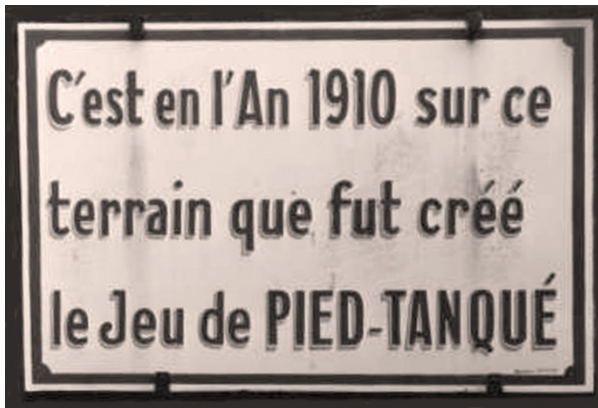


History

Boules games have a very long history, dating back through the Middle Ages to ancient Rome, and before that to ancient Greece and Egypt. The current form of the game originated in La Ciotat in the south of France.



In France in the second half of the 19th century a form of boules known as jeu provençal was extremely popular. In this game players ran three steps before throwing a boule. A former jeu provençal player named Jules Lenoir was afflicted by rheumatism so severe that he could no longer run before throwing a boule. A good friend was a local café owner who developed a variant form of the game in which the length of the pitch was reduced by roughly half, and a player stood still to play. It spread rapidly.

The first pétanque tournament was organized in 1910 in La Ciotat. After that the game spread quickly and soon became the most popular form of boules in France.

Before the mid-1800s, European boules games were played with solid wooden balls, usually made boxwood root, a very hard wood. The late 1800s saw the introduction of cheap mass-manufactured nails, and wooden boules gradually began to be covered with nails, producing boules cloutées ("nailed boules").

After World War I manufacturing technology was adapted to allow the manufacture of hollow, all-metal boules. The first all-metal boule, la Boule Intégrale, was introduced in the mid-1920s. Shortly thereafter Jean Blanc invented a process of manufacturing steel boules by stamping two steel blanks into hemispheres and then welding the two hemispheres together to create a boule. With this technological advance, hollow all-metal balls rapidly became the norm.

After the development of the all-metal boule, pétanque spread rapidly from Provence to the rest of France, then to the rest of Europe, and then to Francophone colonies and countries around the globe. Today, many countries have their own national governing bodies.

Pétanque was featured at the 2015 All-Africa Games, which were hosted by the Republic of Congo, a former French colony and also in the World Transplant Game 2019 in Gateshead. Sport Boules is already present in large multi-sport global events: World Games, Mediterranean Games, Asian Indoor Games, S.E.A Games, All Africa Games, Pacific Games, Commonwealth Games, Islands Games (Indian Ocean), Asian Beach Games.

Perhaps the best-known international championship is the Mondial la Marseillaise à Pétanque, which takes place every year in Marseille, France, with more than 10,000 participants and more than 150,000 spectators.

In the UK the sport is growing. There are now hundreds of clubs and thousands of players registered with the national governing body. There probably the same amount in existence and playing regularly but not registered.

It's an addictive game. It's far more than rolling a boule towards a jack. Expert players can perform fantastic feats with a steel boule. Some call it chess with steel balls. Take the time to find out more and bring Pétanque into your district.