

Invention of softball

While many sports have roots that trace back to ancient athletics, some have clear beginnings in modern history.

{mosgoogle left 4788305716} As we've increasingly embraced athletics, teamwork and good old-fashioned fun, new sports have cropped up to keep us challenged and entertained. This constant search for new ways to play led to many developments, including the invention of softball.

The game of softball was invented in Chicago in 1887 by George Hancock.

On a windy day in November, George Hancock was at the Farragut Boat Club along with a group of Harvard and Yale alumni. The alumni were anxiously awaiting the results of a football game played between Harvard and Yale.

When the results came through of Harvard's defeat, an excited Yale supporter threw an old boxing glove at a Harvard alumni. The Harvard alumni then hit it back with a stick.

This sparked an idea in George Hancock's mind. Hancock, a reporter for the Chicago Board of Trade, tied the laces tightly together on the old boxing glove to make a makeshift ball and used a broomstick as a bat. He then used a piece of chalk to mark out the playing area in the gymnasium of the Farragut Boat Club. He marked out a smaller version of a baseball field. The players were divided into teams and they then played a game that was like a smaller, indoor version of baseball.

The invention of softball had gotten under way; that was the first softball game played, with a final score of 41-40.

That day may have been the first and last day of the softball invention process if Hancock did not pursue his idea. However, by the next week, Hancock had created a rubber-tipped bat and an oversized ball.

He then made permanent markings on the gymnasium floor and wrote up a book of rules for the sport he named 'indoor baseball'. The game gained immediate popularity both locally and internationally.

The first league to be formed was in Toronto and a published Indoor Baseball Guide also appeared within 1887. Hancock's new game was first played outdoors in the spring of 1888. It was called indoor-outdoor.

Due to its increasing appeal and popularity, in 1889 Hancock was prompted to write another set of indoor-outdoor rules.

Although Hancock's game was slowly spreading throughout the country, the efforts of a Fire Department lieutenant by the name of Louis Rober caused the game to flourish. Rober, of Minneapolis, was looking for a sport or game to keep the firemen fit when they were not working. He marked out a plot of vacant land alongside the fire station with bases and a pitching distance of 35 feet.

Rober and his team played the game with a small sized ball and a bat with a diameter of two inches. The game became very popular among fire stations and they started playing against each other. Rober's first organized team was called the Kittens, and the game was then called 'Kitten Ball' until 1925.

In 1925 the game was renamed diamond ball by the Minneapolis Parks Board. Softball only got its name in 1926 when this name was suggested by a Denver YMCA official called William Hakanson. In 1933, organized softball tournaments were arranged within America such that state and national teams were formed.

The first national softball tournament took place in Chicago in conjunction with the World's Fair. Fifty-five teams participated in the tournament, with subdivisions of fastballers, slow pitchers and women.

With George Hancock's simple invention of a new game, softball has grown into a national pastime enjoyed by both sexes of all ages. As new interests and ideas develop, sports are adapted and designed, leading to a constant change in the athletic landscape.