

## Los Angeles Genesis Tchoukball Team

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Lorna Hobbs first played tchoukball in England from 1987 to 1991. When she moved to the U.S., she was disappointed to discover that the game was not played. As the years went by, Lorna never forgot how much she enjoyed playing tchoukball.

One evening in January 2003, Lorna typed "U.S.A tchoukball" in an internet search engine and to her great surprise, discovered an American website promoting the game of tchoukball. She immediately sent an e-mail to the web master asking them for a video or for some promotional material. Pierre-Alain Girardin answered and sent Lorna a tchoukball video.

"Even though it had been over 11 years since I last played, I had still not forgotten what an impact tchoukball had on me. I was pleasantly surprised to find Pierre-Alain Girardin's website. I felt like I had discovered tchoukball all over again!"

Lorna wanted to show the video to her friends to see if they were interested in playing the game. "I have a great group of friends here in LA; I knew they'd love the game so I held an "intro to tchoukball" night at a friend's house. After watching the video, everyone couldn't wait to give Tchoukball a try. I contacted Pierre and arranged for him to fly out to LA to coach an introductory clinic.

The introductory clinic was held in April for 5 hours. Pierre explained the philosophy of the game and introduced many drills to learn the basics of tchoukball. Lorna explains, "We had a lot of fun at the clinic; I think everyone was instantly hooked on the game." At that moment, LA Genesis - LA's first tchoukball team - was born.

Since the clinic, the team has played virtually every Sunday afternoon. Lorna leads the training. "I love to teach tchoukball. It's very rewarding to see everyone have so much fun each week. It's fascinating to see people's competitive and somewhat aggressive attitudes about sport change into more positive ones. It's also a welcome challenge to think of creative new drills that will help to raise the level of the game."

"I love the fact that teamwork is an essential part of this game; one player alone cannot "steal the glory" because without the aid of their teammates they cannot even begin to play the game" Lorna says of tchoukball. "I also love the spirit of the game. Aggression, foul play and negativity are not welcome in this game nor do they serve any purpose other than to lose points for your team. Positive attitudes, honesty and sharp thinking are the attributes needed to play this game well."

Interestingly, out of all the sports that the team members play (basketball, softball, football & soccer), tchoukball has one of the best turnouts week after week. When asked why, a team member said "Tchoukball is SO much fun to play and it's so awesome to play a sport for hours where nobody gets injured."

Laura, another Genesis team member, says of tchoukball “It’s fun and really active; I like the thinking aspect of the game. I appreciate the fact that players with different levels of ability can play together.”

“I like to be part of something which carries noble and positive values. Tchoukball is the first sport that I have ever played in which those values can be expressed and are encouraged. I would like to support the promotion of the game here in the U.S.” says Tristana.

A truly incredible opportunity has arisen for these Los Angeles women. They have the opportunity to represent the United States at the next world tchoukball tournament in 2004 in Taiwan. “Being the first U.S. women’s team is exciting. I like being a part of the team, exposing others to the sport and having the opportunity to meet new people.” Jamie said.

“I am proud to be part of this new type of sport. I think the kind of values and attitude that the game of tchoukball requires and expects are ones that my country is severely lacking. I want to be a part of something that leads by example in the hope of change” Tristana said.

“I want to be involved in a sport that is growing. Going to Taiwan will help spread the knowledge about tchoukball and might get more people involved the sport” says Charlee, another Genesis team member.

This new endeavor has brought about new challenges for LA Genesis. These include finding a gym to practice at on a regular basis, thinking of original ways to fundraise, and finding sponsors that will make this dream possible. The whole team stays optimistic but admits it is daunting endeavor.

“I think one of our biggest challenges thus far has been finding gym space for us to play. Los Angeles recreation centers seem to be overrun by men's basketball leagues and it's difficult to find athletic directors who will give you even 5 minutes of their time so you can explain what Tchoukball is all about and why it's so important that we be allowed a place to play” Lorna said.

As these pioneering female tchoukball players continue their training in order to increase their skills and level of game, the logistic structures are being put in to place to make this dream a reality. “I will help with the sponsorship and fundraising aspects of the team, so we can have great opportunities to learn from more experienced players and discover new cultures” Heather said.

Like their namesake, these women hope to be the genesis of something unique for sport in the United States.

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