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## Lafayette Hosts National Petanque Tournament

By Sophie Braccini



Players caught on a Sunday afternoon at the Lafayette pétanque field Photo Sophie Braccini

On July 25 and 26 the Lafayette Pétanque Field will host a national championship for men, women and couples. The tournament is open only to pre-registered participants who are members of the Federation of Pétanque USA (FPUSA). It will be an ideal opportunity for curious residents to come and see champions fight it out at 480 Saint Mary's Road. Lafayette resident Mary Albright heads up the the Lamorinda Pétanque Club, the tournament organizers. "Our Club has been part of the American Federation since the beginning," says Albright who is also the vice-president of the Federation, "we have some very good players here in Lafayette and about six local teams will be in the tournament." Overall she expects about 40 teams to compete in the event.

Pétanque is a French metal bowl game that's a cousin to Bocce Ball and Lawn Ball. "Here today we had a lady who came for the first time and who is a bocce ball player," said Albright when we visited

with her on the field, "and she is already doing very well."

Usually such a tournament would attract players from all over the country, but with the recession Albright believes that the players from Florida and New York might stay home. She awaits some champion players from Portland and Palm Springs, as well as the greater Bay Area.

The FPUSA national mixed doubles teams will compete on Saturday the 25th, and men's and women's teams of two players will compete on the 26th. "The competition starts at 9 a.m.," explains Albright, "I encourage the public to come in the afternoon to see the fiercest competition." She anticipates the day to end around 5 p.m. "We will have players that compete at the international level," said Albright, "the afternoon will be an exhibition of great pétanque."

The Lafayette Pétanque Field was designed by pétanque player and landscape architect Greg Arthur along Saint Mary's Road, just south of the Community Center, with the support of the Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department. It has the reputation on the US circuit as one of the most beautiful fields, as close to a natural setting as can be. The 22 pétanque courts are covered in gravel and naturally meander around the original pear trees that were left there, which have recently begun to bear fruit again.

"The July weekend will be an opportunity for the public to see world class pétanque," says Albright, "the rest of the year, we encourage people to come anytime we are here and we can show them how to start having fun with the game."

Lamorinda Petanque Club members gather every Wednesday and Friday evening starting at 6:30 p.m. and on Sunday afternoons, starting around 1 p.m. until dark (this schedule may vary – please call the contacts referenced below to confirm). Many bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the friendly atmosphere around the tables under the trees as much as on the sand, playing more or less competitively, depending on their style.

Pétanque being a French game, the French Consul in San Francisco was invited to come to the competition. Pierre-François Mourier will unfortunately be on vacation in France at the time of the tournament, but Jacques de Noray, Vice Consul in charge of press and communication, has promised he will be there to support the Lamorindans.

For more information and to confirm the regular game schedule, call either Mary Albright at 283-

2682 or Brian Murphy at 689-0293. Also check out [www.lamorindapetanque.com](http://www.lamorindapetanque.com).

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