



fpusa
newsletter
early fall 2016



Dan Feaster, FPUSA Secretary and Chairman of the Communications Committee. Drawing by Nat Walter.

A few words of welcome...

Here in the late days of September as heated summer grudgingly yields to fall, we begin what we trust will be a new and rewarding benefit of your FPUSA membership, the quarterly FPUSA newsletter. In our digital pages we will endeavor to keep you informed of significant happenings in the world of pétanque around the corner, across the country, and, if relevant, perhaps a bit of international news as well. We'd like to link our community together through a greater familiarity with each other and the game we love by means of words and pictures. We welcome you as a reader, encourage you to become a contributor, and hope you become a fan.

Well, another busy summer has come and gone. We have lots of news upon which to launch this humble vessel, our inaugural newsletter. When I took over as head of the Communications Committee I set a few goals for myself. First, and primary, was to establish a more meaningful and effective line of communication. "Communication" implies a two-way exchange of ideas and information, and we really want to encourage our members to take part in the exchange. Second, an overhaul of the FPUSA website. Third was to bring back the FPUSA newsletter. We want the website and newsletter to function not only as tools to inform, but also to engage each of you, our members, in a dialogue with your representatives. For a variety of reasons these tasks have taken longer than I'd initially hoped or planned, but we are now well underway. If you've visited the website, you've probably noticed numerous pages that ask for your input, invite your participation, or solicit your opinion. We really mean it. Don't be shy, let us know what you're thinking and what ideas you have for the website. The same applies to this quarterly. We actively solicit your articles, ideas,

your reportage, and your photos. In fact we are even inviting you to help name our publication. Send your suggestions for a name for this publication to: Secretary@USAPetanque.org.

If you've already visited, you'll know that one of the biggest projects of the summer has been our creation of the new FPUSA website. If you haven't, you'll find it here: www.usapetanque.org. While I provided oversight, Nan Walter supplied copy, design, and execution. Etienne Rijkheer, our National Sport Director, assisted with content for the competition section derived from the old Landing Spot. The transition to the new website will be completed by October 1, 2016, and the Landing Spot will be officially closed at that time.

Also in this issue we report on the new Men's Team USA and Women's Team USA. Southeast Region Counselor, Jo Ella Manalan has graciously written on the September Women's Qualifier from the Maine Boules Club in Blue Hill, Maine, while I have done similar duty for the August Men's Qualifier at Lamorinda Pétanque Club in Lafayette, California. Gina Teator DeJoy, one of our top women competitors, has also generously contributed her take on the Women's Confederations Cup Team's adventures at the Mondial Ricard la Marseillaise à Pétanque in Longueuil, Quebec, Canada, this past August.

In club news we'll meet a group of model citizens from the Edmonds Pétanque Club and say hello to our newest club, the Seacoast Boulaines of NH. Finally we conclude this issue with a fascinating article on training, the first in a series by Seattle Pétanque Club President Philippe Geraud and a water color by talented petanquewoman and artist Shannon Bowman. We hope you enjoy taking this little excursion with us and we look forward to hearing from you.

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**The FPUSA Newsletter
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Annual Meeting 2016

The Annual Meeting of the Federation of Pétanque, USA, Inc., took place at the Lamorinda Pétanque Club terrain, 480 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, California on Saturcay, August 13, 2016. Board members present included President and Membership Secretary Frank Pipal, Vice President Christine Cragg, Secretary Dan Feaster, National Sport Director Etienne Rijkheer, and Northern California Counselor Bleys Rose. Proxies for seven absent members were carried by President Frank Pipal (three) and Secretary Dan Feaster (four). With a quorum of 12 established, President Pipal opened the meeting. Reports were submitted by Treasurer Joe Martin, NSD Etienne Rijkheer, and Membership Secretary Frank Pipal. The Minutes will be posted once they have been approved by the Board. One item from the Membership Report that we can share at this time is the application of two new clubs for FPUSA membership. And since the meeting took place, a third club has applied for membership. Now we are 50!



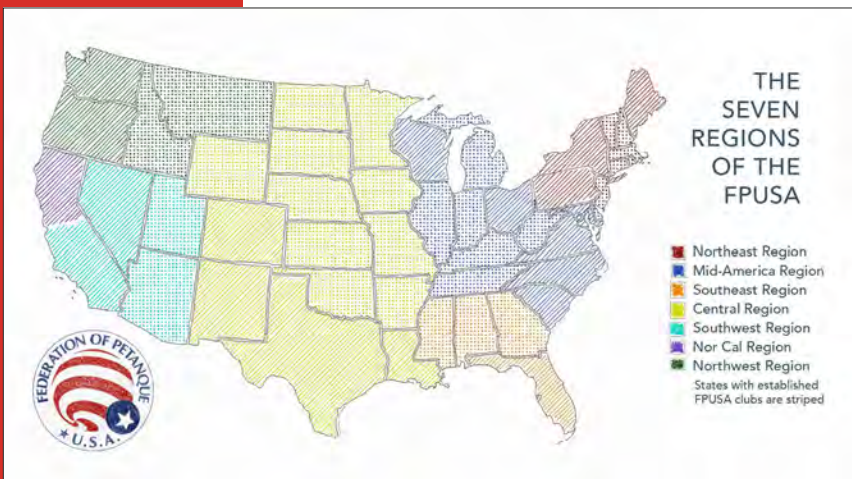
New FPUSA Website

In late September the new FPUSA website, www.usapetanque.org went online. The new site represents a large scale expansion over its predecessor, combining as it does not only the functions of the old FPUSA location, but also the those of the Landing Spot. Other new features are web pages for each of the FPUSA-affiliated clubs that include a brief description of the club, its practice hours, links to websites, Smugmug folders, Facebook pages, local contact information, and a map to its terrain. Sport director Etienne Rijkheer assisted with the creation of the areas of the competition section that derived from the Landing Spot, so all of the tournament calendars, results, regulations, entry forms, and reports remain just as they were on the Landing Spot, which officially will go dark October 1st.

The developers, volunteers Dan Feaster and Nan Walter, kept two audiences in mind while creating the look and feel of the site. They wanted to provide useful information not only for the experienced pétanque player, but also for the newbie, or even the casual browser who might stumble across our pages. The overarching idea is to have the Newsletter and the website work together as useful tools not only to inform the current membership, but to serve as effective recruiting tools for pétanque.

New Website

Above: screen shot of the new FPUSA website. Opposite page: map of the Seven Regions of the FPUSA from the website drawn by Nan Walter.



COMPETITION

National Men's Triples Championship and Confederations Cup Qualifier

Winners of the Men's Qualifier at Lamorinda, August 13-14, 2016, John Harris (Oakhurst PC), Thomas Moua, and By Vang (Fresno PC). Photo courtesy of Tish Harris.



National Men's Triples Championship and Confederations Cup Qualifier

The turnout for this year's Men's Triples Championship and CCQ was relatively light, with 9 teams participating. Lamorinda PC once again rolled out the red carpet with excellent hospitality in every respect. National Sport Director Etienne Rijkheer saw to it that both of the weekend's events ran smoothly. Host clubs play a crucial role in our Sport program, and we thank the club, it's leaders, and all the volunteers for the time and effort put towards a top notch event.

Players from as far away as Washington state and Texas made the trip and by all accounts a great time was had by all. The weather was nice and hot, as we have come to expect from Lamorinda in late summer. The Texans, as well as a strong contingent from the Fresno and Oakhurst clubs seemed to think the weather was just fine. Four strong teams made it out of the day-two pool qualifying into the semi final matches. Team Harris/Vang/Moa bested Feaster/Johnstone/Geraud in one semi-final, while team Porto/Kurz/Thao won out over Mathis/Coughlin/Yang. In the well-played final, Harris/Vang/Moa proved too strong and took the Gold Medal. Porto/Kurz/Thao had a good start, but in the end had to settle for Silver. As is our custom for Qualifiers, there is no match for third-fourth, with the losers of the semis sharing the Bronze.

Just the numbers:

Gold: John Harris (Oakhurst PC), By Vang, Thomas Moua (Fresno PC) 13/7

Silver: Ed Porto, Wofie Kurz, (Petaluma Valley PC), Jer Thao (Fresno PC)

Joint third place: Dan Feaster (Port Townsend Pétanque Alliance), David Johnstone (Portland PC), Philippe Geraud (Seattle PC)

Peter Mathis, Mickey Coughlin (Valley of the Moon PC), Paul Yang (Fresno PC)

In the Lamorinda Select Triples one-day event, Fresno PC made another strong showing, placing teams in first and second place.

Gold: Nicholas Yang, Michel Yang, Fue Vang (Fresno PC)

Silver: Patrick Bourrel, Linda Motschieder, Janice Bissonnette (Fresno PC)

Bronze: Carlos Couto, Serge Hanne (Lamorinda PC), Daniel Genini (Le Club de Pétanque-San Diego)



“Host clubs play a crucial role in our Sport program, and we thank the club, it's leaders, and all the volunteers for the time and effort put towards a top notch event.”

COMPETITION

National Women's Triples Championship and World Qualifier

Women's Qualifier at Blue Hill

by Jo Ella Manalan

The 2016 National Women's Triples Championship and World Qualifier was held in Blue Hill, Maine, September 10–11, 2016. Teams representing every region of the FPUSA were present.

What a weekend! We had 11 teams competing in triples competition, and 7 of those teams included members of the Maine Boules Club, organizers of the tournament, were fantastic hosts. The event even included a torch lighting by an “almost Olympian,” lovely lunches, gourmet snacks, and above all, superb organization of the tournament. This was all capped off by a lobster fest on Sunday night.

There were four games played on Saturday and eight teams continued in pool play on Sunday. The other three teams were automatically entered into the Boatyard Cup competition which took place simultaneously on Sunday. The final tournament game was a nail-biter that went down to the wire with the team of Gina Dejoy, Shannon Hodge, and Shirley Jones finally prevailing over the team of Kate Unkle, Kendall Unkle, and Dindy Royster by a score of 13-12.

On Monday, following the tournament, we were treated to a lovely island picnic. Everyone played pétanque on the beach and we were all winners because of the camaraderie and fun. If you weren't a part of this competition, make plans to attend your next regional and/or national tournaments so as not to miss out on all the fun. Thanks again to the Maine Boules Club and all its generous members and a big congratulations to the winners.



For you data lovers, here are the numbers:

Gold: Gina DeJoy (South Florida PC), Shannon Hodge (Zanesfield PC), Shirley Jones (Carolina Pétanque) 13/12

Silver: Kate Unkel, Kindle Loomis, Virginia Royster (Maine Boules Club)

Joint 3rd place: Julie Jo Fehrle, Angela Gleason (Maine Boules Club), Juanita Celix (Seattle PC) and Tish Harris (Oakhurst PC), Celia Crittenden (Portland PC), Lisa Skerl (La Boule New Yorkaise)

Boatyard Cup Results

Gold: Mark Kindschi, Mia Kanazawa, Matthew 'Max' Mattes (Maine Boules Club) 13/7

Silver: Bo Edwards (Carolina Pétanque), Michelle Healy (San Antonio PC), Janet Kirtland (Portland PC)

Bronze: Bill Lawson, Michael Tareila, David Barry (Maine Boules Club) 13/5

4th Place: Jetsun Penkalski, Michael Percy (Maine Boules Club), Xavier Thibaud (La Boule New Yorkaise)

For more results see the FPUSA website:

www.usapetanque.org

Participants in the 2016 National Women's World Championship Qualifier including winners Gina Teator De Joy (South Florida PC), Shannon Hodge (Zanesfield PC), and Shirley Jones (Carolina Pétanque) in the front row, right of center in light blue sleeveless shirts. Photo courtesy of Gary and Shirley Jones.



COMPETITION

National Women's Triples Championship and Confederations Cup Team Compete in Canada

Oh, Canada!

by Gina Teator De Joy

Canada was nothing short of fabulous. We were welcomed with open arms and treated so very well by all the opponents and spectators. We had numerous people ask to be photographed with us (nothing like that to boost one's ego!) And all games ran very smoothly with exceptional sportsmanship displayed by all. Although disappointed by the change of tournament mid day, we had a great time and suggest anyone who has the opportunity to travel to Montreal to play should do so.

Here is the lowdown on the women's 2016 National Pétanque Team games in Montreal. Day one, as scheduled, we played four games. Our team showed exceptionally well with three wins and one loss in a close-timed game 10-12. Then, we were surprised to be asked to play an additional game on day one (after placing 2nd overall) only to learn afterwards that it was NOT a game to assist the other team in placement but was a qualifier. Unlike other years and standard format, we learned that only one team moved on (not teams 1-4 as usual). This was the first time in the tournament's history that they changed the format like this mid day (after announcing in the morning that we would have four games). No one was aware of the rules change. All the women's teams were upset and confused. We lost 10-12 (all games were timed). Sadly this put is in the consolante pool.

Day 2: In our first morning game we lost; we suffered but rallied, true to our best form in the final games with 13 -1, 13-3, and 13-0 wins. Games won were 13-1, 13-0, 13-7, 13-3, 13-4, 13 -0, and losses at 10-12, and 7-12, which exhibits the efforts, skill, and ability of our team. Our final was our best—Tish on the cochonnet nearly every time, Shannon squeez-



ing in points where most would think it impossible, and I had nice shots including a 10-meter carreau. The game took minutes and we were ready to keep going, but sadly, the day was complete.

The games were spectacular and we made a fine showing. It was a true honor and so many people wanted photos with us and to my utter amazement, asked for autographs. This makes all the hours and hours of practice worth it. When one of us faltered, the others stepped up. The teamwork was perfect. We were under constant observation by the arbitre during our two loss games and perhaps the pressure influenced us—she warned us once as we went over on time (1:04) and ONCE when my heel was on the ring for one shot—regardless a loss at 10 in a timed game is fine.

Tish conquered the courts with beautiful first points, Shannon followed up with the same as well as nailing her shots when called upon. I managed many clean shots and some pretty carreaux which allowed us to have some big wins. We had wonderful friends, both new and old supporting and encouraging us, and I am, again, exceptionally thrilled to have been a member of the USA national team. Thank you FPUSA for the opportunity, thank you to my coaches & advisors (Gerard & Claude) and of course, my teammates...Shannon Hodge and Tish Harris. A true honor. Thank you!

The 2015 Women's Confederations Cup Team looking good in blue: Tish Harris (Oakhurst PC), Gina De Joy (South Florida PC), and Shannon Hodge (Zanesfield PC). Photo courtesy of Gina De Joy.

CLUB NEWS

Editor's Note: Bienvenue! Welcome to the Seacoast Boulaïnes of Nottingham, New Hampshire, the FPUSA's newest club. Pending approval of our three latest applications that makes us 50 clubs. As Liz explains below, the Seacoast Boulaïnes have enlisted the help of the UNH chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers to assist in the creation of an on campus terrain. We eagerly await news before the snow flies!)

A Brief History of the Seacoast Boulaïnes of New Hampshire

by Liz Hebbard

Liz Hebbard, her husband Trevor Verrot, and many of Liz's colleagues who teach French at the University of New Hampshire, have personal connections to the south of France, the birthplace of pétanque. Trevor's family immigrated to the US from Marseilles, and Liz taught in the Vaucluse on the French Consulate's TAPIF program after she graduated from college. She is very proud to be an honorary citizen of Villelaure. On their honeymoon this summer, Liz and Trevor played pétanque with friends in L'Estaque, Martigues, and of course Villelaure. At the end of the trip, the couple invested in their own triplettes to bring home. Back in New Hampshire, they began playing on a local baseball field. While researching pétanque clubs in the United States, they discovered the FPUSA website, and decided right away to found a club in southern New Hampshire. Liz's colleagues at UNH joined in enthusiastically.

The club, called the Seacoast Boulaïnes, is currently playing informally on dirt spaces on campus, but they recently teamed up with the UNH student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to collaborate on the construction of a terrain on campus, and are consulting with university architects to plan for the project's next steps.

A Brief History of the Seacoast Boulaïnes of New Hampshire by Liz Hebbard

Hopefully the new terrain will be here before the first snowfall (although, here in New England, it could snow before I finish writing this!).

Liz and Trevor hope that pétanque will bring their friends, colleagues, and the university community together to celebrate the Francophone heritage of New Hampshire, and to help these newlyweds "tanquent" their "pieds" and set down new roots in their life together as husband/tireur and wife/pointeuse.



“...they recently teamed up with the UNH student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to collaborate on the construction of a terrain on campus, and are consulting with university architects to plan for the project's next steps...”

CLUB NEWS

Edmonds Pétanque Club Leads the Way

Members of the Edmonds Pétanque Club in the Fourth of July Parade. Photo courtesy of Michelle Martin



Edmonds Pétanque Club Leads the Way

Since 2010 the Edmonds Pétanque Club has been doing something right. At least that's what the Edmonds Washington chapter of the Pacific Northwest Kiwanis thinks. In its 23-year history they have only awarded their highest accolade, Citizen of the Year, to a group two times. This year the Edmonds Pétanque Club became the second organizational recipient of that prestigious award. What does it take to be nominated? In general the Kiwanis are looking for citizens who are trying to make their community a better place. Specifically they are looking for people who are endeavoring to: privilege humanity and the spiritual over the material, live the Golden Rule, encourage exemplary standards in social and professional contacts, evolve a more enlightened model of citizenship, provide a crucible for the formation of friendship and community, and maintain the conditions that facilitate the increase of "justice, patriotism, and goodwill."

Back in 2010 Michelle Martin, a native of Lyon, France, got eight friends together to start the club. Today there are 85 members, most of whom play regularly each week, and the club continues to grow.

Michelle and fellow founding member Chris Guitton had the foresight to seek certified nonprofit status as a 501(c)3 corporation. Since then they have not only been doing good, they have also done well for a number of charities.

Every summer the EPC partners in a six-week children's program with the Boys and Girls Club. Each participant earns a certificate. EPC members teach pétanque to students visiting from Edmonds's sister city of Hekinan, Japan. Every summer boulistes in the Northwest Region have looked forward to two special Edmonds events: the Bastille Day Tournament and the Food Bank Tournament. Since 2011 the EPC has contributed over \$22,500 to the Food Bank. Local businesses contribute most of the prizes. Among them EPC member PBS travel guru Rick Steves, who often donates signed books and DVDs.

Since winning the 2016 Citizen of the Year award, not much has changed for the EPC. The gang still plays almost every day. They had another successful summer program with the kids from the Boys and Girls Club. The Bastille Day Tournament was another well-attended success and the Food Bank Tournament garnered more than \$4,500. But they also were honored at a Chamber of Commerce Luncheon, received a plaque that hangs at the Edmonds Museum, and were special guests at the annual Edmonds Fourth of July parade. All of this was a bit of a surprise to Edmonds President Michelle Martin, who modestly asserts: "I was thrilled about it and it is a great honor for the members who make EPC so exceptional...I did not realize that a simple French game would help or change life to many people. It is so rewarding to help the community, the Edmonds Food Bank, and the kids. We have players of all ages that discover that new activity." Not bad for a "simple game."

"I did not realize that a simple French game would help or change life to many people. It is so rewarding to help the community, the Edmonds Food Bank, and the kids. We have players of all ages that discover that new activity."

“The Relevance of Practice in Pétanque Performance and Competition” by Philippe Geraud

The Relevance of Practice in Pétanque Performance and Competition

by Philippe Geraud

ASK TEN PÉTANQUE PLAYERS what their practice routine is and you’re bound to get ten different answers ranging from “I usually practice one or two hours per day” to “I don’t think practice is necessary” or “I usually get all the practice I need when I play.” This is not surprising, given that our approaches to training and practice are often very individual and largely influenced by whether or not we believe that practice is useful, our age, the amount of available time at our disposal for practice, our level of energy, discipline, and whether or not we aspire to higher levels of competition.

New players with adequate hand-and-eye coordination can easily learn the mechanics of pétanque. The basic rules governing how the game is played are fairly easy to remember. Most new players find it relatively manageable to pick-up a boule and throw it without too much difficulty. In fact, anyone who has been exposed to and played games that involve body mechanics similar to those used in playing pétanque, be it golf, bowling, or bocce, may already have certain “natural” advantages since their neural pathways are already wired for gauging distance, follow-through, and “reading the terrain.” These new players may also be somewhat familiar with focusing techniques they may have picked-up playing other sports, techniques that can be applied when playing pétanque.

Haphazard play, luck, and lack of skill can only get one so far, however. Many players who begin playing without having first acquired a firm foundation, through proper instruction and practice, in the proper way to hold a boule, read the terrain and point in various ways in order to adapt to the terrain may find themselves hampered by the unpredictability of their throws.

Soon enough, lack of form, accuracy and predictability quickly takes its toll and leads to frustration on the playing field. This is often due to poor habits which have been acquired early on and which were never corrected; habits which have now become ingrained. Unfortunately, bad habits are very difficult to break once they have been acquired and have become part of one’s individual style.

The debate over the importance of skill building, training and practice goes clear back to the 19th century when Sir Francis Galton wrote his, at the time, seminal book *Hereditary Genius*, positing that “superior” athletes, or most top performers for that matter, “are genetically predisposed to achieve a certain level of performance, regardless of the intensity and manner in which these athletes train to attain a certain level of excellence.” He stated that champions who demonstrate “maximal performance” do so through inherited physical and mental attributes, though he also acknowledged the importance of training and practice in order to reach high levels of performance.

Though Galton’s approach, which focuses primarily on genetic predisposition, still finds acceptance in many circles even today, his theories have been disputed by researchers in the academic fields of kinesiology, exercise science, and sport psychology. Today, the research points to an effective training/practice regimen, one that focuses on the development of physical, technical, tactical, and mental skills, not the genetic profile of the athlete, as the primary determinant of superior performance. This “holistic” approach to skill building really began in the ’60s when psychologists began to examine how top athletes acquire and develop new skills. Two researchers in particular, Paul Fitts and Michael Posner, identified the three stages that most athletes go through when developing superior skills for competition:

“Today, the research points to an effective training/practice regimen, one that focuses on the development of physical, technical, tactical, and mental skills, not the genetic profile of the athlete, as the primary determinant of superior performance.”

Philippe Geraud was born in Saint-Girons, France, and immigrated as a child, first to Canada and then to the US. He is a graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He has continued his post-graduate work in China Regional Studies at the University of Washington, and in TESL at SPU. He joined the Seattle Pétanque Club in 2005 and is now the President. He is currently focusing his studies in training, sports psychology, and team dynamics. He leads clinics and workshops throughout the Northwest sports community.

a. *Cognitive phase*: during this phase the athlete “intellectualizes the task.” During this phase activity is deliberate and involves active thought but also a considerable number of errors.

b. *Associative phase*: this is a transitional phase where movements are repeated over and over again. Repetition of the movement leads to the development of what is commonly referred to as “muscle memory.” During this phase, fewer mistakes are made.

c. *Autonomous phase*: during this phase, movements become ingrained. The body goes on “autopilot” and there is less conscious attention to the intermediary steps that constitute movement. Movement is fluid, automated and does not involve conscious deliberation.

Interestingly, according to these researchers in sport psychology and training, the bulk of skill building takes place during the cognitive and associative phase. According to recent research, skill acquisition can only take place when both our minds and bodies are placed in a position of discomfort. To be effective, training must stretch the boundaries of comfort slightly beyond our level of competence.

“...the way to get better at a skill is to force yourself to practice just beyond your limits.” Maria Popova

Yet, we often seem to get “stuck” at a certain level of performance and often fail to progress to a higher level of skillfulness despite the fact that we may have practiced often and played the game for decades. The “Deliberate Practice” model for peak performance convincingly sheds some light on the reasons for this phenomenon. The “Deliberate Practice” theory was first popularized in 1993 by a team of researchers led by K. Anders Eriksson of the University of Florida, assisted by his colleagues Watson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer. Their research concluded that simply playing a game

for a number of years, or for that matter engaging in a profession for many years, does not guarantee higher levels of proficiency. In fact, being considered an “expert” by peers, according to K. Anders Eriksson, is no guarantee of higher performance.

Inherent to the “Deliberate Practice” model is the “10-year rule,” also known as the “10,000 hours of practice” school of thought, first developed by H.A. Simon and W.G. Chase in 1973. The 10-year or 10,000-hours rule was further developed by Eriksson and his colleagues and applied to the domains of chess, music, and sports. Further research, conducted from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s supported the assertion that in order to reach the highest level of international competition, top performers must spend at least a total of 10,000 hours of practice in order to reach the preeminent levels of expertise. One study concluded that a common denominator between regional, national, and international competitors was the amount of practice each group put in with the most accomplished practitioners’ putting in close to 10,000 hours, while “good” practitioners’ averages were around 7,800 hours and for the least accomplished group about 4,600 hours.

These studies also indicated that targeted “Deliberate Practice,” conducted individually, rather than playing games where one may only get a single chance to make a particular shot from any given location, is the way to progress significantly. Perfecting a shot requires repeated efforts to figure out the mechanics of trajectory. It may take ten or more attempts to figure out the best arm swing, height, speed, and approach to get it just right. By repeating this action time and time again a player is directly involved in the process of problem-solving, gaining immediate feedback from one’s efforts thus allowing us to adjust one’s playing style to improve control and accuracy.

“...the way to get better at a skill is to force yourself to practice just beyond your limits.”

Maria Popova

Eriksson's "Deliberate Practice" theory focuses heavily on the benefits of rigorous, highly focused individualized practice. It identifies several main components required for practice to eventually lead to higher performance:

a. *Focus on technique:* This may seem self-evident but in order to be effective, this stage requires problem-solving and finding solutions to technical problems as opposed to repetitive execution of a movement or skill that one has already mastered. One of golf's greatest players, Sam Snead, once said "It is only human nature to want to practice what you can already do well, since it's a hell of a lot less work and a hell of a lot more fun." Thus repetition, with an eye towards gradual refinement of performance and difficulty best fulfills the requirements of "deliberate practice."

b. *Involve both the physical and the mental:* Developing a higher level of concentration through practice is a key goal of the process. One popular anecdote is that Tiger Woods developed his legendary mental skills through practicing meditation and focus. Tiger's father, Earl Woods, would often cough or drop his clubs at the precise moment Tiger would attempt a shot in an effort to develop Tiger's ability to focus during practice.

c. *Stay goal-oriented:* "Deliberate Practice" training works best when goals are clearly defined. Philippe Suchaud, during one of his interviews, stated that he would place boules in a circle and shoot each one until he had gone through the entire circle. Only when he had completed this routine successfully would he allow himself to leave the practice field, having achieved his goal of completing the sequence without missing a boule. Goal-focused training is a factor both in day-to-day deliberate practice and in establishing long-term targets for eventually attaining expert performance.

d. *Get constant and immediate feedback from perfor-*

mance: This phase is best achieved by having another person available to observe, preferably a coach, or a fellow-player, to provide one with immediate feedback. This can also be achieved through going over video recordings of individual practice performance right after practice. As an alternative, keeping a daily journal of practice sessions can be extremely useful. Some researchers encourage not only documenting what exercises are performed but also noting one's degree of success and adaptations for performance as well. They also recommend keeping track of thoughts and emotions during this phase of training.

e. *Be motivated and committed to improve:* Motivation and discipline are both necessary to successfully implement individual training targets. In addition, commitment paves the way towards investing the necessary amount of effort and time required to reach higher levels of expertise according the "Deliberate Practice" model.

Twenty-three years after Eriksson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer's seminal study, "Deliberate Practice" research has expanded to various areas of sport training and competition. Researchers are still trying to understand to what extent the model can be adapted comprehensively and effectively to various sports including: swimming, soccer, wrestling, gymnastics and Ironman triathlon to name a few. Though conclusions vary, there seems to be a "...consistent relationship between cumulative training and expertise" (J. Baker and B. Young) using the "Deliberate Practice" model.

Consider for a moment Thailand's approach to training: the now-deceased Queen of Thailand introduced the sport of pétanque to Thailand after she spent several years in Switzerland during the '40s. She became so enthralled with the game, which she played regularly, that once she returned Thailand she lost no time in making sure that pétanque was adopted by the police

*"It is only human nature to want to practice what you can already do well, since it's a hell of a lot less work and a hell of a lot more fun."
Sam Snead*

and the military as way to promote focus and concentration. As she was the Queen and Thailand's King and Queen are deeply revered (one can be thrown in jail for speaking ill of them) her personal enthusiasm for the game became the nation's. Pétanque is now, according to several sources, Thailand's first official sport. Most of the best players in Thailand are found in the military where service members selected for pétanque training receive an additional stipend of 1,000 Euros per month (approximately \$1,000). Most service members who have been selected practice several hours per day. Practice nearly always starts with a session of stretching and meditation. Their daily practice regimen focuses on drills that stress form, accuracy, and predictability. Mental preparation and focusing exercises form an integral and important part of the training regimen, especially amongst the top players in the military selected for international competition. This approach seems to have paid off. The Thai women's team has beaten the French women's pétanque team in the World Championship now for the seventh consecutive year.

Unfortunately, we in the US, unlike France and Thailand, lack a specialized network of training schools where rules, proper techniques, etiquette, and good habits are taught in a formalized, progressive, and uniform way. I believe this may be hurting US competitors, especially as we aspire to enter the arena of international competition. The first step is for us to be aware of our deficiencies and to come to the realization that skill development through a well-designed training program focusing on the mechanics and mental training of pétanque is the best way to increase one's levels of expertise. Once we become aware of this necessity, we must find effective strategies designed to grow our skills with excellence as our primary goal.

As I wrote this article I happened on a very interesting piece in the sports section of the Wall Street Journal.

This piece entitled "The Phenom Who Chose to Be Terrible" chronicles the career of Dominic Thiem, a 22 year old Austrian tennis player who was a rising star and ranked number two as a junior until his coach determined that Thiem's double-handed backhand was hindering him from making the kind of progress he needed to transition to a more professional level of play. Adjusting from a two-handed backhand, which affected the strength of his return, to a one-handed backhand became an immediate liability for Thiem as he began to lose to players he used to beat in previous matches. Following this change of technique, Thiem did not win a match for one and a half years. Yet despite this, altering his style from a two-handed to a one-handed stroke helped him develop the kind of backhand strength that he needed in order to progress as a major contender leading him to his first grass-court title earlier last month in Stuttgart, Germany beating world-class player, Roger Federer.

The Thiem story illustrates how making drastic corrections to one's technique and style, especially if one has become comfortable with one's particular manner of playing and especially if these have contributed to earlier successes, are often necessary if one is to make quantifiable improvements. If not corrected, these same habits can keep us from living up to our potential as champions. The path to superior performance resides in the courage to challenge our preconceived notions, commitment to training, degree of discipline, and our application of "Deliberate Practice" methodology.

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Note: I want to thank Jack McHenry for providing much needed editorial assistance in the writing of this article—Philippe



Drawing by Nan Walter

“The path to superior performance resides in the courage to challenge our preconceived notions, commitment to training, degree of discipline, and our application of ‘Deliberate Practice’ methodology.”

PARK NEAR SENEVIER
PARIS, FRANCE
2013 JUNE



Luxembourg
Paris
2013 June

Shannon Bowman

**The only losers
at the Women's
Qualifier in
beautiful Blue
Hill, Maine. Photo
courtesy of Gary
and Shirley Jones.**

