

# INTRODUCTION TO BOCCIA



Cerebral Palsy  
ALLIANCE

*Formerly known as The Spastic Centre*



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# What is Boccia?

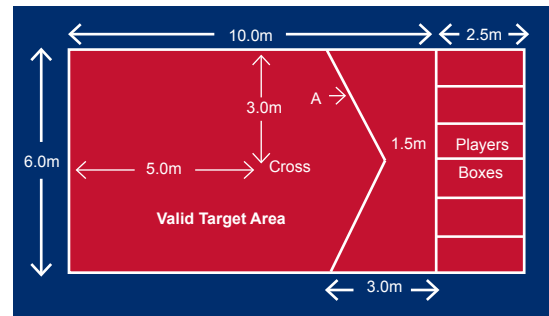
## Boccia is:

- Similar to Bocce or lawn bowls
- A Paralympic sport, designed for people with a disability
- Played by people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities, both at recreational and competitive levels
- A game of skill and accuracy with the emphasis being on accuracy not on strength
- Easy to learn, but hard to master
- One of the few sports in the world where male and female athletes can compete together
- An international sport with an international governing body (IBC – International Boccia Committee)
- Anyone of any age can play Boccia.



## Court

- A typical Boccia court is 12.5 m long (10 m playing surface) by 6 m wide
- Players boxes are 2.5 m long x 1 m wide
- The court layout can be marked out on any flat hard indoor surface.



## Choosing Equipment

### Wheelchairs

- As boccia is a 'wheelchair sport', it is compulsory for the athlete to be seated in a chair
- The chair should be an appropriate size for the athlete
- The footplates should not interfere with the delivery or the positioning of the ramp (if used).

### Boccia Balls

1 set comprises:

- 6 x blue balls
- 6 x red balls
- 1 x Jack (white ball)

Boccia balls are available in hard or soft sets.



## Ramps and Other Assisting Devices

### Ramps

- For players who have functional restrictions that do not allow them to throw or kick the ball
- A ramp assistant is considered part of the equipment. As such, the athlete must have good communication skills with their ramp assistant.
- Remember that all equipment used by players and their assistant must fit into the playing box area.



### Head Pointer

- A device enabling BC3 player to make contact with the ball to propel it down the ramp
- A mouth pointer or hand pointer may also be used.





# The Game of Boccia

- Played between two individuals, pairs or teams
- Played on an indoor court, ideally a hard flat surface
- Singles and pairs play 4 ends
- Teams (3 players) play 6 ends
- A referee controls the game and starts with a flip of the coin
- A white ball called the 'jack' is the target ball
- One team uses 6 red balls and the other team uses 6 blue balls
- The object is to get as many of your coloured balls closer to the jack than the other team's coloured balls
- Players are able to propel the ball into court by any physical means, as long as they have complete control of the ball at the moment of release
- In order for a side to win the game they must have the highest score at the finish of 4 ends (in a team game in 6 ends)
- Players are classified to create an even contest.



## Basic Strategy

- Positioning of the wheelchair to benefit shot
- Place the jack where it will give the serving athlete the biggest advantage
- Place first coloured ball in front of jack
- **Knock-up shot:** To push one of your own balls closer to the jack
- **Throw-off:** If there is a risk of knocking an opponent's ball closer to the jack
- **Smash:** To scatter the head, or to take either the opponent's ball, or the jack ball, off the court
- **Blocking:** Strategically placing balls to stop opponent scoring more points.

# Classification

## BC 1

- Athlete has Cerebral Palsy with locomotor dysfunction affecting the whole body.
- Usually unable to propel a manual wheelchair.
- Has difficulty with grasp and release motions when throwing the ball.
- Has no functional use of their legs.
- Players may be assisted by one sport assistant.

## BC 2

- Athlete has Cerebral Palsy with locomotor dysfunction affecting the whole body.
- Has trunk control, but this involves limb movement.
- Able to hand- or foot-push a wheelchair.
- Possibly be able to stand/walk, but is very unstable.
- Players are not eligible for assistance by an aide.

## BC3

- Athlete may have Cerebral Palsy or NON-Cerebral origin or Degenerative Origin.
- Athlete has very severe locomotor dysfunction in all four limbs.
- Has insufficient strength and co-ordination to grasp and release a Boccia ball and/or to propel it consistently past the V-line onto the court.
- Each player has an assistant to enable them to control the physical movement of the ramp.

## BC4 or "Open Class"

- Athlete has severe locomotor dysfunction in all four limbs, of NON Cerebral Origin or Degenerative Cerebral origin.
- Demonstrates poor strength or severe lack of coordination combined with poor dynamic trunk control.
- Demonstrates sufficient dexterity to manipulate and throw a Boccia ball consistently past the V-line onto the court.
- Poor control of grasp and release will be evident.
- May be able to propel wheelchair.
- Players are not eligible for assistance by an aide.



*Note:* For more information refer to the Australian Paralympic Committee website [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)

# Why Boccia is Important for people with a disability

- To experience and learn from a real sporting challenge
- Opportunity to develop skills, social networks and self esteem
- To play an elite sport, think and act as elite sports people
- Opportunities to travel and play representative sport
- To play in a team atmosphere
- To receive community recognition.





# Key Definitions

## Jack Ball

The white target ball

## Match

Competition between two sides when a specified number of ends are played.

## End

One section of a match when the jack ball and all the red and blue balls have been played by both sides.

## Violation

Any action committed by a player, assistant or coach, which is against the rules of the game.

## Dead Ball

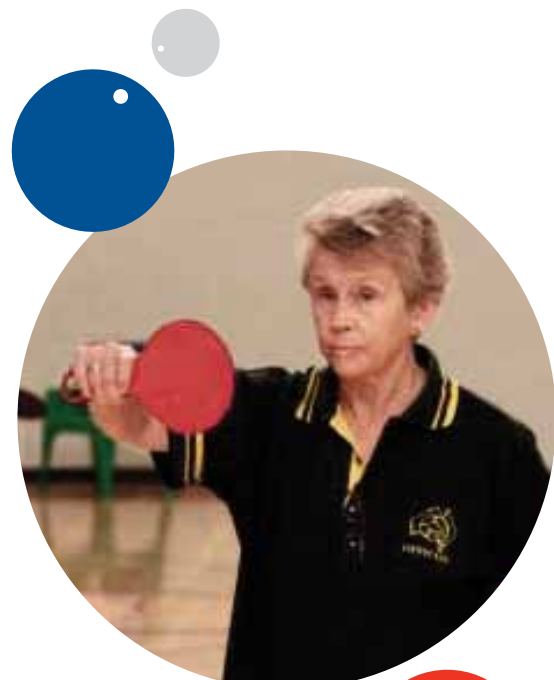
A ball which has gone out of court, a ball removed by the referee following a violation, or a ball not played when the side's time has expired.

## V-line

The line that the jack ball must cross over to be in play.

## Paddle

A red/blue indicator for the referee to show the players which colour is to play the next ball.



# Key Rules

- Players must remain in their designated throwing box throughout the match. However, referee permission can be requested to leave their box in certain situations.
- The player, assistant and all material used must remain within the throwing box at time of releasing the ball.
- The jack must be thrown into the valid area of the court. Otherwise the jack is fouled and will then be thrown by the other player/team.
- The referee must indicate which colour is to play before the player prepares to release the ball.
- Ramp assistants must not turn into the court to view play during an end.
- Ramp assistants must not perform any action without the player instructing them to.
- Players must instruct their ramp assistant to break the horizontal plane of the ramp between shots.
- Players must be the last person to have physical contact with the ball before it is released.
- A penalty of two extra balls is rewarded to the opposing side for some violations.
- Full set of international rules are available [www.cpisra.org](http://www.cpisra.org)

# What Boccia Means to the Players



**Sheila**

'I love going away as a team. I want to see my team go to the Paralympics.'

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**Monique**

'I like being part of a team.'

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**Sharon**

'I like that there is potential to represent my country at the Paralympics.'

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**Ange**

'When I first discovered Boccia, I was 14 years old. I played the game for school sport. One of my friend's mother introduced it to me, then I realised that I can represent Australia by playing Boccia and I can win gold medals at nationals.'

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**Kylie**

'I like to be considered an athlete not a disabled person and competing with my friends in the state. It also gives me a goal the same as everybody else.'

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**Barry**

'As an athlete, Boccia means a lot to me in many ways. Being a good honest team member and being able to play my game well and fit in with the rest of the team. Boccia is my favourite sport. I learn a lot from my team players and coaches, working as one unit. I am happy playing Boccia with my team mates.'

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**Terry**

'I am passionate about Boccia. It is great.'

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**Cally**

'I love representing my state and country in a big competition.'

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# Club Level Boccia

Boccia is played at recreational and competition level at clubs all over the state. Local Boccia clubs can offer the following opportunities:

- Local people to provide initial orientation and entry level games
- Regular training opportunities to develop skills and friendships
- Access to equipment and advice
- The opportunity to feel part of a team and to represent the club at the Inter Club Championships
- Develop advanced Boccia skills to enter state competitions and stake selection teams.

Contact Boccia NSW to find out if a club is operating in your local area. Details inside front cover.



# State & National Levels

## State Level

- NSW State League and NSW State Title are held every year prior to Nationals. Both competitions are part of the selection process from which the NSW team is selected. This team then competes in the National Championships.

## National Level

- National Championships are held annually with all states and territories competing.
- The national representative team competes at all international competitions. This includes the World Cup, Regional Games and the Paralympics.

*Top right: NSW athletes*

*Bottom right: Victorian athlete*



# High Performance Training

Some recreational athletes may want to play boccia at the elite level of competition. Some key attributes would include:

- Commit to a minimum of 4 days of training a week
- Train up to 40 weeks of the year (including gym sessions, sports psychology, team building, promotional work, etc.)
- Major involvement in personal and team fundraising
- Look after your body and maintain fitness levels
- Have an elite athlete diet with a healthy balance of all food groups
- Set reasonable short term and long term goals, in consultation with an experienced coach
- Be subject to quarterly performance appraisals from NSW coaches.

Boccia NSW has a High Performance Training Squad and a Junior Training Squad. Inclusion is by invitation from the Boccia NSW coaching team.



# Playing for Australia

- Athletes have represented Australia since the Seoul Paralympics in 1988.
- An Australian team has been present in World Championships, World Cups, and regional events such as the Fespics games in Kuala Lumpur in 2006, and the Asia Pacific Games in Hong Kong 2009.
- Australia is invited annually to compete in the New Zealand National Championships.
- Australia aims to qualify a team for each Paralympics.

## Paralympics

- Paralympics is the equivalent of the Olympic Games for elite athletes with disabilities. The first Paralympic Games was in Rome in 1960.
- Australia has had a Boccia team in the 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000 Paralympics.
- The Australian Paralympic highlight to date is a bronze medal in the BC3 pairs competition - Atlanta 1996.
- Australia in the Sydney 2000 Paralympics and a team ranking of 9th and a highest individual ranking of 5th.



# What Boccia Can Give to You

- A chance to be part of a team
- Opportunity to travel
- Make new friends and socialise on a recreational level
- A chance for an athlete to realise a dream-come-true of competing for their country
- Provide an opportunity for social inclusion
- Give opportunities for people to express themselves and their talents through playing sport
- A challenge to aspire to be an elite athlete.





