

BANDY, THE POPULAR NORDIC GAME

Bandy, almost as popular a game as ice-hockey which it closely resembles, is the king amongst winter sports as practised in the north of Europe, more especially in Sweden and in Finland.

The popularity of this swift and spectacular game is enormous over there even if it does not possess the international prestige of ice-hockey.

As a matter of fact a great number of young Nordic people prefer it because of its wider range of playing field, where their tactics and skill can find fuller scope for display than on the comparatively confined space of the average ice-rink.

Bandy made its first appearance in Sweden in 1895, introduced by Count von Rosen who discovered it in Britain, while he was in this great country on a diplomatic mission. Thus diplomacy was the means of introducing a new sport which did not take long to become a great favourite amongst crowds of people.

In former days, the Dutch were known to have played Bandy in the 16th. Century, under the name of *Kolv*. However, it is only at the beginning of the 19th. Century, in 1800, to be exact, that one saw this sport take root in Great Britain. To our knowledge, the first international match of Bandy which for a certain time was simply called hockey, took place between the British and Dutch in 1891.

Since then, this new sport never ceased growing in popularity, and this to such an extent that today the Finals of the Bandy Championship played at the Olympic Stadium at Stockholm is considered the greatest Winter Sports event in Sweden. These Finals attract every year a record attendance of 25 000 to 30 000 spectators, because of the stupendous speed, and the general display of the game on a spacious field, the high standard and quality of the competing teams, all these factors succeed in making these Annual Finals a first rate event.

In that country 850 clubs form the meeting place of 40 000 actual players. A national division composed of sixteen teams, as well as a second division comprising the same number of clubs, contest the championship each season. This happens also in Finland and Norway, where this sport has not reached as yet the same level of efficiency. This is proved by the fact that up to now, Sweden has won most of her matches against Finland.

Bandy is equally well known in Russia, and the manner in which the Moscovites and their comrades play has greatly contributed to the evolution of the game, by introducing new tactics and adopting much more mobile concepts of it than in former times.

But what exactly is Bandy? As a matter of fact it is a kind of « cocktail » of three relatively different types of sport, namely, ice-hockey, from which it borrows the skates, the hockey-stick and... the ice; field hockey from which it takes the ball and has the general aspect, and lastly, football from which it takes the same number of players, and the approximate dimensions of the field, with the exception of the goal-posts which are much restricted in size. Also, concerning rules Bandy can compare with and be put in the same category of sport and games as are ruled by the round ball. Taking everything into consideration, football on ice would undoubtedly be the best name for this type of game, and such, would appeal and keep the public's attention if ever this game came to our latitude.

The ideal dimensions for the field are sixty metres by 105 metres, but it may vary between ninety and 110 metres in width. The teams consist of eleven players of which eight players at a minimum must be present at the first kick-off. The matches consist of two half-times of forty-five minutes each. The ball in use is of a vivid colour, weighs between 58 and 62 grams, and has a diameter of 6 cm., but it has not the hardness of the famous « puck » as the inside is made of cork. The length of the stick must not exceed 1 m. 20.

In conclusion, as one sees, Bandy is a mixture of rules and laws of a simple conception which have built up the popularity of so many of the fashionable sports of today. It deserves the popularity it is meeting everywhere, as much by those who practise it, as by those crowds who have been won over to it as spectators.

(Tribune de Genève.)

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