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Basque pelota from the ground up



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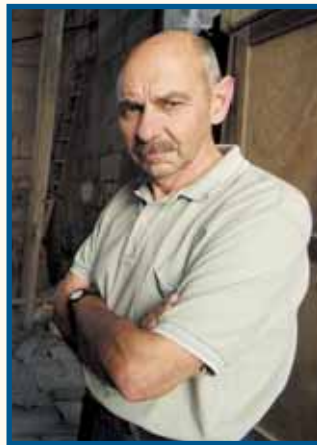
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Aurkezpena

JOSÉ RAMÓN GARAI



Introduction

Director of Sport for the Basque Government

Throughout the history of humankind a great number of peoples have developed their own types of ball game. Some of these games have become an important part of the various cultures. The Basque people are one of these groups.

Experts have not always agreed on the origin of Basque pelota.

However, they do agree on the features that set Basque pelota apart from other kinds of ball games. In keeping with authors L. Bombín and Bozas-Urrutia, Basque pelota can be defined as a set of variations on the ball game devised or adapted by Basques, each following a particular set of rules and regulations. These games arose in the nineteenth century from *jeu de paume*, a ball game played in Europe. Later, with the Basque diaspora, the game was spread throughout the world, particularly to the Americas. The game experienced its greatest achievement in the twentieth, although the end of the century began to witness certain signs of exhaustion.

As we saw in the recent World Cup Soccer Championships held in Germany, it is clear that sport is a

Basque pelota: the sport of a nation shared with the world

A document has been put together containing measures aimed at the promotion and advancement of Basque pelota for the period from 2006 to 2010. The purpose is to obtain a clear picture of the situation of Basque pelota today; to identify the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead; and to develop a participatory strategy for the future which includes activities and projects aimed at achieving clearly defined goals.

magnificent vehicle for projecting and promoting the identity of a people. Some kinds of sports are in fact an inseparable part of a society and therefore the very fact that they exist and are regularly played are a part of cultural identity. This is precisely the relationship between the Basque people and Basque pelota.

The current Law on Sport in the Basque Country considers Basque pelota in this same light and therefore underscores the need to reinforce this sport together with other native or indigenous sports, including rowing and *herri kirolak* (rural sports). Globalization and the new habits associated with sport pose a serious threat to indigenous sports. Important efforts must therefore be made by public authorities and private organizations to adapt them to the needs of the different sports sectors.

Over a year ago the Basque Government, together with other public and private organizations, undertook a process of reflection and analysis to decide what types of measures should be taken regarding the situation. Other organizations and entities from far

afield linked to Basque pelota by practice or passion have also been involved in the process. Never before has such a far reaching project been undertaken in this area. A document has been put together containing measures aimed at the promotion and advancement of Basque pelota for the period from 2006 to 2010. The purpose is to obtain a clear picture of the situation of Basque pelota today; to identify the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead; and to develop a participatory strategy for the future which includes activities and projects aimed at achieving clearly defined goals. This phase of the project has now been completed, with activities soon to be developed and set into motion.

According to the analysis, economic problems are still hold a leading position in the international context. In the professional arena, the most universal variety of the game – *cesta punta* or jai alai – is still bogged down by a crisis whose final outcome is difficult to predict. There are very few frontons in operation at the present time and audiences are smaller than in the past. However, there are signs of hope, including the potential opening of more frontons. On the amateur level, the presence of jai alai in the Pan American Games seems to be a determining factor. But the lack of drive on the part of the International Federation has once again kept Basque pelota of the roster for the 2007 games hosted in Rio de Janeiro. Official support from the Basque Government has managed to a certain extent to alleviate this deficiency in amateur Basque pelota so essential in the international arena. Specific types of help have included gear, training coaches and the construction of facilities, all of which have enabled pelotaris in North and South



America to continue practicing our sport.

Lastly, I should point out that the commitment to Basque pelota by public Basque institutions will be strong and hopeful with the implementation of the new 2006-2010 Strategic Plan. We are convinced that the wide-ranging set of actions defined in the plan will put Basque pelota on a much more secure and hopeful footing for the future. Among the many measures, perhaps the most noteworthy are the II World

Congress on Basque Pelota to be celebrated in 2007, and the creation of a plural and open cross-border entity aimed at the overall promotion of pelota around the world.

We would like to see Basque pelota restored to the same terms as described by some of our first leaders in sports, such as Maurice Abeberry, who described Basque pelota as “the sport of a nation shared with the world.” I trust these pages will help us to move in the right direction.



Olympic sport since 1900

Euskal pilotaren historia bi mendetan laburbil daiteke: XIX.a eta XX.a. 1882. urtean inauguratu zuten Buenos Aireseko Euskara plazan Euskal Herriatik kanpo egindako lehen pilotaleku industrialia. XX. mendean, zesta-punta hedatu izanari eta 20 herrialdetan baino gehiagotan irekitako Jai-Alai izeneko 120 frontoiei esker, nazioartean zabaldu zen. Euskal Pilotaren Nazioarteko Federazioa sortzeak eta Joko Olinpikoetan parte hartu izanak ere lagundu zuen pilota mundu osoan zabaltzen.

Most writers go back to Ancient Egypt, pre-Colombian civilizations or the Roman Empire when trying to situate the origin of Basque pelota. The introduction of the glove as a catching and throwing device was probably the first element that set Basque pelota substantially apart from other ball games existing at the time. The first evidence of the use of the glove is documented from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the history of Basque pelota can be summed up across two centuries, the nineteenth and twentieth.

Essentially all aspects that would eventually distinguish Basque ball games from ball games originating in other areas came about over the course of the nineteenth century (buildings, fixtures, equipment, balls and rules). Examples of some of these other ball games include: Valencian pilota, Castilian pelota, Canary Island handball, Mexican ball games, Ecuadorian ball games, Bolivian ball games, Ecuadorian ball games, the Bolivian ball game, Cuban ball games, the Sao Paulo ball game, Argentinian manito, Belgian and Dutch ball games, Pärkspele, handball, fives, French and Italian ball games or other ball games including tennis, badminton, squash, paddle, racquetball and frontenis.



With the twentieth century the game expanded to other parts of the world. In 1882 Plaza Euskara was inaugurated in Buenos Aires, the first industrial fronton outside Euskal Herria. But it was not until the twentieth century that Basque pelota would be spread worldwide. Cesta punta, or jai alai, played an important role in international expansion. Over 120 frontons were opened for professional players in more than 20 countries outside of Euskal Herria.

The development of international competition, spearheaded by the International Federation of Basque Pelota and based on world championships and world cups, was another factor in spreading the game's popularity, as were the Pan-American Games in Argentina in 1995 and in the Dominican Republic in 2003. And, of course, the inclusion of Basque pelota as an Olympic sport in 2003 was pivotal.

Paris 1900

Classic scholars of Basque pelota are quick to recognize that the sport was included in the 1924, 1968 and 1992 Olympic games, but there are no written references regarding the presence of Basque pelota in the 1900 Paris games. However, the official website of the Olympic Movement, www.olympic.org, lists Basque pelota as one of the 19 sports competing in 1900.

This lack of consensus may be explained by the confusion surrounding the status of events since they were organized for the Paris World's Fair held that same year. In his book on Olympic facts and figures, Karel Wendl had this to say about the 1900 Olympic Games: "there was no official report and the general chaos surrounding the event made it difficult to tell the Olympic events apart from the numerous competitions that took place simultaneously."



The Olympic Movement website shows that the only variety of Basque pelota included in the 1900 Paris games was cesta punta. A two-man team from Spain consisting of players Villota and Amezola took the gold medal against Durquetty and Etchegaray playing for the French team. There is no information on the type of fronton used for the competition.

Joseph Apesteguy, better known as Chiquito de Cambo, and Argentinian José Goñi, Porteño, were two of the pelotaris who also took part in these games.

Paris 1924

The 1924 program included three games between Spain and France – pelota a mano (bare-handed), pala (wooden bat) and

cesta punta (jai alai) – plus a demonstration game between two three-man French teams playing a style called "blé", today known as *joko garbi* (literally, clean game). The scores for the three competition games, won by the Spanish team, were played at the official level but were not included in the overall medal rating. Most noteworthy among the 1924 pelotaris was José Andrés Garate, "Garate II." Following his phase as an amateur, Garate went on to play Basque pelota professionally in China, Brazil and Mexico.

Mexico City 1968

The competition took place in six different venues, all left-walled frontons. Frontenis was counted as Basque pelota, together with mano, paleta cuero (played with a bat and leather ball), cesta punta and paleta goma (paddle and rubber ball). Spain came away with two gold medals and one silver medal. Six countries took part in the tournament: Spain, Mexico, France, Argentina, Uruguay, USA and the Philippines. Argentinian pelotaris Sether and Bizzozero left their mark in this edition. Sether is the leading prizewinner on the international level, holding 13 world titles, mostly in the paleta trinquet version played with both leather and rubber balls. Bizzozero is the only pelotari who has taken part in two Olympiads: Mexico 1968 and 24 years later in the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Barcelona 1992

In Barcelona Basque pelota was considered a demonstration sport. Eight countries took part in 1992 games, as determined by the 1990 World Pelota Championship in Cuba, in which the top four countries in each variety qualified. Not included in the 1992 games were the following varieties: xare (share), singles mano trinquet, and paleta goma played in a left-walled fronton. Participating countries included Spain, Argentina, Mexico, France, Cuba, Venezuela, Uruguay and the Philippines. The Spanish team dominated the competition winning a total of eight medals. Like in many international competitions, frontenis was also included in the Basque pelota program. Originally from Mexico, frontenis was dominated by the Mexican team in the 1992 games.



Three names stand out in the Barcelona games: Rubén Beloki (1), Oscar Insausti (2) and Mexican player Alfredo Zea (3).

[This article is based on a paper written by Mikel Bringas]



VARIETIES

ONE-WALLED FRONTON

front wall only, also called the frontis

DIRECT GAMES: competing players face each other

LAXOA OR LASHOA (from the Basque word *luzea*), a game using the whole court. This early variation was played with a leather glove on a level playing area marked with lines or *eskases*. The four-man teams faced each other on either side of a rope. The game was played in sets, the teams chalking up their wins and changing sides after each set.

REBOTE: this variety evolved from Laxoa, taking its place. A leather glove is used as a hurling device. The *txistera* is also used.

INDIRECT GAMES: games in which players take turns hitting the ball off the front wall

MANO

Singles: The ball is received and hurled bare-handed. This is the most popular variety of Basque pelota today, with a large number of players and followers.

Doubles: Played in the same way as singles, but with two pairs of *pelotaris*, a blue team and a red team.

PALETA GOMA: A lightweight wooden bat is used to hurl a rubber-coated ball.

PALETA CUERO: This version is played with a longer, thicker and narrower bat than the version described above. The leather-covered ball is also more lively than the one used in *paleta goma*.

PALA CORTA: A shorter bat and larger ball are used for this version.

JOKO GARBI: This is a variety of *pelota a blé*, played with a curved glove known as a *txistera* as a catching and throwing device. It is thought that this version later evolved into *remonte* and *cesta punta*.

CESTA PUNTA: Also known as *jai alai*, this is the most international version. The hurling device is a wicker glove with a chestnut frame. The long, streamlined, curved glove is probably a variant of the earlier *txistera*. The curved part has a hollowed out area to retain the ball momentarily. The hand is inserted into a glove held in place by a strap. The main feature of the *cesta* is that the players can catch the ball, allow it to roll to one end of the basket and then hurl it with much greater force against the front of the fronton. The *cesta* measures 62 cm in length for forward players and 68 cm for back players.





TRINQUETE

Generally closed courts consisting of a playing area and four walls, all of which are used in the game. The playing area is 30 meters long and 9.25 meters wide. The front wall is 10 meters high and the rear wall 5.60 meters. From the frontis to the 4.44 meter line the right- and left-hand walls are 8.22 meters high, dropping to 5.60 meters from that point to the rear wall.

DIRECT GAMES:

PASAKA, played on the full court, with a net in the middle and counting sets. It is played bare-handed in three-man teams in *arkupes* (porticos of buildings) or doubles using short glove in regulation trinquet courts.

INDIRECT GAMES:

MANO (BARE-HANDED):

Singles

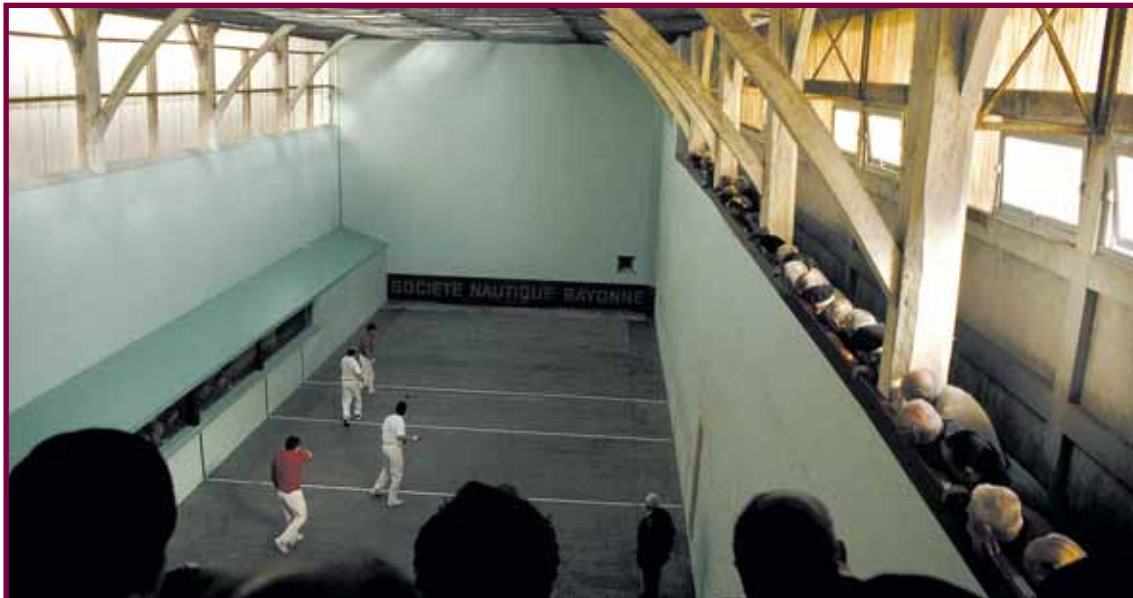
Doubles

PALETA GOMA (BAT & RUBBER BALL)

PALA ANCHA (WIDE BAT)

PALETA CUERO (BAT & LEATHER BALL)

XARE: played with a racquet smaller than the type used in tennis and strung more loosely, keeping the ball from being retained. The ball is received and returned in continuous motion, requiring great skill on the part of the player.





LEFT-WALLED FRONTON

This is the most important type of court in professional competition. A front wall, or frontis, and a left-hand wall are the basic features. Parallel to the frontis, a third wall often marks the back of the court at a distance of 36 or 54 meters, depending on whether it is a short or long court.

All varieties are direct games

SHORT COURT: 36 meters

MANO (BARE-HANDED):

Full-court singles: The ball is received and hurled with the bare hand. The ball is allowed to bounce anywhere inside the court.

Singles inside “four and a half”: Played like the previous variety but after the ball hits the front wall it cannot bounce any further back than a line painted between numbers 4 and 5 on the left-hand wall. This version is relatively new, designed for the sake of spectacularity.

MANO PAREJAS (BARE-HANDED DOUBLES): The rules and regulations are the same as full-court singles, except that here two teams of pelotaris, the blues and the reds, play against one another.

PALETA GOMA (BAT & RUBBER BALL)

PALETA CUERO (BAT & LEATHER BALL)

PALA CORTA (SHORT BAT)

JOKO GARBI



LONG COURT: at least 54 meters

PALA

CESTA PUNTA: the most internationally known variety, also known as jai alai. A wicker basket is used to catch and throw the ball. The ball is not allowed to come to a complete standstill inside the basket. Players have less than three seconds to catch and return the ball to the front wall in one continuous motion. This extremely fast and dangerous game, with ball speeds reaching 300 km (+185 miles) per hour, calls for the mandatory use of protective helmets for both front and back players. The frontons used have to be built with a side wall to protect spectators from the exceptionally hard ball (with a density of 90 to 95%)

REMONTÉ: This version evolved from an earlier game played with a leather glove that did not allow the ball to stop even for a second. The hurling device is a curved basket made of a more compact material than the cesta punta version, and without the deep pocket. It is 82-83 cm long. The technique involves catching the ball with the part of the glove closest to the hand, letting it roll to the other end of the basket and hurling it.

**JUAN RAMÓN ARRASATE**

JAI ALAI PLAYER

Miami, the uncertain future of jai alai



Hogei urtean lekeitiar hau Estatu Batuetan ibili zen. Miamiko Jai-Alai pilotalekuan zesta-punta jokalarri moduan hamaika garaipen izan zuen; beti ere, egunero-egunero izaten ziren 8.000 ikusleek txalotuta. 37 urte egitean erretiratu egin zen, eta, orain, gazteak entrenatzen ditu. Juan Ramón Arrasatek apustuekin lotura estua duen kirol honen gainbehera ezagutu du; 500 profesional mugiarazten zituen Estatu Batuetako 18 pilotaleku irekietan, eta, egun, kasinoan, txanpon-makinen eta ausazko gainerako jokoan kompetentzia izugarriarekin batera irauten du bizirik.

Twenty-eight years ago, when Juan Ramón Arrasate took the leap from Lekeitio to Miami, there were 18 active frontons in the United States, allowed 500 Basque jai alai pelotaris to make a “very decent living.” Today the only jai alai courts open year round are the Miami fronton and Dania Jai-Alai. Another three are open three months a year: Fort Pierce, Ocala and Orlando. All of them together account for less than 100 pelotaris.

Arrasate was one of the hundreds of youngsters who stood out in cesta punta at school. When he turned 18 he was selected to play at the Miami fronton. Despite the fact that the idea didn't go over too well at home, he managed to convince his parents that he wanted to try his luck for a year, that he'd learn English and come back in a year. “We were well paid and had two months off, which allowed us to come back to Lekeitio. One season ran into the next almost before I knew it. When I was just about to retire at the age of 37 after 20 years as a professional pelotari, I was offered a job as a kind of coach for younger players, so I stayed on.”

His job basically involves teaching the less experienced players, most of whom are from Euskadi, although some are also Americans, Cubans and Mexicans. 45 cesta punta pelotaris play at the Miami fronton, half of whom are between the age of 30 and 40. “It's really difficult to find younger players who want to go there and those that do, aren't very well prepared.” Nowadays the salary for pelotaris is not as attractive as it was twenty years ago but it is still enough to make a comfortable living. The starting salary is around 2,000 dollars a month, and the percentage earned from bets can add another \$1,500 to their earnings. As their technique improves each new contract reflects a gradual wage increase.

The world of betting

The decline in cesta punta, according to Juan Ramón Arrasate, began in 1988 with a strike called by the jai alai association. Since then he has been concerned about the future of the game, saying it has lost almost all of its sporting essence: “When I came to Miami the



Juan Ramón Arrasate when he played jai alai.

most important sport in the city was cesta punta. Basketball and baseball were not as popular as they are today and American football was only played on Sundays five months a year. Since there were no bingo parlors or casinos to go to in the evening, the frontons were very popular."

«Support has to come from Euskadi because its one of our sports. The Americans have their own»

were always sponsored by sportswear multinationals. We'd wear their logos on our shirts or use their brand name sport shoes, but now these people think that betting is dirty business and the major corporations don't want to get involved."

Betting has been associated with jai alai since its origins. Generally speaking, today most of the diehard fans are Cuban and Latin American bettors. "This sport has very few followers. We make our living on betting so the competition with other money wagering activities is fierce." In fact, admission to the frontons is free and management tries to lure spectators in by selling beer at the incredibly low price of 25 cents a glass. At the Miami Jai Alai there are events scheduled every day from noon to 5 o'clock and again from 7pm to midnight. There are 14 wagers a day, the betting options the same as for horse racing. A two-dollar bet for a combination against high odds can pay returns of up to \$7,000, but this type of win is very uncommon.

"The prospects," added the coach "are not good. The casino owners are buying up the frontons and putting in slot machines or card games. Experience shows that when they go in, pelota disappears. The other games take over and in no time jai alai falls by the wayside." Even the Miami Jai Alai faces this menace; the management company hopes to obtain a permit to conduct both of these activities. The future is uncertain. The fact that cesta punta is associated with betting has dwindled its possibilities for certain kinds of sponsorships or backing. "When I used to play we

Considering the situation, Arrasate feels that support should come from Euskadi. "It's our sport," he explains. "The Americans have their own and don't really care if cesta punta disappears. The government has made efforts to keep rowing and some of the rural sports alive, so they should also do something to make sure Euskadi's most international sport doesn't die out."

In addition to the problems exclusively affecting the jai alai played in the United States, Arrasate believes the decline is also taking place in Euskadi and that its recovery should be encouraged from the bottom up. "In the past, thousands of pelotaris from the Markina school were sent all over the globe to play. Today fewer players are being recruited from Markina. The same thing is happening with the Lekeitio school, where only five years ago there were between 30 and 40 youngsters, and now it's been closed." Added to the generational change is the lack of material needed to practice the sport. "A jai alai txistera costs 300 euros and very few parents can afford it. We've tried synthetic baskets, but they're only good for training, for low-key practice, not competing. I'm convinced that if it were a sport with a brighter future a lot more would be invested in research, like tennis, where technology has managed to produce much lighter racquets.



KEPA ARROITAJAUREGI

Euskadi Federation of Basque pelota

Euskal Federazioa, ahal duen neurrian, hainbat auzi abian ipintzen hasia da; hala nola, kualifikatutako begiraleak trebatzen, instalazioak hobetzen edota kirol honetan erabiltzen diren materialak ikertzen. Kepa Arroitauregik epe laburrera emaitzak ikusten hasiko direla espero du.



«Despite the complicated panorama, there are solutions»

Former pelotari Kepa Arroitajauregi has always been associated in one way or another with the world of Basque pelota. Journalist by profession, for several years he wrote for a sports newspaper and now works for the Euskadi Federation of Basque Pelota. In his opinion there is reason for concern about the situation of Basque pelota today.

What is the main reason for what seems to be a decline in Basque pelota? Are some of the varieties experiencing more difficulties than others?

The biggest problem with pelota in general on the international level are shortages, ball hardness, a lack of facilities and qualified trainers, limited resources for getting the word out about the sport and so on. There are ways to solve these problems but it's not easy.

What types of solutions are there?

Despite the complicated panorama, the solutions should focus mainly on improving already existing facilities, building new frontons and preparing coaches in the various countries, if possible, in order to keep costs down. As for materials, the laborious stitching work involved makes it hard to reduce costs. It's true that labor costs could be cut by sending work to places outside the Basque Country, but the ballmakers would have to be involved and a good amount of planning would be required. There's also a lack of raw materials used in some of the varieties and there aren't many craftsmen around who know how to work the materials. As far as ball hardness is concerned, if we the game to be played the same way it is today, the ball can't be changed. But that's a problem for us since a lot of kids stop playing because it hurts, and a lot of athletes



outside our culture don't understand how you can practice a sport with materials that cause personal damage. In terms of improving facilities, the Federation has money set aside for activities of this type but it's never enough. Another fundamental aspect is training qualified personnel, not only coaches and teachers, but also people who have recruiting and planning skills who know how to organize, follow up and 'sell the product.'

So, to deal with these problems it was decided to create the Euskadi Federation of Basque Pelota.

Yes, the Federation was created twenty years ago to promote activities related to the sport. We also have work, performance and selection plans in place, drawn up by a series of coaches and a technical manager, geared at improving the technical and physical level of our pelotaris. For the time being, for reasons related to things other than sports, our pelotaris are not allowed to compete on an official level. In any case, we are working on 'unofficial' activities and testing our skills against other countries. The Federation's promotional work involves organizing different types of competitions such as the Liga Euskal Herria de Clubes (GRAVN), a tournament between the regional federations of Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Araba, La Rioja and Navarra, as well as championships between different towns in Euskal Herria and elite tournaments between the year's best pelotaris.

What can you tell us about the research efforts being made to cheapen the cost of materials?

All types of research is being carried out. In cesta punta there's the *txiki-jai* (plastic basket), which is an alternative for beginners, but if we want to maintain the essence of the game, things get a bit more complicated. There's also the synthetic ball, but compared to the traditional ball it's not nearly as predictable on the court. Costs have gone down somewhat in bare-handed pelota but they're still high because the balls are handcrafted. The answer may lie in developing the right kind of machinery to do the job. Although there are differences between ballmakers, generally prices range from 30 to 50 euros. Any club with a decent amount of activity needs at least 100 balls per season, unless they organize a tournament, in which case we're talking about a lot more. In order to carry out the plans I mentioned earlier, the Federation itself uses around 15 balls a week.

Materials are much more expensive for cesta punta. The basket costs around 300 euros and each ball can cost up to 100. Your average jai alai player changes his basket every three to four months, and the balls are easily damaged by the force with which they're hurled against the walls.

What Latin American countries do you have the best relationships with?

We have a healthy relationship with Venezuela, Chile, Argentina (FEVA), Mexico, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. We also have considerable relationships with the United States and Ireland. We have plans to build stronger ties to make the game even more universal and in this way increase the number and quality of our pelotaris. Although it may be hard to believe, outside of Euskal Herria there are places where frontons are on the rise. In Bolivia the city of Cochabamba boasts nearly 180 frontons. A lot of people play Basque pelota, mostly with a racquet or bare-handed. In fact, the president, Evo Morales, plays every day. The courts are very much like our frontons in terms of size. But they have a right-hand wall and no back wall, and the metal strip is at 50 cm., so the game they play is different.

Chile has a number of frontons and trinquets, whereas in Brazil, for example, the main venue is located in a sports complex that seats over 25,000, with all the possibilities that sort of place can offer.

In Argentina there are countless trinquets, unlike the Dominican Republic, with its one fronton located in the capital, or Venezuela, which has a few venues.

Are there common grounds for developing the sport?

We have to preserve our own style of pelota but many of these countries play different versions of the game. The basic rules and regulations are similar so rather than closing any doors we should open ourselves up to new opportunities.

Irish handball, for instance, is a game that could be played by handball players around the world. They use a frontenis type ball and play in small, one- or four-walled courts, which basically requires skill and agility. Manito is a similar game but played with a smooth tennis ball in courts identical to the ones in Euskal Herria but in miniature. The Bolivian ball game is more complicated; it's also played with a hard, leather ball, which makes it more daunting for a lot of potential players.

And you also have good relationship with other federations such as the Irish association.

Yes, our ties with the Irish Handball Federation are very strong. In fact, we've already organized four Pelota handball challenges with Irish pelotaris. The game is basically the same, the only differences being the size of the court and a few rules. But the Basques adapt pretty well to their variety and we keep getting better at it. In August we play against Canada in the World Handball Championships, so we'll see how that goes.



ERRAMUN OSA

Federation of Ikastola



«Efforts are being made to find the right approach to teaching Basque pelota»

Euskal Pilotaren lurraldeko federazioen lankidetzarekin, Euskal Herriko Ikastolen Federazioak “Ikaspelota” programa egin du ikastoletan eta Euskal Herriko hainbat ikastetxetan 1992. urteaz geroztik. Programa Euskadiko aurrezki kutxek

babestuta dago, eta Eusko Jaurlaritzako Kultura Sailak Kirol Zuzendaritzaren bidez egindako Plan Estrategikoaren barruan. Helburua euskal pilotaren inguruko ezagutza gerturatzea eta kirol honen inguruko interesa piztea da.

As part of the Strategic Plan drawn up by the Basque Ministry of Culture's Department of Sport, the Federation of Ikastolas of Euskal Herria has been working in partnership with the regional federations of Basque pelota and with sponsorship from Basque savings banks to develop the “Ikaspelota” program in a number of ikastolas and other schools throughout Euskal Herria. The project focuses on promoting an understanding of and interest in Basque pelota.

Erramun Osa is in charge of the Ikaspelota program, which is now under way in number of ikastolas and other learning centers in the Euskal Herria. It was

created in 1996 to stimulate a positive approach to teaching Basque pelota to school-aged children, the preferred varieties being bare-handed over pala, cesta or trinquet.

What types of activities are involved in the Ikaspelota program?

Different activities are organized depending on the grade and age. Pilotaz Gozatu (enjoy pelota) takes place during class hours in 3rd and 4th grades. It is aimed at promoting Basque pelota in physical education and arts and crafts classes in all of the elementary schools in all three provinces. The program also serves as a source for



recruiting potential players for the various local pelota schools. Topaketak (Encounters) is a program designed for 5th and 6th grade students, bringing children together from different schools to practice activities related to the various varieties of Basque pelota. Then there's the Camp Bernedo program in Alava which takes place at the end of June. The camp is geared towards all of the younger pelotaris from the different Basque pelota schools in Euskal Herria and all of the schools implementing the Ikaspelota program. Lastly, Herriak Bultzatuz, a new program scheduled to be launched this year for the first time, is designed to help create local Basque pelota schools and to reactivate those already in existence in various towns. It gives the children in these towns the opportunity to play Basque pelota during the month of July.



There are still very few girls who play Basque pelota. This project is designed to reinforce their participation.

Do the ikastolas have frontons or similar spaces for playing the game? Most of the smaller towns and villages have frontons, but what about the larger towns?

Generally speaking, most of the ikastolas have an area to play pelota and many of them offer Basque pelota as an after-school activity. But the larger the town, the harder it is to play pelota just for fun or as a part of unscheduled activity.

Among the different varieties of Basque pelota, are there any preferences?

Yes, there is a clear preference for bare-handed pelota over the pala, cesta or trinquet versions.

Are girls joining the ranks as much as boys?

Unfortunately participation is not at an equal footing between girls and boys. There are still very few girls playing Basque pelota. This project is designed to reinforce their participation through these different programs and activities. At this year's camp in June there were 17% girls, although it's worth pointing out that we're gradually seeing a clear increase in the

number of girls taking part in the Basque pelota schools.

Was this project implemented because of a dangerous drop in the numbers of followers?

Since 1996 this project has tried to find an appropriate approach to teaching Basque pelota to school-aged children since before that time point the focus hadn't been very practical. Over the past ten years steps have been taken to improve the way the material is taught: training teachers and instructors, adapting materials for different levels, designing educational materials and so on.

What type of materials are used?

Beginners use what we call a *goxua* quality ball made of softer materials; as the players move on to higher levels they use harder balls called *medio toque* and finally progress to a harder ball called *toque*. The Euskal Soinketa Jarduera-Ikaspelota project focuses on creating materials used in schools and adapted in weight, size and color to meet the needs of each of the different age groups.

Do you organize interschool or similar kinds of championships?

The Basque pelota schools that come out of ikastolas and towns are invited to take part in interschool championships organized by the different regional federations. These championships give young pelotaris the chance to practice all of the different varieties and play with other boys and girls of the same age group and skill level.

For more information on this program write to:

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Not just for boys

Gipuzkoako Euskal Pilotaren Federazioa aitzindaria izan da emakumezkoen artean pilota sustatzen, eta, 2004. urtean, “Emakumea pilotari” proiektua ipini zuen abian. Denbora gutxian fruituak eman ditu, batez ere, eskola-kirolean. Foru Aldundiak diruz lagundu zituen, eta, 2005. urte hasieran, Gipuzkoako eskualdeetako udalekin hasi zen lanean.

They may never see the fame and money achieved by María Antonia Uzkudun, “Chiquita de Anoeta”, Mila Beraza, Calixta Landaburu, Belén Balerdi, Mari Carmen Soroa or a handful of other gutsy racquet players who made a name and a small fortune for themselves in the 1940s and 50s in frontons throughout Spain and the Americas. But the today’s female players give it their all when they swing the bat. The Federation of Basque pelota of Gipuzkoa has set into motion a program called *Emakumea pilotari* (women pelotaris), which is now bearing its first fruits. The provincial council provided funding for the project and in early 2005 the organizers began working with town councils throughout Gipuzkoa. So far, ten towns have become actively involved in launching the plan: Azpeitia, Ataun, Arrasate-Mondragón, Bergara, Donostia, Hernani, Hondarribia, Irun, Tolosa and Zestoa.

Project coordinator Maider Mendizabal explained that they are trying to work on three fronts: school sports, federations and recreational sports. “The first thing we did with regard to school sports was to organize a series of workshops in the various towns geared specifically towards girls. Two of them focused on the pala version played with a wooden bat, and another two on bare-handed pelota. Last year 304 girls took part between the age of 10 and 16. This year the figures have been pretty much the same and we’ve even managed to create pelota schools for girls in towns of Ataun, Arrasate, Azpeitia and Zestoa. We’ve also reorganized the school already in place in Hernani; in Tolosa we’ve formed a group of ten girls and in Irun we’re planning on working with the teams already in place in the former school.”

The success in the area of school sports has been so successful that Gipuzkoa had already hosted the first pala championships. Taking part were 19 teams (some with two girls and others with 3-4-person teams) between the age of 10 and 12; nine teams between the age of 12 and 14 and eight teams of 14 to 17 year olds. The pool of players augers well.



Finalists at the 2006 Gipuzkoa trinquet championships.

At the age of 14 girls can become affiliated to the federation and compete in the Gipuzkoa Championships (December to September playing in frontons with a solid bat and March through April in trinquets with the shorter “Argentinian bat”), and in the Basque league (January through March in frontons and May to June in trinquets). They can also compete in the Spanish Trinquet Championships (from June to early July). On the international level, the World Championships are held every four years, which for women is played in a frontenis court with an Argentinian bat and rubble ball. The World Cup is the highest honor in Basque pelota, with the top four players in each variety vying for the World Championship title.

In the area of federated sports, one of the most pressing goals of the “Emakumea pilotari” project was to create a Women’s Committee within the Gipuzkoa Federation of Basque Pelota. Secondly, a proposal was put forward to increase the participation of women in decision-making bodies and to ensure in the near future at least 30% female pelotari representatives in the Federation’s general assembly and at least one woman sitting on the board of directors. Work is also being done to develop a new competition calendar to better organize the championships in Euskal Herria, and to design a new style for the Gipuzkoa championships to help create more balanced teams and enhance competition.

As for recreational sports, Maider Mendizabal explains that she is quite confident that we will see more women playing the game. “This year we’ve only been able to implement the plan in Azpeitia but considering the outcome we think it’s worth redoubling our efforts to reach the rest of the towns. From Easter to June nine women between the age of 30 and 47 were playing in the Azpeitia fronton every Monday and Wednesday morning using a paddle and tennis ball. We provided the gear and an instructor and they supplied the enthusiasm and effort.”



ETBk rol garrantzitsua izan du euskal pilotaren zaletasuna bizirik mantentzeko lanean, eta halaxe du oraindik ere. Euskal Herrirako eta kanporako ematen dituen ehunka partidei esker, kirol honen milaka zaleek etxetik jarrai dezakete pilotalekuetan izaten den emozioa. Fernando Lopetegi telebistako errealizadoreari frontoi berriak egiterakoan eta zaharrak berritzerakoan arkitektoek aholkua eskatzen diote. Lopetegi 1988. urteaz geroztik final handietan hogeita hamar lagunek osatzen duen taldearen buru da.

The importance of an image

Fernando Lopetegi's career – first a cameraman and later a television producer – gave him an understanding of the importance of image. He soon went on to spearhead the battle launched twenty years ago for green frontons and changing other aspects of the game for the sake of delivering a better TV image. A number of pelotaris have stopped talking to Lopetegi for modernizing Basque pelota. "Traditions are hard to change," says the television expert "but changing the color of the grayish-white frontons was logical. The ball was the almost same color, which didn't provide enough contrast to make it visible when the ball was in motion. It wasn't something that could be solved with a better camera technique."

In varieties such as *cesta punta* or *remonte*, where the ball travels faster than in bare-handed pelota, the frontons have always been green. Lopetegi argued that there was no reason they couldn't all be the same. He backed his stance with two very convincing arguments: "Upkeep is less expensive and Basques are used to everything around them being green." Curiously enough, the French were the first to heed Lopetegi's advice, who assures that in Iparralde his work is more highly respected. "The first fronton we painted green was the Paris trinquet in 1988. The French federation called us because they wanted us to broadcast the world trinquet championships. They saw the need and were convinced immediately." He was also asked his advice by the architect responsible for the Bayonne trinquet, a venue Lopetegi considers "fantastic."

In 1990 Lopetegi received a call from Catalonia asking him to design, from a broadcasting perspective, the frontons to be used in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. In his words, "to this day there is still no better project." Lopetegi, together with the project's architect, Enric Soria,

designed everything having to do with colors and contrasts, including all of the materials between the playing area and the out-of-bounds line, including the camera and lighting set up. "For the audience it's really important to be able to tell the different surfaces apart, just like in tennis, so they can see where the ball lands."

But the changes championed by the ETB television producer were not limited to "the battle for green." To provide Basque pelota with a more modern dimension and to enhance the overall image of the game, Lopetegi also suggested other changes – printing pelotaris' names on their shirts, regulating rest intervals, using computers for statistics and measuring speed.

Thirty-person team

"At ETB we've set up the parameters for broadcasting Basque pelota and the other TV stations have copied us," Lopetegi boasts proudly, adding that he enjoys working with such a close-knit team. A *manomanista* final (bare-handed) requires some thirty people, between production staff, computer experts, sound technicians, eight camera operators, liaisons, replay operators, producer, production assistant, and others. It requires weeks of advance work and about six hours to set up, all of which concludes in live footage. "It's like making a movie but without any retakes. In a tenth of a second, in front of 40 screens, you have to decide which camera will be on the air."

ETB broadcasts all of the games live on ETB-Sat for Europe and rebroadcast for America via Canal Vasco. The last *manomanista* final was broadcast live to the entire world via the Internet through the Canadian online television company JumpTV, and for a fee viewers could download the game.



A strategic plan for the next four years

Datozen lau urteotan euskal pilota sustatzeko, bultzatzeko eta garatzeko, Eusko Jaurlaritzak plan estrategikoa diseinatu du; planak 42 ekintza biltzen ditu. Jarraipen Batzorde batek proposatutako helburuak betetzen dituztela zainduko du. Plana zabaltzeko, elementu identifikatzailea sortu dute; PILOTA 21 marka, hain zuzen ere.

For the purpose of promoting, fostering and developing Basque pelota over the next four years, the Basque Government has drawn up a strategic plan, presented this past July 7th, which envisages the involvement of federations, clubs, local governments, private enterprise and other stakeholders active in the sector, as well as the three provincial councils.

To determine the areas of activity involved in this plan, the Department of Culture carried out a diagnosis of the current situation of Basque pelota, studying the different varieties of the game, the competitions currently under way

and the development of licenses in use. It also conducted a thorough analysis of the different organizations involved in the sport, including: municipal services, sports federations, clubs, Basque pelota businesses, private sponsors, the media, provincial governments and the Basque Government itself.

42 actions

The conclusions drawn from the report show that Basque pelota must be included in everyday society, from the school environment, to play, tourism and business, and greater emphasis should be placed on participation. At the same time, the need was detected to encourage change on the cultural and organizational levels and to define the product itself as well as the market it operates in.



The mission of the strategic plan is to guide an innovative process over the next four years founded on development, research, participation and education which consolidates the future of a local product, raises the profile and the sport abroad and transmits the image and identity of the country.

To this end, the plan defines four areas of activity and 42 actions. A monitoring committee will be in charge of verifying the compliance of the objects put forward. The committee will be presided over by the Basque Government and will include the Euskadi Federation of Basque Pelota, the provincial federations of Alava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, and the three provincial councils.

Modernization of management models

The idea of the first area of activity is to improve the management model and updating work methods to adapt to today's needs. Policies on government aid and subsidies will be reoriented; a program will be set into place to improve management among sport federations and clubs and create a more professional and modern management culture.

As for training related activities, plans are in place to implement a program for the stakeholders involved, including qualified technicians in the different areas. It also seeks to unify educational contents and bring the topic of Basque pelota to the table by holding meetings between



Fernando Tapia, Deputy for Institutional Relations of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, and Miren Azkarate, Basque Minister of Culture, during the presentation of the Strategic Plan for Basque Pelota.



different organizations and authorities working in the area.

The cultural change will entail designing a model of agreement between municipal bodies and clubs, implementing a code of ethics to govern the organization and practice of the sport, creating a framework of relations between professional associations and the federations which includes points in common and ensures continual development of the model.

It also provides for the design and implementation of a comprehensive plan for the integration of girls and women in the world of Basque pelota which facilitate the practice and enjoyment of the sport throughout adulthood.

Education and socialization

In this second area of activity the plan covers popular competitions, spring and summer camps in which school children play Basque pelota as well as other activities related to the sport, and promoting activities or products to ensure the presence of pelota in major events in the Basque Autonomous Community. It also envisages promoting the sport's presence in audiovisuals and new technologies and in school curriculum as part of Basque culture studies.

As for the participation aspect of the sport, the plan provides for the organization of an annual, large-scale, 24-hour, festive event. It also seeks to raise the profile of the Basque pelota among children by promoting evening weekend activities. All of this will be accompanied by awareness raising campaigns aimed at the general public.

Specialization and creativity

Over the next four years efforts will be maximized to encourage participation by pelota federations in competitions at the provincial and autonomous community

**«Basque pelota
must be included in
everyday society,
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to play,
to tourism, to
business»**

level. Efforts will also be made to adapt materials for school and recreational activities to meet the needs of age groups and physical characteristics of children. All schools will be equipped with a regulation fronton. New infrastructures will also be encouraged along with upgrading those currently in existence.

Rules and regulations will be made more innovative and dynamic with an eye to modernizing the competitive model. Cesta punta, pala and remonte will be adapted for the short fronton to attract more players. With regard to

improving materials and gear, plans are in place to facilitate their acquisition at lower costs and to undertake research in a global manner, taking into account technique, tactics and physiology.

International campaign

The plan puts forward the creation of an international body aimed at promoting the development of Basque pelota in general. Another one of the points included in the international arena is to recruit and train technician-trainers and pelota federation leaders in countries requesting such support. Materials for practicing the sport outside Euskal Herria will also be included in these schemes. The plan also provides for actions aimed at national and international recognition of the Basque team to place it on an equal footing in the highest level of international sport. Lastly, the plan addresses the development of a Basque pelota cultural-touristic route which would allow people to learn about the history of the sport, and to use the network of Basque companies abroad to promote the game on the international level.

For dissemination purposes, the plan has adopted an identifying mark, PILOTA 21, which will provide a 'seal of approval' and recognition of the merits of stakeholders or organizations carrying out the activities put forward in the plan.



ANTON MENDIZABAL

Sculptor



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«*Oteiza made me see the fronton with different eyes*»

Ondo asko ezagutzen du euskal pilota Anton Mendizabalek; hainbat eskulturarekin mundu zabal honen aspektuak ezagutarazi nahi izan ditu. Lan artistikoari “Pilotaz” izena ipini dio, eta duela gutxi aurkeztu du Rosarion. Ezinegon artistikoa dela eta, kirol hau beste adierazpen batzuekin ere lotu du; hala nola, musikarekin eta bertsolaritzarekin.

In June sculptor Anton Mendizabal took part in a Basque-Argentinian cultural and sports gathering with his project “Pilotaz”, presented at the Esteve Museum in Rosario. The cultural component of the program was rounded out with music played by Mikel Markez, Pako Aristi and Jesús Mari Lopetegi, and the sports component with athletic competitions and Basque pelota.

“I had to sum up a ten-year project in a very limited amount of time. But it was interesting in that it forced me to create an exhibition/conference based on twenty models from the Pilotaz project, plus a series of slides and three DVDs which helped provide a context to explain how the different sculptures in the project came about. At the same time I showed a sequence of images to narrate the evolution of pelota over the centuries. The presentation was both an explanation of how pelota has evolved and my own interpretation of this evolution



expressed through sculpture.” Anton Mendizabal is an artist who has always been involved in Basque culture, submerging himself in the material to extract new and interesting aspects and combine different artistic disciplines.

Pilotaz was completed three years ago but did it require many years of study before it was launched?

Yes, Pilotaz is a thing of the past. I finished the project in 2000, although I guess you could say its culmination actually came two years later with the exhibition set up at the Kutxa. The entire project was purchased by the Gipuzkoa-based savings bank with the idea and hopes that it would form part of the collection of a future Basque pelota museum. Pilotaz is a traveling exhibition, last shown in Valladolid and slated next for Barcelona.

The sculptures represent different aspects of the sport. How is the exhibit arranged?

Keeping in mind that the ultimate purpose was to be part of a museum collection, I thought that the display should be educational and easy to understand. The world of Basque pelota is extremely complex; there are so many aspects involved, it’s easy to get confused. And I needed a clear script both for myself and future viewers, which ended up being divided into three main areas: the court, in other words the playing area; the player or pelotari, and the tools used. In short, the who, what and where of

pelota. The collection revolved around these three lines and that’s what I used to develop the different aspects. When I worked on the where, the spatial aspect of the game, I used my own interpretation to develop the different courts: from the more primitive type with no walls, which was played in the countryside to the latest glass trinquets. As for the who, my interpretations were based on five different typical pelotari body positions, all taken from bare-handed pelota. And the materials –the what– I used sculpture to describe the most common types of tools such as balls, baskets and bats. I think that each of the three areas are pretty easy to understand.

This project has meant many years of work, a lot of different pieces and materials, plus your own personal evolution.

It took me ten years to sculpt the 41 pieces included in Pilotaz. And in addition to the various themes and concepts in the game of pelota, I also used different materials: wood, stone, iron, leather and rope. And it goes without saying that since the project took ten years, I too developed stylistically over that time.

Was space the most difficult thing to describe? Did you take your inspiration from any other sculptors?

Yes. The postures and tools are already there and you can use pictures as a baseline. But capturing the space of a hundred meter long fronton and turning it into sculpture is much more complicated; but that’s also one



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of the most ambitious parts of the Pilatuz project. Over the years you're influenced by a lot of people but it was mainly Jorge Oteiza who made me see the fronton with different eyes. Alongside Oteiza – at that time we saw a lot of each other – he helped me to discover that the fronton was like a giant sculpture with special vibrations. I owe that to him, so in way, yes, I can say he was an important influence by making me take a serious look at ball courts and learn to regard the walls as sacred. He had a poetic vision of walls as the symbol of a sheltering sky, and in my sculptures the wall also has special significance. When Oteiza was working on Homage to Velázquez he came across the Basque fronton. That's what he called it; he considered it an enormously suggestive and interesting element. And that's how he makes the rest of us see it.

The sculptures related to the pelotari postures and the materials are more figurative.

Yes, but in a certain sense here I also followed the lead of Oteiza because I was very schematic, trying to say the most with the least amount of elements, just like the minimalist artists.

So, why Basque pelota?

Ever since I was young Basque pelota was present in my family through my father. He was a good pala player and I even partnered with him. My uncle, Alejandro Amenabar, played remonte and was woodcarver by profession; he taught me how to carve. I used to go with my father to the fronton in Donostia in the neighborhood of Gros. When the game was over they would give me a ball and I'd go back to the fronton by myself; I would wander back and forth with the ball in that shady space. That, plus what I later learnt from Oteiza ... you realize it's just something that's inside of you.

Your artistic restlessness and Basque culture led you to set into motion the “Pagoarte” project in the Gipuzkoan town of Oiartzun.

Yes, for several years now we've been carrying out a series of experiments which link different areas of creation. It's funny but in spite of the individualism in all of our art, we often come across the same problems concerning creation and also processes. So the idea came up to make things with Basque artists from different areas, which has resulted in some very interesting experiments. For example, in the area of bertsoaris, the *bertso-pilota* was created, a performance of sorts in which the bertsolari plays the role of the pelotari's water boy in a real game of pelota. It was our invention but has now become common in other places. As for sculpture, Zumeta presented his “Gernika” here with all of this sketches and explanations. Now we're working with the organ in Oiartzun, the oldest Cavaille-Coll in the Basque Country. We've been working on the project for four years and each year we've asked a composer to write a piece of music: The first was Gorka Cuesta, who wrote a piece for organ and txistu; then

Ramón Lazkano composed a piece for organ and Baritone soloist, with lyrics by Xabier Lete. Last year, as part of the “Quincena Musical” classical music festival in Donostia, Pello Zabalette, a composer from Iparralde, presented a piece for organ and percussion. And this year's Quincena Musical will debut a work by organist Loic Mallié, based on a folk piece from Oiartzun, “Jangoikoak gabon” written as an organ solo. We also like to add something experimental to each concert, so this time the organist will play an improvisation based on one of the sculptures from to my musical phase, which, in turn, is a sculptural interpretation of Ramón Lazkano's “Ilunkor.”

ou were also a txistulari having studied five years at the music conservatory.

Yes, I'm a frustrated musician. If I had studied an instrument other than the txistu I'd have become a musician instead of a sculptor. But that was the time to learn the txistu and to do everything possible to keep Basque culture alive. The txistu has also developed over the years and now you can play almost anything on it.

So now you're combining music and sculpture.

That's right. The project I'm working on now is based on a work by Oliver Messiaen, whose hundredth anniversary is coming up in 2008. I'd like to put together an exhibition on music and sculpture. One of the pieces I designed as a tribute to the organ players at the church of San Vicente in Donostia is already on display.



Sculptural interpretation of Ilunkor by Ramón Lazkano



Azkoitia to house the Basque Center For Pelota

The first phase of what is to become the "Centro de Pelota de Euskal Herria" (Basque center for pelota) will be inaugurated in Azkoitia at the end of November, on the Feast of Saint Andrew, Azkoitia's patron saint. The project is spearheaded by the local town council in partnership with the provincial government of Gipuzkoa and the savings and loan association, Kutxa. Carlos López de Ceballos is the architect responsible for project.

A number of reasons were behind the promoters' decision to create the center. One was an ignorance of the different varieties between one area and another. ("Biscayans don't know what rebote is and Navarrans know very little about cesta punta.") Another was the need for a documentation center that could house all types of historical documents related to pelota, as well as pictures and other types of creative works. ("A lot of things have been created around pelota, including music, theater, ballet and sculpture."). And thirdly, the need for a place where all varieties of Basque pelota could be played.

The first phase comprises a park for playing pelota, which

the architect entrusted to Antón Mendizabal. "The park will be a tribute to Jorge Oteiza. Oteiza had a special relationship with this Gipuzkoan town, where his grandfather was born and where he had been named favorite son. For this space I've put together a kind of macro sculpture-building reminiscent of a series of metaphysical Oteiza boxes. It's actually six frontons linked together in which each province has its representative fronton: the *arkupe* for Gipuzkoa, the short fronton for Navarra, the long fronton for Bizkaia, the trinquet for Lapurdi, the *place libre* for Zuberoa and the *cimitorio* for Alava."

Another interesting aspect of the project is that people of all ages will be encouraged to take advantage of the frontons, men and women alike. The second phase will include the 90-square-meter, one-walled *place libre* with a parking lot underneath. The third phase will involve the construction of a central building which will house a glass-walled trinquet, a museum –the collection of which will include the Pilotaz project– a documentation center, multi-use rooms, conference rooms, an assembly hall and a cafeteria.

A fronton for Bilbao

As of 2009-2010 the people of Bizkaia will no longer have to travel to other Basque frontons to take in a game. The new fronton, to be built at the entrance to Bilbao, will hold 2,400 – the largest fronton yet. The project is budgeted at 22 million euros and a call for tenders has just recently been made.

The idea has been in on the table for several years and was seen as a necessity: There are a lot of pelota fans but no space large enough to hold them all, said Iñaki Mujika, Director for Sport of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia. "In Bizkaia," he added "there is a growing number of school children interested in pelota; more and more people are joining federations, and we even have a female world champion. Our idea is also to provide space for a school for teaching all of the different varieties of Basque pelota."

The project, which is will be defined by the end of the year, will also include a trinquet and a *Kirol Etxea* sport center, where all of the federations from Bizkaia will have their offices.

Jai alai is back in the Philippines

Aitor Totorika, CEO of Eusko Basque, confirmed that the fronton in the Filipino city of Cebu is slated to open its doors this October. The company has signed an agreement for the next five years by which Eusko Basque will hold 60% of the shares of the fronton. The remaining 40% will belong to the Filipino game and entertainment corporation. Under the agreement Eusko Basque will create fifty jobs in Cebu. In addition to jai alai games themselves, the company has plans to set up *quiniela* wagers for cesta punta and mano games.



The Lehendakari and the Minister of Industry with authorities from Lower Silesia.

Euskadi strengthens ties with Lower Silesia

In June Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe and Basque Minister of Industry Ana Agirre traveled to Poland, where they met with Paweł Wróblewski, head of the Province of Lower Silesia. There, they signed a letter of intent between Euskadi and Lower Silesia aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

After signing the letter, Ibarretxe explained that “the Basque companies and institutions here today have come to share in the future projects and ambitions of this country.” The Lehendakari reminded those present that the economic structure of Lower Silesia was not unlike that of the Basque Country, based primarily on industry and services and to a lesser extent, the primary sector. He also mentioned that they have common passions including self-government, the European Union and promoting industry. The

Lehendakari assured Paweł Wróblewski that the Basque companies that have established themselves in Lower Silesia have the intention of staying, adding that he hopes to see the Basque firms become “Poland’s best.”

“We need to strengthen the presence of our economic sectors in the international markets to consolidate activity, employment and the parent companies in Euskadi,” said Ibarretxe.

After affirming that the experiences of the two countries were indeed similar since both struggled with a period of severe industrial crisis, Paweł Wróblewski added that the important thing was “people not money.”

The Lehendakari, accompanied by the Basque Minister of Industry Ana Aguirre, presented a business platform project in the city of Wrocław and maintained various contacts with Polish business people

and politicians. He announced the wish to strengthen ties between Lower Silesia and Euskadi starting by building closer economic and trade relations between the two regions. To this end, the Basque Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism plans to extend the network of the Society for the Promotion and Reconversion of Industry (SPRI) to the Lower Silesia region by opening an office in Wrocław. The autonomous region of Lower Silesia is pleased with this initiative, which will undoubtedly contribute to creating further contacts and mutually beneficial projects.

During their visit, the Basque delegation visited the new plant opened in Wrocław by the Basque company Fagor. They also had the chance to meet with local and regional authorities of Lower Silesia and with the Speaker of the Parliament, the Governor and the Mayor of Wrocław.

The Basque language in the European Union

The Basque Government feels that it is necessary to take advantage of all of the possibilities opened up by the new European Union framework vis-a-vis the official use of 'other languages' in the institutions and bodies of the EU. It has therefore expressed its readiness to collaborate in putting into practice the use of Euskara to both foment the normalization of the language and to bring Basque society closer to the European Union.

The Department for European Affairs of the General Secretariat for Foreign Action will be the Basque Government body working in this area. It will also be in charge of translating and publishing the provisions adopted in codecision by the European Parliament and Council. The department will also process any papers addressed to the European Union in Euskara by Basque citizens and the respective responses. It will also notify EU institutions and bodies when

Basque representatives intend to use Euskara in appearances and speeches at plenary sessions or other meetings.

These measures were announced by Secretary General for Foreign Action, Iñaki Aguirre, who added that a new web page has been created (www.euskadi.net/euskera_ue) in Euskara with general information about the system, plus recommendations on writing to the EU, types of communications, and a list in Euskara of regulations adopted in codecision, among others. An e-mail address (euskadi-ue@ej-gv.es) has also been set up to channel communications in Euskara.

Recognizing our rights

Patxi Xabier Baztarrika, Deputy Minister of Linguistic Policy, pointed out that "with the recognition of Euskara in the EU we all win: Euskara wins because it gains prestige; Basque speakers win

because our rights are recognized; and Europe wins because bringing citizens closer lends greater credibility to EU institutions. He added that this should not be seen as a symbolic or token concession, but the recognition of a right. Baztarrika added that it illustrates the deficiencies of Spanish institutions, where the recognition of the official use of co-official languages is still pending, despite the commitments undertaken by ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Deputy Minister of Linguistic Policy indicated that in any event this is only a "small step forward." In fact, he pointed out that the new paths opened for the official use of Euskara in the EU have significant shortfalls. Therefore, he is calling for Euskara to enjoy official status comparable to the rest of the official EU languages, since, in his words, "the value and dignity of a language should not be measured by the number of speakers it has, nor by whether it is the language of an officially recognized state. In this area Europe should also be a model of an advanced, open, integrated and truly plural society."

Jon Koldobika Urrutia, Director of the Basque Institute for Public Administration (IVAP), underscored the role IVAP will play, via the Official Translation Service, with regard to EU regulations on the codecision process, including written communications in Euskara and any responses to such correspondence issued by the institutions and bodies of the European Union. (www.revie.org/index4.htm)



Iñaki Aguirre, seated between Patxi Xabier Baztarrika and Jon Koldobika Urrutia.



Donostia-born Daniel Calparsoro to shoot in Hollywood

San Sebastian film director Daniel Calparsoro is finalizing the details of two projects which will keep him in the United States for a time. In early 2007 he'll begin shooting "Anvil", a supernatural terror movie starring angels and demons. He's also working on a remake of his most recent Spanish film release, "Ausentes," which he himself will direct in Hollywood. The cast has yet to be determined. Calparsoro studied filmmaking in New York, working as an unpaid trainee before making his film debut in 1995 with "Salto al vacío" (Jump Into the Void). After making six feature-length films, he sees being a commissioned director as something new. "It's going to be different, but I really feel like doing it. I realize I'll part of a project that doesn't revolve around me and where I won't have the final word," Calparsoro said.



Portugalete Transporter Bridge, World Heritage Site

On June 13th representatives of all 21 countries comprising the World Heritage Committee unanimously declared the Portugalete Transporter Bridge as a new site in UNESCO's World Heritage List, Euskadi's first monument to be given world heritage status. This is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a historical or cultural landmark, enjoyed only by such the likes of such architectural treasures as the Taj Mahal, the Acropolis in Athens and the Gizeh pyramids.

Built in the nineteenth century, in Europe only three other bridges still stand today dating from this period: the Roquefort-Martrou bridge in France, the Newport Transporter bridge in England and the Osten bridge in Germany. Bridges of this type were also built in Africa and the Americas, but the only the La Boca bridge is still in use in Buenos Aires. The "Puente Bizkaia" or Biscay Transporter Bridge was inaugurated in 1893 as the world's first transporter bridge. Designed by the architect Alberto Palacios, it was built on the mouth of the Ibaizabal/Nervi6n River, which crosses the city of Bilbao and links the towns of Portugalete and Getxo. The bridge is based on a clean structure with no decorative covering. It is built on two double towers which support cables 61 meters above the ground. The cables are anchored at either side to piers located 110 meters from the towers.

Today many fewer boats pass under the bridge than in the past, but the population has multiplied on both banks of the river and the bridge still serves as their main link. The bridge is protected

by the Basque Government, which has declared it a Cultural Heritage Landmark.

A delegation of the Basque executive, headed by the Director of Cultural Heritage, Arantza Arzamendi, traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania, the host city for the 30th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, to follow the debates of the 37 candidatures and the final decision on the Biscay Transporter Bridge. Arzamendi underlined its "universal" value and the fact that it is "unique in the world" to explain the relationship iron and industrialization have with the Basque Country. The declaration of World Heritage Site is a conclusive guarantee that the transporter bridge will always remain in perfect condition. From now on, all level of governments, from local to national, have the obligation to take part in its conversation.

Thirty-seven new sites were proposed for inscription at the meeting, 27 of which were reviewed as cultural sites, eight natural sites, two mixed sites and three transboundary sites. The Biscay Bridge is included in the industrial heritage group, alongside other transporter bridges. UNESCO also recognized other monuments, including the old town of Regensburg and Stadtamhof in Germany; Sewell Mining Town in Chile; Bisotun in Iran; The Strade Nuove and the system of the Palazzi dei Rolli in Italy; the aflaj irrigation systems in Oman; Centennial Hall in Wroclaw, Poland, and the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape in the United Kingdom.



35 Gaztemundu participants in Euskal Herria

The 35 youngsters who took part in the Gaztemundu, organized by the Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities, wrapped up this year's program on July 15th with an overall positive experience. For a two weeks the participants, youngsters affiliated with Basque clubs, had the opportunity to broaden their knowledge about Euskal Herria.

Under the coordination of University of the Basque Country instructors Joseba Etxebeste and Clara Urdangarin, participants studied themes related to all types of games – organized games, competitive games (*jokoak*) and unorganized games played purely for fun (*jolasak*) – as well as music, song, dance and sports. The program got under way with a reception by the Lehendakari at his official residence in Ajuria Enea, and was later rounded out with trips to Lesaka, Donostia and Gasteiz, where participants visited the cathedral and the museum of contemporary art, Artium. Gaztemundu emerged as an educational program aimed at providing young people affiliated with euskal etxeas around the world the opportunity to learn about the culture and present-day society of Euskal Herria. The last two editions have had a particular focus on cultural and leisure-time activities for teenagers and younger children. Participants

this year were given a copy of the book "Jokoa eta Jolasa" published by the Basque Secretariat for Foreign Action. The book contains interesting mate-

rial and an extensive catalog of educational and entertaining games and activities put together by teachers Joseba Etxebeste and Clara Urdangarin.

PARTICIPANTS / PARTAIDEAK

- Abasolo de Zavaleta, Estefanía** (Euskaldunak Denak Bat, Arrecifes, Argentina)
- Aldabe, Zulma Beatriz** (Centro Vasco Gure Txokoa, Suipacha, Argentina)
- Altamira, Daniel Héctor** (Centro Vasco Itxaropena, Saladillo, Argentina)
- Alvarado Salas, Karín Alexandra** (Centro Vasco Euzko Etxea, Santiago, Chile)
- Arin, Ezequiel** (C. Vasco Gure Txokoa, Córdoba, Pcia. de Córdoba, Argentina)
- Balla de Aranzabal, María Noel** (Centro Vasco Ibai Guren, Paraná, Argentina)
- Baztan Castro, Maite Soledad** (Euzko Etxea de Comodoro Rivadavia, Argentina)
- Benítez, María Jesús** (Centro Vasco Kotoiaren Lurra del Chaco, Argentina)
- Bilbao, Joseba** (C. Vasco Euzko Etxea de Necochea, Pcia. Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- Calro, María Emilia** (Centro Vasco Euzko Etxea de La Plata, Argentina)
- Castillo Alzuri, Elsa Nieves** (Villegasko Euskaldunak de General Villegas, Arg.)
- Cis Leiza, Ernesto** (Centro Vasco Ibai Ondoko Etxea de Carmelo, Uruguay)
- Dabadie Gorosabel de Ustarroz, M^a Bibiana** (Euzko Etxea, Necochea, Argentina)
- Domingo, Ana Inés** (Centro Vasco Euskal Etxea, San Nicolás, Argentina)
- Etchepare, Ana** (Centro Vasco Zingirako Euskaldunak, Chascomús, Argentina)
- Fernández, María Gabriela** (C. Vasco Gure Txokoa, Córdoba, Argentina)
- Galarraga, María Gabriela** (Centro Vasco Denak Bat, Mendoza, Argentina)
- Galarraga, María Laura** (Centro Vasco Euzko Etxea, La Plata, Argentina)
- Garat, María Pilar** (Centro Vasco Unión Vasca de Bahía Blanca, Argentina)
- García, Mariana** (C. Vasco Denak Bat de Cañuelas, Pcia. Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- Gestido Mendiola, Soledad** (Centro Vasco Anaítasuna, Maipú, Argentina)
- Golcoehandia, Graclana Mabel** (Centro Vasco de Las Flores, Argentina)
- González Torres, Álvaro** (Centro Vasco Ibai Ondoko Etxea, Carmelo, Uruguay)
- Hernandorena, Adriana** (Centro Vasco Denak Bat, Mar del Plata, Argentina)
- Iratorza, Agustina** (Centro Vasco Unión Vasca, Bahía Blanca, Argentina)
- Landa, Pablo Ignacio** (Centro Vasco Laurak Bat, Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- Larribite, Cristina Julia Yolanda** (Centro Vasco Guillermo Larregui, Chacabuco, Argentina)
- Martínez de Alegria, Ismael** (C. Vasco Euzko Etxea, Villa María, Argentina)
- Ordoqui Sasiain, Maite** (C. Vasco Denak Bat, Lomas de Zamora, Argentina)
- Osoro, Silvia Mariela** (Asociación Vasco Argentina Urrundik, Paraná, Argentina)
- Ostolaza Bengoechea, María Inés** (Centro Vasco Denak Bat, Lomas, Zamora, Argentina)
- Reyna Muniain, Facundo** (Eusketxe-Casa de la Cultura Vasca, Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- Rodríguez, Darío Guillermo** (Centro Vasco Toki Eder de José C. Paz, Argentina)
- Salaburu Urruty, Idoya** (Basque Cultural Center, South San Francisco, USA)
- Urdangarin Kavajin, Drlina María** (Centro Vasco Euzko Etxea, Santiago, Chile)

ETXEAK



Azkarraga signs agreements with Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic

The minister meets with Dominican President Leonel Fernández

A delegation from the Department of Justice, Employment and Social Security, headed by Basque minister Joseba Azkarraga, traveled to Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic to meet with senior officials from both Central American governments and to sign cooperation protocols in the area of justice, employment and occupational health and safety.

In Costa Rica, Joseba Azkarraga met with Vice-president and Minister of Justice, Laura Chinchilla. He also met with a group of representatives from Costa Rican jurisprudence led by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Luis Paulino Mora, with whom he signed a framework agreement enabling collaboration and exchanging information on the administration of justice.

Azkarraga met with the Minister of Labor, Francisco Morales Hernández, to analyze future agreements between the two countries in the area of social economy. Azkarraga also met with the regional director of ACI-Américas (International Cooperative Alliance) Manuel Mariño and other leaders from the National Council for Cooperatives, CONACOOB.

In the Dominican capital the Basque delegation met with President Leonel Fernández and later with the



Above, Joseba Azkarraga at a meeting with Leonel Fernández, President of the Dominican Republic. Left, the Vice-president of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla, with the Basque minister.

Minister of Labor José R. Fadul Fadul. The meeting resulted in the signing of two cooperation protocols, one in the area of employment and the other in occupational health and safety. The Dominican attorney general and Joseba Azkarraga signed the plan for the implementation of the cooperation protocol entered into in January 2005 between the Minister of Justice and the

Attorney General of the Dominican Republic, Francisco Domínguez Brito in the areas of juvenile justice, forensic medicine and victim assistance.

The Basque minister gave a conference on social economy at the Foundation for Global Democracy and Development and another presentation entitled "At the doors of peace" at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo.



Basque wedding in Shanghai

Aitor Etxezarreta and Izaskun Arretxe were married on May 27th at the euskal etxea in Shanghai. Over thirty members of the Shanghai-ko Euskal Etxea helped the happy couple celebrate the event. The bride and groom wore traditional Basque outfits, but made with fabric from the Shanghai fabric market. The "txapelas" and "gerrikos" worn by the men came from Euskadi. The groom, born in Aretxabaleta, works for a Basque company with a plant near Shanghai in China.



The Bihotzetik Choir from Boise celebrates 20 years

On July 5th, Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe welcomed the Bihotzetik Basque Choir from Boise to his official residence at Ajuria Enea. The members of the choir, all of Basque origin, traveled to Euskadi to celebrate their twentieth anniversary as ambassadors of Basque culture in the United States. The Lehendakari told his guests that in Euskadi "we're pleased because we're seeing a great opportunity for peace and political normalization, which we hope to take advantage of with your help too."



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Honored with various awards, this chef is energetic, straightforward, hard-working, sensitive and a perfectionist. In spite of his youth, Irun-born Iñigo Lavado has garnered a broad wealth of experience working in some of Europe's leading restaurants. After studying under Luis Irizar at his school in San Sebastian, he worked as specialist chef at Pedro Subijana's Akelarre restaurant. Lavado later moved to Paris, where he had the opportunity to work at the restaurant owned by world-class chef Alain Ducasse. At the same time Lavado took advantage of his time in France to study pastry-making. In 1997 he worked as specialist chef at El Bulli in Catalonia under Ferrán Adrià, and after that returned to work with Subijana as second chef. His relationship with the Berasategui Group began a little later and soon he was in charge of the kitchen at Kukuarri, the restaurant located the Hotel NH Aranzazu in San Sebastián. Since late August 2005 Iñigo Lavado has been running the restaurant at Ficoba, the trade show in Irun bordering with Iparralde.

RICOTTA, MUSCOVADO AND SHEEP'S MILK FOAM

PREPARATION

For the muscovado gelatin:

Boil the water with the muscovado sugar, add the gelatin sheets and allow to thicken in a plastic container.

For the thickened foam

Heat the milk to 65°C and place it in a plastic container with the drops of rennet.

Allow to thicken and fill the siphon. Charge with 2 cannisters and allow to rest.

For the ricotta powder

Add all of the ingredients to the Thermomix. Blend, strain and pour in a PacoJet beaker.

For the walnut sculpture

Mix the ingredients in the Thermomix. Blend thoroughly, strain and place in a pastry sleeve. Allow to rest for 2 hours. Spread onto a Silpat baking mat in the shape of a fine-toothed comb and bake for 5 minutes at 170°C.



INGREDIENTS

For the muscovado gelatin

100 gr. muscovado sugar
250 gr. water
3 gr. leaf gelatin sheets

For the thickened foam:

500 gr. sheep's milk
2 drops rennet

For the ricotta powder:

300 gr. ricotta
300 gr. water
50 gr. 50% sugar syrup

For the walnut sculpture:

200 gr. 50% sugar syrup
30 gr. glucose
100 gr. walnuts



Negro Iroldi and Cesar Bernal Berroa, "El Perro," Basque pelota champions in San Sebastian in the 1970s. El Perro Bernal was five-time world champion in "Paleta Vasca".

DO YOU HAVE A PICTURE TO ADD TO THE ALBUM?

If you do and would like to see it published here, send it by e-mail to the following address: euskaletxeak@ej-gv.es