

The Italian traditional games of fiolet and rebatta
Geert Nijs, France

The game of fiolet

Since time and age a club and ball game called 'fiolet' is played in the Italian region of the 'Valle d'Aosta', a very mountainous region surrounded by the highest peaks of the Alps in the extreme north-west of Italy, bordered by France and Switzerland.

In this game a player hits a ball with a club as far as possible into the field. A real 'longest drive contest'. The main differences between fiolet and colf, crosse, golf and mail is that the ball is not hit from the ground but in the air. There is no specific target whereto the ball has to be hit. It is only the distance that counts.



The equipment used in the game of fiolet: the pira (tee), the fiolet (flattened oval ball) and the eima or mas(s)ette or maciocca (club with the half oval club head). (Photo: www.comune.oyace.ao.it)

The fiolet (ball) used to be a pebble stone with one flat side. Today, the fiolet used in this game is made of boxwood covered with nails to achieve a weight of 35-40 grams. The ball has an ovoid form of which one side is flat (half oval form). Nowadays, fiolets are also made of aluminium. The eima or mas(s)ette) or maciocca (club) is 40 to 70 centimetres long. At one end the club is somewhat thicker, or equipped with a square or cylindrical or half cylindrical bulge. The pira (tee) is a smooth stone placed on a piece of cement of approximately 25 centimetres. The playing field is a triangular stretch of grass between 150 and 200 meters. The field is divided from the tee on in stretches of 15 meters.



The triangular field in which the player hits the ball is up to 200 meters long. The ball should stay within the side lines of the triangle. (Photo: www.deepfun.com)

The game is played between two teams of several players or individually. Players try to hit the ball (in turn) into the field. They place the ball with the flat part up on the pira. With the thick end of the club they give a smart rap on the end of the ball. The ball then spins upward. The player then tries to hit the airborne ball one handed with his club as far as possible into the field. Depending on the 15 meter stretch where the ball came down the player receives a number of points. The further he hits the ball the more points he receives. When all players have had their 10 or more attempts (depending on the kind of tournament) all points of the teams or the individuals are counted together to decide which team or which player is the winner.



It is of utmost importance to rap the ball from the tee into the exact height and direction to be able to hit the ball with full power into the field. (Photo: www.figest.it)

Today there are roughly 450 active fiolet players. The game is played mainly in spring. The most important meetings is the team 'Spring Championships' starting around the second week of March and finishing at the beginning of May. The main individual tournaments are the 'Baton d'Or' championship held on the first of May and another single contest held in mid-May.



The winning team of the Baton d'Or championship in 1927. The fiolet players made use of clubs with a broader end on one side and not the clubs with cylindrical or half cylindrical club heads. (Photo: www.territorioscuola.com)

On the 17th July 1924 the first association, together with some other traditional games, was founded (Federaxon Esports de Nohtra Tera). This federation is again part of the nationwide 'Federazione Giochie e Sport Tradizionale'. Today the final of the championship is played in Brissogne on the first of May. The winner receives the 'Baton d'Or'. The game is played during spring after the snow has melted and before the weeds start to grow and the cattle (bovines) enter the meadows again. A certain Mr Germano Cheillon d'Allein who was born in 1873 explained: "I played fiolet already during the last years of the previous (19th) century, not only with my friends but also with much older players".

The game of 'la rebatta'

A comparable game, 'la rebatta' is played in the same region of the Valley of Aosta, be it in different communities. Also in this game players try to hit an airborne ball with a club as far as possible into the field. In this game use is made of a boxwood ball (rebatta) with a diameter of 28-30

millimeters, weighing 25-40 grams. The ball is covered with iron or copper nails and painted white to make it more easily found in the field. Nowadays these balls are also made of aluminium (provided with dimples)



The 'tee' as used in the rebatta game. The player raps on the small black part of the lever. The aluminium ball (with some dimples) will then spin upward to be hit by the player. (Photo: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-blrLInYGzcl>)

The ball is placed on a small wooden lever in the shape of a pipe. In the head of the pipe (pipa or fioletta) a small hollow is made in which the rebatta is placed. When the player hits on the other end of the pipe, the ball will jump up. The player then tries to hit the airborne ball with his baton (club), as far away as possible into the field. The club is 100 – 140 centimetres long, made of ash wood and has a cylindrical part at one end (matchocca or masseta).



Contrary to the comparable game of fiolet, the 'baton' is held with two hands in a reversed (left hand above right hand) baseball grip. The left arm is straight, the right elbow is held close to the body. (Photo: <http://www.scuole.vda.it>)

The baton is held with both hands in a kind of reversed baseball grip. It is interesting to see that the left arm is straight and the other bent arm is

not 'flying' but hold close to the body. It really looks like a rather flat golf swing. The playing field is a triangular stretch of grass up to 250 meters long and approximately 60 meters wide at the end. This field is divided in straight line stretches of 15 meters. Each stretch stands for a certain number of points. The farther you hit (straight) the rebatta the more points you earn. Tournaments are played with teams with 5 players each. Every player has 20 attempts, the so called batua or tsachà. At the end of the tournaments all points per team are added together and the team who gained most points is the winner.



Contrary to the golf swing, the feet are much further apart. Because there is not a small specific target, the rebatta swing is far more powerful to hit the ball as far as possible. (Photo: <http://www.figest.it>)

The tournaments, both team and individual contests, are held during spring after the snow has melted and before the cattle are taken over the meadows and in the autumn, when the cattle have returned to their cowsheds. This sport has approximately 400 players divided over 14 sports clubs. These clubs are members of the 'Federaxon Esport de Nohtra Tera', like the fiolet players.



The centre of the Federaxon Esport de Nohtra Tera of which both fiolet and rebatta are members. (Photo: www.territorioscuola.com)

If you would like to see how [fiolet](#) is played or [rebatta](#), have a look at YouTube.

Information derived from:

<http://www.deepfun.com/fun/2012/08/tocati-2012/> : Giardini Cesare Lombroso.

<http://www.figest.it>

<http://www.jugaje.com>

<http://aoste.ialpes.com>

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