

Balls

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This film is a series of visual shots, each set with a voice over, in the style of a documentary.

MARBLES: collage of shots of boys playing marbles.

VOICE OVER

This is perhaps the first instance in a man's life of organized group behavior focusing on balls. The ball comes in two sizes, but both are quite small, approximately 1/2 inch and 3/4 inch in diameter.

Close-up of a shot so the size of the marbles can be seen by comparison with a boy's thumb and fingers.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Generally speaking, men play with bigger balls than boys do. Further claims, inferred from this one, are usually false.

In one version, the big balls knock the little balls out of a circle.

A "shooter" marble knocks a smaller marble.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

In another version, the object is to get the ball into a hole.

A marble rolls into a hole in the ground.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This is the beginning of a persistent confusion concerning the relation between balls, holes, and sticks. The winner gets everyone's balls, so you lose your balls if you're not very good at it. Usually the boy has a special bag for carrying his little balls.

Close-up of one boy, standing, casually holding a mesh bag of two shooter marbles, his hand at about waist level.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

He does so quite proudly, often bragging to others about the quantity in his possession.

GOLF: collage of shots of men playing golf.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This game is somewhat related to marbles in that the men try to get a little ball - the ball is larger than a marble but smaller than anything yet to be described — into a hole that they have dug in the ground. The hole, on the other hand, is now a bit smaller and deeper, so the fit is tighter.

Close-up of golf ball sinking into hole on the green.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

One major difference, however, is that they try to get it into not just one hole now, but many — eighteen, in fact.

Pan of golf course.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Another difference is that they now use a long stiff stick.

Man priming for a long shot, carefully lining up his club, adjusting his grip, and so on.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

As in most other cases, their sticks are matters of great concern, and much attention is given to their care.

Men pulling their golf clubs, talking as they walk.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Furthermore, men will endlessly discuss their equipment, comparing advantages and specific uses of certain types and designs.

The winner is the man who uses the quickest, most direct route, or the fewest strokes. Also, unlike marbles, each of the men uses only one ball, but since they often lose their balls, they carry extras along with them.

Close-up of a man cradling two golf balls in his hand.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This method of playing with balls is considered more important than marbles. Men even pay to belong to clubs that will allow them to do it this way.

BILLIARDS: collage of shots of men playing billiards.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This is a curious hybrid of marbles and golf. On the one hand, it regresses back to using many balls — and, like marbles, multicolored ones - but it also uses many holes — like golf, but six not eighteen. The balls are a bit larger —

Man retrieving two balls from a pocket, holding the balls in his hand momentarily.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

— and again, a long stiff stick is used, even longer than the one used in golf. The tip of the stick is often rubbed with chalk to improve performance.

Man chalking his cuestick.

BASKETBALL: collage of shots of men playing basketball.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This version features a larger ball still, but the ball is merely pumped full of air. Most big balls are inflated.

A variation on getting the ball into a hole, this game employs a suspended net that creates the hole to aim for. If a man succeeds in getting the ball 'in', it's called 'scoring'.

Basketball going through the net.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

While he tries to score as often as possible, he also tries to prevent other men from doing the same.

Aggressive defense on the court.

SOCCER: collage of shots of men playing soccer.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

In this version, the ball is maneuvered with the feet instead of with the hands.

Active play with the feet.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

And though, like basketball, the hole is now a net, unlike basketball, the net is guarded. That is, there is one man on each side whose sole job is to 'protect the net' or stop the competitors' balls from getting in.

Goaltender making a good save.

POLO: collage of polo being played.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

With an element to add variety, this hit-ball-with-stick-into-hole/net game includes horses.

WATER POLO: collage of water polo being played.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Some men find it more exciting to play with balls in the water. But there are no horses in this one.

BOWLING: collage of men bowling.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

The balls used in this instance of play have special holes in them; the men put their fingers into the holes.

Close-up of a man picking up a bowling ball and placing his fingers in the holes.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Though perhaps generally true, in this particular case, the balls are very important to the men: if you take their balls away, they will be very upset.

Man putting his personal ball into his bowling ball bag.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

The ball is thrown at an array of objects in order to knock over as many as possible.

A strike!

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

The objects are inanimate.

TENNIS: collage of shots of men aggressively playing tennis; both are wearing white tennis outfits.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

In this one, the ball is hit back and forth between two men. An odd quirk is that they are expected to wear white while doing this. And, though scoring is still the intent, the focus is not on hitting the ball into a hole; rather, the men try very hard to display strength, strategy, and endurance.

VOLLEYBALL: collage of shots of men playing volleyball, including one clear set-up.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Volleyball is an expanded version of tennis - the ball is hit back and forth between two teams, and the game proceeds in such a way that the 'set up' is very instrumental in scoring.

Close-up of two volleyballs caught in a sagging net.

SQUASH: shot of two men playing squash.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Squash is also much like tennis, but it is done in a small room, with fewer people watching.

FOOTBALL: shot of men playing football.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This one involves a slightly deflated ball and men jumping on each other.

Shot of a pile-up.

HOCKEY: shot of men playing hockey.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

And this one involves a crooked stick.

Close-up of player at face-off, his crooked stick resting on the ice.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

And it's played on ice.

Shot of a few players going down.

SHOTPUT: shot of a man throwing a shotput.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

In this one, the man throws or 'puts' a very heavy ball forward. No one really knows why.

MEDICINE BALL: close-up of two medicine balls side by side, with something in background to give idea of size.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Though not a game per se, this is an example of the extreme size balls can become in men's sport - the medicine ball is 18 inches in diameter.

LAWN BOWLS: shot of old men playing lawn bowls.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

After men have lost their fascination with hard sticks and tight holes, they retire and roll their very large - and somewhat misshapen - balls gingerly over the grass, trying to get their balls as close as possible to a small ball. Should their big ball come up and press ever so gently on this little ball, there are sighs of appreciation all round.