

French pétanque champion Marco Foyot visits Eugene Pétanque International Club

By Ryan Baker

The Marco Foyot U.S.A. tour stopped in Eugene, Oregon on October 10th, 11th. Club president Mike Stasack hosted Marco and the adult and junior club members kept the French champion busy during his stay. On Wednesday he gave three private lessons and two clinics to a total of 20 players. Most who attended were regular club members. A few new players heard about the clinics and came to check them out: a couple from Salem, a former high school player now in college, a couple with their own court in Eugene, and a young man who had learned the game while studying in Montpelier. After the clinics members shared a potluck meal and conversation with Marco. As the fall sun faded into the brightly colored leaves, a female member was heard to remark, "This was great! We should do this kind of stuff more often!" It's quite possible that she was actually advocating practicing as opposed to just throwing out and playing!

On Thursday morning, 7:30 a.m., it was off to the local high schools and our junior members. Marco spent the first half of the day at South Eugene High School with club president, French teacher, and high school pétanque coach, Mike Stasack. Marco visited with two of Mike's classes, fielding questions and sharing about his life and pétanque, in French of course! Then it was out to the fields for some demonstrations and brief group lessons. In the afternoon Marco was welcomed to Marist Catholic High School by club Vice President, French teacher and high school pétanque coach, Ryan Baker. Marco was interviewed by the students in French and then went out to the field for some demonstrations and a quick two-end match pitting the local favorite against the French champion: final result Foyot 3, Baker 1! After a quick break it was back to work for Foyot as he teamed with Baker and Stasack setting up pointing and shooting stations for the high school players. Marco had the players working on the low rolling shot from the crouch with the low hurdle, the medium lob over the hurdle, shooting with the proper trajectory into a tire, and shooting on the iron with a post in front of the target boules. This large group clinic included 33 students from Marist, South Eugene, and Sheldon High Schools. The students were excited, smiling, laughing and high-fiving each other's good efforts. After some photo opportunities, students and coaches joined with Mr. Foyot for after-match snacks in the tradition of regular league play. After the students left Marco watched a match between the teams of Ryan Baker and Nan Feaster and Mike Stasack and Dan Feaster. The focus here was on strategy, shot-selection, and teamwork. In a close battle it was Stasack and Dan Feaster who won, 13-12, leaving Baker and Nan Feaster to pay for the apéritif at Marché Restaurant.

Marco Foyot's visit brought excitement, new skills, techniques and strategies to all of the members of E.P.I.C as well as to a few non-members. One new member joined the club as a direct result of the clinic and reconnecting with the club. The high-schoolers gained a new-found passion and the coaches new tools to help train their players. On a personal note I took encouragement and motivation from my private lesson and conversations with Marco and have a newfound desire to practice well, to improve, and to help my junior players and adult club-members improve as well. Marco's visit helped to promote the sport, to equip local trainers, and to improve our overall level of play and enjoyment of the game. Carreau!