

The Sport of Footbag

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by Allan & Stephanie Petersen



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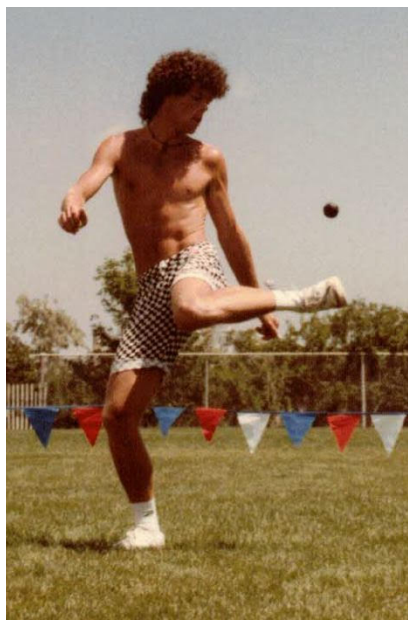
This book would not exist without the invaluable assistance we received from Scott "Mag" Hughes, Kenny Shults, Andy Linder, and Brent and Jody Badger Welch. Thank you so much.

Every attempt has been made to give accurate photo credits where possible. The footbag stick figures appearing throughout the book were drawn by me (Allan Petersen).

Stephanie and I regret that some early players of footbag are missing from this book. And while we fully admit that it's possible we have inadvertently overlooked players, we also are fully aware that certain individuals who should be included in this early perspective on the sport are simply missing. These are individuals for whom we could find no photographs or contact information. We apologize both for this and for any *inadvertent* omissions.

The scope of our book is limited primarily to those years between 1972 and 2000, give or take. While it would have been fun to cover the many footbag achievements that have taken place in the 21st century, we couldn't include them all here and we hope to see another footbag chronicle covering this new era of the sport soon.



with love,

Allan



As a sport, footbag is unique.

Almost any other sport imaginable requires specific conditions and environments, things like props, flooring, venues, netting, tools, obstacles, protective clothing, goals, teammates, and opponents. And while the sport of footbag can incorporate these accoutrements, it can *also* be played with just a foot and a footbag. Mixed doubles freestyle champion Valeria Davidson described it as "the sport that fits in your pocket." Only juggling rivals footbag as a sport one person can play literally anwhere, at any time, which may be why so many footbag kickers are also good jugglers.

Footbag has evolved into a challenging modern-day sport, involving complex freestyle mechanics and specific parameters defining its net volley game, but humans have been kicking small sacks into the air for centuries.



As early as 476 B.C., the Chinese were kicking (*cu*) a small leather ball stuffed with feathers (*ju*) in a game they logically called *cuju*. This game was an ancient precursor of what we know today as soccer. One variation, *zhuqiu*, was played as a competitive sport involving goals, while the other, *baida*, was more like a kicking circle where the object was to cooperatively keep the ball in the air with the help of teammates. The Japanese game of *kemari* evolved from this cooperative variant, eliminating winners and losers.



Detail from "One Hundred Children in the Long Spring" by Su Hanchen, circa 1145 A.D.

Over time, similar kicking games swept across Asia that involved volleying a ball or shuttlecock between opposing sides, sometimes clearing a net. These games included one called *chapteh* in Malaysia, as well as *jianzi* in China, *đá cầu* in Vietnam, and *sipa* in the Philippines.

Fifteen hundred years ago in Myanmar (Burma), a game developed called *chinlone* that's still played today. The term *chinlone* means "rounded basket," which describes its large woven rattan sphere, identical to the rattan balls of *kataw* in Laos and *sepak takraw* in Indonesia.



Many sports rely on the spherical nature of their associated ball, though not all. American football is played with an almost conical elipse and let's not even try to classify the abused focal point of badminton, a poor fly viciously attacked on each side of the net with a swatter. But European football, or soccer, is all about the foot controlling and manipulating a sphere, and footbag, especially its net game, is a natural offshoot of soccer.

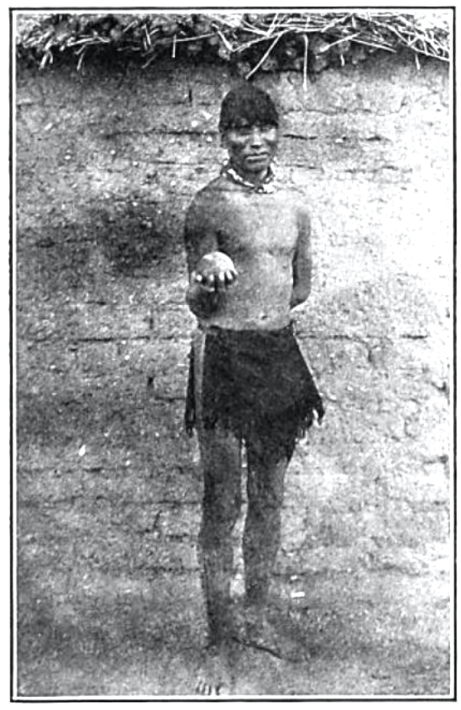
The most recent Asian iteration of a sphere-based, foot-centric net volley game is called *jokgu*, developed in the 1960s by members of the South Korean Air Force. It's played exactly like many of its net game precursors, but with a volleyball.

The modern game of footbag net is really a hybrid of these two, volleyball and soccer, but played with a much smaller ball, or bag. But these are modern iterations of kicking games that began centuries ago, not just in Asia, but also in North America, and with a focus both on teams scoring points and on individual athletes displaying their skills and competing against themselves.

GAMES OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

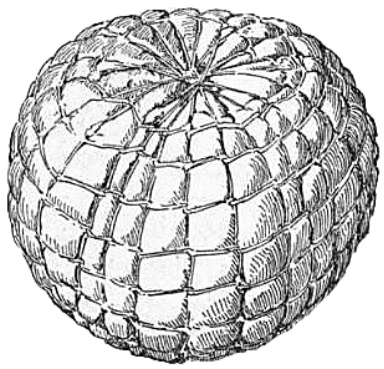
BY

STEWART CULIN

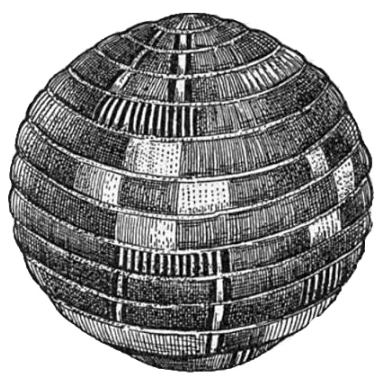


Papago kicking-ball player (Arizona)
photo: William Dinwiddle

The Sport



boop tcje from
the Crow Reservation



Mandan leather foot-ball
wrapped in porcupine quills



buckskin football
of the Paiute

source: Culin

In 1901, small kicking balls called *boop tcje* were collected at the Crow Reservation in southern Montana by journalist S.C. Simms. He described them as "juggling footballs" and reported that women of the Crow Tribe played a game whose object was to "keep the ball in the air the longest time by kicking it or by the greatest number of kicks without a miss."

The German explorer Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied detailed the activities of native peoples of the American Great Plains in his 1840 book, Travels in the Interior of North America. In it, he spoke of the Mandan tribe of North Dakota: "The women are expert in playing with a large leathern ball which they let fall alternately on their foot and knee, again throwing it up and catching it, and thus keeping it in motion for a length of time without letting it fall to the ground. Prizes are given, and they often play high. The ball is often very neat and curiously covered with dyed porcupine quills."

Journalist Marian Taylor wrote early in the 20th century of a game of the Paiute Indians who lived near Pyramid Lake, Nevada. *Wut-si-mo* was played with a buckskin-covered ball three inches in diameter, "used in a football game by men, say, four on a side. The object is to kick the ball between two goals, *tu-bi*, made of willow sticks, and some 8 or 10 feet high. The goals are about 50 yards apart, the players starting in the center."



Fig. 901. Kicking balls; dimensions, 2 inches square; Hopi Indians, Oraibi, Arizona; cat. no. 38705, Free Museum of Science and Art, University of Pennsylvania.

Hopi. Oraibi, Arizona. (Cat. no. 38705, Free Museum of Science and Art, University of Pennsylvania.) Two black cubes made of hair and piñon gum, with rounded corners, about 2 inches square (figure 901). Collected by the writer in 1901.

They were described as sunkoiungat, footballs, and were used in the spring of the year.

source: Culin

In the American southwest, the Hopi would fashion hair and gum into 2-inch cubes they called *sunkolungat* (above). And the Winnebago tribe of Wisconsin saw girls primarily taking part in such games of "foot-ball": "They take a light soft ball, such as a stuffed stocking foot, place it on the toe, and standing on one foot, kick it up a few inches. Then as it falls they kick it back again, so as to send it up as often as possible without letting it fall to the ground, keeping count of the number of times. When it falls to the ground or when the foot is placed on the ground the ball is passed to another player. The first to count 100, or any number agreed upon, wins."

In 1894, Matilda Coxe Stevenson described a similar pastime that she witnessed in her travels: "The Eskimo are very fond of this game. All the people of every age, from the toddling infant to the aged female with bended back, love to urge the *ai uk touk*, as the ball is termed. The size of the ball varies from 3 to 7 inches in diameter. They have not yet arrived at perfection in making a spherical form for the ball, but it is often an apple shape. It is made by taking a piece of buckskin or sealskin and cutting it into a circular form, then gathering the edges and stuffing the cavity with dry moss or feathers. A circular piece of skin is then inserted to fill the space which is left by the incomplete gatherings. This ball is very light and is driven either by a blow from the foot or else by a whip of peculiar construction."

A modern-day reinvention

Fast forward to the late 20th century. Chip Johnson, writing in the *Wall Street Journal,* has dubbed footbag the "perfect fad" for the 1990s: "It's not high-tech and it doesn't cost much money." His article was published just as the 12th World Championships were wrapping up in Golden, Colorado, an event organized by World Footbag Association founders Bruce Guettich and Greg Cortopassi.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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★★ WESTERN EDITION MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1991 DENVER, COLORADO

Even His Archrivals Say Kenny Shults Is The Soul of Footbag

* * *

When This Feet-Only Sport Holds Its Championships, He Seems to Be a Shoo-In

By CHIP JOHNSON
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

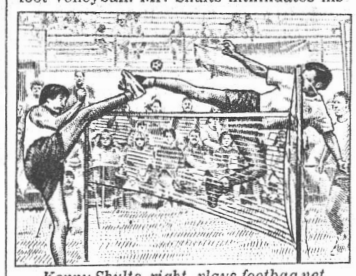
GOLDEN, Colo.—"Every sport has a superstar," Scott Hughes says matter-of-factly, "and in footbag, Kenny is it."

Perhaps you've never heard of Kenny Shults. But if you've never even heard of footbag, then clearly you're reading this in the Eastern time zone. From California to Colorado, it's hard to walk through a park without seeing young people footbagging—or, as they call it, shreddin'.

Footbagging is the perfect fad for the sober '90s: It's not high-tech and it doesn't cost much money. In fact, ifs biggest manufacturer is the same company that made Hula-Hoops. It's sometimes called Hacky Sack. Either way, this is the game: One or more people, using only the feet, kick a two-inch-across, imitation-suede bag around in the air. That's it. Sound simple? Then consider this: In the 12th Annual World Footbag Association Championships held here this month, Mr. Shults set a speed record, kicking the bag from one leg to the other 912 times in five minutes. That's three kicks a second, a blur.

Internal Radar

And that's not even to mention what he can do in footbag net, which is a kind of foot volleyball. Mr. Shults intimidates his



Kenny Shults, right, plays footbag net

foes by attacking an opponent's serve with a flying spike, body parallel to the ground or even inverted. Intercepting a speeding footbag while sailing through the air sideways requires an internal radar that most of his rivals can't fathom.

"His hands are his feet," says an awestruck Scott Milne, a 28-year-old footbag player from British Columbia.

Mr. Shults, 24, is a 6'1", 145-pound advertising director for a small Oregon software firm. He invented many of the moves and terms now used in freestyle competition, apparently benefiting from good breeding: His mother is a ballet instructor who trained with the Joffrey Ballet and helped him with his spin move.

"What Kenny does is the ultimate in *petite allegro,*" says Carol Shults, Kenny's mom. *Petite allegro* is a ballet term that defines quick, fast movements. On seeing her son practice a freestyle routine while he was still in high school, she complimented him on a wonderful *grand Pas de Basque-rivoltade*, the combination of two ballet moves.

"No, Mom," he replied. "That's a torque."

Mr. Shults first spotted a footbag when he was 10. "I saw it on television," he says. "I was obsessed by it before I even got it. I had to have one and I had to be the best in it. I don't know why."

That's when the sport was in its infancy. How it was popularized in the U.S. is shrouded in mystery. According to veteran players, footbag got its start in a military brig. An AWOL soldier picked up the idea there from an American Indian, they say, and began proselytizing the sport

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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★★ WESTERN EDITION MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1991 DENVER, COLORADO

In the Championships of Footbag, Kenny Shults Seems a Shoo-In

Continued From First Page

upon his release. But the World Footbag Association's official literature makes no mention of this, saying the game derives from ancient Asian foot games, including a Chinese version played around 2500 B.C.

In any event, if Babe Ruth reinvented baseball, if Jack Nicklaus reinvented golf, if Wayne Gretzky reinvented hockey, then surely Kenny Shults reinvented footbag. He pioneered the now standard "around-the-world" move, kicking the bag about chest-high with his instep, or the inside or outside of his ankle, then circling the flying bag with his foot a few times before catching it on his shoe.

A new move, called the stomping double leg-over, starts with Mr. Shults kicking the bag in the air. Then, after placing both feet on the floor, he jumps over the bag with both legs, landing just in time to catch the bag with a foot.

Most of these moves are done faster than the unpracticed eye can follow.

Mr. Shults has been the all-around men's champion for six of the past seven years, including at this year's six-day tournament, which featured events like footbag golf. But he wasn't shreddin' like he used to, finishing high in most events but getting eliminated in singles net and placing first only in the speed kick.

One problem was that daily practice had become impossible because of a host of new distractions—a job, a new home and his then-pending marriage to Kendall KIC. Ms. KIC is a top women's footbag player who changed her name in 1984 to reflect a soccer obsession. "We make rhythmic gymnasts look silly," she says, referring to the style and grace of footbag freestyle.

Mr. Shults and Ms. KIC were married on Saturday. She will retain her maiden name.

Others don't let anything get in the way of footbag perfection. Ted Martin holds the record for most consecutive kicks at 48,285, a feat that required more than eight hours. Alan Petersen, a 31-year-old Danish player, spends much of his time sewing the ultimate footbag, with 320 almost microscopic panels of different colored leather. He travels around the country in a 1971 Chevy van with "Footbag Lives" stenciled in red paint on the side.

Footbag is on the verge of becoming big business. The biggest footbag maker, Wham-O, the maker of the Hula-Hoop, sells a brand called Hacky Sack for $8. Wham-O won't discuss sales, but a smaller competitor, Sipa Sipa, expects to sell about 250,000 bags this year, double 1990's total, at prices ranging from $7 to $12. "We've had to put major customers on allocation and choose not to go to some outlets, the demand has been so high," says Ray W. Ferris, the firm's owner.

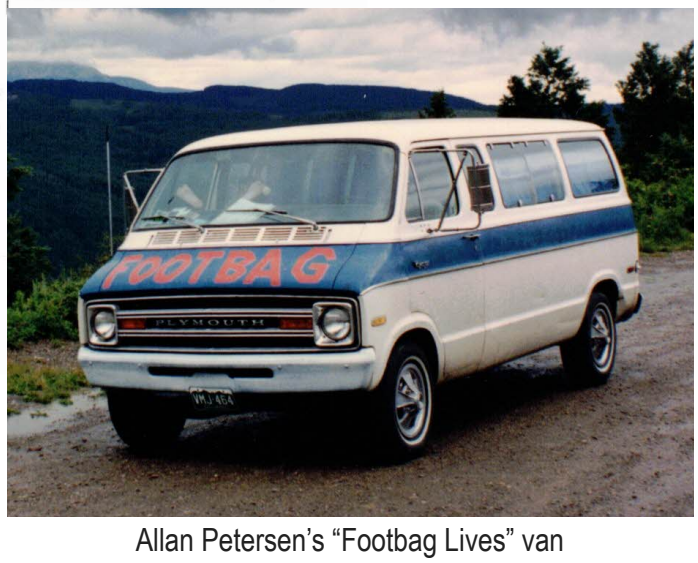
The World Footbag Association has 15,000 members. Bruce Guettich, the association's president, estimates that at least three million footbags are sold annually world-wide. In the U.S., most of the bags are sold in Sunbelt states such as California, Texas and Florida, but Mr. Guettich says East Coast membership is growing by 200 to 300 members a month.

Top players get a small amount of prize money at tournaments ($7,000 total at the world championships) and some eke out a living demonstrating or promoting the sport. But a growing culture clash threatens to split its ranks.

Until recently, footbag has largely been nurtured by mellow Western types who can sit around for hours, kicking a footbag back and forth and generally getting in touch with themselves and each other.

But there's a new, more macho kind of footbagger. For instance, Randy Mulder, the eventual footbag net singles champ, is a member of Denver's Washington Park group, which revels in its reputation as the nasty boys of footbag. Recalling his reasons for taking up the sport, Mr. Mulder, a 23-year-old physical education major at Arizona State University, growls: "We just came to drink beer and pick up women. There had to be women."

But footbag remains just a pleasant fixation for most. After the awards banquet ending the tournament, many drift into small groups around the pool and hot tub, shreddin' the night away. "This is where it all happens," says Mr. Shults, as he shoots a cross-legged pass to Rippin' Rick Reese, who has the shape of a footbag shaved into his hair.



Allan Petersen's "Footbag Lives" van



Johnson had been hanging out in August of 1991 with several footbag pioneers shredding at Denver's Washington Park and was so taken with the sport and the culture that he convinced the editors of what's normally a financial publication that this was a new trend worth covering. His *Journal* article highlighted the skills of Kenny Shults, then considered the sport's leading player, but it also mentioned some of the sport's key figures at the time: Scott "Mag" Hughes, Scott Milne, Kendall KIC, Ted Martin, Allan Petersen, Randy Mulder, and Rick Reese. Writing about the origins of the sport, Johnson briefly mentioned an AWOL soldier and a Native American kicking bean-filled bags but gave few details regarding the birth of this uniquely American version of footbag.





This sport would be reinvented many times throughout history, and the reinvention of modern times was due to two guys hanging out in Oregon. The soldier mentioned in Johnson's article was Mike Marshall. In 1972, Marshall had become acquainted with John Stalberger at an outdoor festival in Oregon.

Stalberger was vacationing in Oregon from Texas, nursing a knee that was recovering from a football injury. Marshall and Stalberger became friends and Mike suggested the sack-kicking sport he'd recently learned as something John could do to rehabilitate his knee. They'd often head outside to "hack the sack" (something they could also do inside, as seen below) and before they knew it, a brand name was born.



Stalberger and Marshall hackin' the sack



Mike Marshall and John Stalberger

The story of footbag as it exists today really *starts* with Mike Marshall and John Stalberger, who spent three years kicking together and developing their own skill sets. According to the Footbag Hall of Fame website, "[T]he two entrepreneurs began experimenting with numerous designs and materials in search of the perfect footbag with the goal of manufacturing improved models that made controlling the footbag easier. Their efforts yielded the original two-panel dog bone model with complete internal stitching and a U.S. patent was issued. This first spherical footbag was designed to flatten out on impact with the kicking surface, making the footbag less bouncy and easier to control during play." Their combined efforts culminated in 1974 with the manufacturing of the Hacky Sack® brand of footbags.

In 1975, Mike Marshall died unexpectedly from a pulmonary embolism. He passed away at the young age of 27. Since 1980, the Mike Marshall Award has been given to players who have dedicated their time, energy, and love to the sport of footbag and its future.

John Stalberger was left to take their plans forward in an effort to honor his friend. Below are John's thoughts, written in an email he sent to the members of the Footbag Hall of Fame many years later.



I met Mike Marshall the summer of 1972, the year I migrated to the Portland, Oregon area (Clackamas and Oregon City, actually) from Houston, Texas. I was 21 years old. Mike was 25 years old.

An instant friendship was at hand. As we walked from Oregon City to High Rocks (Mike's special domain) to swim on the Clackamas River, this was life changing for me as Mike pulled out a little sack of beans from his jean pocket and began juggling it with his feet. I was amazed and he gave me a brief history of how he learned to play this strange game!

From that day until Mike passed away just before his 28th birthday, we spent many hours "hacking the sack," as we coined our passion to play, and to cooperate together to increase our skills and doubles consecutive kick rallies. Oh how I still miss him!!

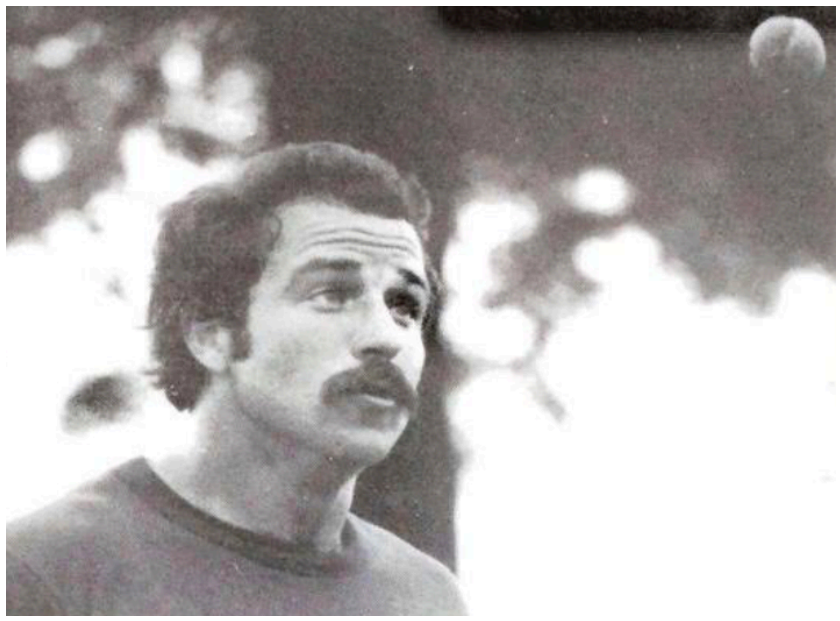
We also competed in a fun new concept of what we now refer to as footbag golf (mostly in Mike's house) teeing off from one area, down the hall, and a dog leg right or left into the garbage can (hole).

We also competed in singles consecutive kicks with lots of laughs as we contorted our bodies ever so focused to increase our personal best rallies. I can hear Mike's special verbiage even now. It was very funny and we laughed so much as we both would fall to the ground holding our stomachs from the joy and laughter we both experienced. The essence of our mutual joy and love for each other.

One day in early 1973 as we were playing outside, our sack went flying over a short fence and Mike jumped over to retrieve it. As he threw it back over the fence to me we began kicking back and forth using the 4 foot fence as a net.

The first official competition was in 1977, as so stated by Ted Huff, and the rest is history. So celebrating a particular date can be decided by others and yet I see 1972 as the beginning of footbag.

~ John Stalberger



But John wasn't alone. During those early years, the sport was attracting enthusiastic early adopters like Ted Huff, Garwin Bruce, Garry Gaman, Cheryl Aubin Hughes, Scott "Mag" Hughes, Keith Lunde, Eddie Robertson, Bill Hayne, Walt Mason, Craig Hufford, Mark and Dave Hill, Jack Schoolcraft, Jerry Cunningham, Jane Wievesiek-Sellman, Bill Fischetti, and Robert and Lori Jean Conover.

A small movement was growing. And Mike Marshall's wife, Linda Roberts, continued to support the sport her husband helped launch. "[A]fter Mike died," she said in an interview on the *Name Taken Podcast*, "I still would go to the tournaments and keep score and be a support system. I was just always the ***mother*** of Hacky Sack.®"



John Stalberger
photo: Tim Vozar



Bill Hayne



Bill Fischetti



Garwin Bruce



Eddie Robertson

(photo credits: Tim Vozar)



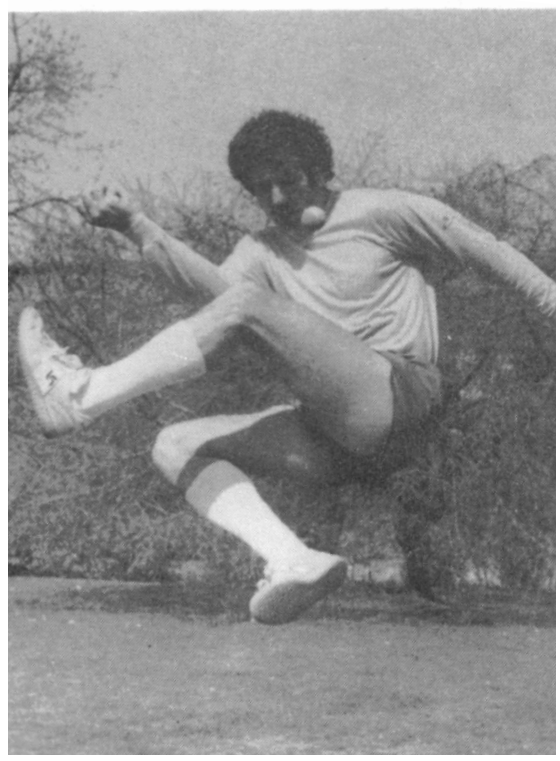
Jane Wievesiek-Sellman



Cheryl Aubin Hughes



Garry Gaman



Scott “Mag” Hughes

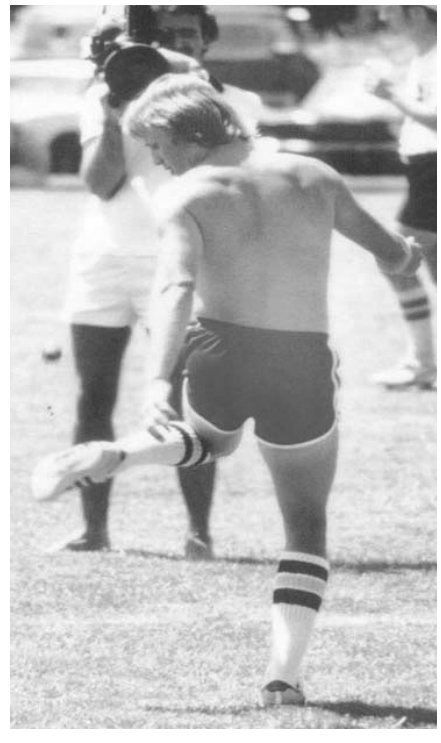
(photo credits: Tim Vozar)



Jack Schoolcraft



Walt Mason



Mark Hill



Craig Hufford and Jerry Cunningham



Dave Hill and Ted Huff

(photo credits: Tim Vozar)



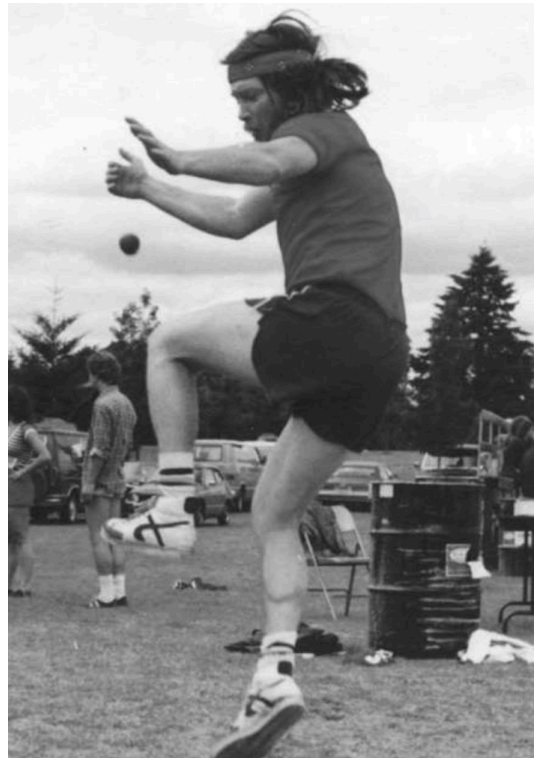
Walt Benziger



Jim “Toes” Fitzgerald



Lori Jean Conover



Robert Conover

(photo credits: Tim Vozar)

Stalberger's vision for footbag was to be more than just an amusement. He saw potential benefit in using it to improve coordination and balance. Marshall had first introduced Stalberger to kicking as a form of rehabilitation for his injured knee, and the moves required to keep the footbag in the air were helping to improve his dexterity and range of motion. This is largely because footbag uses *both* sides of the body rather than limiting the body to just one, as sports like tennis, bowling, or disc golf tend to do. In fact, when a ball is involved in play, the sport can often force the body into lopsided motion and this can lead to a sports injury.

But footbag as rehabilitation worked. According to the World Footbag website, "[Stalberger] found that by stressing the equal use of both sides of the body to control the footbag, and by restricting the touching of the footbag to only the feet and knees, the game could be used as an athletic or physical education training tool." Footbag athletes, injured or not, have all reaped the benefits of conditioning and dexterity that the sport of footbag provides.



HACKY SACK™ SAVES THE KNEE

As most of you probably already know, Hacky Sack™ Footbag Games were invented by an American footballer, John Stalberger, while trying to recover from knee injury. Well, the theraputic uses of the footbag have recently been confirmed by Eric Crawford aged 16, from Marlborough, Wiltshire, who writes,

"My main sport is fencing but due to knee trouble I had to make a drastic reduction in my training. I purchased a Hacky Sack Footbag, and to my surprise my knees improved and I was able to fence more regularly." After consulting a doctor he was told that the improvement was due to the tightening of his thigh muscles which he puts down to training with his Hacky Sack Footbag as he was playing no other sport at the time.

from the Spring 1985 issue
of the British HSA's newsletter



Rippin' Rick Reese exhibiting the toning
results of footbag training
photo: Tim Vozar

It was this conditioning feature of the sport that drew many of its early adherents. "The principle of using both sides of the body," wrote Garwin Bruce, "better coordination, quickness of the feet, developing flexibility and strength in the ankles and knees connected to all the sports that I had played."

Bruce, who would eventually be dubbed "Commander Back Kick," was first introduced to Stalberger playing softball. "They said his name was Johnny Hackysack. (I actually thought that was his name for a couple of weeks.)"

In 1977, John Stalberger, Garwin Bruce, and Ted Huff formed the National Hacky Sack® Association (NHSA), an organization that would exist until 1984. The NHSA established official rules for the sport and organized school tours, training camps, and the first official tournaments. These efforts would bring the sport of footbag national attention.

Stalberger obtained an official patent for the game of footbag in 1979.



Ted Huff, Garwin Bruce, Rick Kaufman, John Stalberger

Stalberger joined the Oak Grove softball team and his teammates, including the pictured Les Wallace, quickly joined the Hacky Sack® craze. As the article states, "[T]he sport threatens to make every small open space in the United States its playground."



THE REVIEW sports

Oak Grove is world Hacky Sack center

BY BOB PRATTE

How would it feel to have put up one of the first jump shots when James Naismith hung a peach basket in front of his physical education class and invented basketball?

Les Wallace, a member of the Oak Grove Tavern softball team and a 1967 graduate of Putnam High School, knows that feeling.

Wallace and the rest of his Oak Grove teammates are in on the ground level of one of the world's newest sports -- Hacky Sack.

John Stalberger, president of the Oregon City-based National Hacky Sack Association and a self-confessed fanatic for the spare-time sport, joined the Oak Grove squad and brought the game of Hacky Sack with him.

If you show up early to an Oak Grove game next summer, you'll see small groups standing around, keeping a tiny leather bag filled with plastic balls from hitting the ground with their feet. That's Hacky Sack.

And the sport threatens to make every small open space in the United States its playground.

"Stalberger came to us as a shortstop three years ago and taught us the game he invented," explains Wallace, who lives on Maple Lane. "John and a friend of his (Mike Marshall) invented the American version.

"It's played with a leather bag the size of a golf ball. The object of the game is to keep the foot bag off the ground without letting it touch your body above the waist, using your feet and legs."

The Oak Grove team initially used the sport to warm up for their summer baseball games, but now sport going."

Games similar to Hacky Sack have been played around the world for centuries. Mike Marshall, a close friend of Stalberger, adapted Hacky Sack from the play of American Indians. Marshall and Stalberger experimented with the game until Marshall died of a heart attack, Stalberger continued.

With the aid of the Oak Grove Tavern softball team, he has staged demonstrations at the Oregon State Fair and raised more than $1,800 for the Easter Seals organization with a "kickathon" last spring. He is pushing the sport with school physical education departments and believes Footbag, a form of Hacky Sack played over a volleyball net, may someday become an Olympic sport.

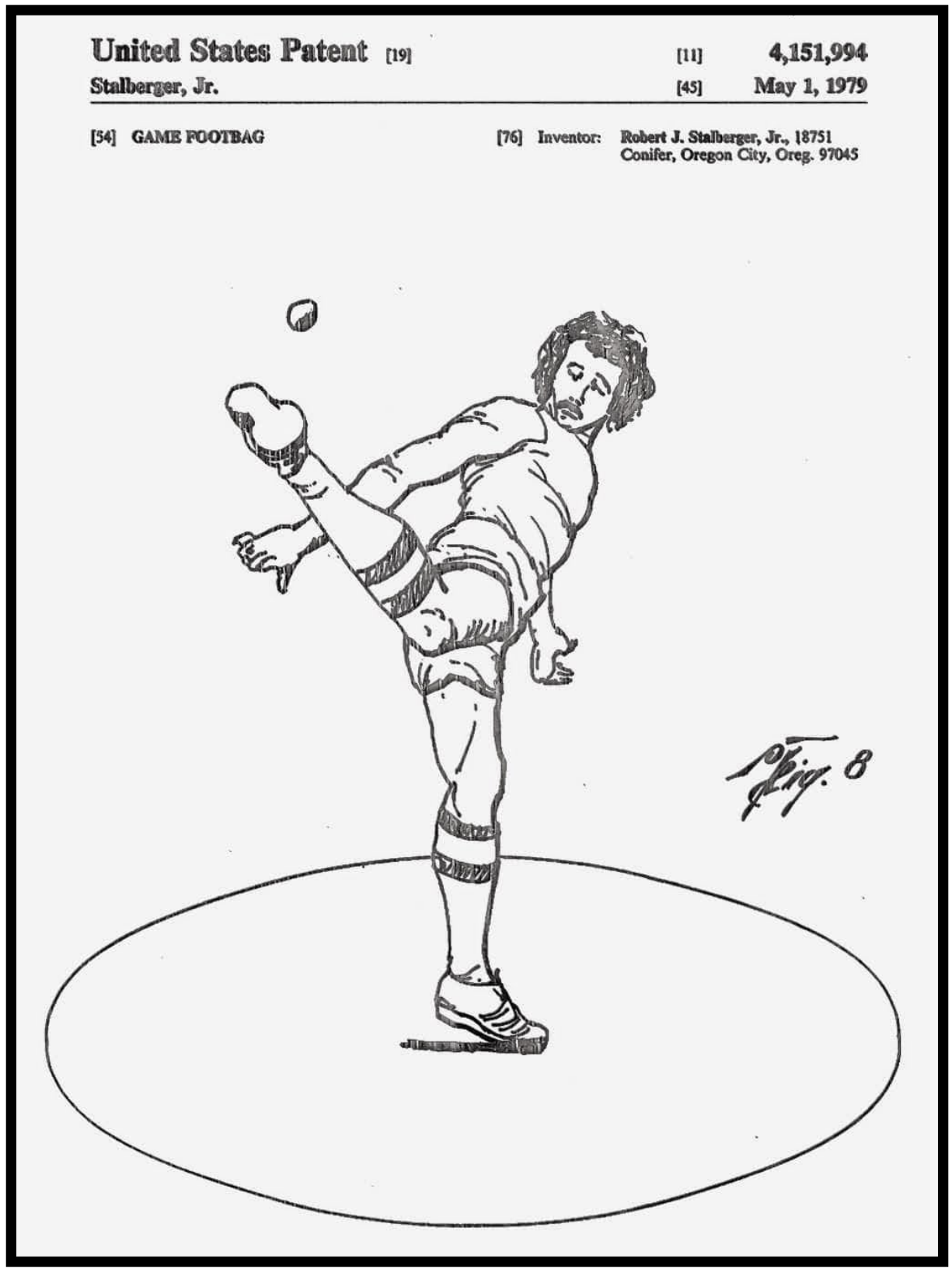
"It's different than all the other forms of the game," he professes. "In the other games, you can hit the foot bag above your waist. But in Hacky Sack, you have to hit it with your legs and feet.

"There're five basic kicks and the game develops a lot of moves you see in other sports. It's a dynamic game that develops the quickness of the eye and foot.

"We have two ultimate goals. We want to get Hacky Sack started in the schools and we want to get Footbag established as a sport."

Currently, Stalberger is holding demonstrations at schools throughout the Northwest and getting ready to expand his efforts into Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and California. But the North Clackamas area still will reign as the Hacky Sack center of the world.

And when a grandfather-aged Les Wallace sees a group of Hacky Sack players nimbly kicking around a pea-sized leather bag, he can say, "I helped start that sport."



United States Patent [19]

Stalberger, Jr.

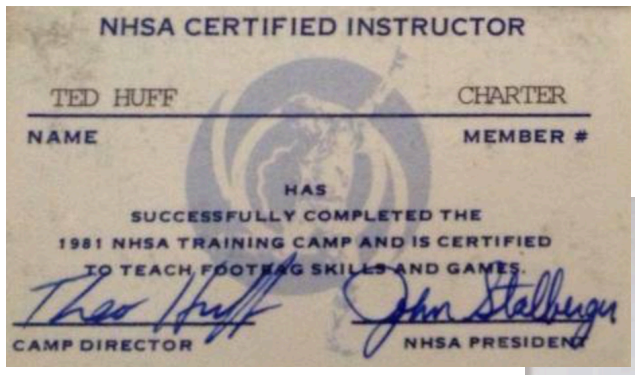
[11] **4,151,994**

[45] **May 1, 1979**

[54] **GAME FOOTBAG**

[76] Inventor: **Robert J. Stalberger, Jr., 18751 Conifer, Oregon City, Oreg. 97045**

Fig. 8


NHSA CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR

TED HUFF — CHARTER

NAME — MEMBER #

HAS
SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE
1981 NHSA TRAINING CAMP AND IS CERTIFIED
TO TEACH FOOTBAG SKILLS AND GAMES.

Theo Huff — John Stalberger

CAMP DIRECTOR — NHSA PRESIDENT



Ted Huff in 1977 with Keith Lunde at the Oak Grove, Oregon grade school launching the NHSA teaching in schools

"While at lunch one day," wrote Ted Huff upon his 1997 induction into the Footbag Hall of Fame, "I was sitting across the table from John. I thought... what if I was sitting with Dr. Naismith (he invented basketball) and he asked me what I thought about helping start a new game. Would I be interested? I decided that exact moment that a chance to be a part of starting a new game and sport is a very rare opportunity, despite not knowing if that dream could come true. I thought that a simplistic idea, such as kicking a beanbag, could have a chance, as I had witnessed people getting 'addicted' in my local area already. I decided I had some skills to bring to the 'game' of marketing this new game/sport, and had the passion to stick with it. I decided I was in."





In 1981, a Hacky Sack® television commercial featured a young future world champion, Kenny Shults, along with John Stalberger. The brand was owned by Stalberger's company, Kenncorp Sports, Inc., that he ran with his business partner, Lee Kennedy.



Stalberger would license the Hacky Sack® brand to the toy company Wham-O® in 1983. Dan Roddick, head of the Wham-O® sports marketing department, was instrumental in widening footbag's popularity.

"Dan... quickly embraced their new Hacky Sack® product," the World Footbag website explains, "and began promoting it alongside their Frisbee® disc as the two items shared a similar audience."



The World Footbag website continues, "For more than ten years, Roddick's annual budget funded hundreds of footbag promotions including regional, national and world competitions, school touring teams, physical education conventions and teacher in-service clinics, fairs and festivals and television commercials."

It's not hard to see the similarities between footbag and disc;

the two sports share several moves



Flying Clipper

(at left) demonstrated with a disc in *Flying Disc Illustrated*
(at right) demonstrated with a footbag by Allan Petersen

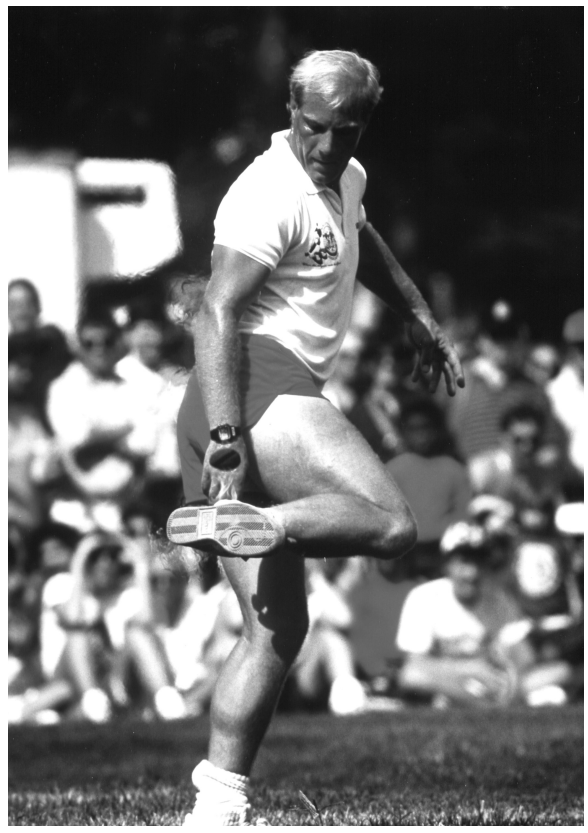


1984 advertisement in *Flying Disc Illustrated*

World Footbag Association is established



Bruce Guettich



Greg Cortopassi

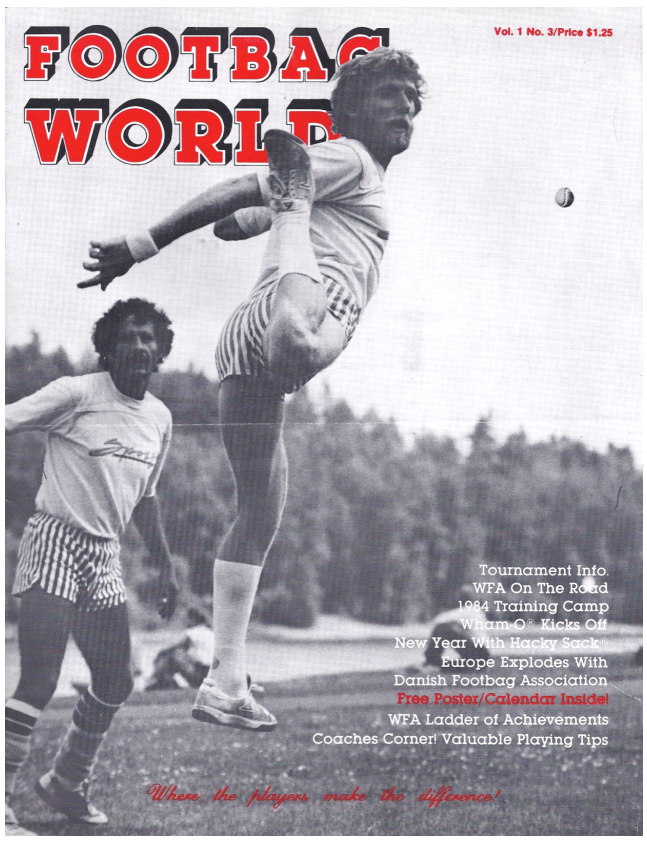
Envisioned by Bruce Guettich and Greg Cortopassi, the World Footbag Association (WFA) opened for business on May 12, 1983 in an effort to broaden the sport's reach beyond Oregon and Washington state. The group's headquarters eventually settled in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Guettich had worked as a promotional director for Hacky Sack® and he expanded this role within the WFA. "When I first started in this game, it was a small little hobby," Guettich told the *Steamboat Pilot* in 2021. "I was involved at a grassroots level when it was taking hold." Guettich went on to host several World Footbag Championships from 1983 to 1993 and won several world champion titles. Cortopassi began kicking in 1979, and like Guettich, has held several world champion titles and has hosted many World Footbag Championships over the course of his career, as well as holding the title of Vice President of the Hacky Sack® Players' Association.

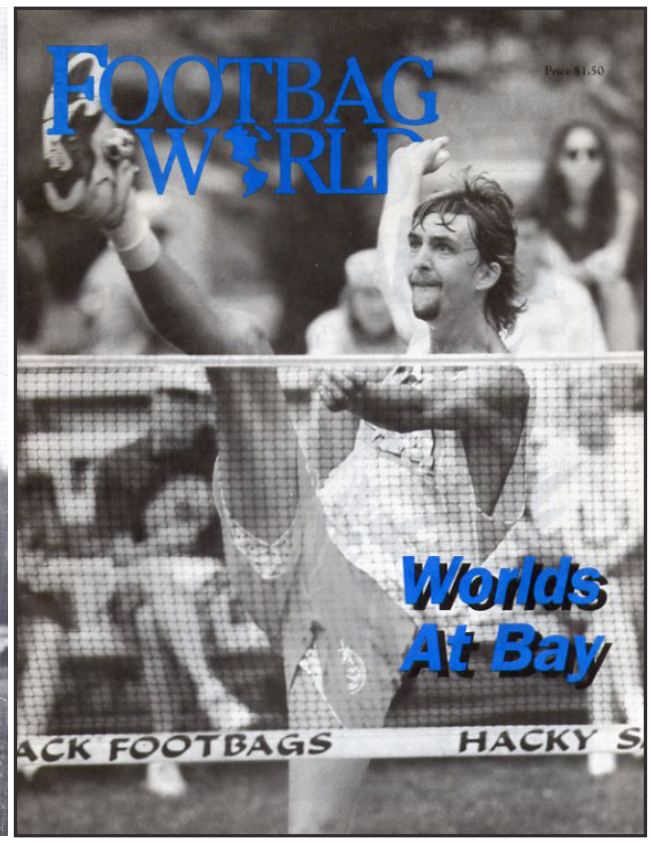
The purpose of the WFA was to create a promotional arm for the sport and its players that was not linked to or influenced by any one manufacturer. From its inception, the WFA worked to establish and promote the sport of footbag, distributing instructional and educational materials and setting up the Player Advisory Board that produced rules and a governing body for the sport. It has since become known for its efforts in footbag marketing and promotions, sponsorships, player support and employment, and its organization of local, state, regional, national, and international events. The WFA has also been involved in consulting for new manufactures, licensing, and product development.

Today, world champions Peter Shunny and Randy Nelson work with Guettich at the WFA. "After I left at the end of 1989," recalls Cortopassi, "Peter Shunny stepped in and has been Bruce's right-hand man for the last 38+ years; his commitment, passion, impact, and overall contributions to the WFA and our sport are numerous... after Bruce, he is the longest-running WFA employee and is a world-class player, promoter, supporter, contributor, employee, and soul friend."

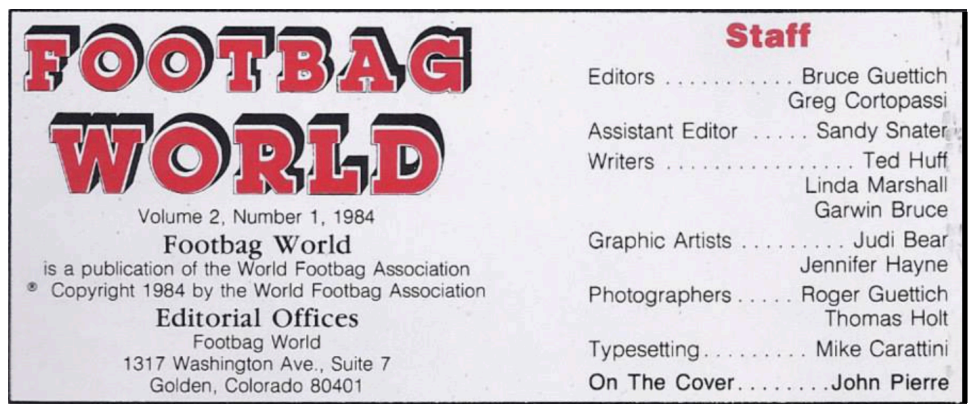
The organization began publishing *Footbag World* in 1983, with its editorial offices located in Golden, Colorado. The publication included features like Garwin Bruce's Coaches Corner and is showcased a bit on the following pages.



Bruce Guettich



Randy Mulder



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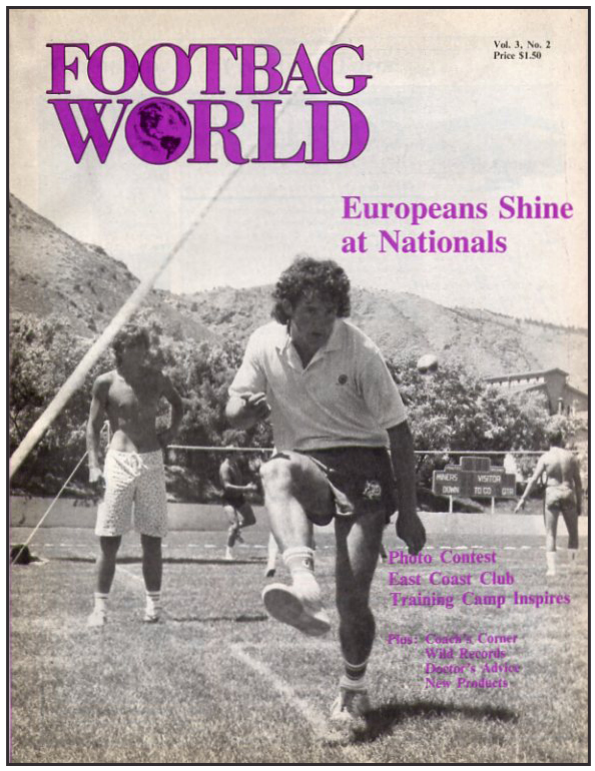
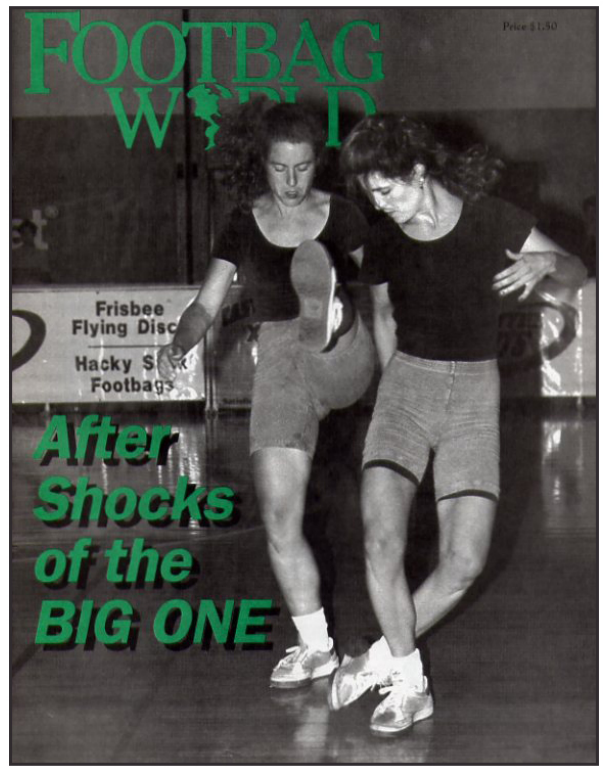


Garry Griggs



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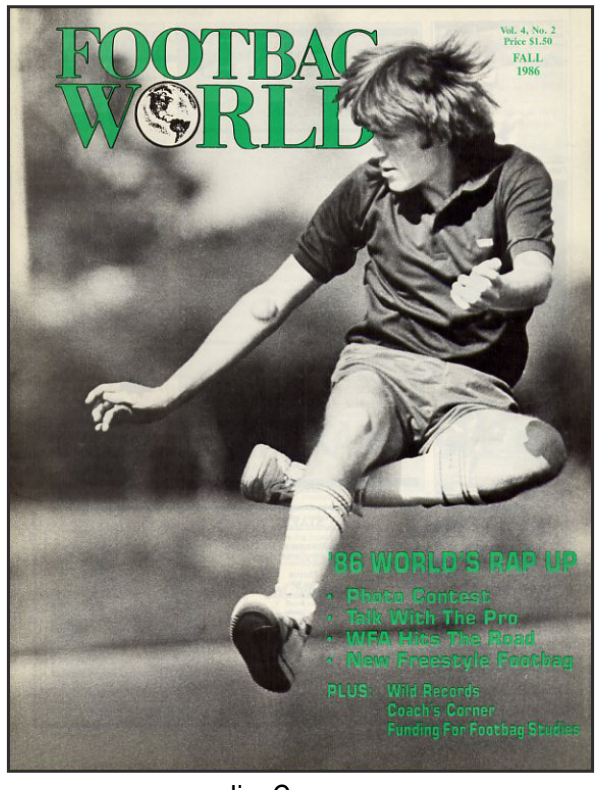

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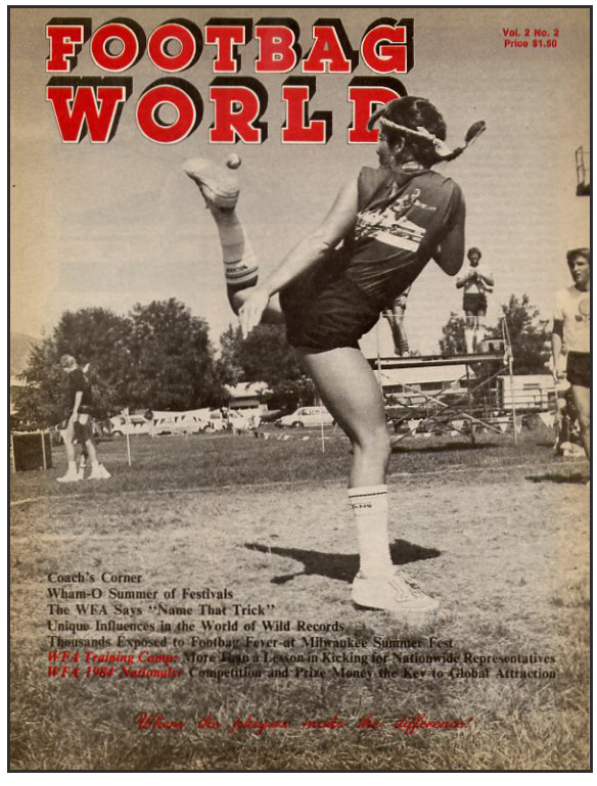


Tricia Sullivan George

COACHES CORNER

by Garwin Bruce

In this issue of Coach's Corner my topic concerns an aspect of the game which most players probably disregard as being important. As a coach, I find that a player's **improvement is dependent upon how quick**-ly they start using the upper body properly.



NON-RECOMMENDED

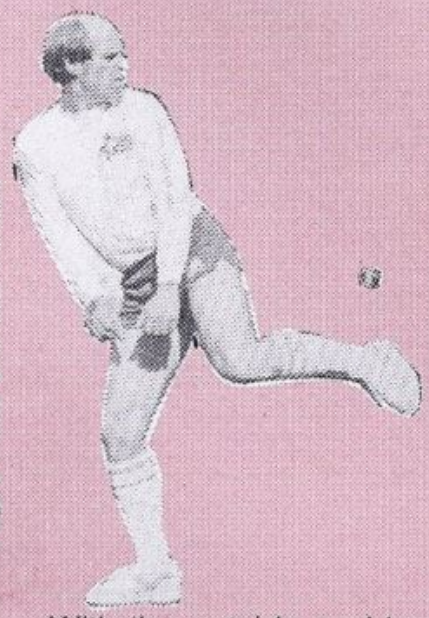
However, before explaining the basic fundamentals of how to use the upper body, let's take a look at its background and importance. In most all cultural kicking games played around the world the upper body is used to block the kicking object down to the feet. Even in the very early stages of footbag games the use of the upper body was also practiced. Shortly thereafter, upper body usage was eliminated. This distinguishes footbag games from most all other kicking games around the world. Some of the many benefits of not using the upper body as a striking surface include the development of better lateral quickness, flexibility, coordination, balance and a need for equal use of both sides of the body.



RECOMMENDED

The most important function for upper body is balance. To illustrate my point, try walking down a railroad track with your arms by your side. Then try it with your arms extended. You will find that your arms act as stabilizers and your balance increases. This makes it easier to negotiate the tracks without falling over. The same is true in footbag. Good balance is the key to a smooth kick.

When executing the inside kick, the most common errors I have observed is when players do not use the arms for balance and lean



the upper body in the same direction as the kicking foot. When you lean into a kick, you force the support leg to straighten, thus giving you a falling-over effect. This will also cause the kick to be off center and much too fast. It is important to keep the upper body as straight as possible. The arms must be extended and relaxed (not behind the hips). This will help you to maintain the proper balance needed over the support leg.

With the outside and back kick, the upper body motions will be basically the same. These kicks are made with the upper body balanced over the support leg. The arm on the side of the support leg is raised above the head to create a counterbalanced effect. When the balance arm is up, the opposite arm should be neatly rolled behind the hip. This creates a clear path of vision to the kicking foot and allows fluid movement of the hip region and good leg extention. One final check for your form on the outside and back kick is to draw an imaginary straight line from the tip of your outstretched balance arm to your kicking foot. If your form is correct, this line should pass through your head and shoulder.



Have you hit a plateau? Is your game not improving? Tune in to my next issue for exciting new drills and tips to help add new life to your game!

One of the first footbag groups to form was the Oregon City Footbag Pioneer Club, and it sponsored its own tournaments. Others popped up around the Pacific northwest and down through California. By the mid '80s a "standing footbag circle" had developed at Stanford University (though its club wouldn't form until 1992) and competitions were being held at U.C. Berkeley.

Though John Stalberger had been using footbag to improve lateral coordination, he collected many first place trophies in the process. "Johnny was unbeatable in singles," Kenny Shults recalls. "He never lost a match and only lost one game in his singles career." Stalberger partnered with both Jane Wievesiek and Maxell Smith, Jr. in net doubles and these teams were formidable.

Champions delivering a consistently high level of performance were starting to emerge in the late '70s and early '80s, and eventually the sport began to see dropless routines by freestyle competitors like Etienne Constable, Kenny Shults, Samantha (Sam) Conlon, Bruce Guettich, Greg Cortopassi, Peter Irish, Carol Wedemeyer, and Rick Reese.

And just as the sport of footbag was beginning to spread across the U.S. and Canada, it reached the shores of Europe.



Allan Petersen in a Hacky Sack® ad

Footbag spreads to Europe



Torben "Wigger" Hansen, a Danish school teacher, reportedly brought the first Hacky Sack® to Europe in 1980. He began kicking in Copenhagen, Denmark with other early adopters including Stephen Skriver and Henrik Borring, becoming the country's earliest champions in the sport.

Wigger and Skriver formed the first European footbag club in 1982 called High Society. It was quickly followed by two other Danish clubs: Jumpin' Jack Flash Hacky Sack® Stars and Zick Zack Hacky Sack.®

Aside from Wigger's imported Hacky Sack,® the only footbags available in Denmark at that time were hand-made. When Allan Petersen was first introduced to the sport in the summer of 1983, Hacky Sack® products weren't yet available in European stores. A friend directed him to Fælledparken, a large public park located next to the soccer stadium in Copenhagen, where a young woman was selling hand-stitched footbags. Petersen still owns that first footbag (at right) purchased from her.



early footbag purchased in the 1980s
at Fælledparken, Copenhagen
(Petersen collection)



Kenny Shults, age 17

In 1983, John Stalberger traveled to Europe with his business partner, Lee Kennedy, as well as Mag Hughes and the young kicking prodigy, Kenny Shults. Through his company, Kenncorp, Lee Kennedy owned the rights to the Hacky Sack® brand outside the U.S.

The group first hit Paris, where Hughes and Shults performed footbag skills at the SISEL sporting goods show. Shults, who was 17 at the time, remembers the exhibitions as excellent practice. "We had to control the footbag to keep it from going out into the people walking by," Shults said. "We had to make it exciting to watch and we had to be able to play for many hours each day. We played one-pass power style with the footbag rarely passing higher than waist high going back and forth from about 8 to 10 feet apart. Hour after hour. This really helped to develop skills for the net game."

From Paris, the group traveled to Munich, Germany for the ISPO sports fair, where Shults met the legendary soccer player Alain Giresse of the French World Cup soccer team. An agent for Giresse spotted Shults kicking and escorted him to the booth where Giresse was signing autographs. "I showed some of my best tricks and Giresse seemed quite impressed," Shults remembers. "Freestyle footbag was very much in its infancy at that time so the best tricks were things like the flying clipper, dragon fly, around-the-world, mirage, and my signature double-around-the-world."

Finally, the group arrived in Copenhagen, Denmark to meet with the High Society club. A few months earlier, in April of 1983, Wigger had organized the first footbag tournament in Europe, held in Skælskør on the southwestern shore of Denmark's main island of Sjælland (Zealand). Called the World's First Danish Hacky Sack® Footbag Championships, it included events in singles and doubles net as well as footbag golf, long kick, most kicks completed, and freestyle kicks. Wigger took first place in single kick in that year but because the sport was so new, the event wasn't well attended. The first official European Championship was held in Copenhagen in 1984.



Torben Wigger, Henrik Borring, and Stephen Skriver
playing in the first European Championships held in Copenhagen



Torben Wigger leading
a circle kick with Danish kids



Maxell Smith, Jr. demonstrating in Japan

At this time, the best way to obtain an official Hacky Sack® brand footbag in Europe was through the several players' associations that were springing up. In 1984, the French Footbag Association was organized by Pascal Marechal. The World Footbag Association sent a team to France, headed up by Garwin Bruce, to perform kicking demonstrations for newspapers, television, radio, and at professional soccer games. Soon, with the help of touring instructors like Garwin Bruce, Maxell Smith, Jr., and Mag Hughes, kids were learning to kick footbag all across Europe and Japan, just as similar teaching efforts were going on across the U.S. and Canada.



Coach Garwin Bruce makes learning quick and easy for French athletes.

Team Hacky Sack® is born

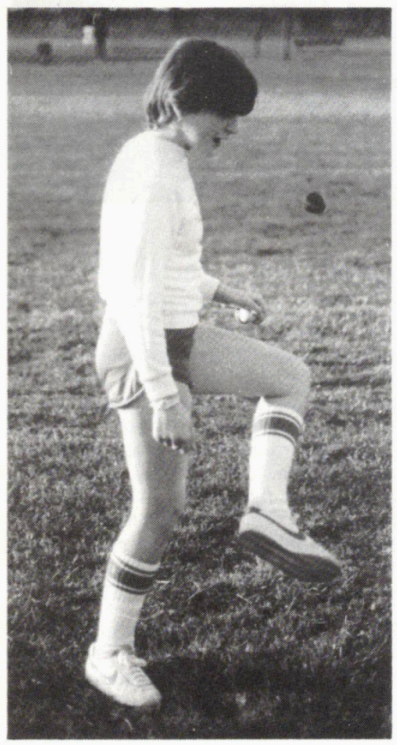


In 1984, the two "Franks" formed the Belgian Footbag Federation: Frank Cotteleer and Frank Van Dyck, who were also official Hacky Sack® distributors. They put together a team of four high-school athletes, Dirk Horemans, Eric van de Leur, Danny Deceulaer, and Koen Peeters, to demonstrate the sport and invited Mag Hughes and his wife, Cheryl Aubin Hughes, to come to Belgium and train the team.

"Frank Cotteleer's business card was simple," Mag Hughes remembers, "white with his title, marketing consultant and his name above in all lower-case letters. He was a dignified European businessman, gracious, kind, and always in a coat and tie. He loved sports and was a part owner in a Belgian professional basketball team. He was big on American fads and figured Hacky Sack,® the new American sport, was going to be big." That same year, the Belgian national baseball team started a tradition of handing out footbags to opposing teams at major competitions, a tradition that continued for years.

Only a small group of kickers participated in the Belgium footbag tournament that year: nine between the ages of 12 and 15, and eleven over the age of 16. Hughes recalled that thirty-two people came together to offer a free lunch for the kickers and "eat together as one big family."

Hughes worked with the Belgian team for several months while living in Antwerp. In addition to their training, the team visited schools, malls, sporting goods stores, and various sporting events in Germany, Austria, and France. This small group of four Belgian demonstrators expanded into Team Hacky Sack.® The team included kickers from Europe and the U.S., with Tricia Sullivan George and Dave Robinson coming to Europe in 1984 for an eight-month tour. The various groups comprising Team Hacky Sack® would travel to holiday camps, shopping malls, beaches, and carnivals demonstrating footbag skills and interacting with the public.



Tina Louise Lightning, at 13, is the youngest member of Team Hacky Sack and the only girl at present. her personal record stands at 224 consecutive kicks, which is the highest British girls' score to our knowledge.



Dave Robinson, Tricia Sullivan George, and Garry Griggs

The U.K. members of Team Hacky Sack® included Garry Griggs, Simon Yates, Grant Montgomery, Ian Mitchell-Innes, Tina Louise Lightning, and Simon Forrester, who would publicly demo Powersack, in which two people kicked back and forth, ten to twelve feet apart.

The British Hacky Sack® Association (BHSA) was formed by Ian Mitchell-Innes, who was an official Hacky Sack® distributor. In the BHSA welcome letter sent to new members, Garry Griggs commented on the emergence of these groups: "Players' associations have been set up in Belgium, Denmark, America, Canada, and England to date, and many other countries are expected to follow shortly. By the end of 1985 it is anticipated that there will be well over six million players in participating countries throughout the world." Another group of skilled kickers was forming in Finland, including Justin Sexton and Jukka Peltola.



Simon Yates, Grant Montgomery, and Ian Mitchell-Innes

One of the 1984 stops for Tricia Sullivan George and Dave Robinson was Dublin, Ireland, where the two were interviewed by Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) News while performing a net exhibition on Grafton Street. J.J. Fitzgibbon was the local importer of Hacky Sack® who was interviewed along with the Irish rugby player, Tony Ward. The demonstration drew a large crowd, and Ward described the sport's popularity being at "crazed proportions."



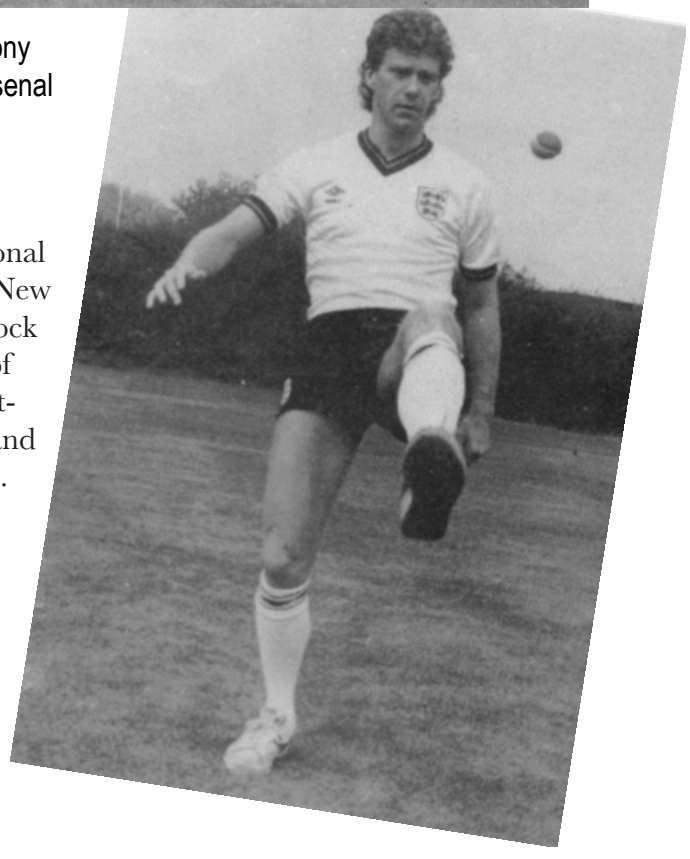
Tricia Sullivan George and
Dave Robinson demonstrating
footbag in Dublin, Ireland





Charlie Nicholas and Tony Woodcock of the New Arsenal soccer team

By the end of 1984, a promotional blitz had exploded across Europe. New Arsenal football stars Tony Woodcock of England and Charlie Nicholas of Scotland endorsed the sport of footbag, developing training methods and practicing together for the cameras.



The BHSA had held the first U.K. Footbag Tournament earlier in 1984. Mag Hughes took down the singles consecutive and net, with other firsts from Dirk Horemans and Erik van de Leur from the Belgian team, Dom Pasquariello, and Simon Yates. Footbag popularity was growing quickly in England and the following year Garry Griggs and Allan Petersen appeared on the BBC kids program, *Blue Peter*, to perform their footbag skills with the newest flourescent version of the Hacky Sack.®



Allan Petersen and Garry Griggs

The Danish contingent of Team Hacky Sack® was formed when John Stalberger and Lee Kennedy returned to Denmark a few years later to meet with Torben Wigger and Allan Petersen. The two kickers were sent some Hacky Sack® product to be distributed both via direct sales and as tournament prizes. Wigger and Petersen first demonstrated in Paris, kicking as street performers in front of the Centre Pompadou that houses France's National Museum of Modern Art. Centre Pompadou was a perfect venue for demonstrating footbag because it featured outdoor chairs and benches for drawing crowds. "We'd start kicking," Petersen remembers, "and there would be a big circle of people around us."



Torben Wigger and Allan Petersen

The rate of participation in Denmark's High Society group was low. Unlike the heads of the other associations throughout Europe, Torben Wigger wasn't set up as a Hacky Sack® distributor. Eventually, High Society dissipated and, as a result, Allan Petersen and Albert Laverick formed the Danish Footbag Association (Dansk Footbag Forbund) in 1986 to fill the void. The group expanded on what Wigger had started and drew some talented kickers including Remi Kristensen, Søren "Spoon" Ravnkilde, Tim Gertsen, Jakob Hall, and Bjarne Everberg as a solid group of competitive kickers was forming in Denmark.

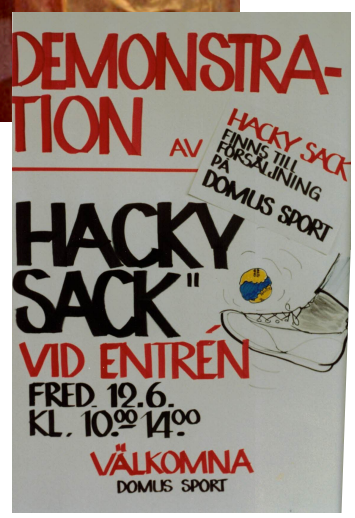
Because Petersen had reorganized the group, promotional queries were now directed to him and he handled events including stage and television appearances in Denmark. The Hamburgische Landesbank in Germany sent a letter to Petersen in 1988 asking to hire kickers to perform at a private celebration of the bank's 50th anniversary. Wigger, Petersen, and a few other members of the DFA performed. "They thought we were cheap entertainment," Petersen recalls, "but we thought we got paid well."



Søren (Spoon) Ravnkilde, Torben Wigger, Mag Hughes, Torsten Gorter, Allan Petersen, and Albert Laverick

HACKY SACK
DANSK FOOTBAG FORBUND





A month-long tour of Sweden was undertaken by Petersen and his kicking partner, Remi Kristensen. A Swedish Hacky Sack® distributor, Mats Johansson, had contracted Petersen and Kristensen to demonstrate at about thirty locations of the Åhléns department store, with daily shows held either outside or in the sporting goods area of the store.



Allan Petersen demonstrating footbag in a Swedish department store

In the summer of 1985, an ad agency representative was walking the streets of Copenhagen looking for campaign ideas. The rep spotted Petersen and Kristensen kicking in their "spot" and the rep was impressed with the sport and its ability to draw a crowd. She told them it was just the type of thing she was hoping to discover: something new and potentially trendy. The rep contracted them to tour Norway on behalf of the Snappy Burger chain of restaurants, where footbags and an instructional booklet were handed out as toys in the kids' meals. Petersen was also featured in a photo spread on restaurant placemats. The tour included restaurant locations in Oslo, Trondheim, and Bergen. Midway through, Albert Laverick joined the tour to replace Petersen, who was called home due to the death of his father.



Kristensen and Petersen demonstrating in Sweden



Petersen featured on Norwegian Snappy Burger placemat

The Sport

The "spot" in Copenhagen that drew so much attention was located in front of the ancient Helligånds Church (Helligåndskirken) at Amagertorv on Strøget, a pedestrian street where thousands of people would congregate. The Danish group also played footbag net in King's Garden (Kongens Have) outside Rosenborg Castle. A core contingent, including Bjarne Everberg, Albert Laverick, Jakob Hall, Allan Petersen, Tim Gertsen, Søren Ravnkilde, and Remi Kristensen kicked on the Strøget for 15 years, doing freestyle demos and selling bags. The Copenhagen locals eventually knew them and anticipated their presence on the Strøget. Many times other kickers, from both in and outside Copenhagen, sought them out to buy footbags, having heard about the spot where they were always kicking. But even if they weren't connecting with the public face-to-face, their many mentions in the European newspapers were helping to spread the word about footbag.



Petersen kicking on Strøget
in front of Helligåndskirken



Footbag kan spilles i en telefonboks. Smidighed og teknik er nøgleord i den nye sport. 23-årige Bjarne Everberg er med til verdensmesterskaberne i USA.

Footbag can be played in a phone booth. Agility and technique is key in this new sport. 23-year-old Bjarne Everberg is part of the group going to the U.S. World Championships.



Allan og Albert er mestre i at holde den lille læderpose i luften, og de håber en dag at blive berømte

HOPLA

■■ Højre vrist, venstre vrist. Knæ.

Bolden flyver over hovedet. *fra fod til fod, fra knæ til knæ.*

Time efter time står Allan og Albert på Strøget i København og jonglerer med den lille læderpose fyldt med plastikgranulat – smuldret plastik.

De træner mellem seks og otte timer.

Hver dag.

Indtil nu har de haft tid nok, fordi de er arbejdsløse.

De håber footbag bliver deres vej ud af de arbejdsløses rækker.

De er allerede europa-mestre og vandt bronze ved årets VM.

EM i London vandt de suverænt med tre ud af fire førstepladser og en andenplads.

Albert Hartmann Petersen på 25 år og Allan Laverick på 22 år kaster sig nu ud i det professionelle ræs. De satser alt på at blive de bedste.

De er kommet i stald hos New Wave Models med den tidligere Walkers-guitarist, Jan Hansen, som manager og står for en længere turné på diskotekerne i Jylland.

Som de bedste footbag're i Europa regner Jan Hansen med, at de bliver idoler på linie med fodboldstjernerne fra landsholdet.

Endnu er de dog henvist til at vise deres kunst på diskoteksernes dansescener. Konkurrencer med pengepræmier er der nemlig endnu kun få af. For det meste, som ved EM i London sidste år, kan de kun vinde et ur.

Turen til London betalte de selv, og deltagelsen i VM i Colorado kostede dem 12.000 kroner hver.

– Konkurrencen består af fire discipliner: »Free style« på fire minutter, »netspil«, med enten en eller to mand på hver side af nettet, »golf-sack« og »fest spark« hvor man skal holde bolden i luften så lang tid som muligt.

I to og en halv måned turnerede Allan i Vesttyskland sammen med verdensmesteren i friss-bee uden at tjene mere end til dagen og vejen.

– Jeg gjorde det både for at gøde jorden for sporten og for at lære det professionelle game. Hvordan man sælger sig selv. For at få erfaring.

Vi var syv, der kørte rundt i et folkevognsrugbrød til 40 bymarkeder og optrådte for op til 7000 tilskuere.

Alligevel er det ikke mere end halvandet år Allan har trænet footbag. Han så, hvordan Albert jonglerede med den lille læderbold på Strøget:

– Jeg gik hen og spurgte om jeg måtte prøve – og i løbet af ingen tid var jeg blevet fanatisk footbag'er.

Albert startede for to et halvt år siden, da han lånte en bold af en kammerat. – Jeg var straks så grebet af legen med bolden, at jeg fortsatte med at spille med den, selv om det begyndte at regne. I fire timer.

– Sådan går det for alle, der først begynder at sparke til den for sjov. Gadehandlerne nede på Strøget var i begyndelsen skide irriteret over, at vi trak kundernes opmærksomhed fra dem, men nu kan de næsten allesammen holde den i luften ti-tyve gange. Og vi forsøger at gøre andre unge interesseret i sporten, samtidig med at vi træner.

Oprindeligt kommer spillet fra USA, hvor Albert Strungman i 1972 opfandt spillet. Han er idag mangemillionær på at sælge og fremstille de små læderbolde. Hackey-sack's.

Allan og Albert håndsyer selv deres læderbolde, der ellers koster 50 kroner i handlen. Snart har de råd til købe boldene. Håber de.

TEKST: SIMON ADRIAN
FOTO: JACOB GILS

Allan og Albert øver hel dagen for at blive berøm på deres fantastiske evne til holde læderposerne i luften.

1985 WFA National Footbag Championships

FOOTBAG NET SINGLES ADVANCED

THIRD PLACE

Foreløbig er det blevet til europamesterska og de to gutter vare bronze ved V

Albert Laverick and Allan Petersen

Bolden danser

Footbag er sport for de hurtige

Af Jeppe Duvå

Footbag freestyle hedder en flot dans, som kræver hurtighed, præcision og kondition af sine udøvere. Partneren er en lille kugle — footbag'en — af kulørt svineskind. Footbag'en kom til Danmark fra USA for fire år siden, og med den en helt ny sport.

Den dyrkes nu herhjemme af en begrænset, men til gengæld toptrænet og hengiven kreds. Footbag kan spilles som freestyle til musik, som netspil med hold, som en art golf eller individuelt, hvor målet er at opnå flest spark uden at footbag'en ryger til jorden.

Foden er ketcheren, uanset hvad disciplinen hedder.

— De fleste tror, footbag bare er en gadeleg, fordi de har set os træne ved Helligåndskirken på Strøget. Men det er en social sport, hvor teknik og smidighed er altafgørende, siger den 27-årige Allan Hartmann Petersen, tre gange all round-vinder ved europamesterskaberne i footbag.

Allan og to andre danskere er i øjeblikket sendt til USA som footbag-landshold. De årlige verdensmesterskaber finder sted i Golden, Colorado. Byen er hjemsted for World Footbag Associaton, hvis danske aflægger hedder Dansk Footbag Forening.

— Derovre kan de bedste leve af sporten som professionelle. Herhjemme er den så ny, at vi selv syr boldene. Det bliver vi ved med, for de fabriksfremstillede bolde kan slet ikke måle sig med dem, vi selv laver i hånden, fortæller Allan, der er formand for de omkring 50 organiserede spillere i Danmark.

Freestyle er den sværeste disciplin, men også den fornemste. Den udtrykker det, der er sjælen i den nye sport.

To eller tre piger og drenge vender og drejer sig, hopper og danser for at holde den højst 38 gram tunge kugle gående i luften mellem hinanden. Til de store konkurrencer har spillerne på



De bedste herhjemme træner footbag 4-6 timer hver dag om sommeren. På den måde bliver spillet mere end en gadeleg, siger Allan Hartmann Petersen, 27 år.

Danish newspaper headline:
"The Ball is Dancing"



Hacky Sack-spillerne Tim Gertsen og Allan Hartmann Petersen - klar til at erobre medaljer ved VM i USA. (Foto: P. H. Seifert)

Danish newspaper headline:
"Fun and Games" (gøgl is an old term for "jester")

Back in the U.S. and Canada, kickers were appearing in newspapers, as well.



10—Rocky Mountain News Sun., July 15, 1984, Denver, Colo.

Here's a goofy way to get your kicks

Do it to music, do it freestyle; it's footbag

I don't know why, but walking down Colfax Avenue Friday toward the Capitol with Scott Cleere, Bill Bethurum and Jolaine Collins was about the goofiest thing I'd done all last week.

And I was ready for goofy.

Cleere and Bethurum were wearing these uniforms: yellow T-shirts, gray gym shorts, white socks with some kind of initials on them and matching white tennis shoes. Both were in disgustingly good shape, well tanned and appeared to be utterly wholesome.

They are practitioners and apostles of something called Hacky Sack, which is played with a small ball that is actually not a ball at all, but a footbag, and you bounce it off the inside of your foot, knees, whatever and see if you can keep it from touching the ground.

You can do this to music, you can do it over a net, you can do it freestyle. Footbags cost $4 to $9.

The game's been around a long time, but it's just starting to get official, and these two guys are on the leading edge of "low and slow," the sanctioned teaching phrase of Hacky Sack coaches everywhere. Low and slow.

John Coit

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS STAFF PHOTOS BY DEBRA REINGOLD

Above, Bill Bethurum, left, and Scott Cleere, both 26, show their stuff at Hacky Sack. Below, News columnist John Coit takes a whack at Hacky Sack with Bethurum and Cleere.

Bill Bethurum and Scott Cleere in the *Rocky Mountain News*



Getting his kicks

Portland's world-reigning footbag cha lives to kick up his heels.

By BILL DONAHUE
Special writer, The Oregonian

Ask almost anyone about Hacky Sack, and they'll say something like: It's a game Deadheads play to kill time, tapping a leather pouch about with their Birkenstocks as they sway to the lazy beat of their favorite band. Some might even know that the modern Hacky Sack was created in 1972 in Oregon City.

Then ask an agile, intent Portlander named Kenny Shults; after telling you it's a serious sport, he'll likely burst into action.

Shults snaps the little leather bag over his head, twirls beneath it, catches it on the toe of his sneaker, cradles it a moment, and then twists through an array of balletic moves that leaves an onlooker baffled.

Shults, ad director for a Clackamas software firm, is the reigning world champion of Hacky Sack. (More precisely, of footbag: Hacky Sack, like Frisbee, is a brand name; it's a term used only by laymen.)

Actually, the 24-year-old ad man has bagged six of the past seven championships, winning most recently last summer at the World Footbag Association Championships, Golden, Colo. He blew away more than 70 opponents with both his snazzy freestyle antics and in footbag net, a kind of volleyball for feet.

He also set a world speed record: 912 footbag kicks in five minutes — resulting in "a burning kind of pain in my shins, a feeling that my legs were on fire."

Shults didn't land any endorsements, but he did win about $350 and caught the unlikely attention of The Wall Street Journal. The paper called Shults the sport's "superstar," crediting him with reinventing footbag in the same way Wayne Gretzky re-invigorated hockey.

Shults is the creator of many of the sport's flashiest freestyle moves — the around-the-world, the stomping-double legover, the whirl, the swirl. They're strange, twisting maneuvers that defy accurate description, declaring themselves the creations of a man obsessed.

He began by playing eight to 10 hours daily, focusing on a game called footbag consecutive — keeping the sack aloft for as long as possible. Shults was marvelous at it: In his first contest, in 1980, he set a world's record, booting it 4,096 times.

That feat, now seems like ancient history to Shults. "There's more excitement in footbag these days," he says. "There're more events; the sport has changed drastically."

He should know: Over the past decade, Shults has lived and breathed footbag, traveling the world on footbag exhibitions and contests. He's even married to a world-ranked footbagger named — we're not making this up — Kendall KIC.

What does it take to stay a world-class footbagger? Shults' training schedule includes riding his bike 15 miles or so a day and working on his "symmetry."

"There are tricks that I can do a lot better with my right side than with my left, and vice versa," he explains. "I want to teach my wrong side how to think."

The Oregonian/JOEL GA

Kenny Shults shows off the style of a world footbag cham

Kenny Shults in the *The Oregonian*


La Presse

Sports

L'affaire Festina empoisonne le climat au Tour de France

Pages 8 et 9

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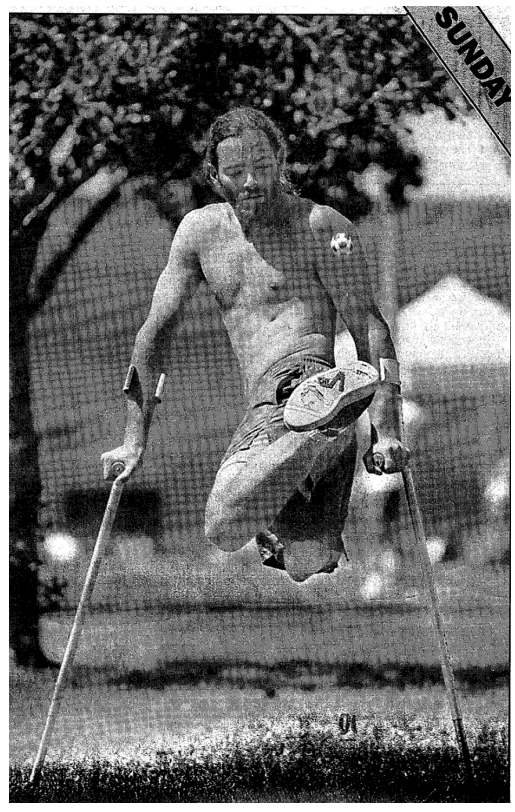
championnat mondial de footbag

Canadian newspaper featuring Emmanuel Bouchard and Sébastien Verdy


Greeley Hacky Sack entrants glitter

Scott Cleere



Jacob Hankamer

Getting in their kicks

Footbag regionals draw a crowd to Zilker Park

By Ron Stefani
American-Statesman Correspondent

Sean Flynn and Randy Mulder's footbag careers have taken parallel paths.

The two started playing footbag, commonly known as Hackey Sack, together in college and wound up facing each other Sunday at Zilker Park in the singles net finals of the Southern Regional Footbag Championships.

Thirty-three other competitors showed how footbag has evolved from a faddish social sport to full-fledged competition. The regionals included net, which is a game similar in rules to tennis or volleyball, golf and freestyle.

A footbag is a tightly packed leather beanbag about the size of a golf ball.

"We were both just hackers," said Mulder, 28, "but we wanted to take it a little farther. You want to excel in this just like in any other sport."

Mulder has realized that potential, winning the world doubles net title the past three years and adding a singles championship last year. Flynn, a 25-year-old who specializes in freestyle events, holds the world record for consecutives, the most kicks in five minutes, with 884.

Craig Lord of Dallas is working toward his sixth consecutive state net doubles title. This year, he paired with James Harley of Austin.

"I can usually hold my own against any of them," said Lord, 45, surveying the crowd of players in their 20s, "but experience counts for a lot in this game."

Harley, who teamed with Lord for the first time, said, "It doesn't matter who you team him with. If you want to win, he'll take you there."

The future of footbag is in the hands of a younger generation that seems determined to keep the sport alive, even if there are some conflicts.

"Sometimes we play in the halls between classes," said Matt Joyce, a senior at Austin High. "The hall monitor told us we couldn't play, but the principal gave us permission. So we went to (the principal), and he let us keep playing."

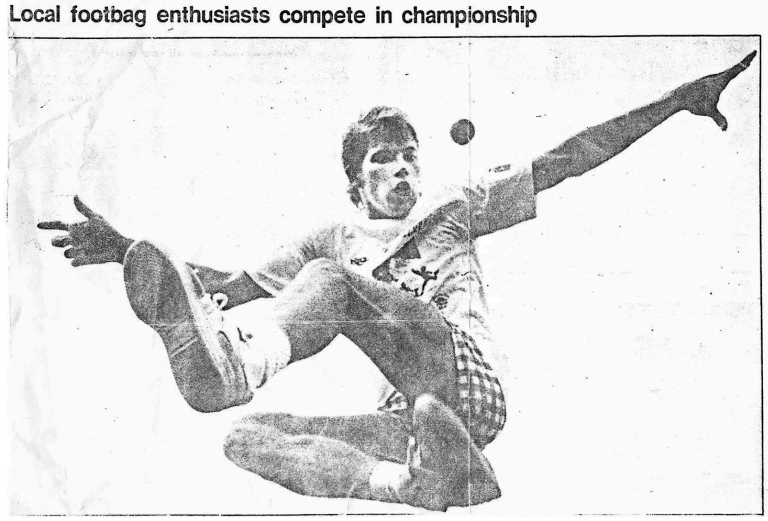


Photo by Tom Stevens
Davie Piper returns a shot in a footbag semifinal match.

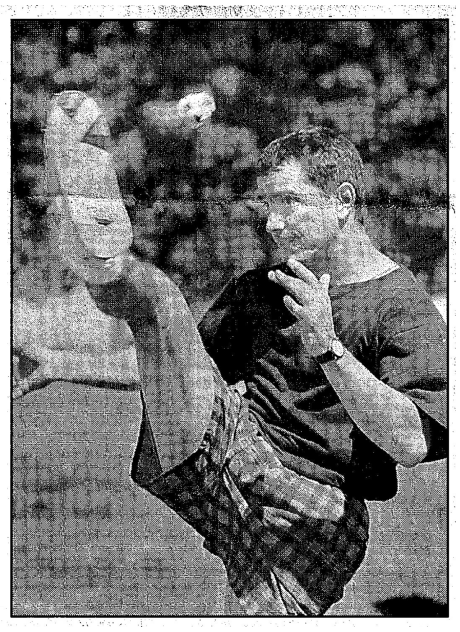
Texas newspaper depicting Davie Piper and featuring
Sean Flynn, Randy Mulder, Craig Lord, James Harley, and Matt Joyce

Footbag follies

Local footbag enthusiasts compete in championship



Rick Reese



Scott Cleere

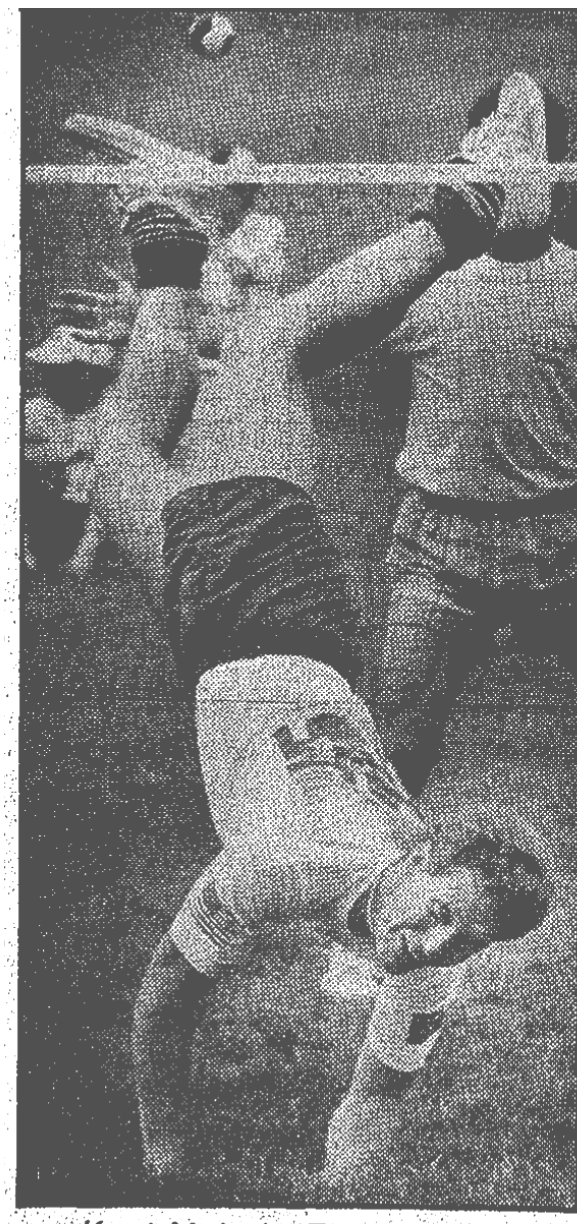


Staff Photo/ Hayne Palmour

A kick in time

North County resident Michael Adcock practices foot bagging techniques at Moonlight Beach in Encinitas Monday afternoon.

Michael Adcock



Kent Meireis/The Coloradoan

FOOTBAGGERS: Rick Reese of Fort Collins, left, practices a flying clipper kick Saturday in City Park for Freestyle Footbag competition. Meanwhile, Bill Bethurum of Fort Collins executes a bicycle spike kick practicing Doubles Footbag Net with partner Scott Cleere for the Stubbies Intermountain Footbag Championships. Sunday's events begin at 9 a.m.

Footbag: an Introduction

BY ANDREW MORGAN

It's called footbag, Hacky-Sack, even fag-bag, but further elaboration is usually required; "You know, the little ball you kick around in a circle." Imagine having to describe hockey or basketball everytime someone asked you about 'your sport'. To footbag players, however, it's just part of being addicted to a sport with a profile somewhat lower than pétanque. "You know, French lawn bowling".

The many theories surrounding the birth of the game are an interesting reflection of the murky nature of footbag lore (Hacky Sack is the registered trademark under which Wham-O first marketed the bag, not the name of the sport.) One such theory attributes it's discovery to the Mayan civilization of pre-Columbian Central America. Another gives as its place of origin ancient Korea, where participants attached a feather to the bag, decreasing it's speed and making it easier to hit. Yet another, more modern version is that it recently appeared in the mountainous regions of Oregon and northern California, where hyperactive rock-climbers, after a day on the cliffs, would kick around rolled-up strips of hand tape before climbing into their VW buses and driving into the sunset. Pick your favourite and share it with a friend, they'll believe you.

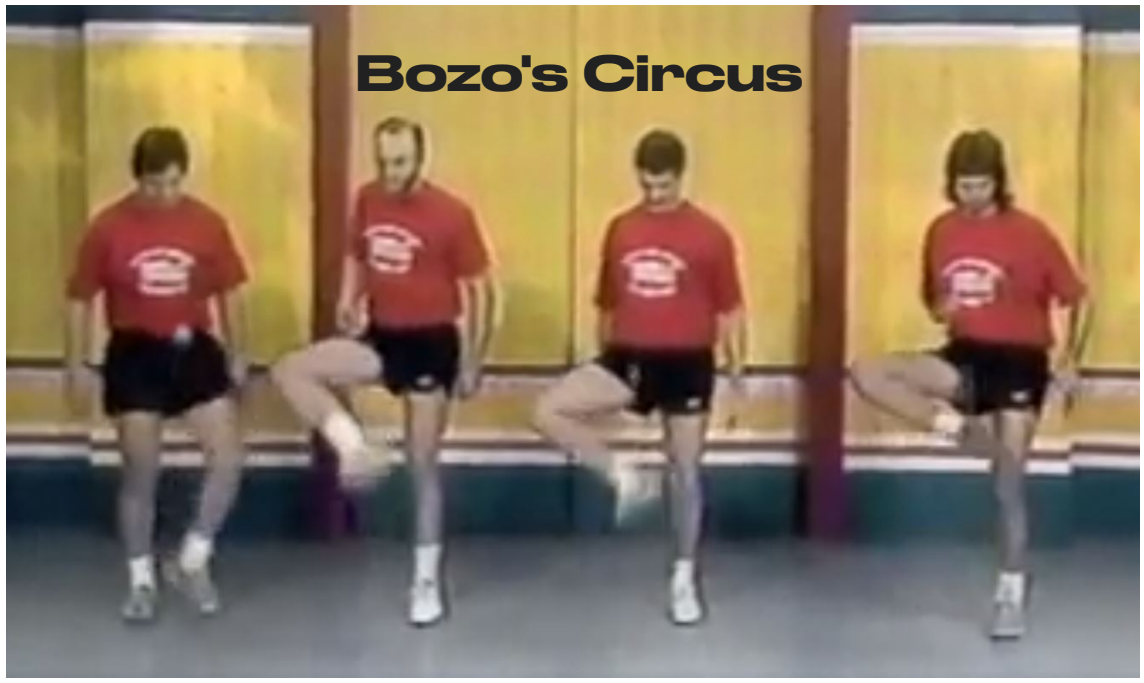
Pick up a footbag and try kicking it around using only your legs and feet. If you didn't pull something trying to keep the stupid thing in the air, you undoubtedly will groping for it under the sofa. Hence rule number one: Play outside (or in a gym); you will need a larger area than you think.

Footbag is difficult for the novice for two general reasons; first, it uses a type of co-ordination (foot-eye) that North Americans are probably most conscious of when clipping their toenails and second; it is a ball game that uses as a contact surface one that is considerably less smooth than a tennis racket, hockey stick, or even the hand, namely your foot.

Footbag is thus not a sport tailored to traditional North American strengths. Europeans (Latinos also) have the unfair advantage of having been weaned on soccer. How often has hockey legend Howie Meeker extoled the virtues of simple skating skills over shooting skills and the European player's mastery of this area? (skip it, Don Cherry). To see how this ability can be applied to footbag, just throw a bag at a North American and a European. The European will likely be able to control the bag using soccer toe kicks. The Calgarian, however, will probably catch it and say "Sorry man, I, like, didn't bring my racket." This temptation to catch or hit the bag using the hands is one the novice will have to resist for some time.

Continued in next issue





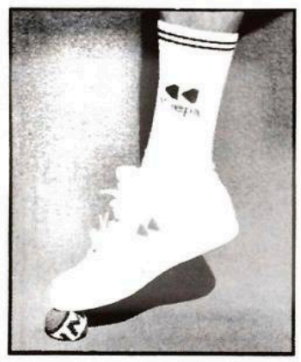
Scott Davidson, Ted Martin, Andy Linder, and Steve Smith on WGN-TV in Chicago

Make Your Life A Little Easier

Stop bending over – get the toe pick-up, down

By Chris Donofrio

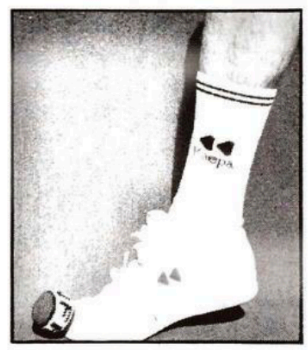
Something every player at every skill level has to face eventually is the



"earth stall" or "gravity check," also known as the drop. A drop doesn't usually stop the fun, because most players simply bend over, pick up the footbag, and hand toss to a new rally. But if your back is getting a little sore, if you are a footbag purist, or if you just want to keep your feet busy, the toe pick-up is for you.

Impressive Move: There are many different ways to pick up a footbag using only your feet, but the toe pick-up is one of the simplest and fastest methods for the beginner to learn, and it's also very impressive to spectators even in the middle of a high energy footbag freestyle routine.

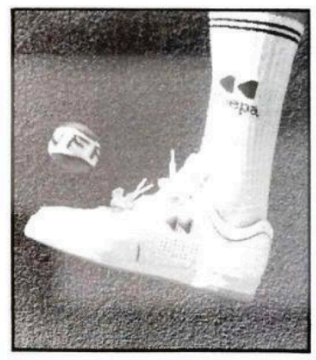
How to Start: To perform the toe pick-up correctly, remember to keep your heel off the ground. When the footbag is lying on the ground, start the toe pick-up by pointing your toes



and touching the footbag lightly with the sole of your shoe beneath your big toe. Next, by rolling the footbag toward you and putting your toes on the ground simultaneously, make a ramp with the front of your shoe for the footbag to roll up on. Then flex your toes up and raise your foot at the same time, and the footbag will lift off your foot ready to be kicked.

Speed and Timing: You can perform the toe pick-up at any foot speed, but to begin, use a slow, smooth foot motion. You will also find that by beginning the roll of the footbag up over your big toe, you can keep the footbag from going off the outside of your foot. And timing is crucial. Feeling exactly when to flex your toes and lift your foot is essential for perfecting this move.

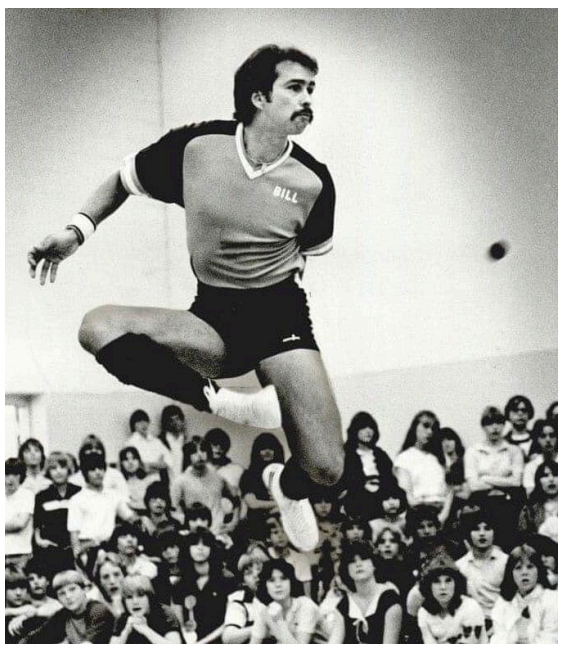
Direct Its Flight: With a little bit of



practice, you'll be able to direct the footbag with the toe pick-up anywhere you desire or simply balance it behind the knuckles of your toes.

Promotional & instructional tours

While the different groups of Team Hacky Sack® were touring Europe, other demonstrators were doing the same thing in the U.S. and Canada. The NHSA sent out footbag instructors like Bill Hayne, David Frazier, Gale Bigler, Garry Gaman, Robert Conover, and Mike Noonan to teach others how to kick. Eventually teams toured the country and taught footbag skills in schools. Rick Kaufman, the founder of the East Coast Footbag group, put together the first instructor camp in 1981.



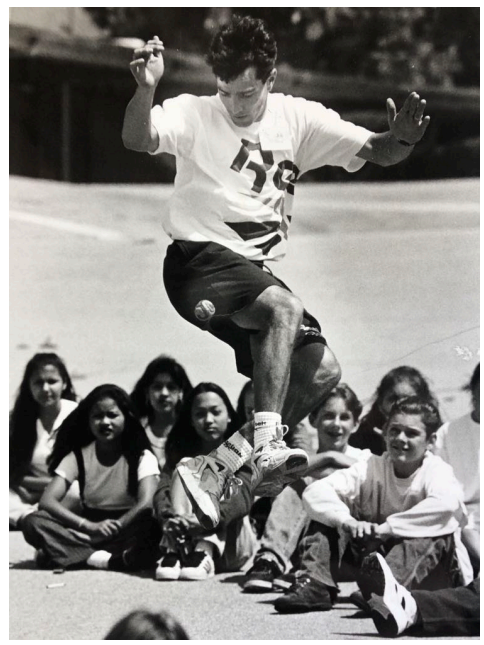
Bill Hayne



Peter Shunny and Bruce Guettich

The World Footbag Association organized the following group of touring pros who demonstrated the sport in schools:

Bruce Guettich	Paul Hunley
Greg Cortopassi	Jon Lind
Peter Shunny	Randy Nelson
Scott "Mag" Hughes	Allan Petersen
Jeff Johnson	Dan Zahner
Dave Robinson	Scott Milne
Jim Caveney	Bill Bethurum
Andrew Gunn	Rick Reese
Chris Donofrio	David Yevin
Jeff Hass	Philo K. Holland III
Scott Cleere	Mark Defilippo



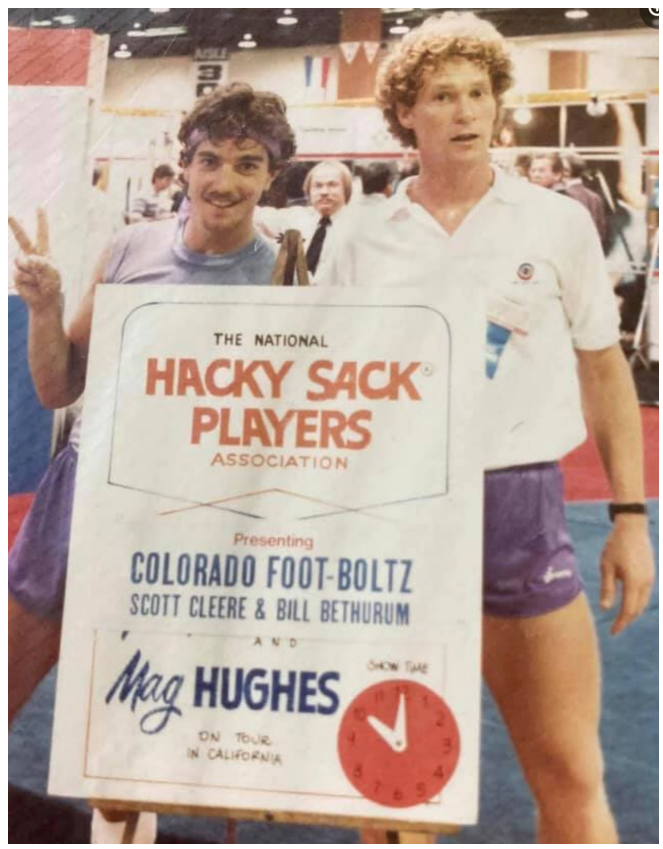
Scott Cleere



John Stalberger



Gary Lautt & Mag Hughes instructing the U.S. Ski Team

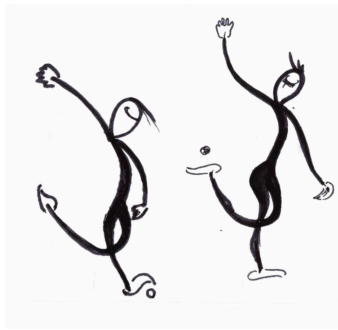


Scott Cleere and Bill Bethurum

By the late 1980s, footbag was well established in Europe, with tournaments being held in many countries. American kickers like Bill Bethurum, Scott Cleere, and Craig Atkinson joined Mag Hughes in attending these tournaments, including such locations as Donauinsel in Vienna, Austria and Dortmund, Germany. Jack Lentz attended an early tournament in the Czech Republic.

Most of the sport's early pioneers were active in teaching and promoting it. Andy Linder demonstrated footbag with Bruce Guettich and Greg Cortopassi in 1983 and 1984 at the National Sporting Goods Association show in Chicago. Yves Archambault was instrumental in promoting the net game in Montreal, Canada, organizing the first World Championships outside the U.S. in 1996. Scott Milne was also promoting footbag in Canada, but on the other side, in Vancouver. Steve Smith, with many first-place golf (a total of 74) and net titles, directed tournaments from 1990 to 2001. And Kendall KIC, the wife of Kenny Shults and a kicker in her own right, was also very active promoting and organizing events, overseeing the U.S. Open for more than a decade. She also directed Worlds in 1997 and again in 2017. "Kendall was probably one of the biggest, most influential tournament directors of all time," said Tricia Sullivan George.





A day in the life of school tours

Peter Shunny and Allan Petersen







Allan Petersen and Peter Shunny


Easter Seals
SERVING THE HANDICAPPED
1ST annual
Hacky Sack
Kick-a-Thon
SATURDAY AUGUST 20
EAST DELTA PARK
National Hacky Sack Association
P.O. BOX 434
Clackamas, Ore. 97015
Easter Seals Society
4343 S.W. Corbett
Portland, Ore. 97201
228-5108

Competitions and tournaments

The First Annual Kick-A-Thon was held in Portland, Oregon in the late 1970s, organized by the National Hacky Sack® Association (NHSA). Ted Huff brought his marketing background and organizational skills to the table, coordinating the event not only as a competition, but also as a fundraising vehicle for Easter Seals. Participants raised pledge donations for every hour they kicked and many hours were logged. Mag Hughes remembers kicking for five hours straight on that day; he also recalls the resulting leg cramps that made his bike ride home a particular challenge.

Aside from the fundraising pledges, the focus of that first competition centered on consecutive kicks. In these early days of the sport's evolution, tricks and maneuvers hadn't yet been conceived. There were no choreographed freestyle routines or even attempts to stall or roll the bag. The competition focused on the greatest number of kicks without a drop. As players pushed themselves and competition intensified, consecutive kick records were quickly established and just as quickly broken. This meant that performances grew longer and longer and leg cramps were becoming the norm.



Kick-A-Thon at Delta Park in Portland
l-r: Paul Vorvick, Greg Cortopassi, Walt Mason, Rita Buckley, Gary Finley, and Mike Noonan



Bruce Guettich and Jim Caveney

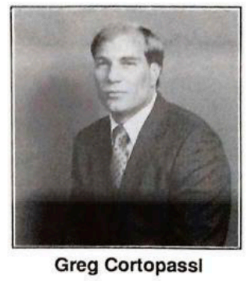
The World Footbag Championships would initially become a staple event in Golden, Colorado. "I remember a tournament back in the day in Golden," tells Derrick Fogle, "and the fateful 'storm' finals that year. Kenny Shults went out there as a storm front was moving in, wind whipping wildly everywhere, and just absolutely *smoked* it, right before the competition was called off, and moved indoors. That performance has stood as perhaps the most incredible display of footbag mastery I have ever witnessed."

1989 Worlds Staff

TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS



Bruce Guettich



Greg Cortopassi

SUPERVISORS
Peter Shunny
Chris Donofrio

SCORING DESK
Larry Graves
Pauline Bechtel

FOOTBAG NET
Scott "Mag" Hughes

FOOTBAG FREESTYLE
Brent & Jody Welch
Reed Gray

FOOTBAG CONSECUTIVE
Chris Donofrio

FOOTBAG GOLF
Jeff Johnson
John Graves

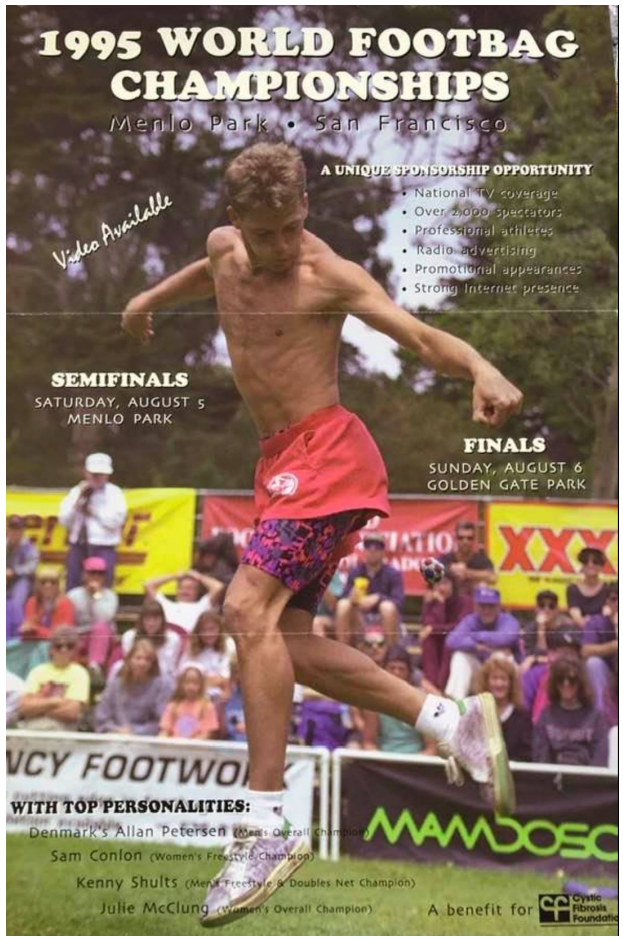
FOOD CONCESSIONS
Golden Lyons
Bruce Kennedy
Bill Pazar

STATISTICIANS
Linda Bertelson
Jim Caveney

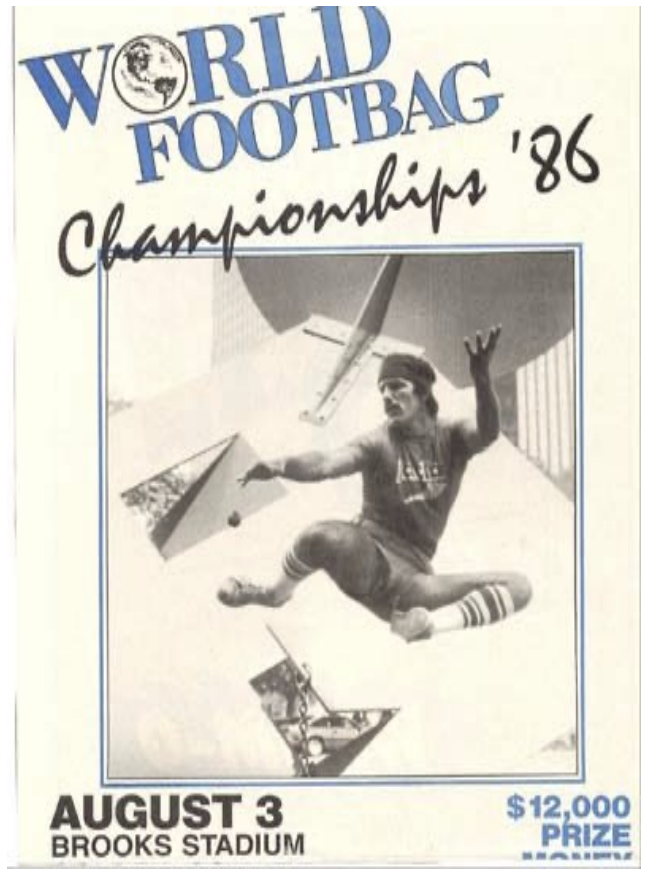
SOUND
Peter Shunny

OFFICIAL VIDEO CREW
John Sandy Productions

Jay Moldenhauer, sharing a Rippin' yarn: "Remember the Kaepa tennis shoes? Rick Reese came up to us [Jay and Greg Nelson] after watching us around 1989, I believe, and said we needed a pair of these shoes. They were a two-separate-laced shoe with a big toe box for catching the bag. We didn't know where to get any. He disappeared and came back a bit later with a pair for Greg and myself. So many good memories."



Rippin' Rick Reese



Tim Vozar

After 1993, Worlds moved from Golden to other locales like San Francisco, Montreal, Vancouver, Chicago, and beyond. "We started hosting tournaments in Berkeley as the Bay Area Footbag League (BAFL) in 1987," recalls world champion Brent Welch. "Prior to that, Chris Ott was hosting combined Footbag and Flying Disc tournaments up at Sonoma State in Cotati, California. We had a few Berkeley Freestyle Festivals, and then hosted the Western Regionals on Memorial Day weekend for several years. That tournament morphed into the Green Cup hosted by P.T. Lovern and Johnny Leys. In the fall we would host a Pro Am tournament in Golden Gate Park, which was where several folks, like Edwin Veltman, found our community." Other events of note included the Illinois tournaments coordinated by Andy Linder and the Xmas Jams for freestylers, organized and promoted for many years by Jay Moldenhauer and Paul Munger. Ian Kobayashi was the tournament director of both the Kitsilano Open and the Vancouver Open.



The European players were regularly traveling to American tournaments, as well. Western locales such as Portland, where the sport was born, Vancouver, the Bay Area, Texas, Colorado, and Montreal all hosted competitions. In 1985, Pennsylvania became a footbag hot spot as Joe and Brenda Solonoski put on the Funtastik tournaments at Shanks Park in Hershey, a tradition that began in 1985. The Funtastik store then opened in 1987.

"We ended up at 1991 Funstastiks and got blown away, and hooked," writes Vince Bradley. "There I saw Martin Côté and Yves Archambault battle for 1st place singles net. Spent most of the weekend playing doubles against Jack Lentz and his partner... Had a blast."



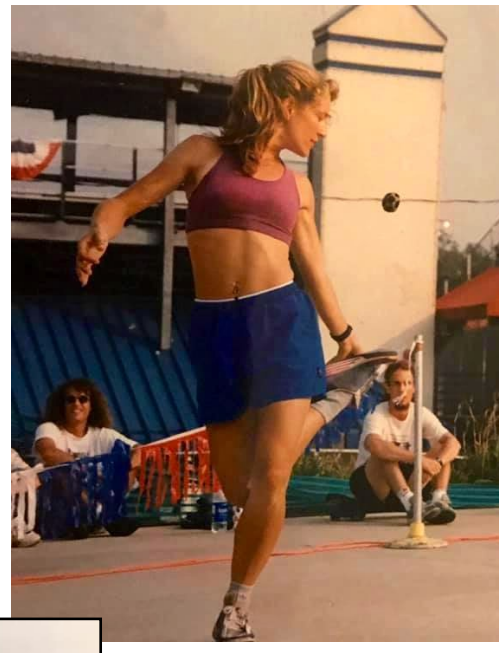
Joe Solonoski (at right) at the entry table for the Funtastik tournament



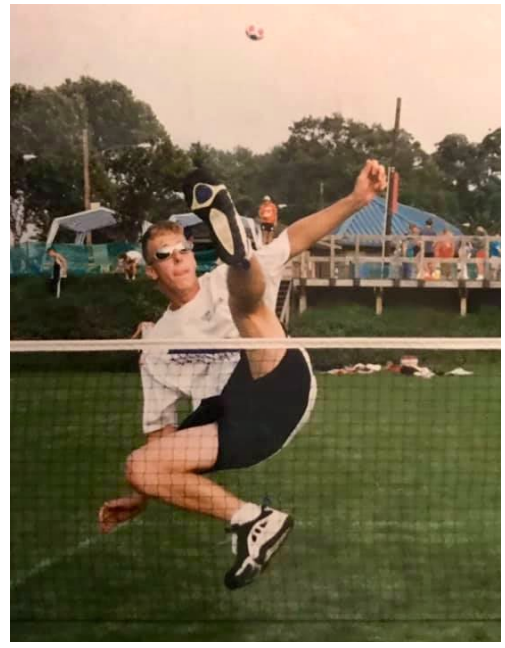
Joe and Brenda Solonoski



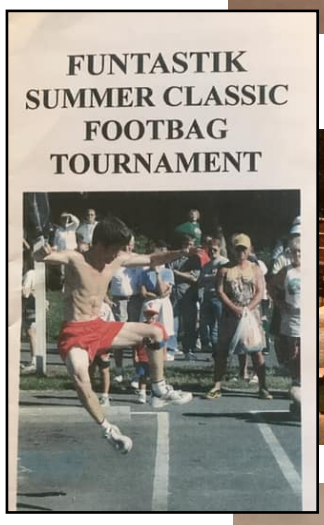
Andy Linder demo at Hersheypark



Sam Conlon
photo: Jamie Lepley



Joe Lepley
photo: Jamie Lepley







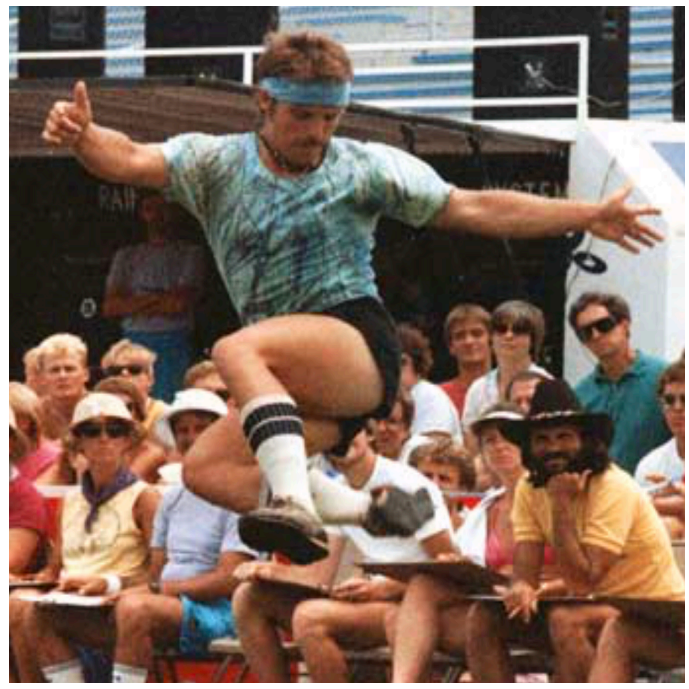
Scott Davidson
photo: Jamie Lepley



Heather Squires Thomas
photo: Jamie Lepley

In the early years, the sport was more or less defined as consecutive kicking without drops. Footbag circles were more of a social phenomenon and rarely competitive, but the object was always to keep the bag from hitting the ground. Among the more serious kickers, time spent "shredding" or "hacking the sack" was usually done in an attempt to break personal best records. Eventually, the sport of footbag would expand into a net game, freestyle, and other offshoots including golf and even cricket, but that didn't mean the pursuit of consecutive kicks would disappear. And in the area of consecutive kicks, many records have been established and surpassed.

One of the earliest world records for consecutive kicks was set in 1979 by Jack Schoolcraft with 2,705 kicks at the First Annual MDA/Hacky Sack® Challenge in Portland, Oregon. In 1981, an early women's record was set by Kalia Kliban, who was introduced to the sport when Greg Cortopassi came to her high school promoting footbag. In 1981, she traveled to Nationals and achieved 393 kicks in just under five minutes. "Jim Caveney and Gary Lautt were along on that trip. I do still have two medals from that event: 3rd place in team freestyle and 2nd place in novice doubles."



Jack Schoolcraft



Gary Lautt, Kalia Kliban, Jim Caveney

WOMEN'S WORLD RECORD HOLDER

The women kickers of the world are becoming more and more prominent in their footbag abilities and are gaining strength in numbers everyday. One such lady, whose accomplishments were highlighted by a new women's world record in consecutive kicks is Kalia Kliban. After only one year of practice this eighteen year old from Fairfax, California kicked the footbag 393 times in just under five minutes. This record was set during the 1981 National Tournament and will be submitted to the Guiness Book of World Records.

Kalia attended Drake High School in Fairfax, where she was first introduced to Greg Cortopassi and the American Footbag Games. After participating in 1981 NHSA Nationals, she decided to attend Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Uncommitted to a major, she presently expresses a strong interest in the Russian language.

The NHSA views Kalia's accomplishment as an indication to what the future holds for women in the footbag world. Kalia plans on furthering her record and will, no doubt, do so. She also challenges other women to break her record.

It was at the 1979 tournament that future superstar Kenny Shults would emerge on the scene at the young age of twelve. The tourney was a benefit for Muscular Dystrophy and Shults remembers paying fifteen dollars for fifteen attempts to set a consecutive kick record. He won the under-16 division with his best rally of 456 kicks.

For Shults, that was just the beginning. He went home from the tournament and didn't put his footbag down until he was consistently breaking Schoolcraft's record in his basement. At the 1980 Mike Marshall Memorial Tournament, the first national event held in Oregon City, Shults officially broke Schoolcraft's record with a rally of 4,096 kicks.

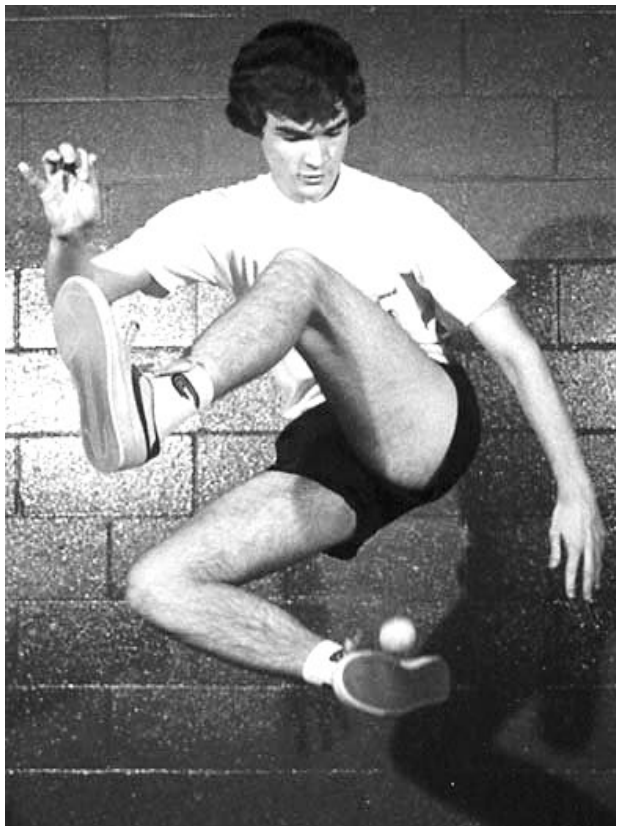


original pouch that held Shults' first Hacky Sack®



Kenny Shults

Andy Linder would break Shults' record in 1983 with 17,872 consecutive kicks at the World Championships in Portland, Oregon. He was given his first footbag in 1981 by his high school biology teacher, Dale Oldis, who would let him kick in the classroom after finishing his school-work. Like many other stand-outs, Linder began kicking footbag after a shift away from soccer due to knee problems affecting his cartilage caused by chondromalacia. "The lighter footbag did not hurt my knees the way a soccer ball did," he said.



Andy Linder



Ted Martin and Andy Linder

Linder went on to shatter his own record with a total of 36,230 consecutive kicks at the 1986 Midwest Regional Championships in Palatine, Illinois. That record was then broken by Johannes "Ted" Martin, who then broke it several more times, worried that Linder might break back and reclaim the title.

"[Martin] first started playing in 1981," wrote Larry Mayer in a 1997 feature in the *Chicago Tribune*, "after his college roommate at Western Illinois University in Macomb had been introduced to the sport during a trip to Colorado." His final record of 1997 stands at 63,326 kicks, a feat Martin accomplished in 8 hours, 50 minutes, and 42 seconds. Despite their rivalry, Linder and Martin eventually decided to team up. "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," Martin said during a video of a school footbag promotion and demonstration. "I always respected Andy, since I was chasing his record, so I asked him to team up with me and we went on to break all five doubles records multiple times."



Linder and Martin pursuing the world record in 1992



Martin and Linder in 2018

Bill Langbehn and Brent Welch had achieved an early one-pass world record with 10,454 kicks in 2 hours, 20 minutes. “One-pass uses a soft bag,” Welch said, “and you stand right next to each other. We practiced alternating left-right inside kicks. That record lasted a few years before Andy Linder and Ted Martin pushed the record past 13,000.”

For one year, Linder and Martin, between them, held all seven recognized consecutive kick records, and the two have held the doubles world record for the one-pass at 27,956 kicks since 1993.

“In 1994,” Linder recalls, “we broke our own [doubles] record with 100,001 kicks. The reason we stopped at that number was because the recreation center had already closed and the maintenance workers wanted to lock up, shut off the lights, and leave. We were approaching 100,000 and decided we would stop at 100,000 even, but a reporter there suggested we stop at 100,001 to break the 100,000 mark, so we did that. That was the last time Ted and I ever did that event.”



Constance Constable

The women's consecutive kick record has been held by Constance Constable since 1998. She starting kicking in 1978 and began the group Women Alive and Kicking to draw more females to the sport. "My journey to a world record," tells Constable, "began with frustration (and soon) fascination with kicking a footbag once, twice, thrice, and then more. I didn't learn basic technique until after four years of circle kicking, and I had some bad habits to replace. My numbers began increasing steadily (breaking into double digits, breaking 100, 200). Kicking consecutives yielded physical and mental benefits (such a great way to develop and improve focus)!"

"In 1986," Constance continues, "Marie Elsner and I set the women's doubles record at 21,025. In 1995, Tricia Sullivan George (who has always been a huge inspiration) and I decided to break that record, and agreed to stop at 34,543; it's a palindrome and a prime number. Our rally was successful, and during the course of that rally, I began thinking about a singles attempt. To make a long story short, Tricia and I both agreed that the women's singles record needed to be higher, so we had a fun back-and-forth, pushing the number up. I am proud of the record I now hold, set in 1998, of 24,713 kicks."

Pursuing consecutive kick records, however, was running headlong into a conflict with the expansion of newer expressions of the sport, including footbag net and freestyle routines. Because early tournaments had been holding consecutive kick events first, players attempting to break those records were kicking for hours on the first day of competition. This left many players cramping, their leg muscles spent before other events like freestyle, golf, or net even began. Ordering consecutive kicks first in the line-up was a tournament killer for a lot of people and left them unable to participate in top form in other events.

In the late 1980s, the World Footbag Association decided to change the way consecutive kick competition was handled, shifting the focus onto the *speed* of consecutive kicks and limiting the amount of time spent kicking to five minutes. Rules included the use of alternating feet and records quickly improved. This change allowed consecutive kickers to also be able to compete in other events since their muscles weren't spent chasing those hours-long records.

Ida Fogle holds the five-minute speed record for women at 804 kicks, a record she's held since 1997. Fogle was a co-partner involved in organizing the Heartland Regional Championship Series tournaments and was also involved with the FEAT footbag club; she remains the only woman to have ever broken 800 in speed consecutives.

MOST "HACKS" IN FIVE MINUTES Andy Linder, a psychotherapist from Chicago, IL, set the world record for most consecutive kicks in five minutes on June 7, 1996, with 1,019 hacks. He set the mark at the 1996 Midwest Regional Footbag Championships in Mount Prospect, IL.

The women's record is 804 kicks, set by Ida Fogle at the 1997 World Footbag Championships in Portland, OR, on August 11, 1997.

Andy Linder is still the only kicker to have broken a thousand kicks in five minutes with a total of 1,019, an average of 3.4 kicks per second. His original pattern of using the toe of his left foot and the inside of his right foot in a back and forth motion was successful for consecutives, but for speed, Linder paired the left knee with the inside of his right foot. Consecutive kicking rules allow contact with the knee and Linder was able to increase his speed by directing the footbag off his foot directly to the knee.

Kick Records

source: Footbag Hall of Fame website

Consecutive

Women's Singles
24,713 Constance Constable

Men's Singles
63,326 Ted Martin

Women's Singles 5-minute
804 Ida Fogle

Men's Singles 5-minute
1019 Andy Linder

Women's Doubles
34,543 Constance Constable / Tricia Sullivan George

Men's Doubles
100,001 Ted Martin / Andy Linder

Co-ed Doubles
132,011 Gary Lautt / Tricia Sullivan George

Women's Doubles One-Pass
6136 Constance Constable / Tricia Sullivan George

Men's Doubles One-Pass
27,956 Ted Martin / Andy Linder

Women's Doubles Distance One-Pass
249 Tricia Sullivan George / Jody Badger Welch

Men's Doubles Distance One-Pass
622 Ted Martin / Andy Linder

Doubles 10-minute One-Pass
1415 Tricia Sullivan George / Paul Vorvick

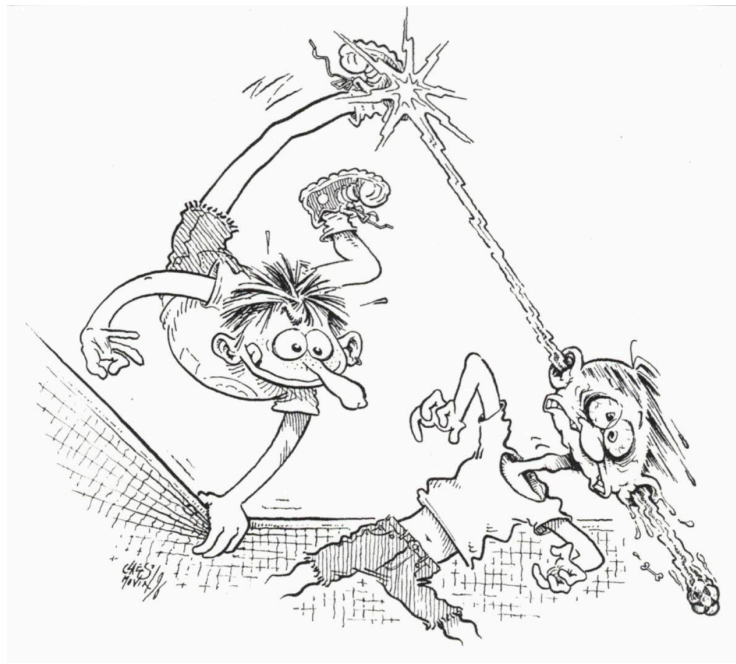
Doubles One-Up-Five-Down
23,251 Ted Martin / Andy Linder

Footbag net

By December of 1977, a second tournament was held. It also focused on consecutive kicks, but the world of footbag was about to change. As it happened, the venue for this tournament housed an upper gymnasium with a volleyball net. Access to that upper gym allowed what footbag.org calls the first public "experiment" kicking a footbag over an 8-foot net. Players put together 5-member teams and decided on a maximum of five kicks per side.

However, a *private* experiment with what eventually became the sport of footbag net had already occurred: "One day in early 1973," Stalberger recalls, "as we were playing outside, our sack went flying over a short fence and Mike jumped over it to retrieve it. As he threw it back over the fence to me we began kicking back and forth using the 4-foot fence as a net."

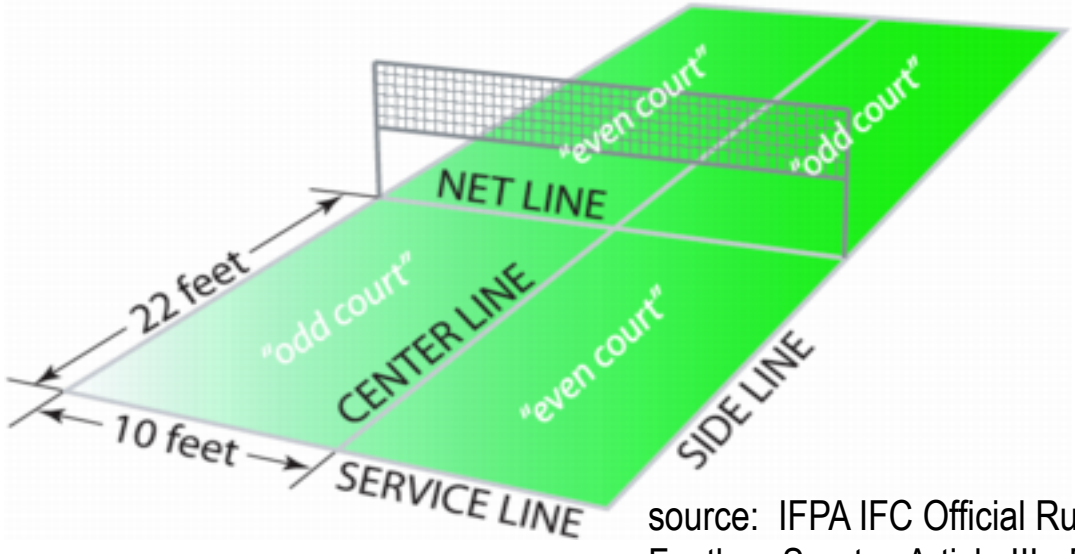
Footbag net was the inevitable evolution of the sport in the direction of team play and the addition of a net game to the footbag repertoire brought welcome relief from the struggle of hours-long attempts to break consecutive kick records. This evolution in the way footbag skills could be expressed broke the sport wide open.



cartoon by Danish newspaper illustrator Claes Movin

Eventually, net height was standardized to five feet and by November of 1979 the Roseburg Net Tournament had incorporated that parameter. The court dimensions were also officially defined as twenty feet wide by forty-four feet long. These were the same parameters used in the game of badminton, which isn't surprising as the flight distance of a footbag is somewhat comparable to its much earlier predecessor, the shuttlecock.

The court was split down the center to define serving quadrants and serves were required to land in the diagonally opposing quadrant. Games had to be won by at least two points and matches were played as the best of three. Eventually the game of footbag net and its corresponding rules would be governed by the International Footbag Players' Association (IFPA), an organization described in more detail on page 120.



source: IFPA IFC Official Rules of Footbag Sports : Article III - Footbag Net

Originally, the maximum number of kicks in a doubles match was limited to five per side. In a singles advanced game, three kicks were allowed per side, but a separate game, singles ultra, reduced that number to two to increase the challenge level. Eventually, all singles matches conformed to the ultra rules and today only two kicks are allowed per side.

Upper body fouls were initially defined as contact with any area of the body above the groin. This meant that knees and upper thighs were usable parts of the body, and as spiking became more common, players would often tame a spike on top of the thigh. To make the game more challenging, upper body fouls were redefined, further restricting contact to below the knee. This change completely altered net game strategy. In the early days, as some players have since described, the goal was just to get the footbag over the net. In order to do that, players would often attempt to set it up toward the *back* of the court for the volley return. This was more easily done by initially stopping the incoming footbag with the thigh.

Today, without that option, the game is played more like volleyball where the footbag is set *towards* the net for a downward spike. Many players say that restricting contact to below the knee has made the game more aggresive and competitive.

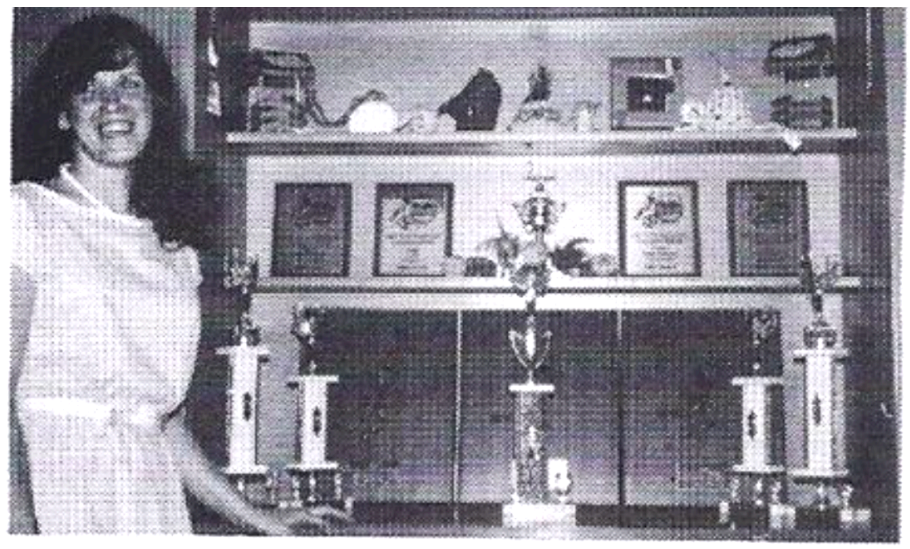
The footbag used for net games evolved to be much harder and rounder than the original softer ones used for consecutive kicks. Softer footbags created irregular flying patterns and didn't launch as far, nor did they lend themselves to the type of explosive kicks increasingly used in the game of net. Harder footbags required more control but gave players more zing in the serve and faster, more precise volleys. They also allowed for more aggressive spikes and smashes, and allowed players to put some spin on the footbag. Higher speeds created more demanding play and the goal was to serve or spike the footbags at speeds they couldn't be returned.



Juice™ Net by Flying Clipper™

Aim also played a huge part in net strategy. A powerful serve that came in low or directly at a player was difficult to return using the front of the body. Players quickly learned to let the serve zing past them, but then "pick up" the footbag behind the body on the outside of the shoe with a back kick. The back kick became a staple feature of footbag net and really separated it from the game of soccer.

As skills improved, the net game serve also evolved from a simple toss down to the foot that was lobbed over the net. Eventually, skilled servers were tossing footbags *up* and connecting for the serve at shoulder height. This change brought increased speed, more precise aim, and a downward trajectory into the opposing court.



Lori Jean Conover

"It was 1978 the first time I saw net play," wrote Lori Jean Conover for the Footbag Hall of Fame website. "Dave Hill encouraged me to come to Oak Grove Gym to kick... As I walked into the gym, Mag and Billy Hayne were playing over the net and there were several of the top players there including Garwin Bruce, Ted Huff, and Robert Conover (who later became my husband). They all encouraged me to attend and play in a tournament at Portland State that weekend. At the tournament, Bill Hayne worked with me and recruited me to play in mixed with him. That was it... I was hooked."

Another early pioneer, Tina Lewis, began kicking in 1980 and went to her first tournament in 1981. "Our little group of hackers from Austin," Lewis remembers, "traveled to Houston Memorial Park to be mesmerized by a young Kenny Shults and in awe of Mr. Hacky Sack himself—Johnny Stalberger. I was talked into playing footbag net even though I had never even seen the game and I was hooked! I started competing at Worlds around 1983 and won my first world title in 1987: mixed doubles with my partner, Scott Cleere. In 2005 I won world titles in singles and doubles footbag net. Lisa McDaniel and I organized the Texas State Footbag Championships in Austin, Texas for many years and we both hold many state champion titles in both Open and Women's. We also helped Tim Vozar organize the Southern Regionals Footbag Championships. It has been an amazing ride seeing our World Championships start out in Golden, Colorado to move around the world. Footbaggers are an amazing and diverse group of people. I am lucky to be a part of this amazing tribe."



Tina Lewis and Lisa McDaniel



Brent and Jody Badger Welch

On his website, Brent Welch, who started kicking in 1980, writes, "I first saw the net game in 1982… I met my wife (Jody) playing footbag, and she grew into the best overall woman footbag net player." Brent and Jody went to the Worlds finals eleven times together and won seven of them.

"I can honestly say," said Jody, "that being part of a team with my husband, Julie and Tricia, and later P.T. Lovern and Kenny Shults for mixed doubles, was way more important to me than any of the titles I won. These people became lifelong friends and my spouse. The memories that stick most with me are: 1) Kicking my first 10 consecutives, and 2) Winning mixed doubles three weeks after giving birth to Chris in 1994 and winning again in 1996 just a few weeks after having Daniel. Through footbag, I met my husband and had a family and became a part of a larger loving and inclusive group of people, footbaggers!"

Brent Welch was instrumental in organizing and documenting the rules and scoring procedures of the sport of footbag and was the person who typed up the official footbag rules after they were set by the International Footbag Advisory Board (IFAB).



Lisa McDaniel and Jakob Hall

Net competition took place all over the U.S. and Europe by the mid-1980s. The European Championships in Taranto, Italy in 1988 brought over many well-known players from the States, including Lisa McDaniel and Scott Cleere.



Bjarne Everberg and Allan Petersen





Scott Cleere



Tim Gertsen



Mag Hughes, Walt Mason, Mike Harding, and Kenny Shults

Kenny Shults recalls his rivalry with Canadian kicker Emmanuel Bouchard:

"We met at Worlds four times. I won the first three. He took this one (pictured at right) which was number 7 of his record 12 singles world titles in a row. One of the greatest periods of dominance by any athlete in any sport, in my opinion."

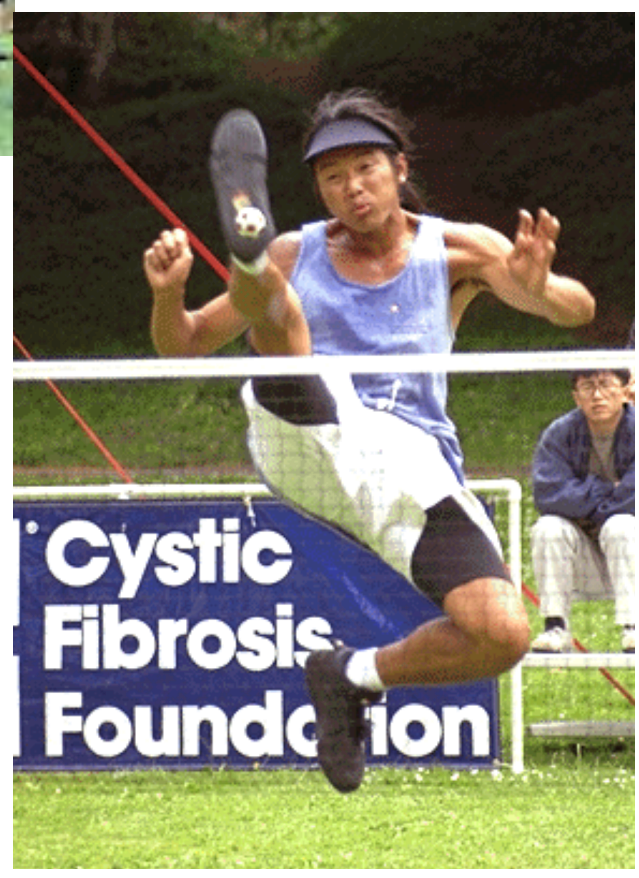


Kenny Shults and Emmanuel Bouchard
photo: Jamie Lepley



Andy Ronald
photo: Pierre Frigon

Andy Ronald recalls his rivalry with Jake Leong: "Jake was the dominant player in Vancouver and so often was the guy who eliminated me in singles. He was known as Jake the Snake, so the first time I finally defeated him (and in the spirit of our many, many battles) I became known as the Mongoose. It was quite soon after that Jake and I became doubles partners."



Jake Leong
photo: John Caveney



Steve Smith and P.T. Lovern
photo: Tim Vozar



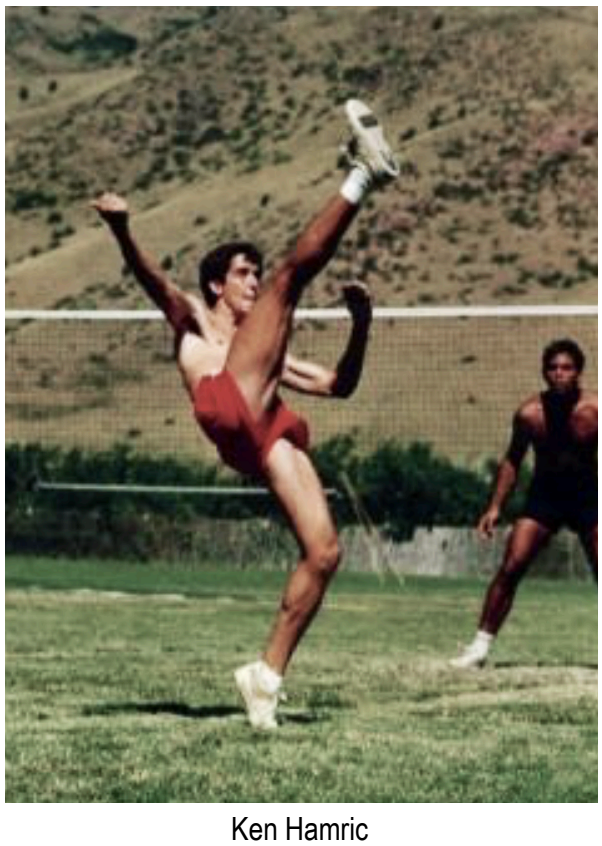
Craig Hufford and Jerry Cunningham
photo: Tim Vozar



Lisa McDaniel
photo: Mike Grueter



Tuan Vu



Ken Hamric



Scott Milne



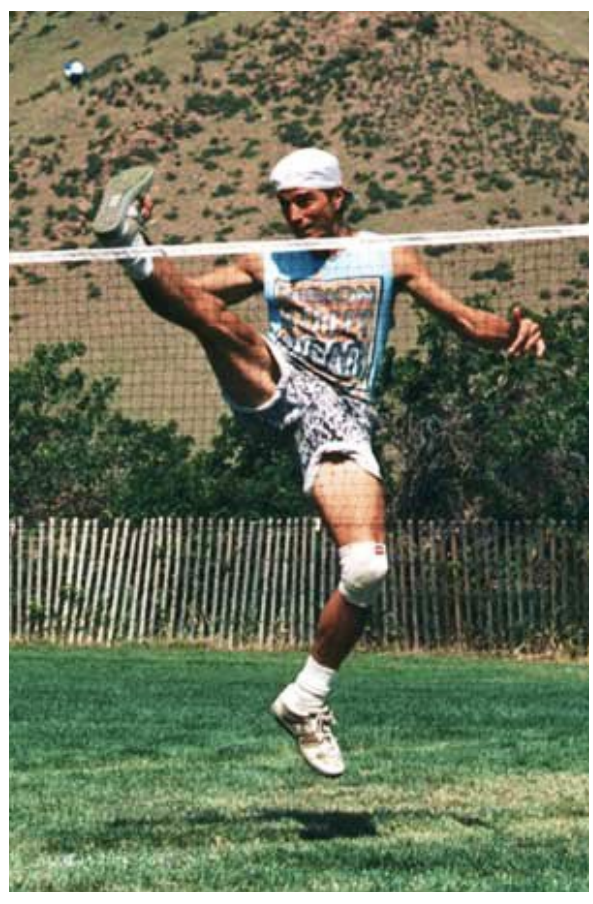
Alf Marcussen



Julie Symons
photo: Mike Grueter



Chris Siebert



Scott Cleere
photo: Tim Vozar





Jim Derricott and Peter Shunny



Bjarne Everberg, Justin Sexton, Yves Archambault



Kenny Shults and Chris “Crass” Eddicott
photo: Mike Grueter



Yossarian Kelley
photo by: Martin Côté



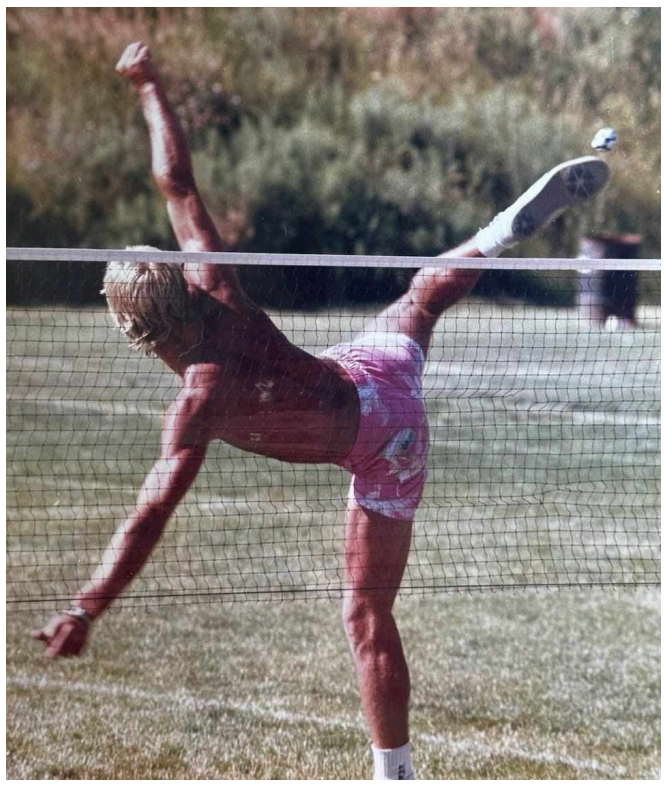
Jody Badger Welch
photo: Kenny Shults



Eric “Bart” Bartholomay
photo: Jamie Lepley



Andy Ronald and Dave Bernard
photo: Mike Grueter



Scott John East



Becca English



Randy Mulder and Chris Donofrio



Patrick Asswad and Danny Borsky
photo: Pierre Frigon



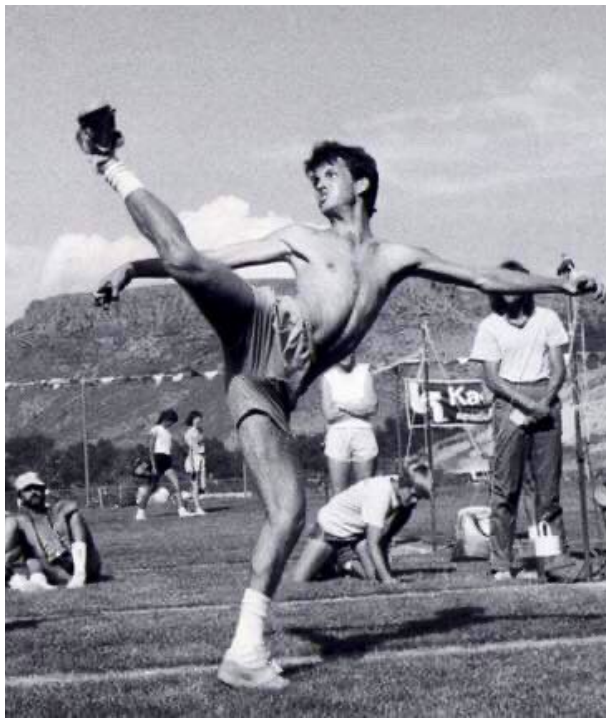
P.T. Lovern and Jukka Peltola
photo: Pierre Frigon



Lisa McDaniel and Brent Welch
photo: John Caveney



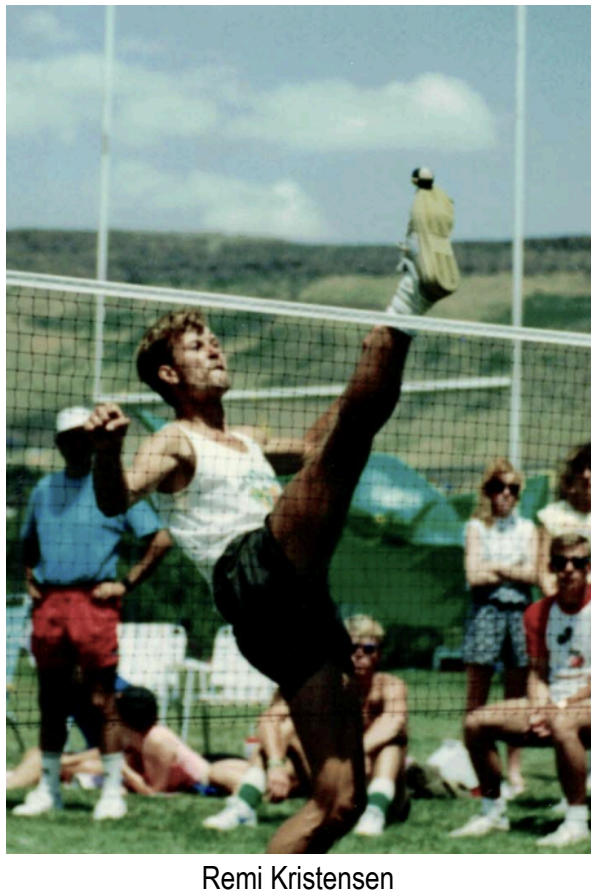
Dave Bernard and Peter Shunny
photo by: Mike Grueter



Kenny Shults



Amy Westberg
photo: Martin Côté



Remi Kristensen
photo: Allan Petersen



P.T. Lovern “Mr. Chaos”
photo: David Sweeny



Evanne Lamarche



Tricia Sullivan George
photo: Greg Durrett



Chris Siebert
photo: Tim Vozar



Yves Archambault



Mag Hughes



Tim Vozar



Peter Shunny



Chris Ott
photo: Tim Vozar



Andrew Morgan and Allan Petersen



Jake Leong and Dennis Ross
photo: Mike Grueter



Danny Borsky
photo: Mike Grueter



Ken Hamric



Sébastien Verdy and Steve Smith



Martin Côté
photo: Tim Vozar



Ken Hamric



Jim Caveney
photo: Tim Vozar



Danny Borsky and Sébastien Verdy
photo: Pierre Frigon



Rob Wantland



Eric Wulff



Kenny Shults and Alf Marcussen
photo: John Caveney



Dave Bernard and Sébastien Verdy
photo: Mike Grueter



Torben Wigger (serving backwards)



Garry Griggs



Bill Langbehn and Brent Welch



Allan Petersen
photo: Grischa Tellenbach



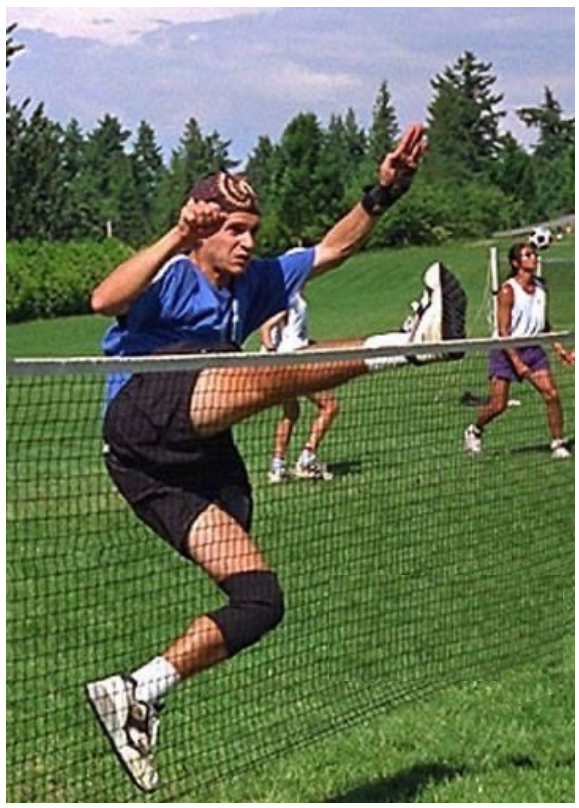
Chris Ott
photo: John Caveney



Andrew Morgan and Emmanuel Bouchard
photo: Pierre Frigon



Chris Routh and Randy Mulder
photo: John Caveney



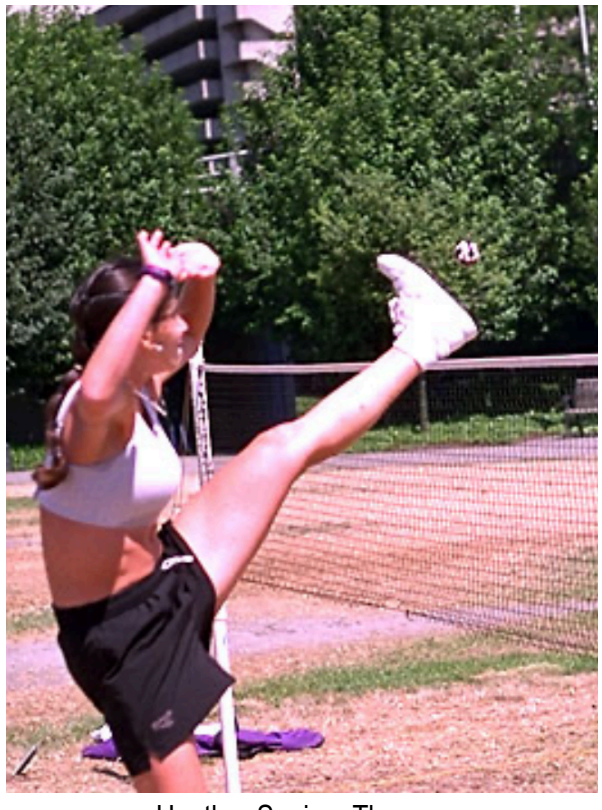
John Leys



Tim Gertsen



Dave Robinson (Lisa Monti-Vu, Chris Routh, and Tricia Sullivan George)



Heather Squires Thomas
photo: Mike Grueter



Becca English
photo: Mike Grueter



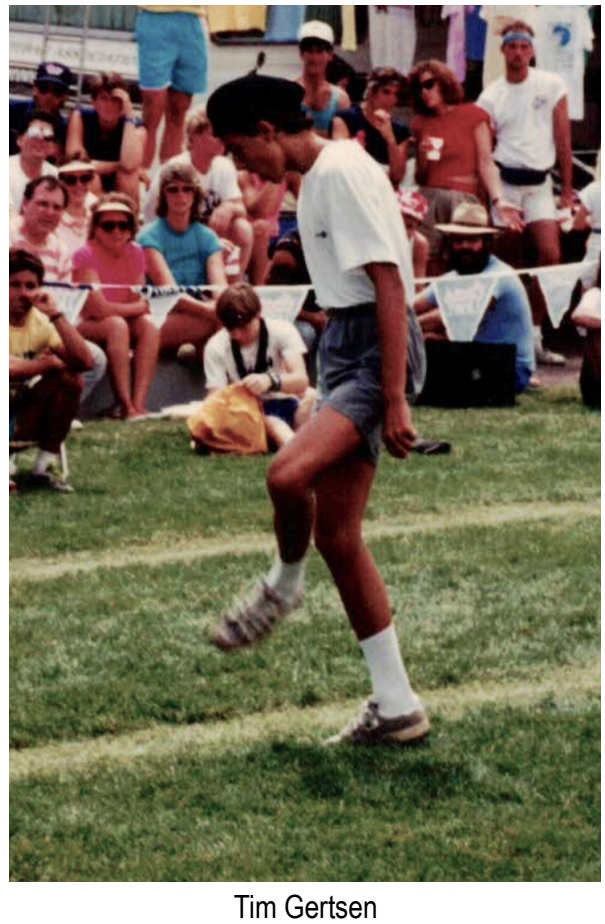
Scott John East



david Butcher
photo: Pierre Frigon



Bjarne Everberg



Tim Gertsen



Steve Dusablon and Kenny Shults
photo: Mike Grueter



Vernon Wilder and Craig Lord
photo: Tim Vozar



P.T. Lovern and John Leys
photo: Tim Vozar



Bill Langbehn
photo: Tim Vozar



Patrick Asswad
photo: Mike Grueter



James Harley
photo: Matt “Q” Quint



Yossarian Kelley and Jim Derricott
photo: Mike Grueter



Vernon Wilder



Martin Côté
photo: Tim Vozar



James Roberts



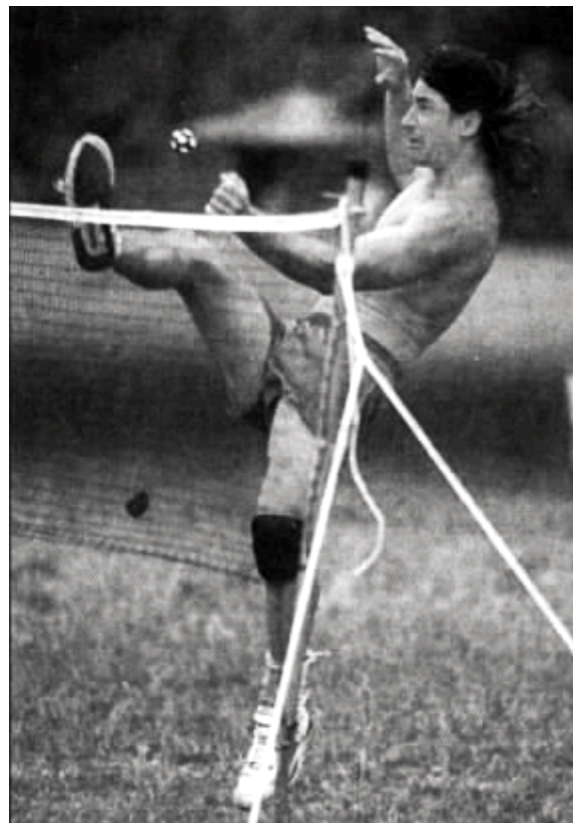
Steve Goldberg
photo: Tim Vozar



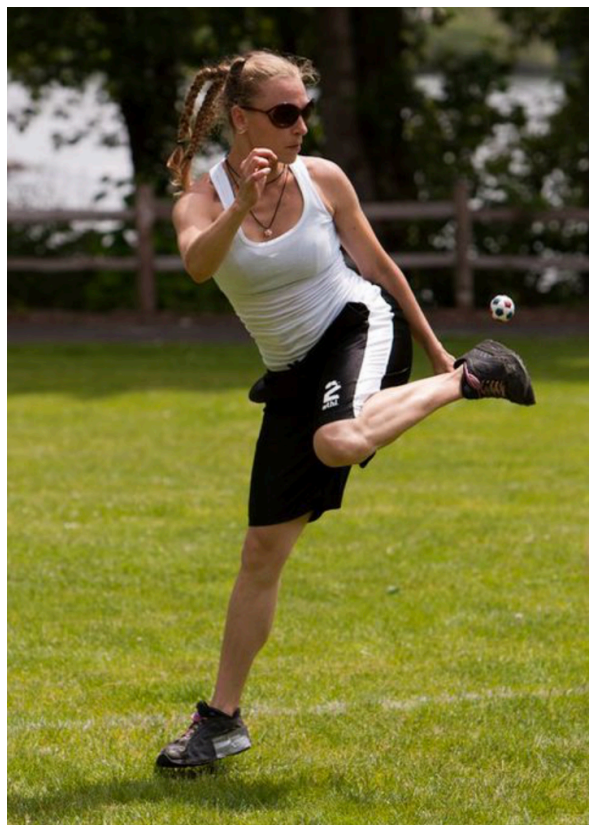
Remi Kristensen and Kenny Shults (Allan Petersen and Randy Mulder)
photo: John Caveney



david Butcher



Davie Piper
photo: Tom Stevens



Genevieve Bousquet
photo: Kenny Shults



Jakob Hall



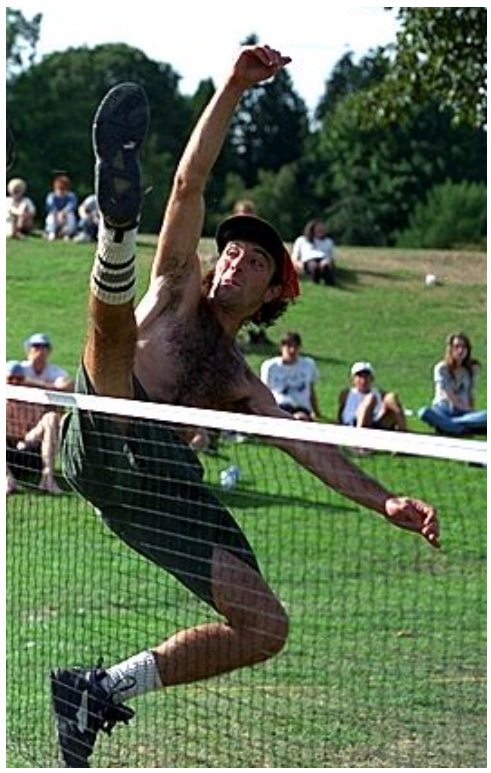
Andy Ronald and Dave Bernard
photo: Mike Grueter



Chris Eddicott and Sébastien Verdy
photo: Mike Grueter



Allan Petersen and Kenny Shults



Dave Bernard
photo: Mike Grueter



Emmanuel Bouchard
photo: Jamie Lepley



Randy Mulder and Jake Leong
photo: John Caveney



Chris Routh (Mag Hughes and Kenny Shults)



Remi Kristensen



Craig Lord
photo: Tim Vozar



Tina Lewis
photo: Tim Vozar



Andrew Morgan and Sébastien Verdy



Brent Welch (Jake Leong, Scott Cleere, and Jim Caveney)
photo: John Caveney



Lisa McDaniel and Amy Westberg
photo: Mike Grueter



Remi Kristensen



Allan Petersen



Jim Derricott
photo: Mike Grueter



Evanne Lamarche
photo: Mike Grueter



James Roberts
photo: Jamie Lepley



Sébastien Verdy
photo: Mike Grueter



Maude Mandreville and Genevieve Bousquet
photo: Andy Ronald



Jim Caveney, Scott John East, and Bill Bethurum
photo: Chris Routh



Garry Griggs



Andy Ronald and Dave Bernard
photo: Mike Grueter



Dave Robinson
photo: Tim Vozar



Brent Welch



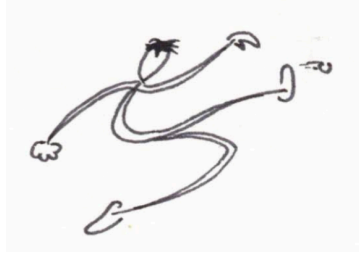
Julie Symons
photo: Tim Vozar



Genevieve Bousquet
photo: Kenny Shults

Heel and toe, an arch, a sole, and ankles flexing curves
as shoulders turn, and
catching floating, fleeting spheres in air, behind, in swerves.
The muscles burn, but
footbags fly from splaying toes. A lengthened leg unnerves
opposing eyes. A
well-placed leap returns explosive, missile-driven serves.

~Stephanie Petersen



Early Net Champions

Men

Singles

John Stalberger
Bill Hayne
Kenny Shults
Mag Hughes
Garry Griggs
Randy Mulder
Danny Borsky
Sebastien Verdy
Emmanuel Bouchard

Doubles

John Stalberger
Maxell Smith Jr.
Mag Hughes
Bill Hayne
Kenny Shults
Mike Harding
Ken Hamric
Chris Routh
Jim Caveney
Randy Mulder
Emmanuel Bouchard
Sebastien Verdy
Yves Archambault
Chris Siebert
Peter Shunny

Women

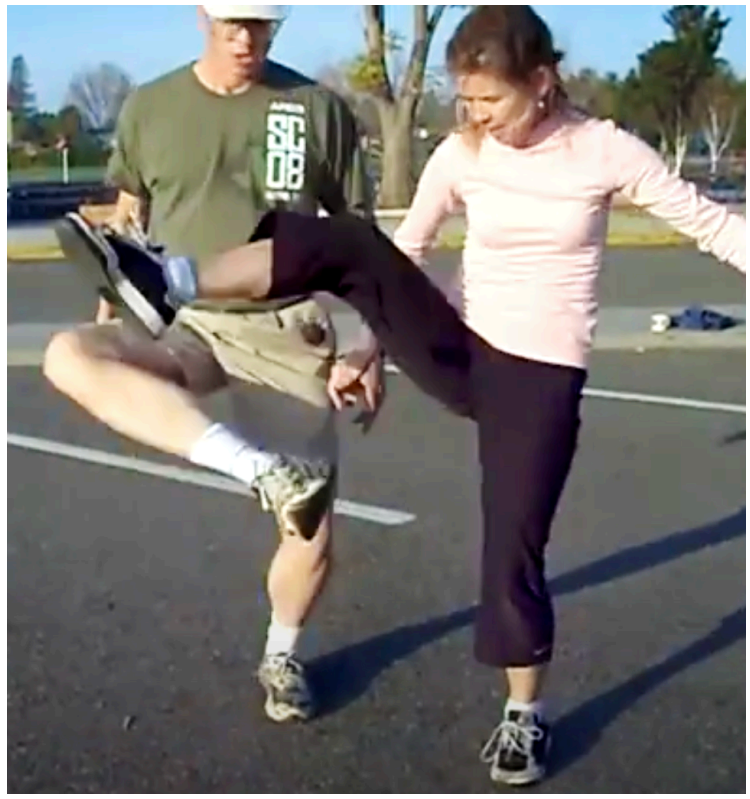
Singles

Tricia Sullivan George
Jody Badger Welch
Lisa McDaniel
Julie Symons
Kendall KIC
Tina Lewis
Evanne Lamarche

Doubles

Jody Badger Welch
Tricia Sullivan George
Julie Symons
Lisa McDaniel
Amy Westberg
Kendall KIC
Tina Lewis
Sam Conlon
Heather Squires Thomas

Freestyle



Brent and Jody Badger Welch

Along with the advent of the net game, other expressions of hacking the sack were quickly evolving. As consecutive kickers developed better control, they also began moving with the footbag in more of a dance, turning or spinning the body while the footbag was in the air, and incorporating stalls and rolls. It wasn't just about the number of kicks anymore. Now it was about *how* the footbag was kicked as the spirit of freestyle was emerging.

Early kicking techniques only made contact with the inside of the foot or the toe, which is how beginners start, but before long, players were using all sides of the foot including the heel, the tip of the toe, the outer edge, and even the sole. Toe stalls or "delays" made kicking more intricate and soon footbags were being kicked in directions other than just straight up.

Freestyle was acknowledged as a competitive event for the first time at the 1982 Nationals, though many of its scoring protocols weren't fully developed until five or six years later. In freestyle competition, a kicker could earn "Adds" for additional sequences and higher levels of difficulty. For example, a trick's stall might earn one Add, but a subsequent cross-body kick could then earn a second Add, and so on. The Add system was first conceived by Kenny Shults and Rick Reese as a way to account for the number of tricks in each routine and to restrict the ease of the tricks. The system was further developed with input from Reed Gray (who had a background in scoring gymnastics), weighing half for presentation and half for difficulty. Gray combined the number of tricks with the number of Adds to come up with an average ratio of difficulty per trick. Steve Goldberg and Vince Bradley were also involved in the overall development of freestyle scoring.

"The Add system had an impact on the evolution of freestyle play that went beyond just the scoring system," said Kenny Shults, who explained that one of the first levels freestylers worked to attain was eliminating basic kicks without Adds, known as "The's." After achieving consistency at that level, a player would try to go "tiltless." Tilts were simple 1-Add tricks like a toe stall. This drove players to link tricks without pausing for tilts. "A few years later," Shults continued, "the top players were going 'guiltless,' which was to play using only 3-Add tricks and higher. Later 'tripless' and then 'fearless' would represent the top level in the game."

"The rules were pretty complicated at the time, with a lot of numbers to add up," said Brent Welch, who created a Hypercard scoring program for freestyle competition. "Hypercard was a nifty programming environment that helped us organize data entry." For several years, Welch organized the freestyle judging assignments at Worlds. Because the rules were so complicated, scoring required ten judges and an Adds counter. Welch was responsible for not only coordinating the judging schedule (regarding who was judging, who was kicking, and when) but also for compiling the scores from all the judges and entering that data to calculate the final results.

In 1994, Brent Welch, along with co-founders Steve Goldberg, Julie Symons, and david Butcher (sic), incorporated the International Footbag Players' Association to serve as the international governing body for the sport of footbag. It was initially formed and incorporated in California as the World-Wide Footbag Foundation, but its current name was adopted in 2000. Within the IFPA, the International Footbag Committee has published and updated, since its inception, the official rule book for the sport of footbag.

ifpa international footbag players' association

Official Rules of Footbag Sports

Published by the International Footbag Committee under the auspices of the International Footbag Players' Association

TWELFTH EDITION, APRIL 2010

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- Article V - Footbag Freestyle
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Rainbow performed by Scott Davidson

One of the first breakout moves, initially developed by Mag Hughes, was the *rainbow,* where the footbag was kicked over the head. Moves like this were often discovered accidentally or perhaps serendipitously, and once a new move was discovered, kickers would try to replicate and then perfect these moves. Every athlete in the sport tells the same story, that improvement and mastery was always and only the result of hard work. Derrick Fogle perhaps said it best: "It wasn't any skill or ability that made me who I am today; it was simple, dogged persistence."





Tuan Vu also performing the rainbow



Tina Lewis
performing a flying clipper



Rita Buckley
performing a stinger

Another early freestyle move was the *flying clipper*, demonstrated above by Tina Lewis, in which the footbag was tossed up and the kicker jumped to meet it with the foot of a bent leg behind a straighter leg. This move led to the standing *clipper stall*, where one leg bends behind the other and catches the footbag on the inside of the foot. In competition, a *flying clipper* would earn one Add each for a toe stall, a cross leg, a spin, or flying in the air. Compounding several of these allowed competitors to gain higher Adds in one move.

The *stinger* was a double sole kick, blind and behind the back, that resembled the stinger of a scoprion. Contact with the footbag was more difficult since the kicker couldn't see it fall, but using both feet did provide more area for contact. The result was a graceful arcing move in the air. Rita Buckley, shown above performing it, was a world champion in both freestyle and net, and was the first woman to tour nationally to demonstrate and broadcast the sport. Rita was inducted into the Footbag Hall of Fame in 1999.





Jay Moldenhauer and Greg Nelson

As competitive freestyle developed, the moves used by doubles teams evolved to become more complex than simply two athletes kicking in tandem. Freestyle partners Jay Moldenhauer and Greg Nelson took doubles cooperation to the next level by sharing one footbag and executing *crab work*. Each partner would weave in and out of the action; while one was hooping, the other would perform a trick underneath. The result was a mesmerizing interplay of footbag teamwork: two kickers acting as a single entity.

Moldenhauer describes one of their tricks: "One combo that I've seen repeated and improved upon was *slide squared*. It was basically a bag under the other's leg, then sliding behind your partner and repeating."



Allan Petersen performing a dragonfly

The *dragonfly*, similar to the *flying clipper*, was developed by Jack Schoolcraft. Kenny Shults remembers Schoolcraft showing him the move in the spring of 1981. Here, the kick waits for the footbag to drop, at which point the outside leg goes over the footbag while the inside foot kicks it up. Competitors earned one Add for the jump, and another for the cross-body kick.



Eric Wulff performing around-the-world

The move called *around-the-world* saw the foot stall the footbag, set it up in the air, and then circle around it before stalling it again. In the early days, one of the signature moves of Kenny Shults was the *double-around-the-world*. "We knew people would someday do *around-the-world* three times," recalls Allan Petersen. Today, however, a few athletes are circling *four* times around an airborne footbag. Like the four-minute mile, human achievements often break forward in spurts into newer realms of possibility.



Andy Linder performing the pincher



Andy Linder invented a free-style move called the *pincher* and was the first person to perform it in competition at the 1983 World Championships. It involved catching the footbag and squeezing it behind the knee and has become a common trick that most players still work into their routines today.

"In the early-mid '80s," Linder recalls, "Jack [Schoolcraft], Kenny [Shults], and I were inventing the tricks that became the foundation for what freestyle has become."

Early male freestyle world champions included Jack Schoolcraft, Andy Linder, Kenny Shults, Jon Lind, Rick Reese, Peter Irish, Eric Wulff, and Scott Davidson. Females included Nancy Reynolds, Tricia Sullivan George, Sam Conlon, Constance Constable, Kendall KIC, Heather Cook, Carol Wedemeyer, Heather Squires Thomas, and Julie Symons.



Tricia Sullivan George and Jody Badger Welch
photo: John Caveney



Heather Squires Thomas and Julie Symons







Dennis Ross and Jon Lind





Peter Irish and Eric Wulff
photo: John Caveney



Brent Welch and Etienne Constable



Bill Bethurum and Scott Cleere



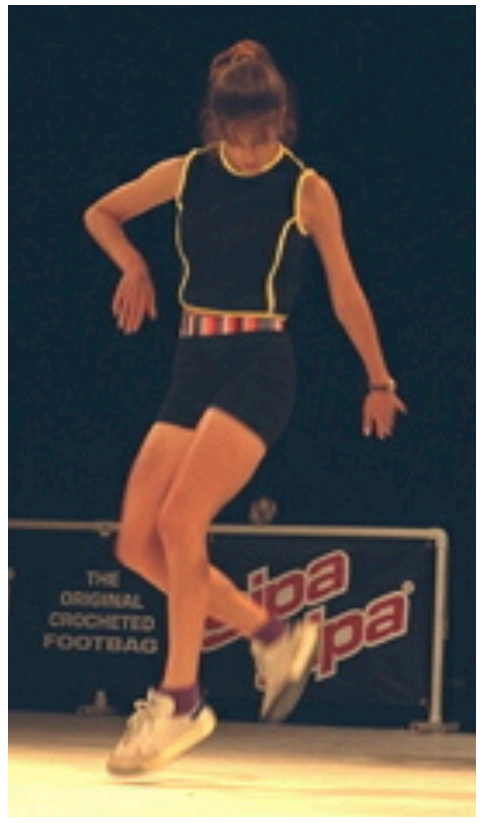
Colorado Foot-Boltz: Scott Cleere, Bill Bethurum, and Randy Nelson



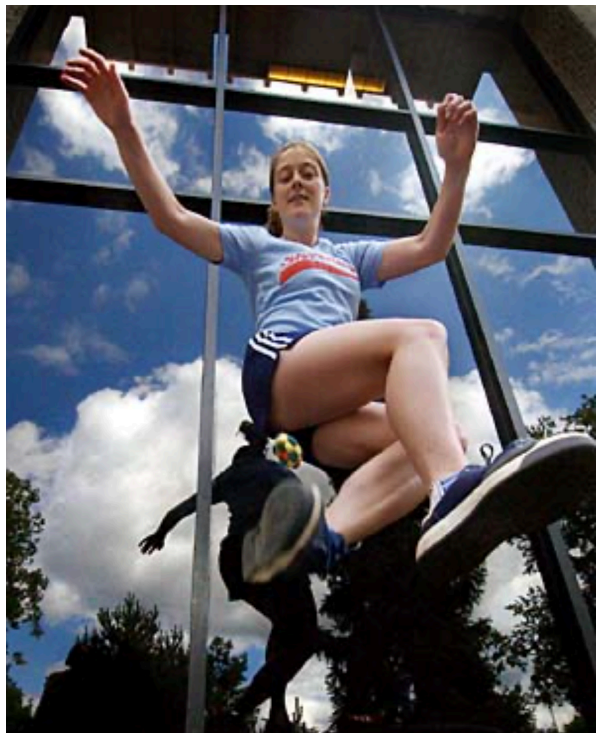
New Jersey Ocean County Clippers: Ed Orlando, Russ Willi, and Eric Wulff

Today, freestyle is focused primarily on speed and ever higher numbers of tricks packed into a routine, but freestylers back in the day were known for gaining air, especially performing the *flying clipper*. Old school moves involved jumps easily six feet in the air and head-high kicks. It's hard to imagine anyone back then doing well at footbag, either in freestyle or net, without also being able to do the splits.

Carol Wedemeyer, a member of the Footbag Hall of Fame, began kicking socially. "I met a guy in Michigan, Brian Hayes of the Flying Aces. He worked with Greg and Jay. Even preceded them I believe... He invited me to check out a school show to see the Aces in action. So I went, and the show was awesome. It really blew my mind. Jay Moldenhauer was shooting hoops with footbags from the free throw line!"



Carol Wedemeyer
photo: Tim Vozar



Jane Jones-Zerbe
photo: Alex Sutherland/*The Chronicle*

Jane Jones-Zerbe, another member of the Footbag Hall of Fame, got her first footbag in 1984 but didn't start to compete until 1993. "I attended my first footbag tournament, 1993 Western Regionals, [where] I competed at novice net and met some freestylers that taught me legover. Steve Goldberg presented me with a novice scholarship of some kind that would have covered any entry fees for Worlds that year. This was very encouraging!"



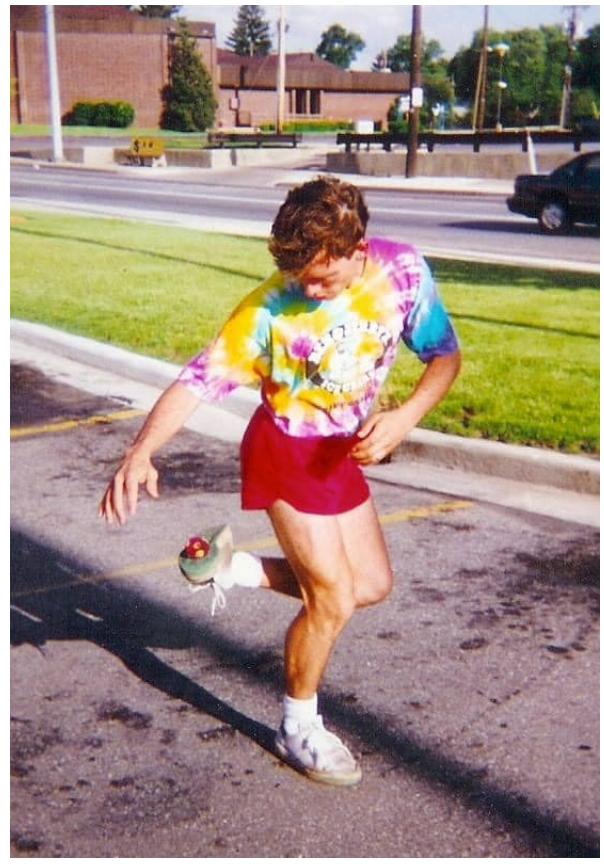
Scott Milne



Gary Preston



Rick Kaufman



Scott Davidson



Mag Hughes and Kendall KIC
photo: Mike Grueter



Yves Archambault



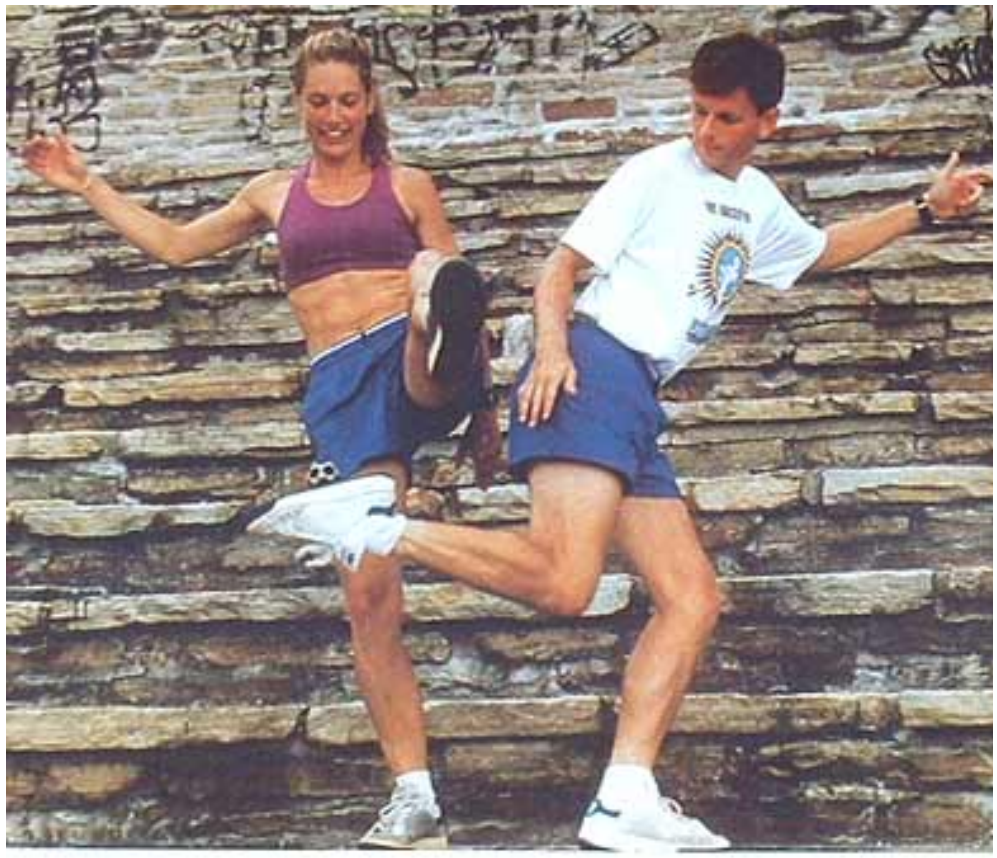
Lisa McDaniel and Julie Symons



Etienne Constable



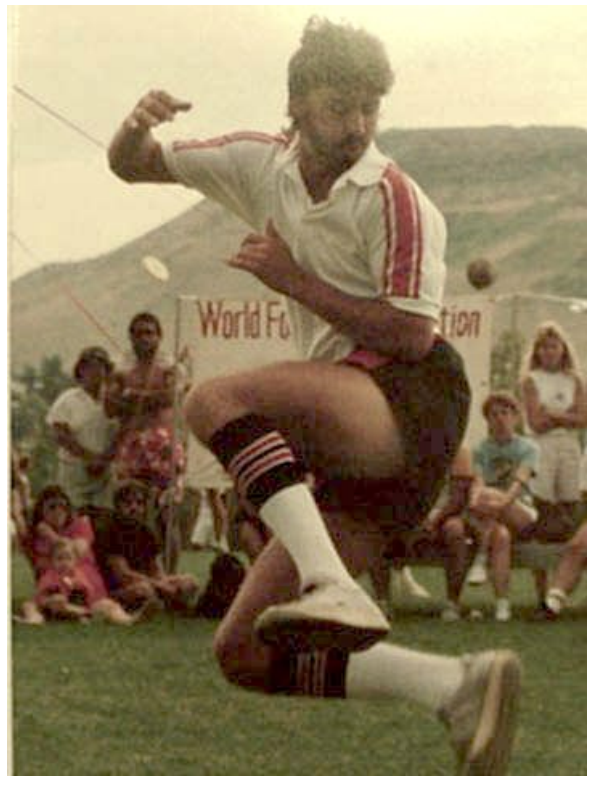
Constance Constable



Sam Conlon & Steve Goldberg



Allan Petersen



Dennis Ross
photo: Tim Vozar



Tim Vozar



Greg Nelson
photo: Tim Vozar



Jeff “Animal” Johnson
photo: Tim Vozar



Steve Goldberg and Edmund Lamacchia



Tricia Sullivan George and Paul Vorvick (Tall Not Tall)
photo: Mike Grueter



Jack Lentz
photo: Tim Vozar





Jack Schoolcraft



Gary Lautt
photo: Tim Vozar



Maxell Smith Jr.
photo: Tim Vozar



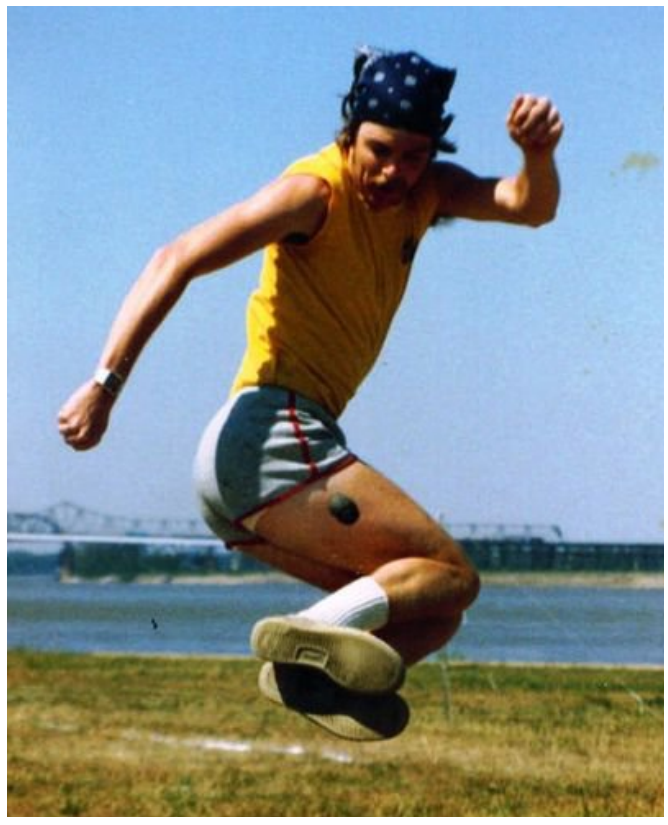
Reed Gray



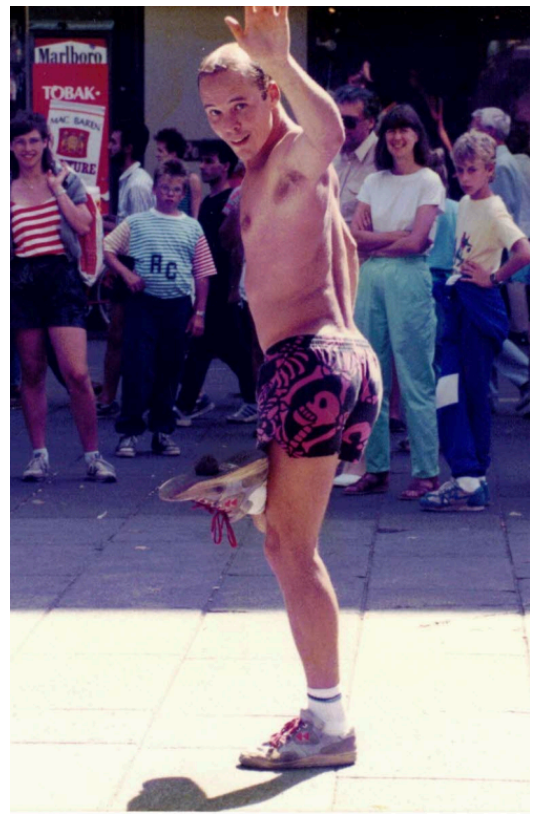
Jim Caveney and Constance Constable



Julie Symons
photo: John Caveney



Derrick Fogle



Kim Lind



Alf Marcussen
photo: John Caveney



Daryl Genz and Rick Reese
photo: Pierre Frigon



Ahren Gehrman
photo: Pierre Frigon



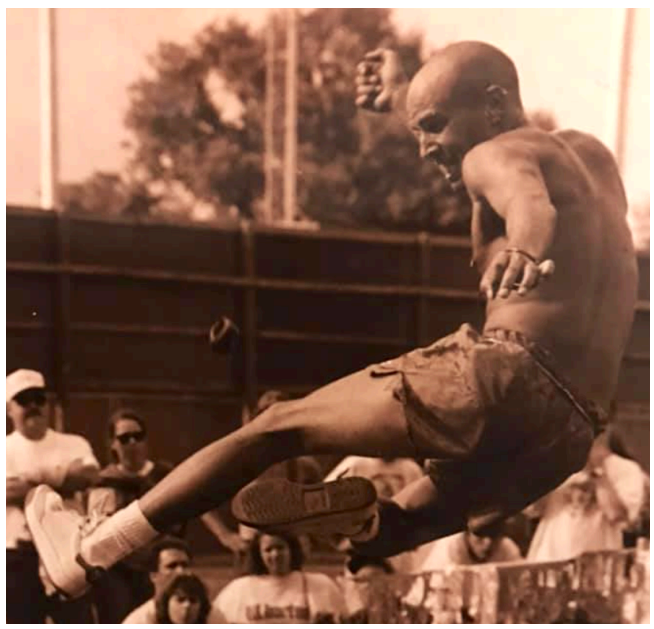
Peter Irish
photo: Pierre Frigon



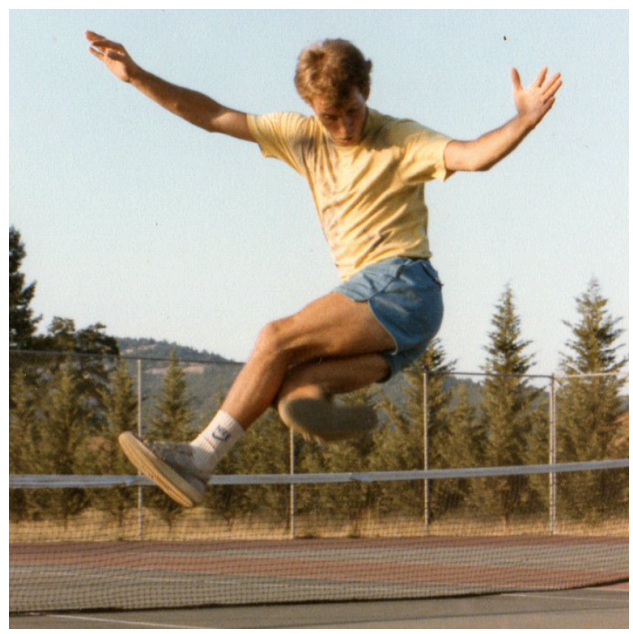
Etienne Constable



Jon Lind
photo: Tim Vozar



Eric “Bart” Bartholomay
photo: Jamie Lepley



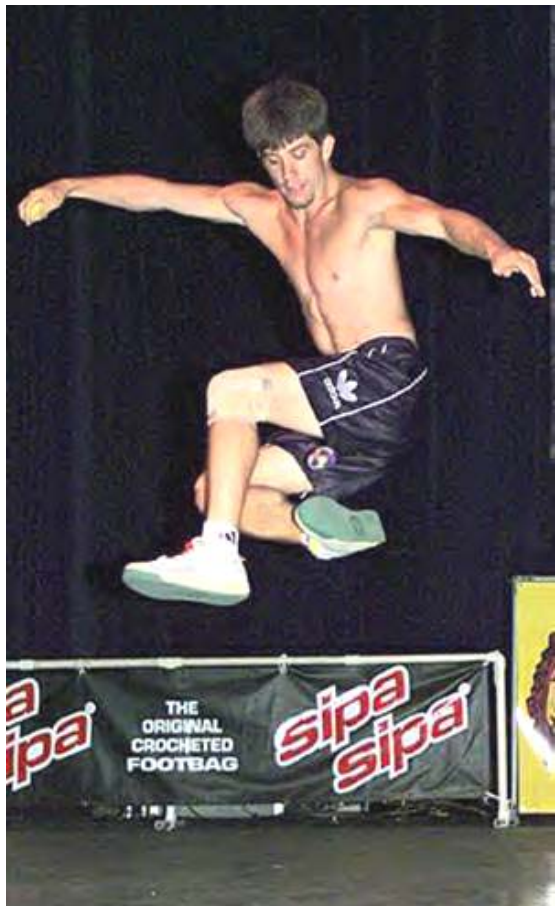
Bill “Camping Man” Langbehn



Heather Cook



Ethan “Red” Husted



Eric Wulff
photo: Tim Vozar



Derrick Fogle



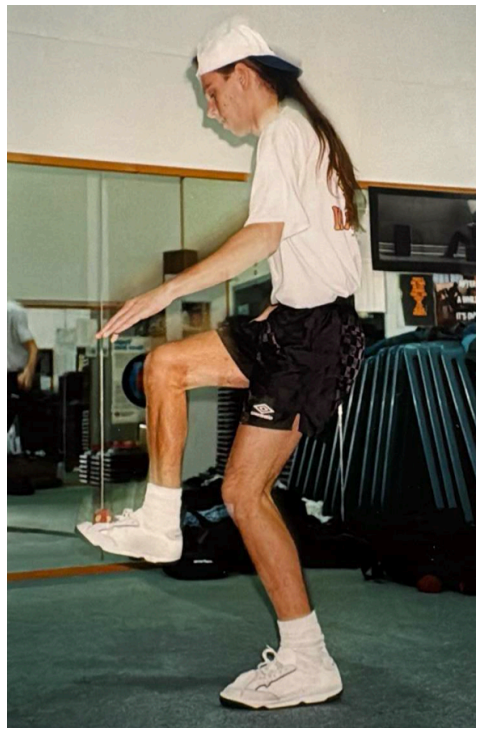
Justin Sexton
photo: Tim Vozar



Lisa McDaniel
photo: John Caveney



Eric Lardinois
photo: Pierre Frigon



Steve Kremer



Greg Nelson
photo: Pierre Frigon



Tuan Vu
photo: Pierre Frigon



Greg Cortopassi
photo: Tim Vozar



Jim “Toes” Fitzgerald
photo: Tim Vozar



Craig Lord
photo: Tim Vozar



Bruce Guettich
photo: Tim Vozar



Daryl Genz
photo: Tim Vozar



Carol Wedemeyer
photo: John Caveney



Jane Jones-Zerbe



Alex Zerbe



Kendall KIC



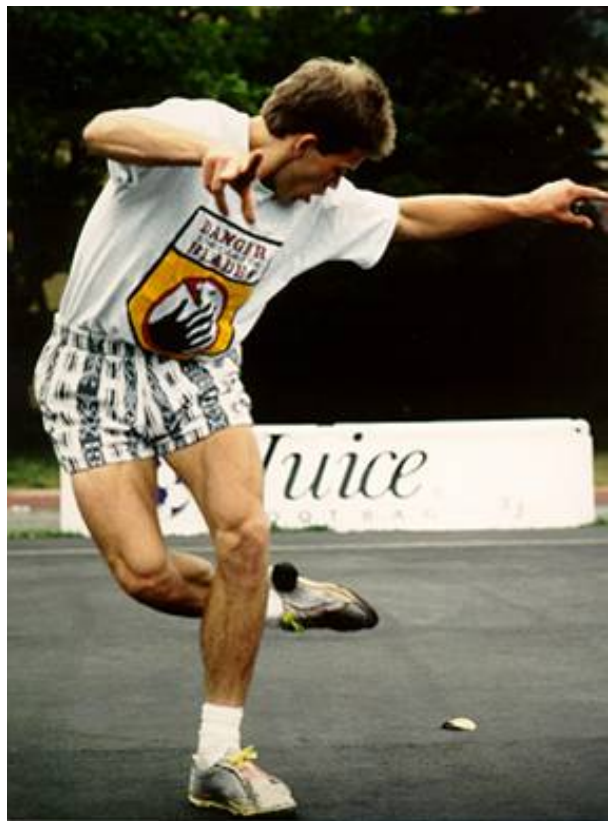
Eric Cole
photo: Tim Vozar



Maxell Smith Jr.



Kenny Shults
photo: Mike Grueter



Rick Reese



Ted Martin



Sam Conlon and Greg Nelson



Dave Hill
photo: Tim Vozar



Chris Donofrio



Jon Lind



Mike Noonan
photo: Tim Vozar



Paul Vorvick



Sam Conlon
photo: John Caveney



Steve Kremer



Jody Badger Welch



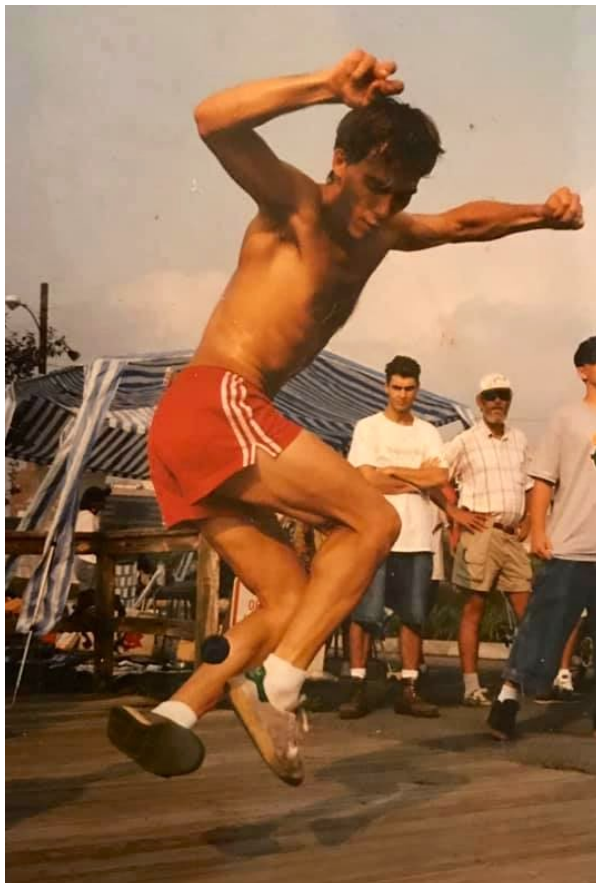
Scott and Valeria Davidson
photo: Mike Grueter



Raul ODonnal



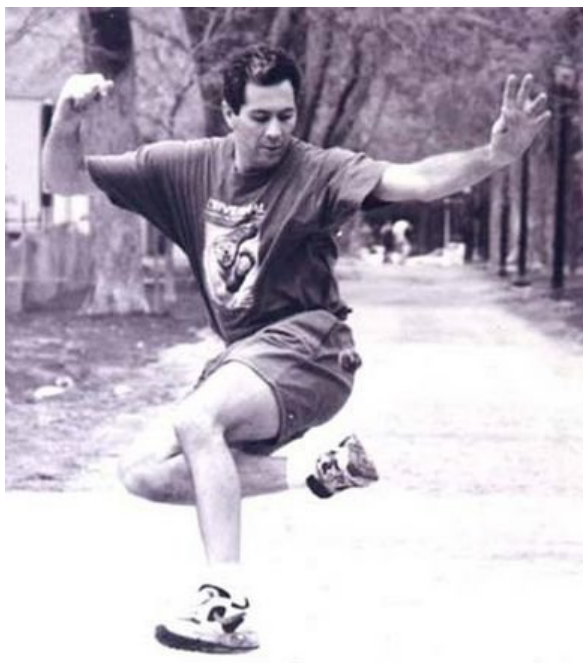
Mark Hill



Scott Davidson
photo: Jamie Lepley



Reed Gray



Yves Archambault



Bill Langbehn



Brent Welch



Brent Stewart



Jim Caveney



Tricia Sullivan George
photo: Tim Vozar



Andy Linder
photo: Tim Vozar



Lisa Monti-Vu



Remi Kristensen



Jeff “Animal” Johnson



Peter Shunny



Ted Martin



Dennis Ross



Paul Munger



Tim Kelly
photo: John Caveney



Josh Casey
photo: John Caveney



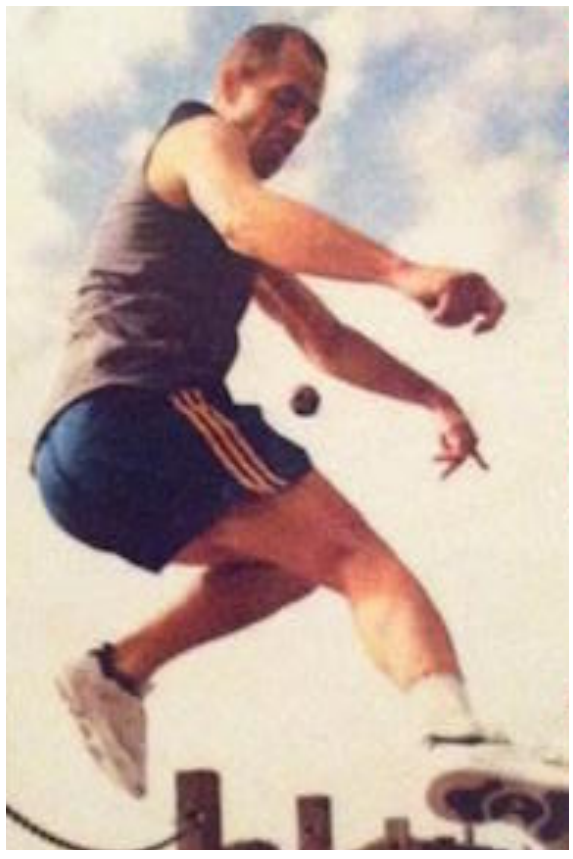
Peter Irish
photo: John Caveney



Ryan Donohoe (Mulroney)



James Roberts



Richard Abshire

Early Freestyle Champions

Men

Jack Schoolcraft
Andy Linder
Kenny Shults
Jon Lind
Dennis Ross
Rick Reese
Eric Wulff
Scott Davidson
Bruce Guettich
Greg Cortopassi
Jim Caveney
Peter Irish

Women

Nancy Reynolds
Tricia Sullivan George
Sam Conlon
Constance Constable
Kendall KIC
Heather Cook
Carol Wedemeyer
Heather Squires Thomas
Julie Symons

In the early years of footbag tournaments, trophies were awarded to champions of both freestyle and net, but a third title of *overall* champion also existed. It was a title involving the overall score a kicker earned in all disciplines. Kenny Shults dominated this title early on, as did Tricia Sullivan George. In the mid-1990s, Allan Petersen won it four years in a row, followed by Peter Shunny, but eventually this ranking was removed from tournament competition. As kickers became more adept, they were also becoming more specialized and the overall title grew obsolete.

Early Overall World Champions

Men

Mag Hughes
Kenny Shults
Allan Petersen
Peter Shunny
Chard Cook
Sean Flynn

Women

Tricia Sullivan George
Jody Badger Welch
Julie Symons
Evanne Lamarche

Footbag Hall of Fame

In 1996, the Footbag Hall of Fame was founded by John Stalberger, Ted Huff, and Garwin Bruce. Its website, footbaghalloffame.net, lists each inducted member, with a few new individuals being voted in each year. The photograph below was taken at the Hall of Fame inaugural dinner in 1997 and includes Scott "Mag" Hughes, Walt Mason, and Bill Hayne. All three were athletes in several sports, in addition to footbag. Hughes was active in football, basketball, baseball, and tennis and was a professional juggler. Mason played baseball at Lewis Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho, and Bill Hayne was an All-American baseball player and baseball coach.



Mag Hughes, Walt Mason, and Bill Hayne

"The game of footbag, in general, is an innovative and exciting concept destined to become one of the greatest outlets for sports enthusiasts our country has seen for some time. On a recreational level footbag provides a skill activity packed with an abundance of fun. On a sport and training level it is one of the finest tools around — when utilized and taught correctly — to help develop foot quickness, agility, lateral quickness and balance. In addition to being a footbag enthusiast, I have incorporated it into our program as a drill and exercise to assist our catchers and middle infielders with the development of those athletic fundamentals.

Footbag is an activity I recommend highly, whether for fun, training or the serious sports competitor."

Bill Hayne
Baseball Coach
Green River Community College
Auburn, WA



1997 Footbag Hall of Fame founding members:
front row (l-r): Mark Hill, Jerry Cunningham, Eddie Robertson, Jack Schoolcraft
second row (l-r): Garry Gaman, Greg Cortopassi, Scott “Mag” Hughes, Dave Hill, Ted Huff, John Stalberger, Lori Jean Conover, Walt Mason, Bill Hayne, Garwin Bruce, Bill Fischetti
third row: Scott Cleere (EmCee)
photo: Jamie Lepley

Footbag golf and cricket



Steve Smith
photo: Jamie Lepley

The 1982 Nationals introduced another new event: footbag golf. Like regular golf, footbag golf involved 18 holes and different types of footbags were used, depending on the shot and distance required. Every shot was a hand-tossed kick and players worked their way from tee to green. The hole was a fabric cone 18 inches in diameter and 18 inches off the ground.

A 13-year-old Brit named Daniel Green of Norwich invented "footbag cricket" in 1985. According to *Footbag Fever*, the newsletter of the British Hacky Sack® Association, Green's conception of footbag cricket was "played as a team game with nine outfielders, a bowler, a wicket keeper, plus the two kicking batsmen of the opposing team." Green won five pounds for his idea.



Jamie Lepley



Reed Gray



Geoff Hand

Guinness World Records

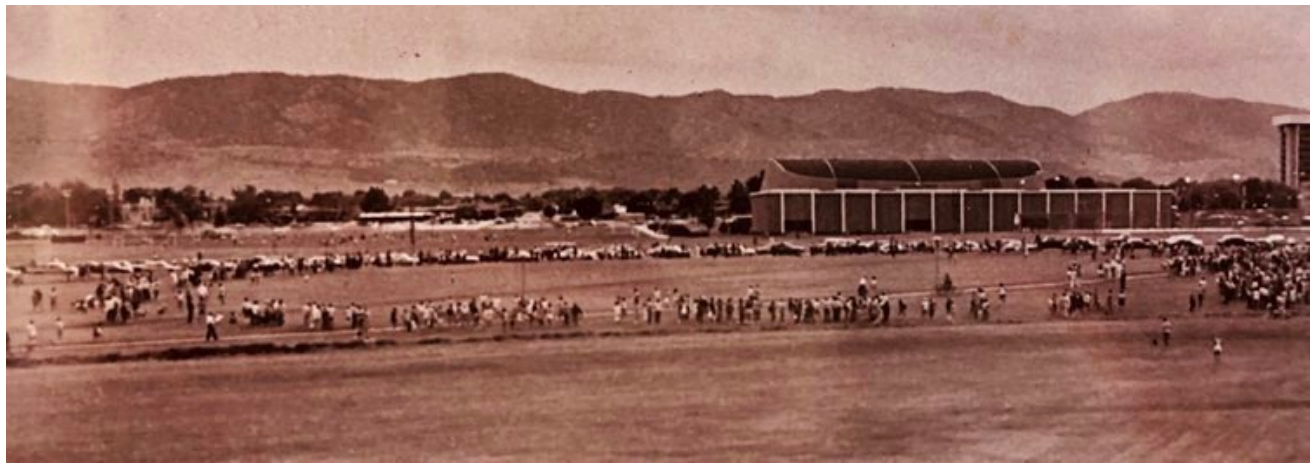
The consecutive kick and speed consecutive record holders listed on page 70 also hold Guinness World Records for those achievements. In addition to those, a few other pioneer kickers hold the following Guinness World Records:

Derrick Fogle

Derrick's record involved the longest distance traveled while controlling a footbag: 16,581 feet.

Scott Cleere

Scott attained the *first* Guinness World Record for organizing the largest footbag kicking circle: 863 people at the campus of Colorado State University in 1986. Wham-O® had sponsored a contest for the largest circle, with a winning prize of $10,000... according to Cleere, his largest windfall from the sport of footbag!



Scott Cleere's footbag circle of 863 at CSU

Andy Linder

Andy holds the *current* Guinness World Record for organizing the largest kicking circle at the Cornerstone Festival in Bushnell, Illinois with a total of 946 participants.

Allan Petersen

Allan holds the Guinness World Record for the highest number of consecutive kicks of a "fire sack" (a footbag lit on fire), which is 119.




GUINNESS

REKORD-DIPLOM

Det bekræftes hermed at ALLAN HARTMANN PETERSEN

KØBENHAVN dag den 11.3. 19 88

har sat rekorden i FOOTBAG ELLER HACKY-SACK

MED DELS ET VERDENSMESTERSKAB I FOOTBAG NET DELS FIRE SACK MED 119 SPARK

København, den 27.10 19 88

PER THEIL HANSEN

FORLAGET KOMMA A/S

Dette diplom medfører ikke automatisk optagelse i GUINNESS REKORDBOG.

Scott Davidson

Scott's record isn't documented by Guinness (yet) and is currently ongoing; it involves days-in-a-row kicking footbag. As of the publishing of this book, Scott has kicked more than 6,000 days in a row. "I started when I turned 40 years old," he said. "I wanted to do something meaningful. I thought it would be neat to kick every day because I noticed, at that age, if I took any time off it took twice as long just to get back to where I was. After a year, I decided to keep going, and on December 20, 2023, it will be 17 years kicking every day."

Footbag design & stitching

The first well-known Hacky Sack® footbags were the result of much sewing and material experimentation. "It was not unusual to fill them with rice or seeds," the World Footbag Association website relates, "but that led to problems when the footbags got wet, because eventually they would start to sprout... plastic pellets proved to be more durable and gave the footbag a more consistent reaction while in play, again accentuating the natural flow."

Eventually, footbag design evolved into two panels of pigskin sewn together and filled with plastic granulate. The basic design was similar to that of a tennis ball or baseball: two curved cat-tongue panels that fit together like a three-dimensional yin and yang. These were then mass produced from a design spec Stalberger sold to Wham-O.® Fairly quickly, Wham-O® introduced two more basic designs: an 8-panel and a 12-panel.

It was around this time that a legal distinction regarding nomenclature came into play. A hand-sewn footbag could not be referred to as a Hacky Sack® because that was a brand name owned by Wham-O.® Subsequently, other brands of footbag developed alongside Hacky Sack,® including Balywik,® Flying Clipper,™ Soc Sac,™ Dragonfly, Abshire Footbags, Hane Dane Footbags, Earth Bag,™ QuicKick,™ Sipa Sipa, Kanga, Deca, Dolphin Footbags, Twisted, CarolBag, Hu-Mungis, and Zeno.



early Hacky Sack®
(Petersen collection)



early Hacky Sack® tote
(S.J. East collection)

of Footbag



Official Hacky Sack® Footbag—A footbag that was the first, the original! This 32 gram, internally hand stitched, 100% leather footbag is scientifically designed with a patent on its two piece construction. A classic.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



Hacky Sack® Book—Another first and original from Hacky Sack®. A 72 page how-to book on the art of footbag games American style. Light hearted, fun and easy to read. Complete with official Hacky Sack® footbag. Great gift idea.

Non-member $9.00 Member $7.00
6 to 11 - $6.50 12 to 20 - $6.00



1978 Collectors Footbag—1978 model Hacky Sack® brand footbag. Handmade in Haiti with heavy gauge leather to ensure years of great kicking. Already 6 years old, a real collectors item. Limited inventory, act now!

Non-member $20.00 Member $15.00
No volume discount, limited supply.



Hacky Sack® Footbag Key Chain—First of its kind. Quality handmade 2 panel footbag key chain. Footbag has been reduced to approximately ¼ size of a normal Hacky Sack® footbag. Excellent new item.

Non-member $5.00 Member $2.50
6 to 20 - $2.00



Earth Bag™ Footbag—Going natural? This four panel footbag is handmade of quality leather filled with mother natures finest cherry pits. Go natural.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



La Luna™ Footbag—The latest earthly model by the makers of Earth Bag™ footbags. This footbag is a little bigger and a little softer. Recommended for easy break in and great control.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



Mini Toe Tickler Footbag—This high quality footbag introduced from California is the newest concept in footbag manufacturing. Besides their unique 3 panel construction and soft custom leather they've introduced a new size. The Mini is approximately ½ size of a normal footbag. Excellent for advanced play and quick response. Test your skills, master a Mini.

Non-member $7.00 Member $5.50
6 to 11 - $5.00 12 to 20 - $4.50



Tangent Footbag—Flying Clipper Leathers introduces the latest of the multi-panel footbags. All their footbags are guaranteed for one year, hand crafted in Oregon and made of 100% cow hide leather to insure long life and durability. The Tangent is a 14 panel footbag constructed with 8 hexagons and 6 squares put together to form one of the finest footbags ever produced.

Non-member $11.00 Member $9.00
6 to 11 - $8.50 12 to 20 - $8.00



Octoe Footbag—Another Flying Clipper product. This footbag is an 8 panel, combining 4 triangles with 4 hexagon pieces of quality leather. Excellent kicking design.

Non-member $9.00 Member $7.50
6 to 11 - $7.00 12 to 20 $6.50



Tetra Footbag—The last of the great line-up by Flying Clipper Leathers. This 4 panel footbag is made in a four sided tetrahedron design. Great kicker.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



Sipa Sipa Footbag—The latest high quality crocheted footbag. Every Sipa Sipa footbag is handmade with quality materials. All footbags are washable and are colored bright orange with a black stripe for high visibility. Sipa Sipa footbags come with their own unique sound and are made ready to kick. Ideal for new games and beginners.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



Soc-Sac Footbag—America's original multi-panel soccer style footbag is patented and guaranteed for one year. This hand sewn 12 panel footbag is internally stitched and made to form a dodecahedron for durability and roundness. Highly recommended.

Non-member $10.00 Member $7.00
6 to 11 - $6.25 12 to 20 - $5.50

New Arrival





Bälywik™ Footbag — This 2 panel designed footbag is hand crafted in the United States to insure top quality. It is constructed with genuine deerskin and 100% natural barley filler.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00



Takraw Ball—The WFA offers another new foot related kicking object. Takraw ball is not a footbag, but has been made available because of its age old popularity in many countries and cultures worldwide. The Takraw ball is a round object approximately 6 inches in diameter. It's constructed of one layer of woven rattan consisting of 9 to 10 strands, having 12 holes.

Non-member $8.00 Member $6.00
6 to 11 - $5.50 12 to 20 - $5.00

from a 1980s *Footbag World* magazine

But although Hacky Sack® created the design that launched the sport, it was a design that others immediately sought to improve. A number of well-known early pioneers in the sport of footbag stepped up to that challenge.



early Flying Clipper™
(Petersen collection)



Flying Clipper™ Octoe
(Petersen collection)

In 1983, Jim "Toes" Fitzgerald, Reed Gray, and Dennis Ross created Flying Clipper.™ Toes Fitzgerald was a kicker in the late 1970s in Eugene, Oregon, who, along with Gray and Ross, wanted to create new footbag designs that would improve on the original Hacky Sack® design, which tended not to be perfectly round. They describe Flying Clipper™ as, "the oldest continually operating footbag manufacturer on the planet."

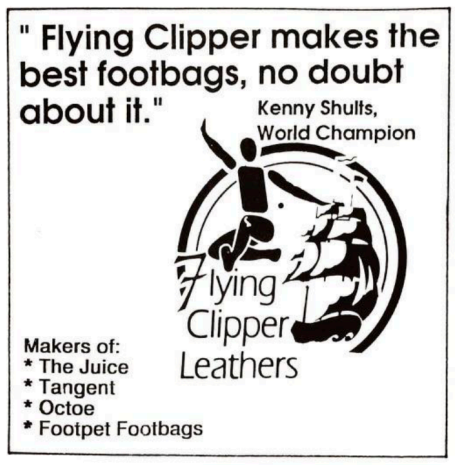
Flying Clipper™ created the first footbags using ultra-suede, a material that was more pliable than leather or pigskin. Footbags needed to be flexible but strong. Ultra-suede fit the bill, plus the options were colorful and even washable; none of this was true of pigskin. Later, these would also use sand instead of just plastic granulate, which required more stitching but resulted in a heavier bag. Fitzgerald and Gray also pioneered a 14-panel called the Tangent.

Dennis Ross, a 2001 inductee to the Footbag Hall of Fame, recalls, "I started sewing footbags for Reed Gray and Jim Fitzgerald with a company called Perpetual Motion putting together Soc Sac footbags before I actually became addicted to playing the game." Due to a copyright issue, the Soc Sac was later renamed the Soc Soc.



Soc Sac





In 1985, Flying Clipper™ introduced the Juice™ facile footbag, named by Kenny Shults when he described it at the National Championships as "the juiciest footbag I have ever kicked." The Juice™ was based on the 32-panel soccer ball design that uses 20 equilateral hexagons and 12 equilateral pentagons.



32-panel soccer ball design: equilateral hexagons and pentagons



Allan Petersen's equilateral 32-panel

Because equilateral polygons have sides of equal length, the pentagons of the basic soccer ball design look smaller than the hexagons that surround them, which is more obvious in the footbag shown at right. (The reason for this is because a pentagon has only five sides, but a hexagon has six, making the hexagon a larger shape.)

The Juice,™ however, *enlarged* each pentagon (shown below in red on the net game version) and truncated the hexagons (shown below in white) into squared-off triangles. This design can be further modified by simply replacing each hexagon with a triangle.



Juice™ by Flying Clipper™



In addition to the Juice™ and their Leathers, one of the most popular designs for Flying Clipper™ has been the DirtBag.® The brand was later acquired by the World Footbag Association and the Juice™ is still produced today in vinyl.



Richard Abshire's truncated 32-panel

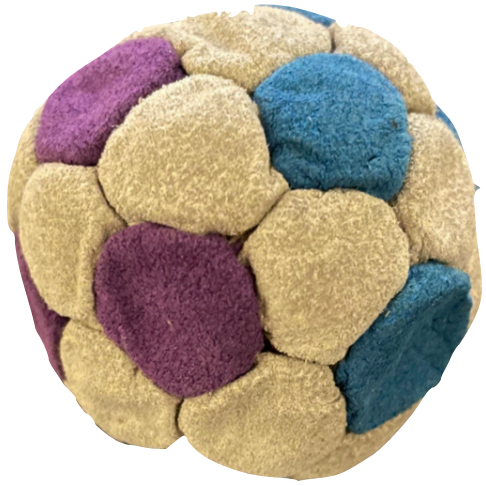


Scott Milne's 32-panel Kanga with triangles

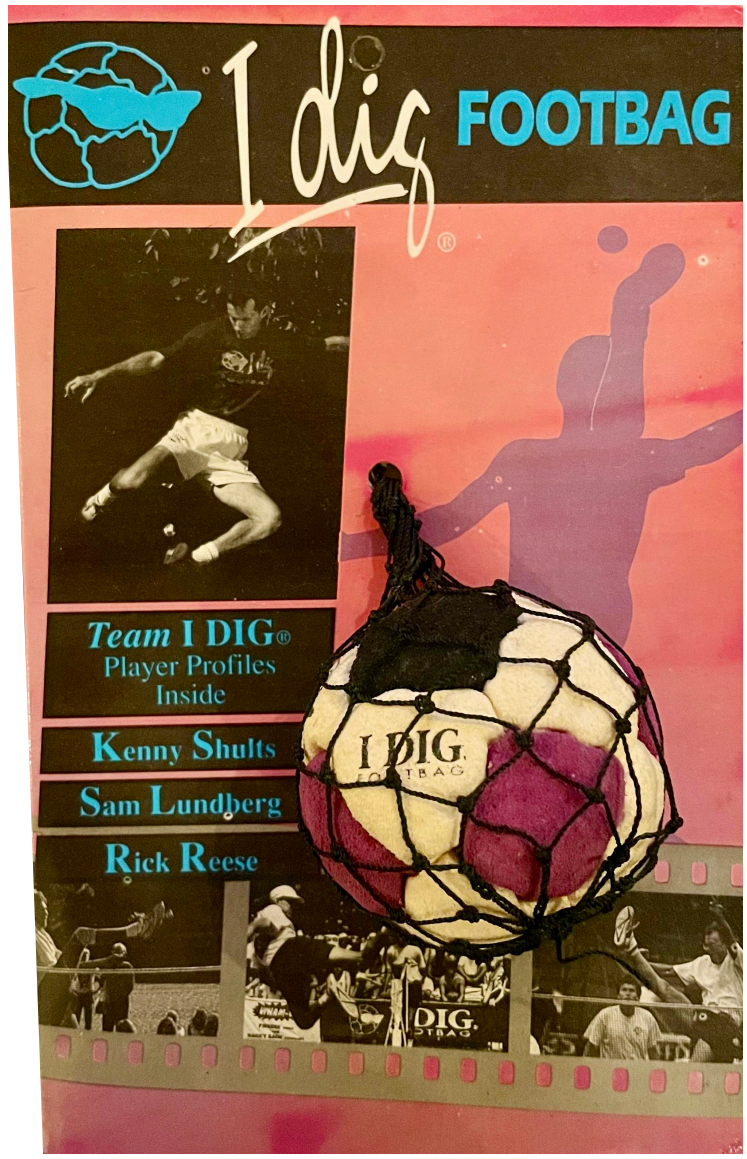


Allan Petersen's 32-panel with triangles

The Soc Soc™ featured both a Pat Bieber and Kenny Shults signature version in the mid-1980s, and by the '90s, Shults was pursuing his own line of footbags called I DIG.® He formed the company with John Stalberger and Flying Clipper™ producing several footbag models, but with its centerpiece being a 14-panel design. The packaging featured Sam Conlon (listed on the package as Sam Lundberg) and Rick Reese.



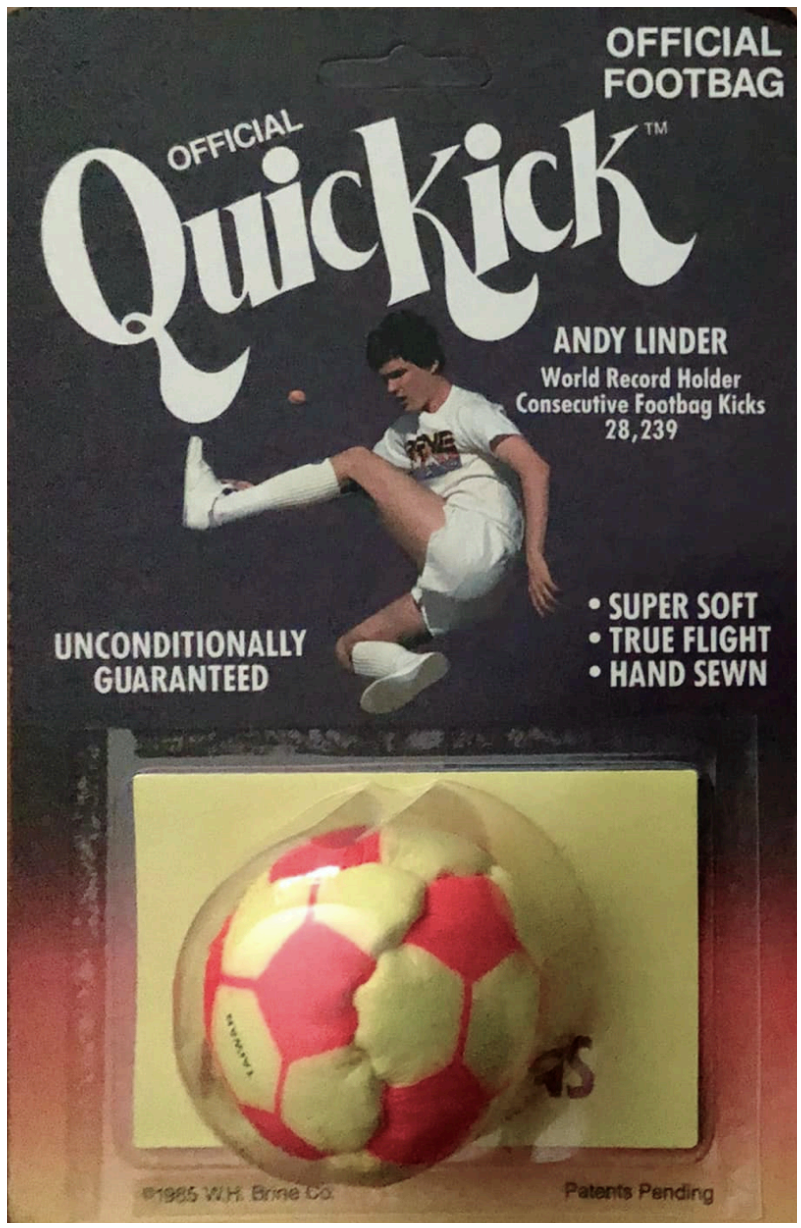
Shults' Juice



"This is the footbag," Shults said, "that I first called 'The Juice' which then became the brand name for this model from Flying Clipper.™ It was also the footbag that I used when I went dropless all three rounds in 1989 to win the singles freestyle title."



Both Balywik® and QuicKick,™ marketed their footbags with the signature and likeness of world champion / world record holder Andy Linder.



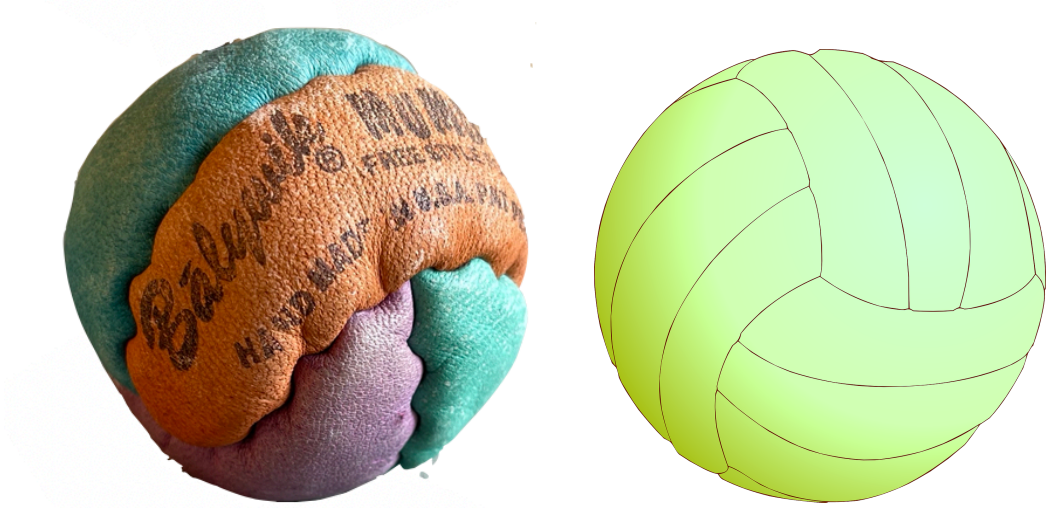
early QuicKick™
(Linder collection)







early promotional
Balywik® bags
(Linder collection)



early Balywik®
(Petersen collection)

The Damar corporation came out with the Balywik® in 1983, a 2-panel deerskin footbag filled with barley. Their marketing strategy was to undercut Wham-O®'s price point of $8.00, charging $7.50 per bag. A court case over patent infringement was filed by Wham-O,® which was settled when Damar changed the Balywik® Mumbus design to four panels, reminiscent of volleyballs that use the same design in groups of three. QuicKick™ was produced by Brine, the company that subsequently took over manufacturing the Balywik® footbags when they bought the design from Damar.

Just as footbag designs were waxing more complex, a simple 3-panel design called the Orbitor was first put out by the WFA in its 1985 player's package. This bag was pieced together using two circles joined by a rectangular band connected in a single seam. The Orbitor was a firm cowhide footbag.

"As I recall," said WFA co-founder Bruce Guettich, "the Orbitor was a design that came to us from the original manufacturer from Haiti of the Hacky Sack® 2-panel footbag. We created a limited edition to give away at the 1985 World Footbag Championships and to gauge the players' interest for possible future production. It turned out that the hamburger shape made this model extremely challenging to control. The project was scrubbed after only one small run of a couple hundred units."



Orbitor
(Petersen collection)

Allan Petersen sold several of his footbag designs to Wham-O.® These included the zig-zag Impact and the Panther, which altered the spherical footbag concept to incorporate both inward crevices and outward protrusions. The Panther was a modified 8-panel where each panel was a three-dimensional, pyramid-shaped pouch. All eight pouches were then connected in the center. Wham-O® also produced Petersen's interlocking three-ring design, marketed as the Infinity.



early Wham-O® Impact and Panther
(Petersen collection)



Bud's Leather Bag

This ancient footbag was made in the 1980s by "Bud," his signature appearing on one of the panels. While perhaps not the best stitchwork ever seen on a footbag, Bud's early achievement is noteworthy for its unusual design and longevity. It's composed of 16 leather panels that look to be in a random pattern. On closer inspection, though, there is a method to the madness: a series of triangles cut in half and then offset.

When this footbag was constructed, there was no artificial suede on the market and it was packed with too much fill, almost like a net footbag. As such, it didn't stall well and was of little use for freestyle. Still, it's an attractive bag in its own way and the colors are striking.



Earth Bag
by Lance and Eric Cole



Lind's Deca

In the '80s, Jon Lind designed the Deca footbag which included features like the studs seen on the bottom example. Only 36 studded Decas were ever produced. Lind called the outlined footbags "brain bags" and he dated each footbag he made.



Anderson and Bartholomay's Twisted

Homemade artisanal footbags allowed the creativity of kickers to be expressed. The Twisted was designed and stitched by Chris Anderson and Eric "Bart" Bartholomay. Though Bart was an avid kicker and ranked 2nd at Worlds in 1993, Anderson never kicked a footbag. The Twisted sold well at tournaments and in kicking circles all over the country.

Eventually Scott Milne leased the rights to the Twisted design. Milne had acquired the Kanga design from Dave Robinson in the early 1990s, and was also producing the FourPlay, Mojo 152, and Habit footbags.



Kanga



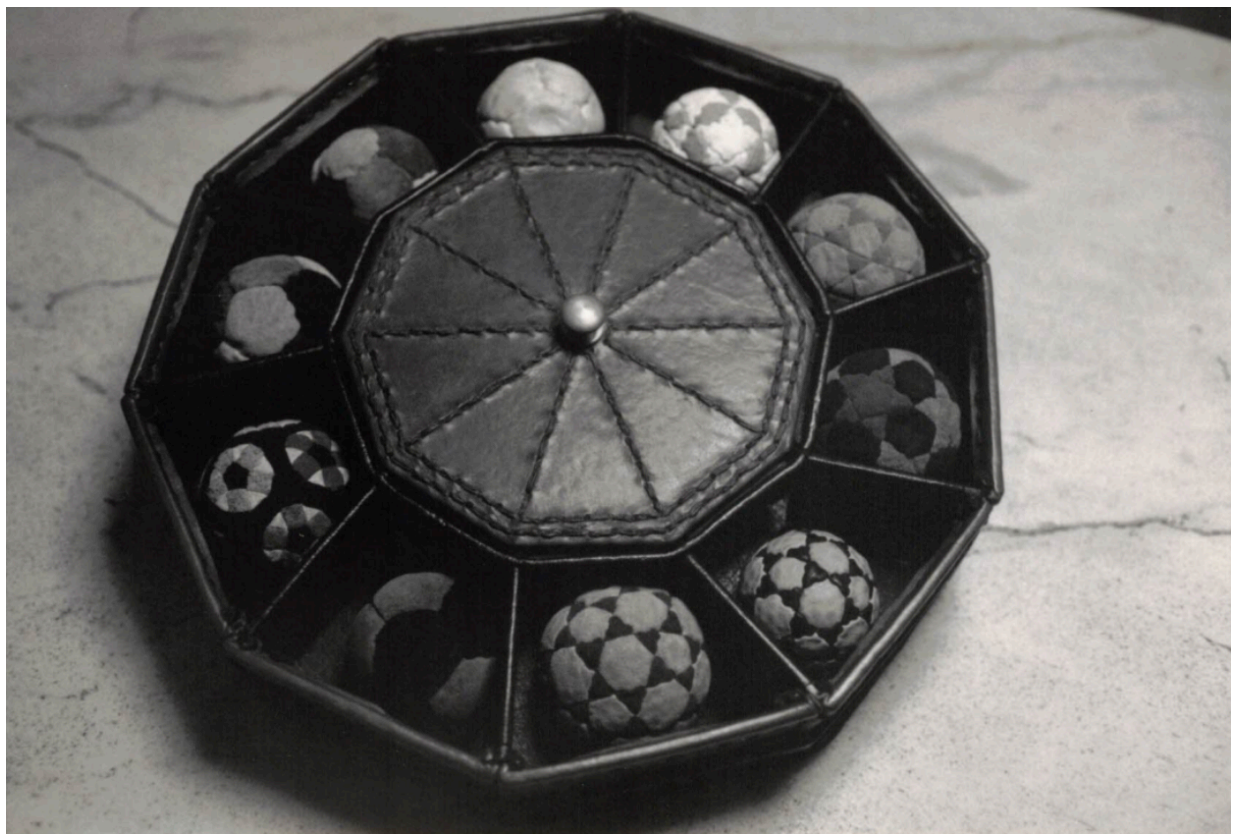
Habit



Allan Petersen

Torben Wigger first taught Petersen to sew footbags in 1986. Later, as Petersen traveled the world playing and promoting footbag, he found that he could fund his excursions stitching: he would create some basic, low-panel designs on the airplane, anywhere from 6 square panels (for a cube) to 12 pentagonal panels. Once he arrived at his destination, he would street perform and sell the footbags he'd sewn on the sidewalk.





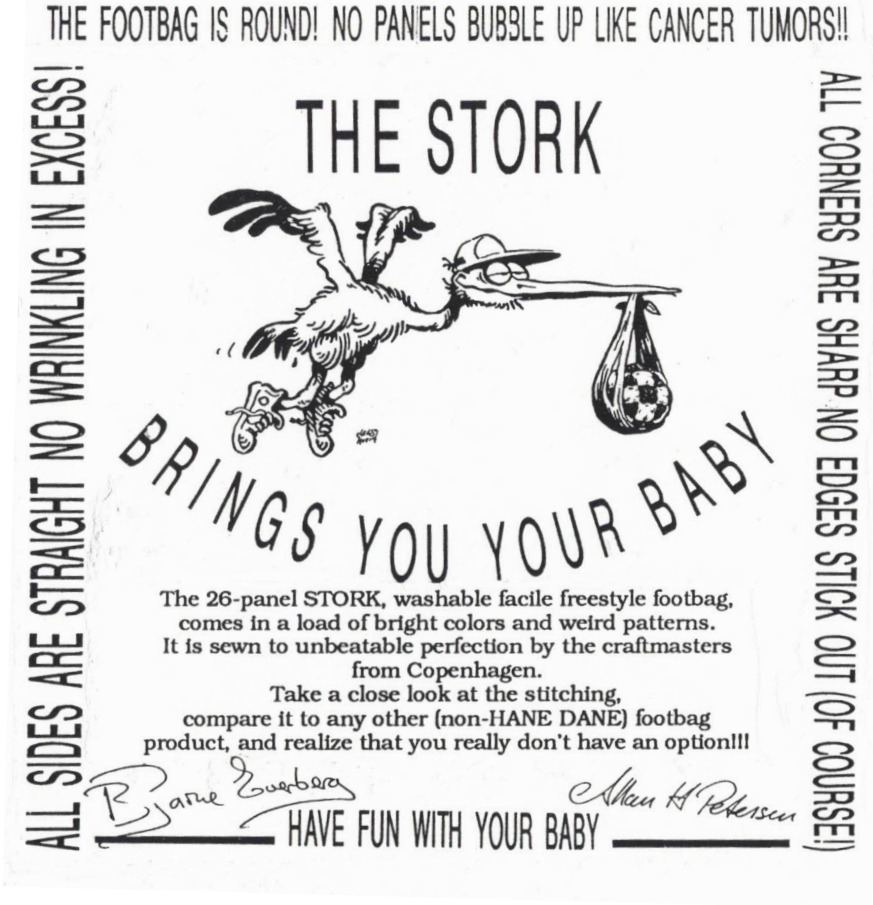
Petersen's footbags in a leather display he also created

His focus went from low-panel designs for ease of stitching to higher-panel designs to attract enthusiasts who would not only kick the footbags but appreciate them aesthetically. "When selling footbags," he said, "people are drawn to those with more panels." Also a woodworker, Petersen was fascinated with various ways to construct a sphere. His designs include footbags with holes, a six-pointed star, and his most complicated multi-panel contains 452.

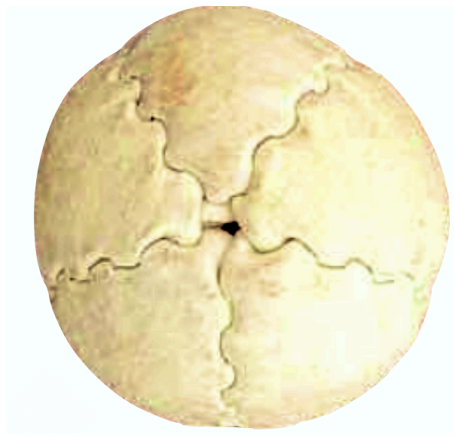


Everberg and Petersen's Stork

Petersen's first design was conceptualized in Denmark with Bjarne Everberg, his freestyle partner at the time. The five-square cross footbag was a 26-panel called the Stork, utilizing only squares and triangles, stitched with artificial sinew treated with beeswax. Petersen created a banner for tournaments and advertised his 62-panel, the Hammer, along with the Stork. Claes Movin, a newspaper cartoon illustrator who was kicking in Copenhagen at the time, drew up the Stork logo.



A one-panel footbag



Petersen's Sand Dollar

Though it used only two panels, the original Hacky Sack® wouldn't be claiming any records for low-panel design. That honor would go to any footbag designed with just *one* panel. After creating and sewing many complex, multi-panel patterns, Petersen wondered if he could design a footbag with just one. Of course, there are several ways to do that, but the single-panel design that he hit upon was to shape that panel into a five-pointed star.

The result was the Sand Dollar. When each ray segment was sewn to its neighbor, the points met in the center. Looking from above that center point, the footbag resembled a sand dollar.

With just one panel to work with, Petersen found this design to be very production-friendly and the "easiest, quickest footbag I've ever sewn." Opposite the converging wedges was its smooth side, free of any stitching at all. Having a surface area devoid of stitching translated into high pliability, as what stiffens up any footbag is the thread and interior flaps. Since thread and flaps increase with the number of panels being sewn together, a one-panel footbag remains simple and relatively soft, making it easy to direct and stall. "This footbag," Petersen said, "practically hugs your shoe."



Licensed Infinity



The Infinity is one of three designs Petersen sold to Wham-O® for mass production. The footbags are constructed of three interlocking rings. It wasn't an easy footbag to sew because it needed to be interlocked during the closing process. Each ring was one panel, sewn into a tube, and had its own separate plastic fill. Because of the difficulty involved in producing it, Wham-O® sent Petersen to their factory in China to teach the staff how to stitch the design.

"I flew out to Hong Kong and from there drove into China," Petersen recalls. "The factory was surrounded by a huge brick wall and the working environment was very strict. When I walked into a room of roughly 200 sewers, not one of them looked up to see this new person visiting the plant."

The Infinity shown above is one Petersen personally stitched. "It looks brand new," he said, "because, to be honest, it wasn't my favorite." The Infinity wasn't a great kicking footbag, but Wham-O® liked it for its unusual look and low number of panels (just three).



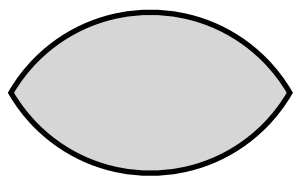
Petersen at the factory in China

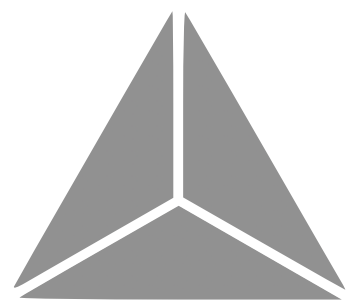


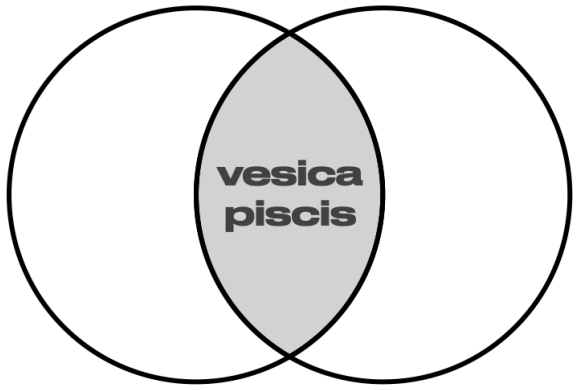
dipole 4-panel net footbag
(Petersen collection)

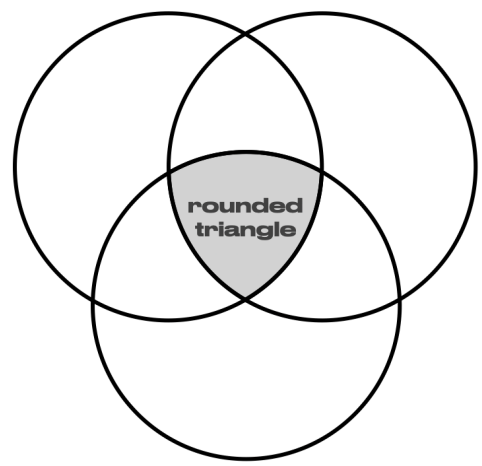


Petersen's Tetrahedron 4-panel









The simplest 4-panel footbag design uses the shape of a vesica piscis (as on the left). When sewn together, the resulting sphere is a dipole, with all four panels meeting at two diametrically opposed points. This is panel *duality*.

Another 4-panel design produces a sphere through panel *triality*, forming a rounded tetrahedron, seen on the right from above. The fourth face, or panel, occupies the full footprint of this shape on its bottom side that's hidden from view. But while a tetrahedron is built from triangles, a 4-panel footbag using pliable fabric panels will seek its least-resistant, spherical form. This is a rounded triangle shape, called a Reuleaux triangle, created from the overlap of three circles.



Petersen's original 5-panel



Licensed Nike Grind

Petersen's 5-panel footbag is a design involving three circles and two conforming bands that surround them. It creates a pseudo-sphere that feels very triangular. Petersen sold this design to the World Footbag Association; it was then licensed to Nike, where it was manufactured under the product name of Grind. This was a good design for a logo because it used a panel large enough to accommodate the stamp.



Petersen's Dog Turd

Moving up by one panel is Petersen's Dog Turd. This design uses six panels: it's actually two C-shaped bags that are then sewn together. Each segment is composed of three panels: two sides and one top forming the outer, darker face. Because it has a long, streamlined surface area without any stitching, it's a soft and pliable footbag that stalls easily.



Petersen's WhiteSnake

Petersen designed the WhiteSnake as a play off the 8-panel footbag. The 8 panels are obvious, but the bag has a total of 26, including 12 snaking panels and 6 small, white squares where the snaking panels meet.

The footbag pictured here is made of black- and white-dyed pigskin. To stitch pigskin, a triangular, leather needle is used that can *slice* through it. Each white panel or strip appears wavy because of the way it's stitched; pulling the sinew string through will wrinkle the pigskin. A uniform stitch (consistency in both the stitch distance and tension) will generate a uniform wave of the white panels. It's also important to keep the same number of stitch holes per side throughout the entire footbag. That ensures uniformity and a balanced result.

"The WhiteSnake is from my early days of experimenting to see how thin I could sew a line of fabric," Petersen said, "and it was an important step in my learning process. Depending on the fill used, it can be both a great net or a great freestyle footbag. There are a low-enough number of panels that will allow it to stay soft if you're wanting it to stall."

the Blister extended family



Petersen's Blister



Petersen's Cat's Paw

Petersen's Blister designs (including the Cat's Paw) came about when he realized that he could sew footbags *outward*. Imagining a sphere as simply a curved two-dimensional plane, he wanted to project the footbags out into the third dimension off that plane. Each pad on both of these footbags is self contained, with its own fill. In the Cat's Paw, like the Panther, the separate pads meet in the center, where they're sewn together. Each are made of both ultra-suede and leopard faux fur.

"Back when I started footbag in '83," Petersen said, "it was about *kicking* the footbag. Stalling was just one of the challenges, but today freestyle is primarily about connecting tricks without kicks in between. The sport has evolved enormously, but non-spherical footbags work well for both early or late kicking styles... When I make an intricate footbag, it's for love of design."



Petersen's Shroom

A cousin to the Blister, the Shroom is a colorful footbag pieced together with 64 panels, a rare number to be used when engineering sphere-shaped fabric. It uses a soccer ball design with 12 pentagons and 20 hexagons. Each blister bump protrudes via one thin white panel that has been scored to make each turn around the pentagon or hexagon shape. It kicks with a little more bounce than a normal footbag, though it's not great for stalling because it's harder to collapse.



Petersen's Shock Absorber

The Shock Absorber design hides a secret: its center is hollow! The only fill used in the bag is held inside the 12 three-dimensional pentagons making up the outer shell. Each exterior pentagon ends up being a small bag of its own, and all 12 are sewn together to form the overall footbag with 36 panels total. This footbag is a little larger than most of Petersen's other designs and because of its hollow center, it absorbs the shock of each kick.

With this footbag, Petersen incorporated small 3-sided pyramids between larger cubes. It uses a total of 6 cubes and 8 pyramids totalling 68 panels, the only one in his collection to use that number. It sports a nice burst of colors that bring to mind a bowl of candy, and it's a fun little footbag.



Petersen's Candy Bag

The Grid is an unusual design... again, maybe more unusual than functional for a footbag. It totals 60 panels with 20 triangular pouches held together with three well-placed stitches. Each little pouch consists of 3 panels sewn together and filled with a small amount of plastic granulate. This is a footbag that stalls even before it lands. It's pretty much always in a state of collapse, so it's far from the perfect kicking footbag, but it makes a great Christmas tree ornament.



Petersen's Grid

The Red Buttons footbag is another relative to the Blister, but while the Blister has 44 panels, the Red Buttons has 74. It's great for kicking. Not for shredding, but it works for light freestyle. Each button is surrounded by a circular band of blue and green. These circles intersect each other but also stand apart individually... a slight optical illusion.



Petersen's Red Buttons



Petersen's RastaQuad

The RastaQuad is a variation of the Cat's Paw but with fewer sacs protruding into a tetrahedron. Each sac is also sewn a little differently with 3 rasta-colored side panels and a black top. The footbag is composed of 16 panels, two inches in diameter.



Petersen's Jax

This footbag combines the jax and the ball into one! It's composed of 6 protruding discs or cylinders forming a three-dimensional cross. Unlike the RastaQuad, the Jax is not composed of separate sacs connected together, but is one footbag with one compartment inside for fill.

Stars



Petersen's Morning Star

Like most other footbags, this one is sewn inside out until the very end, then turned right. But the Morning Star takes significantly more time to make, adding on at least another hour. The 20 cones have to be made separately, prior to stitching them to the larger pentagons.

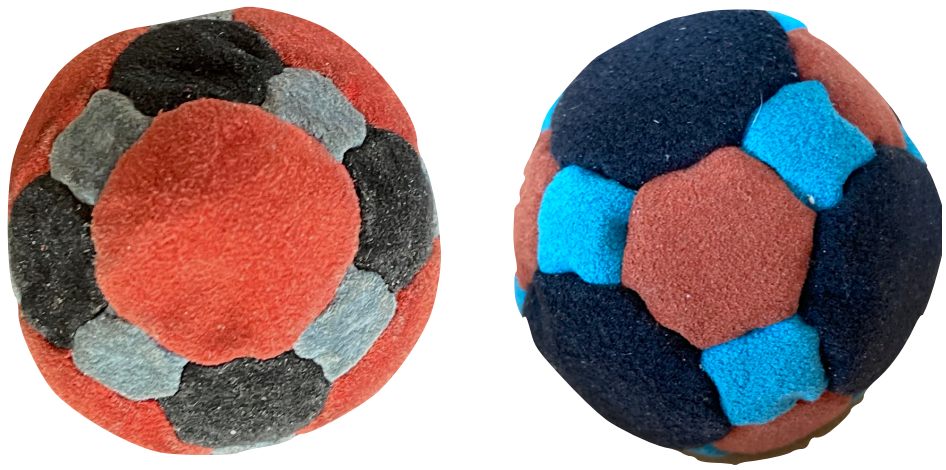


Petersen's 6-Point Star



Petersen's 12-Point Star

The unique tripod design, called the "6-point star," is a fully functioning footbag! Some wonder if these unusual shapes can stall and kick straight, and the answer is, yes, they absolutely can. As a matter of fact, the "6-point star" doesn't roll easily so it's unlikely to roll off the foot. For aesthetic purposes, Petersen added some short, red fringe wherever 3 cones intersect. Its cousin, the "12-point star," utilizes twice the panels. Both have one open compartment on the inside.



Petersen's Octabag

The Octabag 26-panel design is made with pigskin and contains 6 octagons, 8 hexagons, and 12 squares. What makes this design rare is the inclusion of octagons, an unusual shape to use in the construction of a sphere. The footbag pictured on the left uses orange octagons; black octagons are used on the right.

The octagonal panels need to be larger to accommodate all eight sides, but these larger panels give the footbag an uneven surface. These larger panels also stretch over time and tend to either protrude out or dimple in. However, this is only a problem when using pigskin, as it can be more stretchy. Ultra-suede uses synthetic fibers that don't stretch. And while the Octabag isn't a particularly functional footbag design, it's interesting to look at.



Petersen's Sunburst

The Sunburst is an incredibly unique design: it's made up of 44 panels comprising four different shapes and two 6-pointed stars. The four shapes include: 8 hexagons, 12 pentagons, 12 triangles, and 12 diamonds.

This footbag actually utilizes an asymmetrical design and its asymmetry is the reason Petersen didn't make more of these; only symmetrical designs can create a perfect sphere.

On one end is a red sunburst and on the other is a white one. The panels are pigskin and filled with plastic granulate. It's not particularly good for freestyle but would be fine for plain, old circle kicking.

"I was making a normal soccer ball design," Petersen said, "but I wondered what would happen if I flipped the design into the opposite: pentagons around a hexagon. You can do that with or without the triangles to create a sphere."

Diamonds only



Petersen's Harlequin

Not many footbag designs can utilize just one shape, but this one incorporates only diamonds. There are 48 of them in a busy color scheme (or non-scheme) called the Harlequin.

This was an early footbag Petersen made before perfecting his stitching techniques. Still, the leather used in this footbag was thick and tough, making it hard to achieve sharp corners and tight joints for which he would later be known.



Petersen's Diamond Back2Back

Related to the Harlequin is this Diamond Back2Back that also utilizes only diamond-shaped panels. Arranging the colored diamonds in groups of three gives the footbag a very different look.

Unlike a typical 32-panel, this design uses only 30 panels and each one is diamond-shaped. Because each diamond butts up to four others, the result is called the Diamond Back2Back.



Petersen's Offset

The Offset is composed of 92 panels: 12 pentagons and 80 triangles. It's a fairly unusual design for sphere construction, as each pentagon is offset or slightly turned.

A better way to illustrate the offset nature of this design is with a similar but differently colored footbag with 32 panels made by Eric "Bart" Bartholomay:



On this one, each pentagon is surrounded by triangles that extend past the edge of the pentagon. (In the Offset, that larger triangle extending over is broken into four smaller triangles.) The triangles then determine where the next pentagon will be positioned, and rather than sitting directly opposite from the other pentagons, each pentagon is slightly offset from the others. Because each triangle side is twice as long as each pentagon, Bart's 32-panel is not an easy footbag to make.

With 92, the Offset has too many panels to be a good freestyle footbag. The large numbers of stitches make the bag very firm, so not reliable for stalling. It holds its spherical shape and doesn't collapse down.



Petersen's Lotus

The Lotus is a 122-panel footbag and one of just a few in which Petersen used four shapes: pentagons, squares, diamonds, and triangles. When creating a sphere, the pentagon shape is key; that's what curves the fabric into a ball. Hexagons and squares sewn together won't make a sphere. Using only those shapes without a pentagon, the result would be a flat blanket.

The basic soccer ball design uses 12 pentagons, as does this footbag, but the shapes between the pentagons in the Lotus are a bit unusual. Compared to a soccer ball or even the 92-panel soccer design with triangles, the Lotus separates itself from the family of most other footbag designs. These four shapes together create a layered floral pattern that looks great with any color combination.

Kickingwise, it's relatively soft and a great kicking footbag, depending on what material is used. More weight is needed to break the footbag's surface stiffness, so the fill would need to be a combination of sand, plastic granulate, or bb's to make the Lotus into a great freestyle footbag.



Petersen's Don't Blink 182

Above is the rasta version of an homage to grunge music and Dr. Who: a 182-panel footbag made of pigskin using triangles, squares, pentagons, and hexagons. When sewing 182 panels, don't blink or you might overlook one of the tiny pieces. Obviously, cutting and sewing 182 separate pieces is time consuming and tedious and this footbag took about 12 hours to stitch. But besides the complex construction, it also required a unique stitching technique: only the corners were attached. There was no sewing down the length of any panel, which was only about a quarter of an inch long.

Depending on the colors used, different visual effects can be achieved on a 182-panel: the rasta version is a colorful pinwheel encased in a black border, but the black and white versions can produce an overlapping, five-pointed starburst or an almost Celtic weave.

Because there's too much thread in these to make a super-soft footbag, and because of the high number of bent-in panels creating stiffness, these are only good for net and collecting.



Petersen's Fahrenheit 452

If Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which book pages burn, 452 is the number of panels to make a footbag hot during shredding! Like in the Don't Blink 182, its panels were so small that stitches were made only at the corners, and such a high number of panels required a total of five needles to close the bag. Also like the Don't Blink 182, as well as the Lotus and Sunburst, this footbag uses four geometric shapes: triangles, squares, pentagons, and hexagons. But even with this high number of panels, there are still only 12 pentagons and 20 hexagons, just like a basic 32-panel soccer ball design.

Of all Petersen's footbags, this one has the smallest panels. The 452 took him five days, sewing eight hours a day, to complete. That time included cutting out all 452 panels, which had to be very accurate. It contains the most panels Petersen has ever stitched, though a footbag could be made with more.

This one isn't the best for freestyle... when Petersen makes an intricate footbag like this, it's more for the love of design and form over function.

Hollow footbags



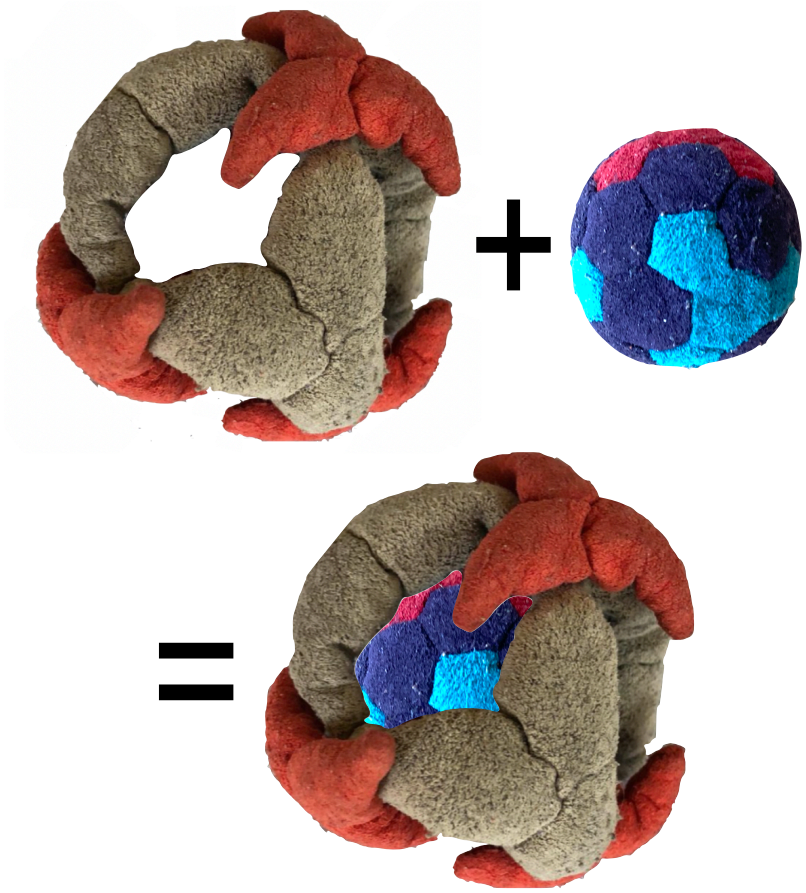
Petersen's Jester

The Jester footbags bring to mind the silly antics of clowns at court. Six cones protrude between its eight cushions or pads; the smaller footbag contains four cones protruding through four cushions.

A Jester is two footbags in one. The pointy, cone-shaped inner can be removed from the outer cushion shell. It's definitely more fun than functional, but both footbags are very kickable, either separately or together.

No footbag is particularly easy to sew, but this design presents different challenges than a more straightforward, flat-panel example. And because footbags are sewn inside-out, the Jester's cones get very bunched up during the stitching process. Before closing the footbag, the cones need to be punched outward.





Petersen's Ninja 300

Another footbag design with a hole in the middle is the futuristic Ninja 300. Again, it's two footbags in one: the 24-panel outer shell of tan and orange 3-point stars holds an inner 32-panel mini footbag (a typical soccer ball design). They can be used together (one inside the other), or can be separated into two pieces to kick individually.

With the right fill, this can be a good shred footbag. The one pictured here contains plastic granulate, but this design, filled with bb's or sand, would stall even better.

This Ninja 300 is around 25 years old and although the design looks complicated, it's actually not terribly difficult to sew. Mastering the tripod is half the battle. Each tripod is connected from the outside, however, so it's important to hide those stitches.



Petersen's Tubular

Another hollow footbag, the Tubular is based on an 8-panel design that manifests as a 12-panel tube/pipe construction. How to turn an 8-panel into a 12-panel? The 8-panel design is flipped *negative.* Each of the 8 panels is negative space, becoming a hole. Only the 12 *edges* exist and are comprised of positive material.

This particular footbag uses color to camouflage the otherwise very basic and symmetrical 8-panel design. The colors give it a different perspective, calling attention to an offset, zig-zagging band rather than its four-bottom, four-top construction.

"I was really excited with the way this one turned out," Petersen said, "because it was so completely unusual."

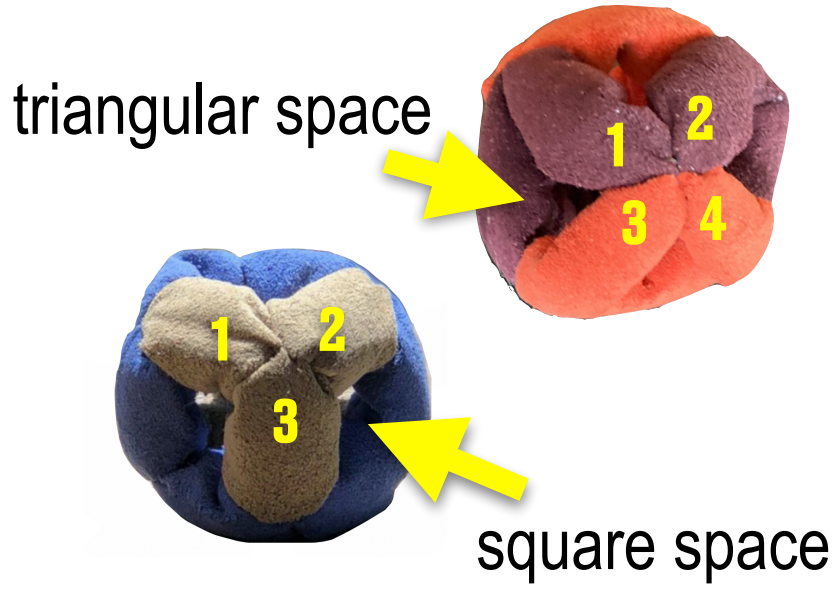


Petersen's Tesseract

The design of this footbag may only express a three-dimensional cube in space, but its fourth dimension comes from its function. Because of its hollow center, it stalls really well and plays like a regular footbag in all other respects.

The Tesseract is a 12-panel and one of the more challenging footbags to sew, due to the technique used: it must be connected and filled as you go along, rather than filling at the end.

An interesting geometrical note: the Tubular has four panels at each connecting point that result in *triangular* holes, while the Tesseract brings three panels to each connection point, but creates *square* holes.





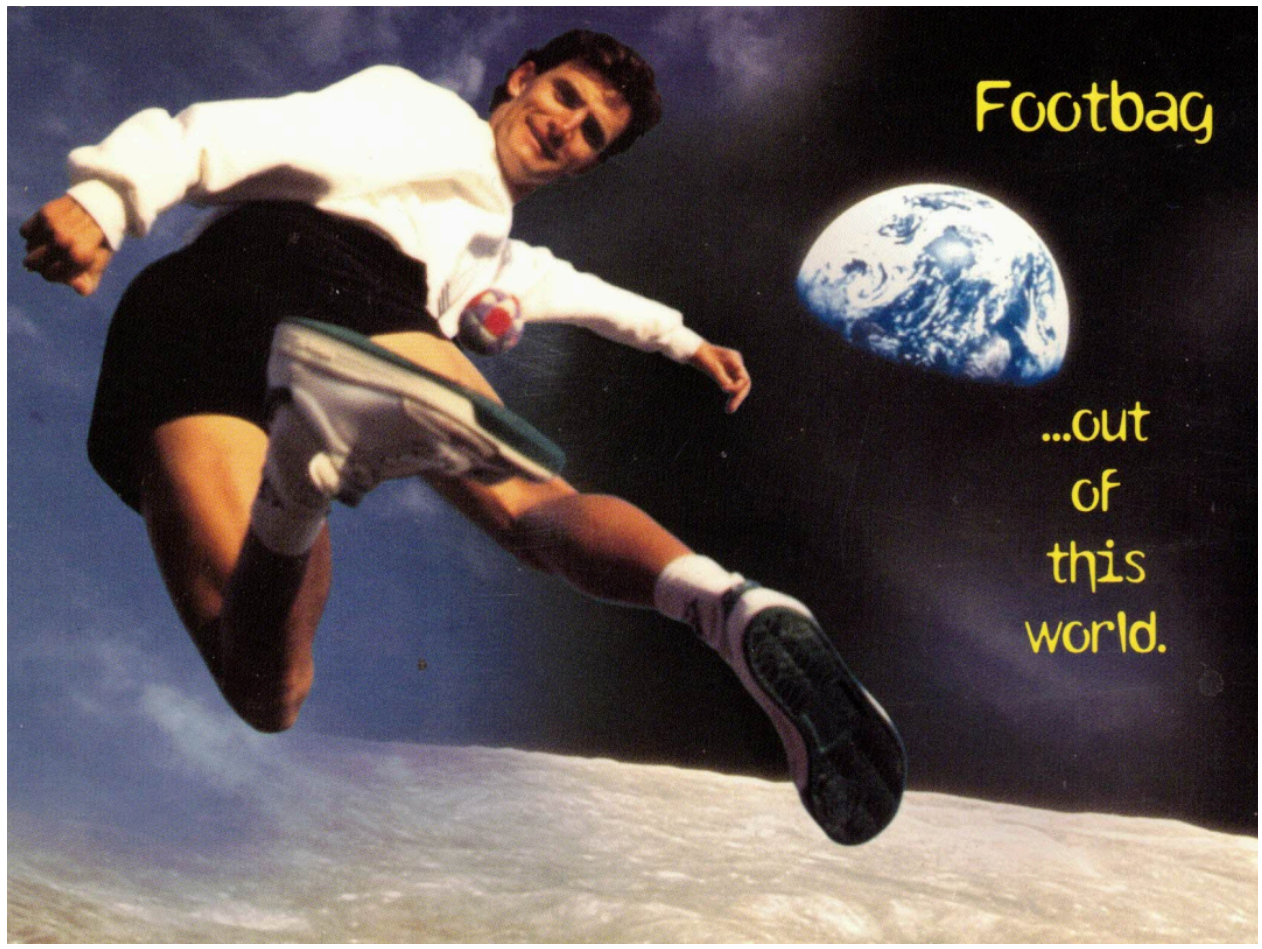
Robert Conover and Mike Noonan



Beaver Open Family
photo: Kenny Shults

Before wrapping things up, we should mention the iconic Beaver Open, the "longest-running footbag tournament in the world," that was co-founded by Robert Conover and Mike Noonan in 1981. It's really an annual footbag *festival*, held in Oregon over Labor Day Weekend, where kickers and their families can reconnect with other footbaggers while camping, playing games, and enjoying music, food, and drink. Glow golf is a night-time Beaver tradition of footbag golf in the dark, with Pink Floyd piped out over a loudspeaker.

"One of my favorite memories," Paul Vorvick recalls, "is the first time I went to the Moonin' & Noonin' Beaver Open footbag tournament in 1988. The footbag community is wonderful enough, but get them kicking and camping together for three-plus days, and wow! Everyone was there to reconnect and have fun. There was net, freestyle, and footbag golf. Jeff 'Animal' Johnson was the EmCee of what was then called 'Late Nite at Ani's,' a talent show that still continues at the Beaver each year. There was also a cribbage tournament and Bizz Buzz. I stayed up way too late! I've been going ever since."



Peter Shunny

We want to thank all the players who have shared their stats and memories with us. An amazing sport that started in 1972 and a wonderful time was had by all...





Allan Hartmann Petersen is a four-time footbag world champion, winning in overall points from 1993 through 1996. He was born and raised in Denmark and moved to the U.S. in the 1990s. Stephanie McPeak Petersen is the author of four other books, including ***The Next Octave***. They live in the mountains of Colorado.

Is footbag a sport? It's a question Allan Petersen has heard many times over the course of his career in footbag, and this book attempts to answer that question. It also fills in some of the history of footbag, from the indigenous games that evolved into the branded, competitive, world-wide phenomenon we know today. In addition to the photos and memories of some of footbag's early pioneers, this book also covers a wide range of geometrical footbag designs.