

PRECISION-THROWING SPORTS WITH A MEANINGFUL CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-COUNTRY POTENTIAL: INTERNATIONAL JUKSKEI AND HORSESHOE PITCHING

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THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF SPORT

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else can. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair.”
(Nelson Mandela, Laureus World Sports Awards Ceremony: 2000)

It is generally accepted that sport has a great impact on people and society. Watching sport events inspires people with excitement. Participating in sport can give people tremendous joy, but it can also (almost) ruin their lives. Sport plays an increasingly important role in peace building, health promotion, education, social inclusion, promotion of living conditions, etc. It is indeed possible to foster a better society through the power and impact of sport.

Jukskei as sport originated in Southern Africa, in the rather ‘narrow’ domain and perhaps naïve culture of White South Africans. However, over the past decade, the sport of Jukskei has been transported to other cultures in Southern Africa and hence also to the global arena – to the international domains of several countries, each with their own cultures and sub-cultures. Jukskei’s positive dividends as sport were instrumental in its transfer to other countries and especially to other cultures. Its impact is already regarded as **meaningful** in terms of nation-building in Southern Africa. It might become a global Sports for All phenomenon in years to come.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The **purpose** of this paper is firstly to introduce the indigenous South African precision-throwing sport of **Jukskei**, as well as the North American sport of **Horseshoe Pitching**. Thereafter, via a short reflection on true events over the past few years, it will be demonstrated how Jukskei has locally and internationally (via its international liaison with the National Horseshoe Pitching Association of the USA) made (and is still making) a meaningful cross-cultural and cross-country impact.

SOUTH AFRICA: ORIGIN OF JUKSKEI?

Jukskei South Africa is generally regarded as the “mother country” of the sport of Jukskei in the World as we know it today. The first official Jukskei match was played on the 4th of November 1939 in the town of Paarl in the Western Cape, between two teams, from the Cape Winemakers Association and Small-Drakenstein respectively. The former team was triumphant and because of the widespread and spirited enthusiasm generated by this match, the first jukskei union of South Africa, namely *Free State Union* was established just five days later on the 9th of November 1939 in Bloemfontein. Less than a year later, on the 25th of October 1940, the *South African Jukskei Board* formally came into existence, in the Bloemfontein Coffee House. The sport of Jukskei thus rightfully seems to be indigenous to South Africa.

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that there weren't perhaps a number of predecessor sports, from which Jukskei might have originated. According to research done by the well-known South African radio sports commentator, Johann Rossouw (1986: for many years a soothing voice on Afrikaans radio stations and also a familiar face on Jukskei fields of South Africa – although he was more dedicated to the sport of Football over the past fifteen years), some of the principles of the game of Jukskei were conveyed to South Africans by their British and European ancestors, especially via four specific sports, namely Boules (or Petanqué or Bocce), Horseshoe Pitching, Quoits and Pachschieten.

JUKSKEI IN NAMIBIA

Since 1938, Jukskei is played informally throughout many towns, villages and farms in South West Africa (SWA, now Namibia). On the 25th of October 1940 (the very day that the South African Jukskei Board was established in Bloemfontein), an article appeared in the *Suidwes Afrikaner*, the only Afrikaans newspaper in the then SWA, informing readers that an interim Jukskei management committee has been established in Windhoek (the capital). The sole purpose of the latter committee (compare Taljaard, 1992: p. 300) was to organise a Jukskei championship in December of that year, which would possibly lead to the founding meeting of South West Africa Jukskei Union.

During the first nearly 50 years of its existence (from 1941 until 1989), South West Africa Jukskei Union, because it was regarded as a South African province, participated on even footing with other South African unions, in both the South African senior and junior championships. South West African teams have always been a force to reckon with and they did remarkably well, especially in the women and men's veterans' divisions.

Coen Brand, President of the South West African Jukskei Union for many years, Executive member (and later Vice-President and President) of the South African Jukskei Board between 1965 and 1987; as well as President of the International Jukskei Association in the 1970s and 1980s, could

be regarded as the initial driving force behind the success and impact of South West Africa Jukskei Union. He strongly strived to establish and promote Jukskei as organised sport for the whole family – not just in Namibia, but throughout the world.

After their independence in 1989, Namibian Jukskei teams were prevented from participation against their South African counterparts. All of this changed after the democratic elections of South Africa in 1994. Via a five year development plan initiated by the Swakopmund Jukskei Club (Hendrik and Toy Venter and their associates) of Namibia between 1995 and 2000, South African national teams started to conduct regular coaching clinics in Namibia. These coaching sessions were accompanied by international matches between the two countries. From 2001, the Namibian Jukskei Board, now under the Presidency of Christie Horn, gave formal status to these events and also broadened the participation base of players.

JUKSKEI IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In April 1972, on invitation of “*Mr. Jukskei*”, Senator MP Prinsloo, Bob Pence (at that stage Secretary of the National Horseshoe Pitching Association of the USA) and his wife, Lois; accompanied by Ottie, Jeanette and Jennifer Reno, paid a visit to Jukskei Park in Kroonstad, South Africa, to demonstrate the sport of Horseshoe Pitching to the South Africans. Later that same year, Senator MP Prinsloo, visited Greenville, Ohio in the USA, to, in return, demonstrate the sport of Jukskei to the North Americans. The flames of enthusiasm, related to both sports, started to burn and it spread like wildfire.

Peter Shepard, a regional director of the NHPA, from Worcester in Massachusetts, then paid a visit to the 1973 South African Senior Championship at Kroonstad. He wrote the following in the 1974 annual brochure of the South African Jukskei Board (p. 69-71): “*Horseshoes and Jukskei are a common sport and this is the best way I know to exchange people and make friends from one country to another. When I saw the South African flag waving proudly alongside the flag of our wonderful United States, I was deeply moved and it is a feeling one experiences only rarely. All I could think was that we are miles apart in distance, but yet, since we share this common interest we are very close.*” It was clear that a sporting relationship was beginning to develop between Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching. This relationship strengthened over the next fifteen years.

It just had to happen and on the 4th of September 1975, the **Jukskei Association of the United States of America** was established in Columbus, Ohio, with Peter Shepard its first and Ottie Reno its second President. Jerry Ison of Ohio designed the USAJA’s official emblem, incorporating a hint of the world-renowned stars and stripes forever theme. A period of rapid growth of Jukskei in the USA followed, with 1979 a highlight year. A visiting USA team played a match against the provincial Transvaal team in Standerton in April, while the USA National Jukskei Championship took place in

Alabama, which for the very first time also featured a regional USA championship (Alabama representing the Southern, Virginia the Eastern, Nevada the Western and Ohio the Northern region respectively), Ohio being the first regional champions.

The next decade revolved around touring teams from South Africa and the USA visiting each other during alternate years. In 1986, the USA team undertook a three week tour of South Africa, playing nearly 40 matches in total against many of the South African Union teams. This was the last USA team to tour South Africa, for some time to come.

Regular contact between *Jukskei South Africa* and the *USA Jukskei Association*, as well as the *USA National Horseshoe Pitching Association*, practically ceased since the 1990s. However, the birth of the “new” democratic South Africa in 1994 and the continuous efforts of the *International Jukskei Federation* since 2008 seemed to have finally paid off. The NHPA of the USA invited an international Jukskei delegation to participate in their World Tournament in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in July 2010. This was followed by a visit of a USA Horseshoe Pitching delegation to Namibia and South Africa in March/April 2011, during which the USA Jukskei Association affiliated to the International Jukskei Federation, after a 20 year period of ‘dormancy’.

THE AMERICAN SPORT OF HORSESHOE PITCHING

The early British and European Settlers, who immigrated to the Americas during the 16th and 17th centuries, were regarded as the conveyers of both *Quoits* and later *Horseshoe Pitching*. Quoits as game was initially hugely popular, but the quoit as object was gradually being replaced by a horseshoe, firstly because the latter were more readily available in the USA and secondly because it’s just much easier to cast an “open” horseshoe around a stake, than it is to cast a “closed” quoit over it (compare Taljaard, 1992: Section 1.3).

Horseshoe Pitching became an organised sport in the USA in 1899. Diversified application of the rules of the sport over the next decade and a half, lead to the establishment of the *Grand League* of the American Horseshoe Pitchers’ Association in May 1914, in Kansas City. According to the USA Quoits Association website, an unknown rookie horseshoe pitcher (not affiliated with the Grand League) discovered a technique in 1920, which enabled him to throw consistent ringers with standard pitching horseshoes. The rookie entered and won the Horseshoe Pitching World championship, becoming infamous overnight. Soon thousands of people (the majority being Quoits players) swarmed to the game of Horseshoe Pitching. This was a major blow to the game of Quoits in the USA, causing a slow but steady decline, leading to it being referred to as “*a fairly obscure oddity*” by the end of the 20th Century.

On the 10th of May 1921, the *USA National Horseshoe Pitchers’ Association* (NHPA) was formally established. This happened a full twelve years after the first National Horseshoe “World”

Championship took place in 1909 in Bronson, Kansas. The NHPA's World Tournament has always been and today still is a red letter event in any Horseshoe Pitcher's diary.

In July 2011, history was made when four South African Jukskei players enrolled for the NHPA's World Tournament in Monroe, Louisiana, with two of them being crowned as Horseshoe Pitching 'world champions'. This strongly cemented the envisaged continued future linkages between the two 'sister' sports.

THE INTERNATIONAL JUKSKEI FEDERATION

On Tuesday the 17th of April 1979, international Jukskei history is made, with the establishment of the *International Jukskei Association* (IJA). The IJA unfortunately functioned (especially during the first 15 years of its existence) in a time sphere where sport boycotts against South Africa, because of its Apartheid political system, were generally implemented. This meant that the IJA couldn't really give concrete meaning to its mission of promoting and overseeing the sport of Jukskei across all national and continental borders.

With the dawn of the "new" South Africa after 1994, and especially after the turn of the Century, the IJA 'escaped' from its dormancy hide-out and started to become, what it should be: a more prominent international sporting body. The hosting of the so-called World Jukskei Tournament in Swakopmund, Namibia in 2002 was one of its first noteworthy initiatives of the new era.

In May 2008, the new Executive Committee of the IJA made contact with Dr. Jan Fransoo, the President of the *Association of International Sport Federations* (ARISF). Dr. Fransoo recommended that the IJA should become a **Federation** (an international body, consisting of national or regional sport associations and boards) and that the IJA should strive to affiliate with the international body, the *Confédération de Mondiale des Sports de Boules* (CMSB), which oversees all so-called precision throwing sports. The IJA did change its name to the **International Jukskei Federation** (IJF) in 2009. In November 2010, the IJF was invited to 'state its case' as an international precision sport to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne, Switzerland. After a very successful engagement, the IJF was formally acknowledged as precision-throwing sport and hence recommended to try and affiliate with TAFISA (The Association for International Sport for All). The latter affiliation will give the sport of Jukskei (and also Horseshoe Pitching) significant international exposure and promotion opportunity.

ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER SPORTS AND COUNTRIES

The sports of Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching have been involved in meaningful engagements since the early 1970s, but much more so during the last two to three years. Similarly, Jukskei has also been interacting with the sports of **Bocce** (a visit to Chicago in the USA took place in August 2010) and **Curling** (an Olympic Winter sport, which paid a visit to Durban, South Africa in July 2011).

Jukskei as sport is alive and thriving and many requests for the stronger international promotion of the sport were received from countries like New Zealand, Ireland, England, Australia, France, Brazil and a number of African countries. The same could be said about Horseshoe Pitching. However, the purpose of this paper isn't just the promotion of Jukskei or Horseshoe Pitching, but much more so: the cross-cultural and cross-country impact that Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching, as precision-throwing sports, might have had already.

JUKSKEI'S AND HORSESHOE PITCHING'S CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-CONTINENTAL POTENTIAL

Bodley (1994) argues that culture is shared, learned and symbolic. Being shared means that culture is a social phenomenon that is learned and involves arbitrarily assigned, symbolic meanings (for example, that a rose, in some societies, implies romance). Furthermore, Harvey & Stensaker (2008) argues that culture is transmitted across generations, is adaptive, and integrated. This means, for some, that culture is not dependent on the individual but precedes and survives any individual: a super-organic view of culture. This sometimes manifests itself as seeing culture as an abstract rather than, as Bodley prefers, an 'objective reality'. Bodley (1994) insists that culture includes its human carriers and argues that many *'humanistic anthropologists would agree that culture is an observable phenomenon, and a people's unique possession'*.

Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching are precision throwing sports, played by all people, young and old, irrespective of gender and also allows for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, both sports provide an opportunity for participation by the whole family – thereby creating a unique situation where children, parents and even grandparents can participate on the same court. This uniqueness of Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching promotes healthy family values and involves entire communities. Both Horseshoe Pitching and Jukskei, as sports, enhance an individual's hand-eye co-ordination, balance, team integration and dynamics, leadership and even their strategising abilities. Jukskei and Horseshoe Pitching thus provide lifelong opportunities for character shaping and building, but even more so for cultural integration and cross-country (and cross-continental) 'fertilisation'. The presentation will elaborate on and try to demonstrate the latter.

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