

This is not your mother's lawn bowling

Garfield Park plays host to a spirited league of Bocce bowlers ... complete with a Board of Directors and all the Italian beer you can drink

BY JESSICA TAYLOR

The game of Bocce is no longer confined to barbecues and backyards. The DC Bocce Ball League has thrown the sport of lawn bowling into the spotlight with its weekly tournaments at Garfield Park in Southeast Capitol Hill.

Garfield Park, located at Second and F streets, SE, is the league's home for its weekly Tuesday bocce team tournaments. Beginners are welcome as long as they are over 21 years old and ready for some social fun.

The league was formed in 2004 and garnered 50 individuals for its inaugural season. There are two seasons each summer that run for five weeks from June to mid-July

and from mid-July until the end of August.

With the first two years under their belt, the burgeoning league has grown to encompass over 200 bocce players. At the end of each season, the winning team is awarded donations to give to their charity of choice. Past charities have included the American Red Cross and Women Empowered Against Violence.

Bocce, informally known as lawn bowling, is played in teams of anywhere from five to seven people. A match between two teams typically lasts for an hour. A ball, known as the jack or boccino is thrown, and players try to bowl their ball closest to the jack. The team with the closest balls to the jack gets a point for each ball closer to the jack than the opposing team's balls.

Sarah DeLucas, who sits on the league's board of directors, said there is no limit as to how many teams can participate each season. There are 34 teams on the roster this year.

The DC Bocce League is a registered nonprofit run by a board of directors.

"Basically we perform the role of overseers," said Matt Herzog, chairman of the board. "This includes monitoring member registra-



PHOTOS BY BRETT DAVIS

Marci Drury prepares to throw for The Freak Gasoline Fight Accident.

tion fees, placing individuals on teams, and serving as judges for the Tuesday games."

There is a \$35 membership fee to join the league. The registration fee contributes to equipment, team T-shirts and happy hour beer specials for members.

So what does bocce have to do with beer?

"Well, we're a social organization," DeLucas said. "We get together for games and after the games a lot of us go to the Pour House bar on Capitol Hill for \$2 drinks."

DeLucas secured the league's discount on beer when she obtained sponsorship from the Pour House and Peroni Beer. As with many local league sponsorship deals, the Pour House donates \$500 in exchange for the promotional and social aspects that the league provides.

League members regularly go to the Pour House after games and have the Pour House logo on their team T-shirts.

As for the beer, "It was the perfect choice for sponsorship," DeLucas said. "An Italian beer for an Italian game. It's a great drink after a good game at the park."

The Tuesday night games in Garfield Park were largely improved this season due to the construction of two bocce courts.

The league petitioned the Friends of Garfield Park for rights to build the first and only bocce courts in the District. LandDesign, a site planning and land design construction company, volunteered its service and equipment for the construction of the two courts.

"This was really the first time that the Capitol Hill community has seen bocce courts," Herzog said. "As it turns out, the Garfield Park association wanted to include bocce courts when the park was created but did not have the funds. So the League and the Association really feel that these courts are an asset to the park and the community."

The courts in Garfield Park are open to anyone, except for league nights on Tuesday.

Many members, of all ages, join the league with no prior bocce experience.

"Out of everything you could play, bocce is a game that's really relaxing and easy for anyone to pick up," said Matt Rochkind, a member of team Mr. Boccehead.

"I was actually raised playing bocce," explained Dani Barnett, a member of the 6 Bocce Babes and Rich team. "I come from a large Italian family and was so happy that DC offered a bocce league. It's been a great way to meet people and the Italian beer is great."

"And athletic ability does apply here!" added Chris Balash, a member of Bocce-holics Anonymous. "Although really anyone can pick up the game."

For more information or to register, visit www.dcbocce.com.

VOICE



Eric Hiller of team Pabst (Pan Am Bocce All Star Team) makes a toss.

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