

THE GAME OF HORNUSSEN

A historical game native to Switzerland for about 400 years, the sport is a cross between golf, tennis and baseball. The game involves swinging a whip-like pole with a wooden head and hitting a rubber puck into a field where an opposing team tries to deflect the puck with large paddles.

History

This sport seems to have a varying number of origins, but the general consensus of the game's heritage is that it grew out of similar forms of the sport which were widespread amongst northern regions of the Alps during the middle Ages. The more modern version of the sport is thought to have developed out of the 17th century. This evolution of the sport stemmed from shepherds wanting to play a game that brought people together, built camaraderie and could be played in a large field. The earliest recording of the sport dates back to 1625 describing a sport disrupting observance of the Sabbath. Since then the game has grown, and in 1902 the Swiss "Hornussen" Federation was founded. Fast forward to the present and the sport is still quite popular in Switzerland. Also, as of 2012 the International "Hornussen" Federation was founded to help promote the sport internationally.

The Game

As with most sports, the game looks complicated to the average passer-by but it is actually quite simple to understand. The game consists of two teams: one team attacks and one defends, and then they switch. One at a time a person from the attacking team swings a long whip-like pole, called the "Stecken", with a wooden head the "Träf" around their body and tries to make contact with a small rubber object, the "Hornuss" or hornet, so named because of the sound it makes flying through the air. The "Hornuss" is propped up on an incline rail on the ground, the "Bock". The bock is a system of two rails, essentially functioning as a curved metal ramp, that is kept close to the ground and is used to help launch the projectile. The aim of the attacker is to hit the rubber ball as hard and as far as possible, while the aim of their opponents, who are placed 100 metres away in a field, is to try and stop the "Hornuss" from hitting the ground.





The striker swings the whip and hits the "Hornuss" to send it to the field at a speed of up to 300 kilometers per hour. With a good hit, the "Nouss" can reach a height of 50 meters over ground. There is penalization for foul hits. All the defenders have large catch boards called "Schindel" which are made of wood or synthetic material and weigh approximately 4 kg. The board is trapezoidal, 56cm wide near the handle and 64 cm at the upper end.

The game is most prominently played in the German-speaking side of Switzerland.

Rules, Regulation and game play

- There are two teams of 16-18 players
- The entire game is split into 4 quarters, giving each team the chance to attack and defend twice
- The home team attacks first while the away team defends
- The field is 100 metres from the attackers, in between the field attackers zone" and the defenders is called the "dead"
- The field is 180 metres long and is 8 metres wide at the front, while 12 metres wide at the back
- If the "hornuss" hits the ground without a defender touching it with their paddles, the point will go to the attacking team
- If the "hornuss" reaches the field, the attacker gets 1 point, and for every 10 successive metres the attacker gains another e.g. if the "Hornuss" travels 160 metres, the attacker gets 16-points)
- The "Stecken" (whip-like pole) is 2.3 - 2.6 metres long



Risk

Security advice: Be aware that Hornussen has been invented by really tough farmers of the Swiss mountains, so it's only to be played by tough people on their own risk. Playing the game of Hornussen you'll risk: blisters, haematomas, swellings, black eyes, torn bands, fractures, broken teeth, shaken brains, unconsciousness and if you don't mind the sun: sunburn, headache, dizziness and a lot more.