

A Review of the Development History of Bocce in Chinese Universities

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Abstract: This paper uses historical analysis and literature review methods to sort out the development of bocce in Chinese universities from 1984 to 2021. The research shows that universities are the birthplace of bocce in China (with Beijing Sport University being the first), and its development has been influenced by policies, Olympic strategies, and social demands. It has gone through three stages: rapid development (1984-1992), slow development (1993-2008), and steady growth (2009-2021). Through international competition exchanges (such as winning the world championship for the first time in 1992), curriculum construction, and talent cultivation, universities have established a leading position in the development of bocce in China. However, due to its non-Olympic status, the problem of uneven popularization is prominent.

Keywords: University; Dartball; Historical Development.

1. Introduction

Bocce was introduced to China in 1984 [1]. Beijing Sport University was the first to start the sport, and colleges and universities have become the main front for the spread and development of bocce in China, playing a significant role in the popularization and development of the sport in the country. From a historical perspective, the development of bocce in Chinese universities has not effectively responded to the transformation of national sports policies. From the current situation, there are still some problems in the teaching and competition system construction of bocce in universities, which restricts the high-quality development of bocce in universities. In February 1986, the former State Sports Commission issued a notice on the popularization of bocce: it required all regions, provinces, and cities to pilot the sport in areas and schools with conditions first, and then gradually promote it. After years of development, bocce has been carried out in provinces, cities, industry sports associations, universities, and higher vocational schools, forming several advantageous regions, including Beijing Sport University, Xi'an Sports University, Zhejiang Industry and Trade College, Hebei Normal University, Shanghai Maritime University, Henan Polytechnic University, Beijing Institute of Technology and Vocational Education, Dalian Jiaotong University, and Jiaxing Vocational College, etc. [2]

2. Research Object and Methods

2.1. Research Object

This study takes the historical picture and current situation of bocce development in Chinese universities as the research object. By drawing on the theories of school physical education and history and other related disciplines, and through interviews and the collection and organization of text documents, it summarizes and sorts out the historical trajectory of bocce development in Chinese universities.

2.2. Research Methods

2.2.1. Literature Review Method

This paper uses "bocce", "university sports", "physical

education", "history", etc. as keywords to search for papers and monographs in databases such as CNKI, Wanfang, and SCI, and collects relevant regulations, policies, and documents from text materials, the official website of the Chinese Bocce Association, and the WeChat public account of the Gao Wei Bocce Museum, etc., to sort out the historical development of bocce in Chinese universities and provide support for related research.

2.2.2. Historical Analysis Method

This paper uses a dialectical perspective to analyze different social phenomena. It sorts out the development history of bocce in Chinese universities, traces its roots, and clarifies the development process of bocce, thereby studying its reform path.

2.2.3. Interview Method

On April 14, 2021, a telephone interview was conducted with Professor Gao Wei, the former head coach of the national bocce team and a professor at Xi'an Sports University. On August 5, 2021, an interview was conducted with Teacher Wu Lichun from Beijing Sport University in Hebi. In addition, interviews were conducted with teachers Wang, Luo, and Geng. The interviews aimed to understand the origin, development, and trends of bocce, and the interview materials were sorted out.

3. Historical Periods and Characteristics

The sport of bocce was introduced to China in 1984, during the period of reform and opening up. At that time, China's national interests were centered on economic construction, developing productive forces, and achieving socialist modernization. The General Administration of Sport of China (GAS) first promoted bocce in sports colleges, successfully leveraging their advantages in research, teaching, and training. Since then, bocce has taken root and flourished in Chinese universities, cultivating a number of outstanding bocce talents. However, the development of bocce in universities has not been smooth, being influenced by factors such as national policies, funds, and social environment. Following the development trajectory of bocce in universities, it can be

divided into three historical periods as follows.

3.1. Rapid Development Period: Policy-driven and the Beginning of Internationalization

After the founding of the People's Republic of China and the decision to implement reform and opening up, the sports industry developed comprehensively. China has always been committed to developing relations with the international sports community, and international exchanges have become increasingly frequent. Bocce was introduced to Chinese universities under this background, thus opening a "new window" for international exchanges in bocce in universities.

International Exchange Event (1): In 1984, at the invitation of the State Sports Commission, Italian experts came to China to teach the sport of bocce. They gave systematic lectures on bocce at the first bocce training class held by Beijing Institute of Physical Education (now Beijing Sport University) and assisted the institute in building the first bocce court in China. A total of 22 people, including ball game teachers from Beijing Sport University and Xi'an Institute of Physical Education, and officials from the training departments of the sports commissions of Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, participated in the training. [1]

International Exchange Event (2): From 1985 to 1987, the National Federation of France led by President Baggio visited China for three consecutive years and held friendly boules matches with representative teams from Chinese universities. In May 1985, the visiting team played friendly matches with the teams from Xi'an Institute of Physical Education and Beijing Institute of Physical Education (now Beijing Sport University). In October 1986, Xi'an Institute of Physical Education won the friendly match against the visiting team with a score of 2:1, achieving its first victory in an international competition. In 1987, the visiting team came to China for a visit and competition. The representative teams from Sichuan and Xi'an Institutes of Physical Education both defeated the visiting team, causing a stir. This indicates that while the sport of boules is continuously spreading in China, the level of the sport has also greatly improved. In 2003, there were 6 institutions of higher learning in the Chinese mainland that carried out boules sports and formed teams to participate in domestic and international competitions. [3]

When Yin Weizu, the vice chairman of the Chinese Judo Association, visited Italy, Switzerland and other places, Mr. Baggio of the International Judo Federation mentioned to him, "In such a large country as China, promoting judo is of great significance. We have witnessed the hope of judo's rise all over the world here." [4] The International Judo Federation is actively striving to include this event in the Olympic competition program. The exchanges between various countries in this regard are becoming increasingly frequent. Looking at this period, the exchanges between university judo sports and international judo sports were frequent, laying a foundation for the development of university judo sports in our country.

3.2. Slow Development Period: Resource Compression under the Olympic Strategy

Bocce and other non-Olympic sports, relying on universities, developed through school-run forms. However, due to decentralized management, complex team personnel, uneven technical levels, a lack of high-level coaching teams, and the absence of long-term and systematic training, only concentrated training was conducted during "competition

years," making it difficult to achieve greater breakthroughs in performance. This led to the waste of many talented athletes. In 1995, bocce underwent comprehensive reforms, and the funding changed from partial self-sufficiency to full self-sufficiency [5], which had a certain impact on university bocce teams.

Since 2002, Beijing Sport University has undertaken 97 Olympic research projects for the General Administration of Sport of China [6]. In an interview with Wu Lichun, a teacher from Beijing Sport University, it was learned that as the origin of the non-Olympic sport of bocce in universities, Beijing Sport University has many non-Olympic sports programs. However, due to the large investment in Olympic sports, it is difficult to give equal attention to non-Olympic sports such as bocce. The participation of the university's team in bocce competitions and activities has gradually decreased, but they still form teams to participate in major events. During this period, the development of bocce in universities was slow as a whole, affected by relevant policies and funds.

3.3. Steady Growth Period: Empowerment from the Integration of Sports and Education and National Fitness

The Beijing Olympics sparked a new wave of sports enthusiasm across the country, making sports a focus of attention and a hot topic in society. Taking advantage of the successful hosting of the 2008 Olympics, efforts were made to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development of competitive sports in the post-Olympic era [7]. The General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Strengthening School Sports and Promoting the Comprehensive Development of Students' Physical and Mental Health" and the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Sports in the New Era", as well as the "Healthy China 2030" Plan Outline. The "National Physical Education Curriculum Standards" and other documents have put forward clear requirements for school physical education classes and extracurricular exercise. Additionally, 2010 was not only the closing year of the "11th Five-Year Plan", but also the beginning of the "12th Five-Year Plan". The State Council specially set up the "National Fitness Day" to commemorate the successful hosting of the Beijing Olympics. Against this backdrop, this period is defined as a stable and upward phase. Only when the whole nation participates in sports competitions can it reflect the comprehensive strength of the country from the side. The game of bocce the National Fitness Regulations, and colleges and universities actively participate in and hold national fitness activities. For instance, Xi'an Sports University sent teams to participate in the 2010 National Bocce Fitness Exhibition Conference in Yanggu and Quzhou. 2021 was a unique year, as the first National Fitness Bocce Exhibition Conference, the National Bocce Championship, and the National Bocce Elite Competition were held together. Among them, Zhejiang Industry & Trade Polytechnic and Xi'an Sports University achieved relatively good results. The second time the National Fitness Bocce Exhibition Conference and the National Championship were held together was in 2013, with 300 athletes participating and over 500 matches held. Wang Yang from Xi'an Sports University and Cheng Liangying from Beijing Sport University both achieved excellent results. Zhejiang Industry & Trade Polytechnic performed particularly well, winning 5 gold medals and 3 silver medals. The number of people watching

the National Fitness Bocce Exhibition Activity reached over 10,000 in 2017 when it was held by Henan Polytechnic University. This was the second time Henan Polytechnic University held the National Exhibition Conference. The first time was in 2009, when the national metal bocce team and the French CRO club delegation visited Henan Polytechnic University for exchange. International Bocce Federation representative to China, President of the French Small Metal Bocce Federation, Bernard, President of the French CRO Metal Bocce Club, Michel, and the national team coach, Gao Wei, all attended the welcoming ceremony. The development of these two National Fitness Exhibition Activities could not have been possible without the strong support of colleges and universities. Wang Liwei, the director of the Small Ball Center of the National Sports Administration, said: The establishment of the China Throwing Sports Academy is of milestone significance for the development of the throwing sport. Since the throwing sport entered China over 30 years ago, it has won multiple world championships. Now, it needs to develop towards a higher level of comprehensive development and needs to cultivate more coaches, referees, and multi-skilled talents for the sport. [8]

4. Analysis of Major Historical Events

4.1. International Exchange Events

Since 1984, the sport of discus throwing in China has originated from universities, with university teachers and students representing the country to compete both domestically and internationally, achieving outstanding athletic results. In 1992, Lu Feng and Gao Wei from Xi'an Sports University, among others, as members of the Chinese national team, participated in the first World Men's Discus Throwing Club Championship and won the championship. According to the available data, this was the first world championship achieved by the Chinese university team and Chinese discus throwers in this event. The then International Discus Federation President, Mr. Baggio, commented on the Chinese team's winning of the championship, saying, "The spirit of China's team's active participation in sports is unforgettable. Thank you to this rising star of China. It shows that as long as sports are perfectly integrated into the constituent factors and social values of the sport, people can achieve remarkable results in a short period of time." [9] Among them, from 2009 to 2021, multiple firsts were created, particularly noting that Cheng Xiping, a graduate of Beijing Sport University, is currently employed at China Petrochemical Corporation's Zhenhai Refinery. She won the championship in major international and domestic competitions from 2009 to 2010, becoming the first athlete in China to achieve a grand slam in the single-person continuous throwing event. In 2012, she won the highest award of the World Discus Throwing Sports Federation, the Oscar Award, which was awarded for the first time by the World Discus Throwing Sports Federation. The award-winning athlete was all those who have made outstanding contributions and achieved excellent results for international discus throwing in the past 10 years. She was the only Chinese athlete among the award winners. It is known that Cheng Xiping studied under Teacher Wu Lichun from Beijing Sport University. The excellent athletic achievements she has obtained are closely related to the teaching, training and research model of universities, further demonstrating the scientific and systematic nature of universities in talent cultivation. In

addition, multiple "firsts" in the sport of discus throwing in China were created by university teachers and students, such as Yang Ying from Xi'an Sports University winning the first gold medal for China in the women's accurate discus throwing competition; Ma Dong from Xi'an Sports University achieving a bronze medal in the men's World Championships, achieving a breakthrough in medals; Wang Mei from Zhejiang Trade Vocational and Technical College is the first female discus thrower in China to obtain an international referee certificate; Chang Wen from Xi'an Sports University and her teammates won the first gold medal in the Asian Games for the Chinese small metal discus throwing event; Su Wen Tao from Xi'an Sports University achieved the first bronze medal in the men's World Championships in the accurate throwing event; the French discus team held the first exchange activity with the national team at Jiaxing Technical College. These fully demonstrate the importance of universities in the cultivation of outstanding discus throwers.

4.2. Notable Events

2018 World Championships. Ten pétanque teachers from Xi'an Sports University, Shanghai Maritime University, Hebei Normal University of Physical Education, Zhejiang Industry & Trade Polytechnic College, and Shenyang Sports University held a meeting to discuss the preparations for the 2018 Women's and Youth Metal Pétanque World Championships. They also set up training stations across the country, including Xi'an Sports University Station and Henan Polytechnic University Station, among others, totaling six stations. Young coaches such as Suo Wentao from Xi'an Sports University, Fan Shan from Zhejiang Industry & Trade Polytechnic College, and Wang Yan from Henan Polytechnic University were appointed. The number of trainees reached about 100, making it the largest-scale event in recent years.

Pétanque Competition of the Second National Youth Games (Ice Hockey and Pétanque All-Around Event). College teams performed exceptionally well, such as Henan Polytechnic University and Beijing Sport University.

The 2021 National Games. To facilitate the inclusion of discus throwing in the National Games, in 2020, member units of the Chinese Discus Association responded to the policy call and launched the "Promoting Fitness for All and Contributing to Comprehensive Well-being" discus throwing activities. Various universities carried out the "I'll Participate in the National Games" series of activities, including Xi'an Sports University and Henan Polytechnic University, etc. They deeply implemented the fitness for all plan and contributed to the inclusion of discus throwing in the National Games. The 14th National Games' discus throwing finals for the general public was successfully held in 2021. University teachers and students achieved excellent results, such as Wang Yang from Xi'an Sports University winning the gold medal in the single-person continuous throw and Wang Yan from Henan Polytechnic University winning the bronze medal in the single-person continuous throw. Discus throwing first entered the National Games, and the achievements of university teachers and students were remarkable, indicating that discus throwing in the post-National Games era will accelerate its popularization, development and improvement in universities.

5. Conclusion

Discus throwing originated in universities and was introduced to China in 1984. According to different social

backgrounds and policies, China's university discus throwing has been divided into the following three periods:

The Rapid Development Period (1984 - 1992), during which it developed rapidly with the spring breeze of reform and opening up. During this period, most outstanding discus throwers emerged in universities and represented the country to compete in international competitions, achieving remarkable results and breaking Chinese discus throwing records multiple times, achieving a breakthrough in medals;

The Slowly Rising Period (1993 - 2008), during which university discus throwing was affected by policies, bidding, organizing and hosting Olympic projects. The sports performance fluctuated, and the popularization in universities would decrease somewhat. However, overall, it still showed an upward trend;

The Stable Rising Period (2009 - 2021). This period was not only influenced by the post-Olympic era but also by policies such as fitness for all and the integration of sports and education. China's sports industry developed rapidly during this period. The main force of discus throwing in China was universities, and the overall trend was a stable upward movement.

Overall, the Olympic strategy led to a shortage of resources for non-Olympic projects, and university discus throwing showed an elite tendency of "strong in competition, weak in popularization". The Chinese Discus Association and the Chinese Discus Sports College could initiate the establishment of a university sports association branch to lead the overall design of university discus throwing affairs, plan and promote the development of university discus throwing. Strengthen the value recognition of discus throwing by the school sports department, lead with the idea of integrating sports and education, improve the campus competition

system, and promote the "one school, one brand" construction.

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