

Washers

Contributed by Bernie DeKoven
Monday, 25 June 2007
Last Updated Monday, 25 June 2007

According to the International Association of Washer Players, "The history of the game is cloaked in mystery but lends itself to colorful conjecture. 'Betcha I can toss this here washer into that oil can over yonder,' someone might have wagered years ago. Most certainly humble roots fathered the game as participants used readily-available parts, a hallmark of the game that survives even today."

The association recommends "standard round metallic washers, 2.5" in diameter with a 1" center hole." In case you were wondering. In case you weren't, you can play Washers with just about anything round and flat, or perhaps not so round or not completely flat.

For those of us who seek immediate, commercially-available, official-looking, moderately-priced gratification, there's Bulls-Eye Washers from Fundex. You don't have to dig any special pits (as the IAWP states: "although not absolutely necessary to the game, pits add an aura of legitimacy, provide for easy maintenance of the soil, and aid in scoring measurements.")

The washers have that perfect heft and pleasantly graphic markings. And the boxes (one might call them "portable pits") are easy to carry and set up. They each contain the recommended 3-point-worthy PVC target, surrounded by a tastefully green carpeted secondary target area. I especially appreciate that the targets are so adjustable - you can put them any distance apart, so that you can play the game almost regardless of age or ability. Some kids find that standing almost on top of the box is more than enough of a challenge.

Wide is the variety and comparative delights of the game of Washers. At perhaps another commercially-available extreme, we have the game of Chuckers.

The people who've developed Chuckers like to call it a "family tossing game."

By "tossing game" they mean a game that involves, well, tossing things, as does, for example, horseshoes, and a variety of bean bag and target games, and of course washers, which is strangely enough also called, "cornhole," and most relevantly perhaps that quoits game where you throw rings around pegs.

So, in a way, if you know any one of these games, you'll know how to play Chuckers. In another way, because it combines different aspects of traditional games to result in a completely different, and, arguably, a far more majorly fun game - because it's a family game.

By "family" they mean a game that can be played by just about anybody - especially if you're kinda loose about the rules. Which you can be, easily. Because the game is almost self-explanatory. Because the game is so well made.

And because the game is as much luck as it is skill. Very interesting - how combining luck and skill, in just the right manner, so that you really half believe that you can master the thing, learn the right control, the precision positioning of finger and ring and foot and eye, while at the same time, you half know that it's really luck, not skill - sheer luck that your ring thing landed around the farthest peg or into the farthest target or wound up leaning on a peg, giving you exactly 21 points! Just enough luck so that anyone, regardless of skill, can win. Even you.

The rings you toss are made of rubber and steel. They've got, what you'd call, "significant heft." The things you toss them into are even more significantly hefty. Thick, sturdy, and yes, what you could only call "industrial strength" plastic. They are connected by a rope which is exactly as long as the recommended distance between the two targets. It's a game you can leave out for a while, at a family party, in a playground, a park, a classroom...

All of which is to say that, in addition to commercially-available inspirations, there are perhaps a minor infinity of washer-like games, that can be made out of a similarly minor infinity of materials - sand dollars and sand pits, old CDs and shoeboxes, dead golf balls and toilet paper tubes.... To we of the make-your-own-washer-game perspective, the entire modern world is an invitation to play. (see also [Shoeshoes])

{mos_fb_discuss:2}