

A SHORT HISTORY OF BANDY

by Ron Edgeworth

Bandy is an 11-a-side game similar to ice hockey but played on a large ice rink similar to a football pitch, from 90-110 metres in length and 45-65 metres in width. In addition, bandy is played with a ball rather than a puck, as in ice hockey, with the ball being intermediate in size between a golf ball and a hockey (field) ball. The game is now principally played in the Baltics, with more than 500,000 players in Russia, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. It is also popular in Estonia, Latvia, and Mongolia. In the Baltics, bandy was originally called “winter football.” Sweden itself has over 1,200 bandy clubs and more than 100,000 players.

Bandy may have originated in England, *circa* 1790, mainly in the low-lying districts of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire. The first modern Bandy Club appears to have been that of Bury Fen Bandy Club in the Northeast of England. Some well-known football (soccer) clubs, such as Sheffield United and Nottingham Forest, originally had bandy in their title as well as football (Nottingham Forest was once the Nottingham Forest Football and Bandy Club). The creation of the English Bandy Association came about in 1891. The first international meet also occurred in 1891 when Bury Fen opposed the Dutch Club of Haarlem. The game was soon superseded in England by ice hockey and is little played there today.

Three years later (1894), C.G. Tebbutt, a player from Bury Fen, introduced bandy in Sweden. Clarence de Rosen, IOC member from 1900-1948, was the person behind the first Swedish Bandy club, formed in 1895. Bandy in its current version was first known to have been played in Russia in 1898. However, the game of bandy has been popular in Russia for centuries, already known by the name of “hockey on skates” in Peter the Great’s time.

The International Bandy Federation was formed in 1955. Prior to that, bandy was contested as a demonstration sport at the 1952 Olympic Winter Games in Oslo. Three Scandinavian nations competed at the Olympic demonstration event: Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In the round-robin tournament, all three countries won one match, thus effectively causing a three-way tie for first. The tie was broken by goals scored, with Sweden first (5 goals for, 2 goals against), Norway second (4 goals for, 4 goals against), and Finland third (3 goals for, 6 goals against).

World Championships have been contested in Bandy from 1957, biennially starting in 1961. Only two countries have won the world championships as the Swedes have won four times and the former USSR 14 times. The most recent championships were held 2-7 February 1993, in Hamar, Norway, with eight nations contesting the championship.

1952 Olympic Bandy Tournament

		Won	Lost	Goals For	Goals Agst
1.	Sweden	1	1	5	2
2.	Norway	1	1	4	4
3.	Finland	1	1	3	6

World Bandy Champions

1957	-	U.S.S.R.
1961	-	U.S.S.R.
1963	-	U.S.S.R.
1965	-	U.S.S.R.
1967	-	U.S.S.R.
1969	-	U.S.S.R.
1971	-	U.S.S.R.
1973	-	U.S.S.R.
1975	-	U.S.S.R.
1977	-	U.S.S.R.
1979	-	U.S.S.R.
1981	-	Sweden
1983	-	Sweden
1985	-	U.S.S.R.
1987	-	Sweden
1989	-	U.S.S.R.
1991	-	U.S.S.R.
1993	-	Sweden

1993 World Bandy Championships

1.	Sweden
2.	Russia
3.	Norway
4.	Finland
5.	United States
6.	Canada
7.	Hungary
8.	The Netherlands