Ikea and bent rulers across their foreheads.

But the ultimate winner of the Wednesday Hill division was team Taking Suggestions for Drink of the Week. Playing together for almost four years, team members dressed up as different cocktails and shots.

Some of the drink names are better left to your imagination, but a quick visit to the photos section of dcboce.com can confirm your guesses.