First Little Italy Bocce Tournament

FIRST LITTLE ITALY BOCCE TOURNAMENT IN CALIFORNIA'S NEWEST LITTLE ITALY!

On June 11 and 12, 2022, Little Italy of Sacramento was the scene of a two-day Little Italy Bocce Tournament event at East Portal Park. The event, hosted by the East Portal Bocce Club, drew teams from all over California. The list of teams included teams from Martinez, San Rafael, Stockton, Salinas, Pittsburgh, Antioch, Auburn, Fresno, Chico, Huntington Beach, Penn Valley, Monterey and Sacramento.

The event organizer was Michael Mathis, whose immigrant grandfather, Christopher Cuilla and his brother, Sam Cuilla. Played bocce at East Portal Park back when the courts were dirt. East Portal Park is in the heart of the Little Italy Historic District. Recently, a Little Italy historic district sign was installed at the five-court bocce complex in East Portal Park. Now that Little Italy Sacramento is a reality and the Italian community is supporting the new district with its first Little Italy bocce tournament, we hope to see more activities and festivals follow to celebrate California's newest Little Italy.

Bocce, An Italian American Tradition

Bocce Ball was brought to California in the 19th century and continues to be a tradition in the lives of Italian Americans. During the period 1925 – 1950 bocce was one of the most popular recreation sports among first generation Italian American men.

The first two courts, uncovered, were built in East Portal Park in the early 1960's. Prior to that the courts were dirt. In 1978, all weather covering was built over two of the courts, with bleachers. Today there are five covered courts.

The East Portal Bocce Club operates bocce leagues at the courts with over 50 teams in the program. Bocce in Sacramento continues to be an important cultural feature of Italian American life in Sacramento.

For information about joining the East Portal Bocce Club, visit their website at: https://eastportalbocceclub.com