

The local scene

B O C C E !

By Lisa Marie Petersen
Staff Writer

Connie Miller took her turn on the bocce court. Left hand on her knee, her right holding the ball, Miller, 66, looked at the "pallino," a small target ball. Then she tossed her ball down the 64-foot clay court and it stopped — within inches of her target.

"A beauty, Connie," said Sue Mollo, 59, fellow teammate on Fairfield Monument of Stamford.

"Now watch them knock it out," Mollo said of the opposing team, Vespucci of Danbury.

And they did. One Vespucci player chucked a ball toward the target and knocked Miller's ball clear from the target ball.

"That's what happens in bocce," Mollo said.

The same frustrating scene was happening on the other seven bocce courts at Scalzi Park yesterday as 160 bocce players competed in the quarter-finals of the second annual Stamford Open Bocce League Tournament, sponsored by Medaglio d'Oro Coffee Company Inc.

The eight winning teams will compete today in semifinals and finals that begin at 9 a.m. They are John's Best of Stamford, Sons of Italy of Derby, Italian-American Fraternity of New Haven, Lombardi Roofing of Stamford, Twin Ridge Landscaping of Stamford, Settefratse Club of Stamford, Minturnese Club of Stamford, and Montetigre of Norwalk.

Bocce is a traditional Italian game played in a long court with raised wooden sides. In a cross between bowling and marbles, a competitor tries to roll a heavy ball, which is slightly larger than a baseball, as close as possible to a smaller target ball placed on the court.

If a ball is rolled too close to the target for the comfort of the other team's members, they try to knock the opposition's ball away from the target — if they can hit it.

Players interviewed yesterday agreed that the teams most likely to win would be those with the most experienced players. That is why members of Derby's Sons of Italy, which took first place last year in Stamford, practices no matter what the outside elements are like.

"We practice every day," said Michael D'Ambrosio, 46, who has been playing the game for nearly 30 years. "Even in the snow," said his teammate, Antonio Scapellato, 42, an equally experienced player.

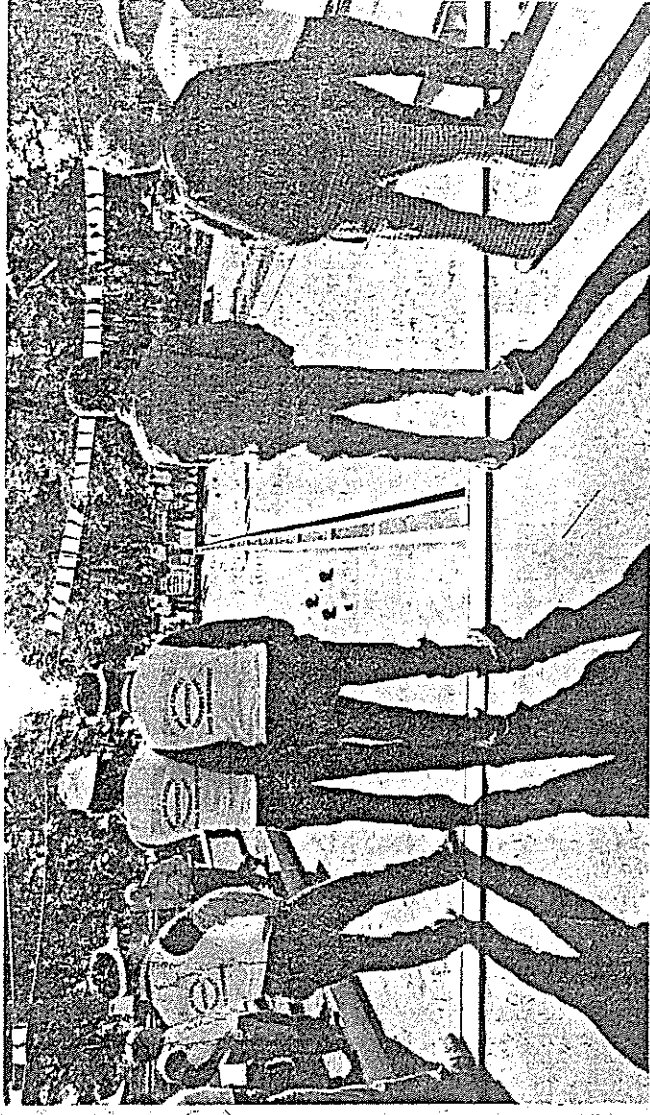
The Raiders, a Stamford women's team that has played together for two years, thought they'd join the open competition yesterday because they recently took third place in their division in Stamford. But they found that two years was not enough to match the 16 years of their competitors, T. & R. Wholesale of Massachusetts.

"I think the courts were too fast," said Jean Arena.

Said teammate Margie Dedonato, "I think they were just better than us."



Above, Carmina Pirolozzi of Stamford throws the ball in tournament action yesterday at Scalzi Park, Stamford. The semi-finals and finals of the Second Annual Stamford Open Bocce League Tournament are today.



Staff photos
by Dru Nadler