

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Volunteers overhaul pétanque courts, welcome community to the sport



Photo Pippa Fisher

A petanque player throws the ball from within a circle, attempting to get her "boules" closer to the target ball than her opponent's.

By Pippa Fisher

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Lamorinda Pétanque Club. And the courts have never looked better.

In fact the courts, which sit alongside the creek near the Lafayette Community Center amongst shady trees at 480 St. Mary's Road, have recently had a bit of an overhaul.

"We did all the work ourselves. We are all volunteers," explains Club Director Gilbert Sonet, with obvious pride in the beautiful grounds.

Sonet, who hails from Provence but has lived in the Lamorinda area for 30 years and worked in the restaurant industry, stresses that pé-

tanque is a game for everyone.

"The outstanding feature of pétanque is that it brings together people of all ages, genders and backgrounds in a way unheard of in more physically demanding sports," says Sonet, noting that they always welcome visitors. "Our club members are a very friendly group."

Pétanque is easy to learn, so anyone can enjoy it from the first time they play. The basic rules are simple and easy to follow. To start playing, all that's needed is a set of metal balls (boules) and a wooden target ball (cochonnet). It is similar to bocce ball from Italy and lawn bowling

from England.

The club has boules available to borrow. Members welcome newcomers and encourage anyone interested to drop by when the courts are open on Sundays from 1 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 p.m. until dusk. Sonet points out you don't have to be a member. "Games are open to everyone. We'll show you how to play."

Groups are encouraged to come by, says Sonet, and to bring a picnic to enjoy at one of the shady picnic tables as they try out pétanque.

Make no mistake however; some of their members are playing at a very high level. The Lamorinda Pé-



Working the field

Photos provided

tanque Club regularly hosts other clubs from across the Bay Area and sometimes from further afield. In 2014 they hosted the National Pétanque Tournament, winning it for Lamorinda.

It is a family affair for Sonet. His son Noah has been playing since he was 4 years old. "He started with plastic balls," explains Sonet.

In 2017 the then-high school freshman represented the U.S. at the pétanque world championship in Marseilles, France. He will again be going to the world competition in Cambodia in November this year with his father.

Currently the Lamorinda Pétanque Club has about 48 members. Only a few are actually French.

Speaking French is optional.



For more information go to their website at <http://lamorindapetanque.com/index.html>.



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