



# Women in Petanque

*Promoting petanque through sharing news & information*

## Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the Women in Petanque Newsletter produced by the Petanque Ambassadors for Women (PAW) Group. The newsletter is all about promoting petanque to women and sharing news, information and celebrating successes from across the EPA Regions.

Through this Newsletter, we hope to report on the range of activities being undertaken by clubs and regions up and down the country to promote petanque. We will also be featuring some of our high profile women players and inviting coach Toni Gates to share her top tips and tactics of the game.

We would welcome your views and suggestions for future articles as well as invite you to send in your local petanque stories. We hope this Newsletter will enable the sharing of good practice and create a platform to celebrate the successes of women playing petanque.

Hassi Leverett  
Editor

**Good Luck** to our Women's Team (Sarah, Emma, Sammy & Kaylee) who will be representing England at the World Petanque Championships in China - November 2017



And to Alex who is part of the National Youth Squad

## The Future of Petanque - Opportunities Galore! by Martin Hughes, EPA Vice President

There are tremendous opportunities for women's participation in petanque both in England and Internationally and the EPA supports Junior (under 18), Espoirs (under 23), Seniors (18+) and Veterans (55+). Our clubs and regions are the entry points for playing and there is a national rankings system to identify the best players.

There are dedicated World and European Championships for women. In recent years, we have had a lot of success at international level, winning medals at European Championships at Espoirs and Seniors level, and we hope to make even more progress going forward. **The more women that join our sport, the greater pool of talent we will have to win more success for our country!**

## In Focus - Sammy Thatcher

Sammy is currently the SCPA Regional Shooting Champion and the Women's National Doubles Champion. Sammy has been playing for England since 2012 where she went to her first Junior European Championships and she played in the Women's World Championships in 2013. We managed to catch up with Sammy ahead of a busy schedule as she prepares for the Inter-Regionals in September and the World Championships in China in November.



### *How did you get into playing petanque?*

I got into pétanque out of chance really. None of my family or friends played, which is how most people do. We were at a craft fayre in Victoria Country Park where there was a stall for pétanque run by Loren Butt, who used to play for Shedfield Pétanque Club. Me and Kaylee went over to have a go and Loren said we were naturals hahaha. He gave us a leaflet for the nearest club (Southampton City) and we have been playing ever since!

### *What was your first major win?*

My first major win individually was my National Singles Title in 2015.

### *What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?*

I think my greatest achievement is being selected for the Women's World Championship in China this year.

### *How do you feel about being part of the England Women's Team going to compete in China?*

I don't think it has sunk in completely yet. I was absolutely over the moon when I got the message from Martin Hughes. The last couple of years have been very busy for me what with completing my degree and working part time too. I have struggled to balance pétanque within it but I think my level of play has still remained at a high quality and hopefully it will continue over the next couple of months too.

### *How do you prepare before a particularly important competition?*

To prepare for a major competition I always make sure I am organised either with a list if I'm going abroad or pack the night before if it's just a one day competition. I try to attend as many competitions as I can and I always go to every National and Regional competition. I have a pétanque piste in my garden, so I try to practice when I can too.

### *You are renowned for your unique shooting technique and ability, do you have an inner monologue prior to taking a shot?*

I don't really say a lot to myself if I'm honest apart from thinking positive and motivating myself with each shot. Psychology is a major part in the game and I have learnt over the years that positivity is the key. Studying it as part of my degree too has really helped me to understand why it happens and how to deal with types of stressful situations.

### *What advice would you give to new players?*

My advice would be to just enjoy the game. Skill will develop overtime with practice but if you do not enjoy it then you will not improve in my opinion.

### *Who is your petanque role model and why?*

If I'm honest I do not have a role model. I really enjoy watching international men play as I think their style of play really appeals to me. Playing abroad in competitions really has opened my eyes to the different level of play there is outside of England.

### *Your sister Kaylee is also an excellent petanque player, how do you feel when you are playing against each other - is there much sibling rivalry?*

I have been really impressed with how much progress Kaylee has made over the last 2-3 years. I never like playing against her but I always want to win because that's the aim of the game. We always support each other in competitions, so it doesn't matter if we win or lose against each other.

### *What is your favourite way to relax after a competition?*

I like to watch TV and completely switch off from pétanque. I never dwell on any mistakes that I make or count how many shots I missed throughout the day. Everyone makes mistakes and I learn from them when I can.

### *Finally, if Petanque becomes an Olympic sport in 2024, what do you think are Team GB's chances of winning medals.*

If pétanque becomes an Olympic sport I think we could have a great chance of doing well if we continue to go abroad and play against high level teams. In the next 7 years we need to be up there with France and Belgium otherwise I think we will struggle.



**Many thanks to Sammy and we wish her all the best in China and also in future International Competitions.**

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**Many thanks to Sammy and we wish her all the best in China and also in future International Competitions.**



## Toni's Top Tip!

Toni Gates is an inspirational Coach to our National Youth Squad and has done wonders to motivate and inspire our youngsters over the past few years. Previously, Toni represented the Chiltern Region at the Inter-regional championships and Champion of Champions and had qualified three times to play for England in the Home Nations. We are delighted that Toni will be sharing some of her top tips with 'Women in Petanque' and in this issue, Toni talks about:

### The importance of the word 'if'

This small word "if" can have a big impact on your ability to practice and improve. Have you heard the saying "practice makes perfect"? Well practice does not make perfect if you are not doing it right. Practicing mistakes will not improve anything. Remember that little word "if." Practice makes perfect if it is deliberate. Practice makes perfect if it is regular. Practice makes perfect if you've got the right technique.

### What is deliberate practice?

Often in practice we keep doing things we are good at like "shooting a boule at 6m", we hit often, it looks impressive and its lots of fun. However most top athletes will go out and set up something that is very difficult to do, something they are not good at focusing on the parts that are hard. This is called deliberate practice.

Rather than relaxing in the comfort of skills you've already acquired, to achieve top player status, you must be relentless in pushing the boundaries of your abilities. The practice shouldn't be so difficult that it overwhelms you - this will be demotivating, but also not so easy that you're not putting effort into it. Find that space where you're right at the boundary of your abilities. Once that boundary becomes less and less of a challenge push the boundary further. Many of our actions become automatic. Try to describe how you get out of a chair - these actions are automatic and unconscious we no longer think how to do it we just do it. Do not let your practice become automatic, it will stop you improving.

It's the way that you practice - not the time spent practicing that counts.



We are pleased to announce our  
**National Youth Squad**  
Youth World Championship Team  
16th Junior Petanque World Championship  
4 – 8 November 2017 China

## TEAM ENGLAND



Morgan Pry



Alex Spillett



Jason White



Kai Sheffield



## OUT AND ABOUT

### Portchester Petanque Club meets the Women’s Institute

On a beautiful summer evening, Portchester Petanque Club invited their local WI to come along and have a fun evening playing petanque. Twenty-eight women attended the evening of learning to play petanque quickly followed by some healthy competition.

Nick Hall from Portchester PC said “ the evening was a great success and the WI are keen to come back again next year”



### Going out into the Community

Thanks to Zena Forbes from Mercia Region for sending details about a recent initiative they have taken to promote petanque to ladies. They have made a grant application to the local council to work together with their local mosque and extend a hope of friendship following an act of hate crime.

“Our plan is to work together to offer a series of “Give It a Go” Pétanque Taster Sessions in August 2017. This will include a weekly Indoor Pétanque Ladies’ Group.

The project will promote tolerance and understanding, demonstrate that people from diverse backgrounds can come together, enjoy each other’s company and improve community cohesion. For the ladies group, it will give opportunities to develop new skills, self-confidence, have fun and enjoy a safe, sports-based experience.”

We wish Nottingham City Petanque Club all the best with this very positive initiative.

### Why do we need this initiative for women?

The EPA currently has a total membership of 2,696 of which 877 are women. Although the gender gap in membership varies across the Regions, on average the majority have a 2:1 ratio of men to women.

The idea behind the Promoting Petanque to Women initiative is to close the gender gap by engaging with women and girls from all backgrounds and promote the social and health benefits of petanque.

Research conducted by Sport England highlights that there are 2 million fewer women than men regularly playing sport and this is applicable at almost every age group. So the opportunity to engage women is huge.

Petanque is an attractive sport to women as it offers a wide range of social and health benefits that many women seek when thinking about a pastime. It is a sport that can suit any level of player from those that just want to enjoy the outdoors with some light activity in the company of good friends to others who are keen to participate in competitions at various levels.

There is also a growing momentum for France’s bid for petanque to become an olympic sport in 2024. Our International Federation FIPJP are working hard to get Olympic Recognition as part of a consortium of related boules sports - Petanque, Boule Lyonnaise & Raffa.

This is creating quite a buzz within the EPA, and the Regions are gearing up to find their future Olympians in readiness to bring home a few medals.

For more information, please visit

[www.boules-sport.org/uk/](http://www.boules-sport.org/uk/)

### Future Issues of ‘Women in Petanque’ Newsletter

Our next issue will be in January 2018 so if your Club or Region has a good news story to tell, we would love to hear from you.

Do you have an up and coming new player that is showing potential - why not send in their story? Or if like Portchester Petanque Club, you are hosting special events to promote petanque to Women’s Group, keep us posted.

Please email: [hassi@culturaljourneys.org](mailto:hassi@culturaljourneys.org)

# PAW Meet the Petanque Ambassadors for Women



Hassi Leverett (PAW Group Coordinator)  
Region: Southern Counties  
Local Club: Fareham & Portchester

Hassi started playing in February 2014 and fell instantly in love with the game. She loves the competitive aspect of petanque as well the social benefits and has made many friends from clubs across the Southern Region.



Diane Greenaway  
Region: Great Western  
Local Club: City of Bath

Diane is the Vice Chair and Events Manager and has travelled both home and abroad to play petanque. Petanque ticks many boxes for Diane including her love for competition. Win or Lose, Diane always enjoys the journey.

[Di@bathboules.co.uk](mailto:Di@bathboules.co.uk)



Elaine Aldersey  
Region: Southern Counties  
Local Club: Muscliff Park

For Elaine, petanque is a form of retreat as having to concentrate and focus offers her an escape from the hum drum of daily routine. She also loves meeting new people and learning new skills and finds it amazing how friendly, unassuming, clever and fascinating some of the players are.

[Pawssoutherncounties@gmail.com](mailto:Pawssoutherncounties@gmail.com)



Lesley Drakatos  
Region: Devon  
Local Club: Honiton, Chudleigh and ISCA

Lesley loves having goals to train for, fulfilling her competitive spirit and enjoying good teamwork and playing a sport that doesn't result in visits to A&E.

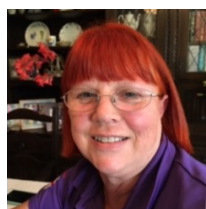
[customsaddlesuk@outlook.com](mailto:customsaddlesuk@outlook.com)



Jackie Corp  
Region: Southern Counties  
Local Club: Shedfield

Jackie loves petanque as its a great leveller, it's teamwork, sociable, fun and competitive. Jackie likes that it teaches you a lot about yourself.

[jackiemcorp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jackiemcorp@yahoo.co.uk)



Hilary Annicchiarico  
Region: Southern Counties  
Local Club: Muscliff Park

Hilary enjoys the team spirit, making new friends, meeting wonderful people and visiting new places. She feels the breeze and loves sharing experience and promoting petanque as a truly social sport.

[hilary.muscliffparkpetanque@hotmail.com](mailto:hilary.muscliffparkpetanque@hotmail.com)



Giselle Whiteaker  
Region: London  
Local Club: London Petanque Club

Giselle loves the socially inclusive element of petanque - that anyone can show up, play a game, throw at least a few good boules, and meet new people while they're doing it.

## About PAWs

The Petanque Ambassadors for Women (PAWs) are a Group of Women who are passionate about petanque and want to actively promote the sport and its appeal to a wide range of women. The Group was set up as part of an EPA initiative aimed at raising awareness and recruiting more women to participate in this great sport. The main focus of PAW is to develop ideas and encourage local clubs to run events that will enable greater participation from women in petanque at local, regional and national level.

Within the PAW Group, we are lucky to have a wide range of skills and experience including organising events, networking, marketing, advertising, and journalism, which we hope will serve well in supporting local clubs to promote and plan specific activities for recruiting new club members.

Our report to the EPA: *Promoting Petanque to Women* will be available on the EPA website and we will soon be producing a Good Practice Guide along with a series of posters that can be used by clubs specifically to attract women to join.

We will be officially launching PAW at the Inter-Regionals and will have a pack available for each Region. Look out for our representatives Elaine, Hilary and Lesley who will be out and about at Hayling Island on Saturday 16 September.

## Want to become a Petanque Ambassador?

If you are passionate about petanque and would like to be involved in promoting, supporting and generally helping to raise awareness of this social sport within your local area or Region, then please email: [hassi@culturaljourneys.org](mailto:hassi@culturaljourneys.org)

It would be great to have at least one Ambassador in each of the 16 Regions within the EPA and raise the profile and membership of this great and inclusive 'sport for all'.

