

STARTING A SHINTY CLUB



US Camanachd Sourcebook



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Introduction - so you want to start a shinty club?

Great!

Here are a few ideas, theories and resources to help you, things that we've learned over the 15 years of running a shinty club in the San Francisco Bay Area. I have also incorporated information I learned in the coaching course, and from visiting with clubs both here in the US and in Scotland. Use what is helpful and ignore the rest, there is no one way to start a club. If you have feedback on anything in this sourcebook, please drop a line via info@uscamanachd.org the more info we get, the better this document will become!



Here are a few questions to help you approach the process of starting a club.

(1) Why do I want to start a club?

There are lots of answers to this, but we have joked that if one of them isn't "I love playing shinty" or "I love shinty and want to share it with others" you might want to find another project.

(2) Will the club be primarily (A) a competitive athletic club; (B) a group of friends spending time together; (C) a way of being active and getting a workout; (D) a way of being involved in a Scottish activity; (E) an activity for children, or some combination of the above.

There is no correct answer here. My experience suggests that camaraderie will be a very important part of any shinty club. Perhaps you were already friends before you started the club, or perhaps your group came together through shinty, but do not under value the social aspect of your club.

In general, you will want to have an idea what expectations people have when they come out for shinty. Is it primarily for competitive play, or simply wanting to learn shinty skills and push themselves in a challenge, is it wanting a casual hit about or a sport for the neighbourhood children to enjoy? All are valid choices - and you will likely have members that fall into all of these categories. Just remember that if your goals are too far different from those of your club members, there could be problems.

(3) How much time do I expect to spend on shinty related activities?

The answers to question 2 will probably give you an idea about the time issue. If you are setting up a competitive league, you will probably spend more time on coaching and training, as well as managing logistics, than a person organizing a once a month to hit about.

Do not over-commit yourself to begin with, you must balance setting challenging goals with allowing your group the best chance of having successful events. If things go well and everyone is enjoying the club, you can easily ramp up your activities, your equipment, and your plans. Over-committing your club resources right out of the gate can lead to frustration and failure, which could bring a swift end to people's interest.

(4) How do I get help running the club?

We suggest that from the very beginning you delegate tasks, making various people responsible for small things. Someone brings the water and ice, someone else brings the first aid kit, someone else makes field reservations (if necessary), etc. Distribute responsibility for whatever it is that your group needs among different people, that way no one has to do everything, and everyone is invested in making the club and its activities a success.

(5) Where do I find resources for building a shinty club?

Right here! US Camanachd is dedicated to supporting the growth and development of shinty here in the US. We are doing our best to bring the most current information from Scotland, to develop resources aimed at an audience that is new to the sport, and to offer whatever help we can to clubs that are starting or already on the go. If you have a question, please drop us a line and we will do our best to help you!

Other resources are available online, including the Camanachd Association's own website, the Facebook community World of Shinty, and various other club websites. Skye Camanachd's site is particularly good at offering current news about the sport.



Our club here in the San Francisco Bay Area is currently celebrating its 15th year, and I can honestly say that being involved with this group is one of the best experiences I have had in my life. Not only am I shinty daft, but it has allowed me to be involved with a fantastic group of people with whom I have shared many cool adventures and great times. I hope you have a similar experience with your own club, and hopefully these notes will help you along the way.

*Michael Bentley
Northern California Camanachd Club
US Camanachd
1 July 2015*



Northern California Camanachd – 2007 Challenge Match

Original introduction from 2006

First of all, I am really happy you are reading this because I assume you want to start a shinty club! This is intended as an aid to getting a Shinty Club started. These are some thoughts and ideas that have come out of our experiences with Northern California Camanachd, and hopefully they will be useful, but remember there is no one right way to do things. You will find your own way, and I hope to hear about things that worked for you in the future.

Shinty is played in Scotland in both 6-a-side and 12-a-side forms (with slightly different rules and very different pitch/field sizes), so the good news is you don't need an overwhelming number of players to play! In fact, even after we grew in size we found it easiest, and most practical, to concentrate on Sixes since that format uses fields the same size as soccer or American Football fields. Sometimes we will throw a couple more players on the field, but squeezing 12 onto a field that small is not advised.

During the first year we started small with about 4 to 6 players coming out on a regular basis, and we set a goal of fielding 10 to 12 players – enough to be able to work on skills, fit into a small playing area, and not require formal goals etc. Just about any park served initially as a pitch and we used park garbage cans for goals, progressing later to orange cones and then to soccer corner flags. Playing what we called “half court” and taking turns being on offense and defense served as a good way to learn. We then set up a very small pitch with two goals to give more of a “game” feel. Early on we would sometimes use soccer goals with some coloured twine and a stake to reduce the width to something like that of a Shinty goal. By our second year we were fielding 8 to 12 regular players and continued to grow from there. We made properly sized portable goals and began to set up our field more like a true Scottish Shinty pitch.

What we learned is that even with small numbers a group can create some semblance of game play, setting sides of 3 on 3 or 4 on 4, often playing without a goal keeper. Things grew from there through word of mouth, people seeing us play and asking what it was, and so forth. In our first year we got permission to stage a short demo at one of the local Highland Games, playing on the Heavy Athletics field during their lunch break. We worked our way into playing a 40 minute demo match with proper goals and uniforms and over the years we've appeared at dozens of events in California and as far afield as Scotland!

So, it may be slow going at first, but as folks get a chance to see the sport, and especially to hit the ball a few times, you will find recruits in many places – so keep at it, it's a blast!

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Scrimmaging

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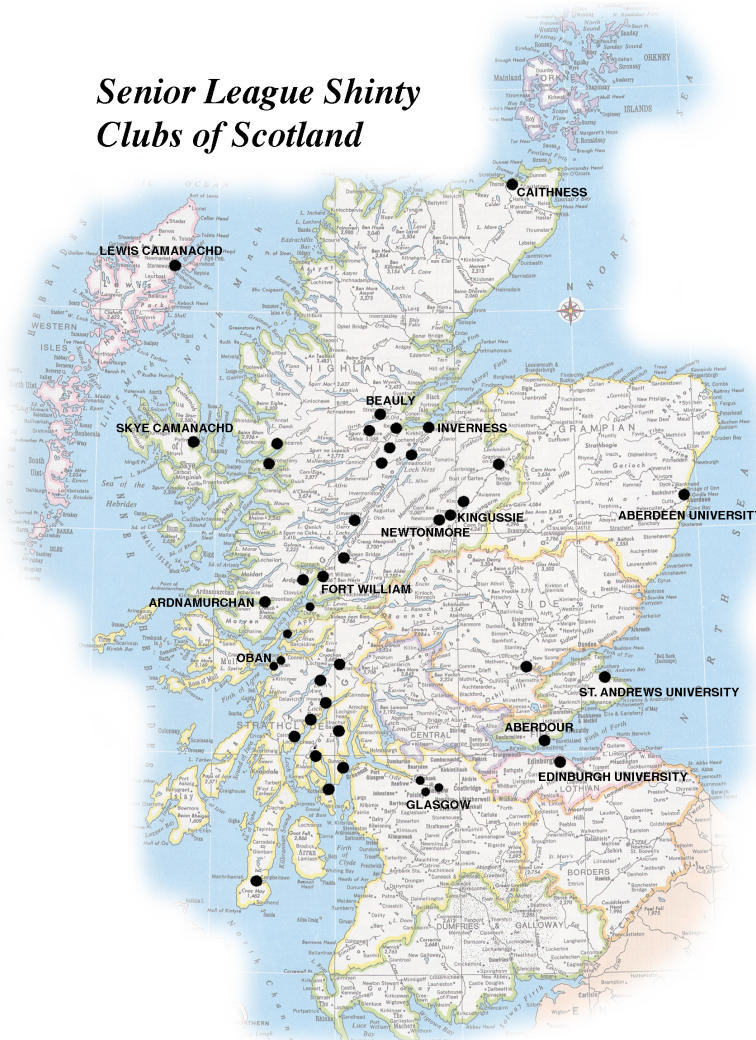
What is shinty and why haven't I heard of it before?

If you are reading this you must already know at least a little about shinty, and if you are already familiar with the story of shinty, feel free to skip ahead. You are going to be asked the above question over and over as you work to spread the word about the sport in your area, so here are some details to help you with answers.

Shinty (also known as *Camanachd* and *Iomain* in Scots Gaelic) is a team sport of the stick and ball variety that has been played in the Scottish Highlands for many many generations. Shinty's origins date back nearly 2,000 years, and it can claim hurling as a cousin, and ice hockey and golf as descendants.

Because shinty was traditionally a winter sport, with the playing season running from Fall to Spring, tourists who have visited Scotland during the summer have not had an opportunity to see the game being played until recently. Now that the season has shifted to a Spring to Fall schedule, travelers will be able to take in a game, which should help to spread word about the sport beyond Scotland. It is also true that Shinty is not played in all parts of Scotland. The game has close ties with the Gaelic culture and has generally flourished in the *Gaidhealtachd*, or Gaelic-speaking areas. A great many teams can be found in close proximity to the Great Glen, between Inverness and Fort William, though teams also exist in other locales, including Skye and Argyll, as well as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Shinty is expanding and several new clubs have entered the senior leagues over the last 5 years, hopefully more will follow in the years ahead!

Senior League Shinty Clubs of Scotland



There are other teams/clubs in Scotland, but this map gives you an idea where many senior-level teams are located.

Shinty, some history and background

There are several good sources for the history of shinty (a bibliography with links is available on the US Camanachd website), so I will not go into great detail here, but a little general background is an interesting jumping off point for those new to the game.



Shinty is a very old sport, with recognizable references dating back several thousand years. Undoubtedly the rules have evolved and changed through the centuries, but the fact that this athletic pursuit has had an important place in Gaelic culture for a long time is significant. The playing of shinty has traditionally been associated with holiday celebrations, particularly that of New Years or Hogmanay. These games would involve entire communities and were an important part of the social fabric of Highland culture. Perhaps we could draw a parallel between this and the role of baseball at a Fourth of July picnic in the United States. The game often involves all generations and could stretch on for a significant part of the day. Players come and go during the game, perhaps taking a break to eat, and the overall feeling is one of community and fun rather than rigorous athletic competition. This is not to say that the games were not fiercely contested, and some matches would have hard fought battles indeed!

In the Nineteenth Century shinty, like so many other sports (baseball, football, soccer) developed a universal set of rules and became something recognizably like the modern sport played in Scotland today. The Camanachd Association was formed and in 1893, and the first Camanachd Cup match was played in 1896.

The varying fortunes of shinty mirror those of the Scottish Highlands. Camanachd has been used as battle exercise in times when armed combat was outlawed, and in this sense intermingles with the storied history of the Scottish Regiments and military traditions. Scottish Land Reform issues have also had their impact on the sport, land ownership changes had an effect on the patronage of shinty, especially in certain districts. In addition shinty's place in the lives of Scottish youth has been challenged by football/soccer, with the costliness of equipment given as an excuse for removing shinty from schools throughout the Highlands during some periods. Through these and other details it is easy to see how much shinty has been a part of life in the Gaidhealtachd

There are a number of great sources for further information on the history of shinty as well as it's place in Scottish culture. A brief book list follows here, other references are available online (see the Links and Resources sections of the US Camanachd website).

- Hugh Dan MacLennan – *Not An Orchid*
- Hugh Dan MacLennan – *Shinty!*
- Roger Hutchinson – *Camanachd! The Story of Shinty*

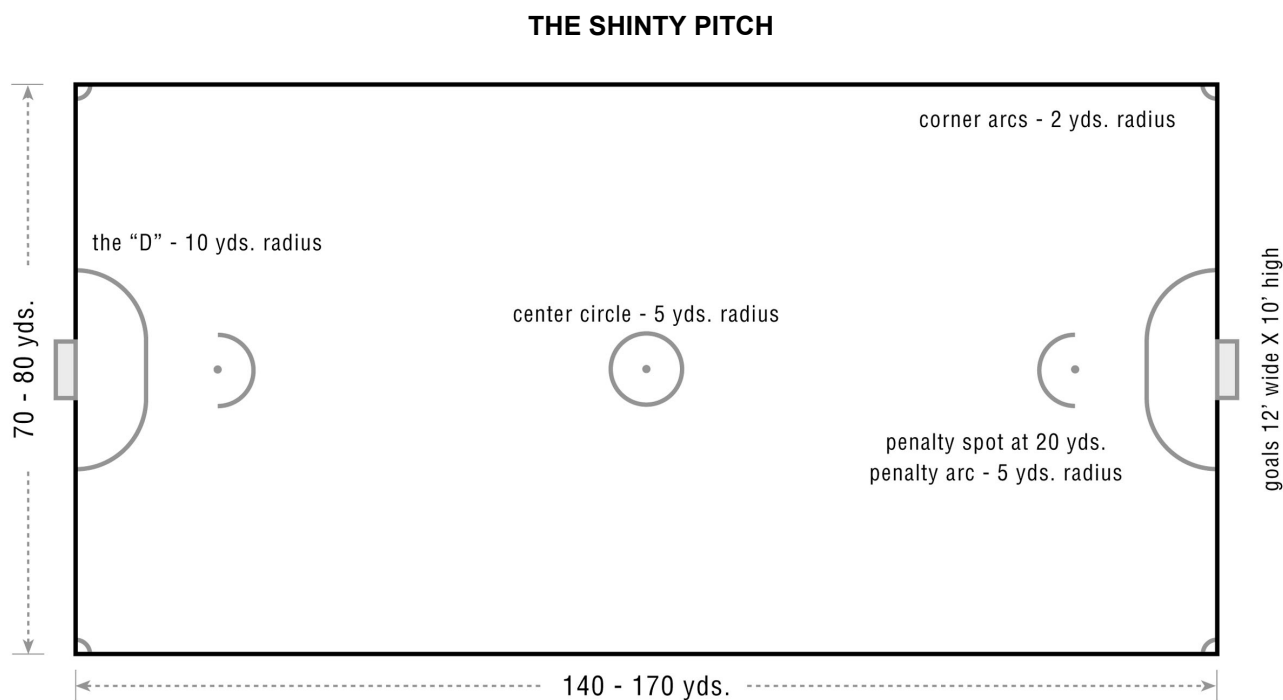


Action during one of our earliest scrimmages, blue and white t-shirts served as our first jerseys.

A very brief overview of the rules

Two teams (usually of six or twelve players a side) play on a field of similar proportions to, though usually larger than, a soccer pitch (see diagram). The players use *Camans* (hooked/curved sticks with a triangular cross section, photos follow in the next sections) to strike the shinty ball, either in the air or on the ground, with the intention of scoring goals. As in soccer or hockey, a goalkeeper guards the goal nets, which measure 12 feet across and 10 feet high. A shinty match is either 30 minutes (for six-a-side) or 90 minutes (for twelve-a-side) in length, divided into two halves with a short break between. A referee regulates play, enforcing rules and calling fouls for illegal and/or dangerous play. There are also side judges and goal judges to assist in calling side-outs, end-outs and goals.

There is a one-sheet *Basic Rules of Shinty* in the appendix that outlines the rules in an easy-to-digest form. There is a similar one-sheet *Rules Summary and Tips for Referees* to help get officials up and running.



*(This diagram is to scale for a field of 160 x 80 yards)
This would be a full-sized pitch suitable for 12-a-side matches*

The shinty player

This gives an overview to what a shinty player might be wearing on the pitch. Not all players will want the safety glasses (though we do recommend them) or gloves, but shin guards and (for males) a protective cup should be required. Other optional equipment would include a helmet (recommended requirement for minors), a mouth guard, and knee-pads. A chest protector is recommended for female players.



Equipment – some photos and descriptions

Shinty is a stick and ball sport, so your equipment needs begin there. Though camans (shinty sticks) may be a little difficult to come by, there is no easy substitute for their shape – it is the unique form of the camans that makes shinty different from ice and field hockey, hurling, and other stick and ball sports. At a certain point it is hard to learn proper technique without a caman. When we first read about shinty we actually made our own sticks out of curved branches (much as they would have done it times past in the Highlands), but it should be possible to order modern camans, see the appendix for information.

There are different camans associated with the different positions on the field (forward to keeper, left to right in the photo below), but there is no rule stating that you have to use a midfield for midfield only and forward for forward only. Your style of play will determine which type of stick you use as much as your position, the designations are more suggestions or guide lines for where they would be used. We began with a lot of midfield camans, which seemed a good starting point, but at this stage we would recommend getting a good proportion of forward sticks in your mix as their flatter/larger surface helps in learning to make stick tops.



The shinty stick is called a caman, a Gaelic word meaning hooked or crooked – makes sense when you see a caman. There are different camans for different positions, as you can see in the photo, the wedge being increasingly angled from forward (on the left) through midfield, defender and keeper (far right). Below: camans and balls, and camans from different makers, note the slight variations in the curve of the stick.



When we made our first couple of caman orders, club members pitched in so we could purchase additional camans as loaners. We were fortunate to have the cost of shipping donated by a local supporter, which helped to keep costs down. Occasionally we have been able to get used camans from Scotland and fix them up to be loaners, however this is not a dependable source of sticks (drop us a line to see if we have any used sticks).



Three camans fresh from a match, all forwards or mid-forwards. Note the variations in taping and the use of tennis or golf type grips. The bottom-most caman (taped in red) was donated by Gary Innes from the Fort William Shinty Club.



The balls available these days are, in general, leather match balls. You may still be able to find plastic shinty balls, and while they don't get water logged, they do behave rather differently than a leather ball. Plastic balls can be useful in some settings – we have used them for our New Year's Day Beach matches, for instance. Over the years we have tried various alternatives to augment the number of balls on hand at practices. Something like 8" IncrediBalls (youth safety balls) can be used, though they will also behave very differently than a regular shinty ball (and lately seem to be far less durable as well).



Various types of balls: (top to bottom, left to right) tennis, baseball safety ball, plastic shinty ball, a leather match shinty, and a rare "Tighnabruaich" match ball. More comparisons: a shinty ball (at center)(clockwise starting at left) a sliotair (hurling), an American softball, a baseball, a PeeWee league safety ball (8" version), a handball, and a golf ball.

At this point the cost difference between regular match balls and these alternatives is not that great, so going with actual shinty balls is probably best. One other option, especially for youth players, is to use a First Shinty ball. These balls are designed specifically to be used in teaching young children the sport, being larger and softer than a match ball. We have also used First Shinty balls when doing demo matches in a crowded venue, or when playing in very long grass, as a First Shinty ball tends to rest on top of the grass instead of sinking in.



A First Shinty ball (left) is larger and much softer than a regular ball.

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There are a few other pieces of equipment that the Shinty player should have. For men the wearing of athletic cups is recommended (if not required for liability issues), especially when first learning to play. For women some sort of chest protector might be a good idea. Shin Guards are worn in Scotland at all levels of play (we have found Field Hockey shin guards to offer greater protection than Soccer type shin guards). Players may also want to consider wearing helmets (we have used both lacrosse and ice hockey helmets with face guards). The Camanachd Association in Scotland has approved a helmet made by Mycro (based on a hurling helmet), and wearing this helmet is mandatory for all youth players (optional for adults). In recent years we have seen an increase in the numbers of senior level players wearing helmets. This is likely the result of players growing up wearing helmets and so carrying that on into senior shinty.

If you are not wearing a helmet, we highly recommend the use of safety glasses while playing. They are inexpensive and available at most hardware stores. There are even polarized sunglass versions for those interested in such things. It is important to wear glasses or sunglasses that are impact resistant, unlike normal glasses, in order to provide maximum protection. We have had several players take a ball to the eye area, and all have been spared serious injury because they were wearing safety glasses at the time. We even had one occasion when the ball broke the safety glasses, but that protection had saved the eye from serious damage!

Beyond these items, some players wear gloves (batting or motocross gloves, for instance, for grip and/or protection), and knee-pads (volleyball or baseball types are easy to find and allow mobility).

As far as shoes go, we have found that soccer or football cleats work well, though there are many other alternatives depending on the surface on which you are playing. The only expressly forbidden shoes, by rule, would be ones with metal spikes or studs. There could be issues with proper footwear for certain kinds of

artificial turf fields, some may prohibit studs (longer cleats, different materials on shoe bottoms) and therefore turf shoes might be required. Turf shoes usually provide more support for the foot and ankle, which has been a positive quality for many of our players.

The Shinty uniform consists of jersey top, shorts, and knee socks, so this traditional Scottish activity is very affordable as compared to piping, dancing or heavy athletics, all of which require the purchase of a kilt! We used coloured t-shirts as our first uniform, and continue to use vests/bibs regularly to form teams or groups quickly during training, so you do not need to purchase expensive jerseys to play. Note that the goalkeeper wears a contrasting colour jersey so they can be easily distinguished from the field positions and the referee. Referees also need to wear a contrasting top, traditionally black is worn in Scotland.

Our experience is that uniforms not only enhance the experience of watching the game, relevant if you are playing at local Highland Games for instance, but they enhance the experience for the players. Proper uniforms also improve the look of your photos, providing a bit of polish to your club. Even little differences, like the colour of shorts and socks, will stand out dramatically in photographs, though hardly noticeable on the field during games.

We do not recommend playing in kilts, though obviously many will want to do this. Using kilts for some sort of demo or historical re-creation may have its place, but for regular sessions it is not a good idea.



The toss-up starts one of our Highland Games match, now the t-shirts have our logo!

Shinty for children

Shinty is a fantastic sport for children! The combination of fitness, hand-eye coordination, and team play is a lot of fun, and provides great tools for other endeavours as well.

First Shinty is a version of the game designed specifically for teaching children the skills and rules of shinty in a safe and fun way. Generally First Shinty is played between two teams of six, though games can be played with fewer players as well. When comparing First Shinty to adult shinty, First Shinty uses: (1) smaller playing areas; (2) simplified rules; (3) small sided teams; and (4) modified, safer equipment. This format allows each player maximum time on the ball, which is more fun and makes for a productive learning experience.

The Camanachd Association First Shinty Guide, available on the US Camanachd website, provides some ideas for coaching a session. We have also put together a short document presenting First Shinty to American audiences, which is available upon request. Other resources, such as the Camanachd Association Foundation shinty coaching videos (see links list) can be quite helpful for those running children's sessions.

First Shinty equipment is available from several of the sources listed in the appendix, and we are happy to help with procurement.



A First Shinty stick has a foam rubber head, and the ball is quite soft.

Teaching Shinty

If you have never played shinty, or even seen a game, how can you approach teaching? Well, there are a several resources that will be most helpful. First of all the latest Camanachd Association training manual is available in PDF form via the US Camanachd website – go to the Resource section for this and other downloads. As a supplement to this we have created a very basic introduction to shinty in the Coaching section that will give an idea of the elements of the sport with photos and diagrams. And the rules of the game are also available via the Rules section. And a recent development has been the Camanachd Association posting coaching videos associated with the Foundation Coaching Course, available via YouTube. Check the website for the latest links to these resources.

Watching some of the shinty matches available via the Camanachd Association's YouTube channel will give you an idea how Shinty is played at the highest level in Scotland, and give you and your club some idea of how a game flows and the techniques from the coaching manual are used during the run of play. Not everything will be suitable for a learner, and remember that the level of physicality will be higher than a beginner should play at, but a glimpse into the modern game is invaluable!

One of the best methods for learning is to find someone who does know the game, perhaps a Scot living abroad or a player that happens to be visiting your area. We have benefited a great deal from Scottish ex-patriots who have come out to play with us and from visiting players/coaches. Additionally, if you or any of your club members are planning a trip to Scotland, try to allow time to see a match in person. The fixture schedule is posted on the Camanachd Association website (shinty.com) and is updated throughout the season.

Additionally, US Camanachd is interested in working with clubs to set up workshops where possible. We have the unique resource of a certified UKCC Level 1 shinty coach who is also a certified referee, a great help in teaching the sport and helping local coaches.

Beyond these resources and ideas, you should look over the Camanachd Association's rules for some of the details of what is and is not proper play. From our experience you will probably need to caution players about kicking the ball (a natural reaction for people who played sports such as soccer and ice hockey) as it is not allowed, and there will probably be a few other rules that may not come naturally at first. A lot of it will come down to common sense. Most of the rules are in place for safety reasons. Things like wild swinging, playing the ball while a player is on the ground, and the like are against the rules because they put players at risk. If you keep safety in mind you will be off to a great start and you are sure to enjoy the game.

You will be trying to acquire skills and a “stick sense” that most players in Scotland have developed from a young age, so we recommend you approach training with a safety first mentality. The more you play/practice, the better sense you will have as to where the caman is likely to be during a swing and how to approach other players who are attempting to hit the ball. At first folks may try things that could result in injury, so be proactive in teaching safety.

It is also possible that you will have one or two players in your club that want to play much more physically than the rest of your group, either by putting in aggressive challenges, swinging hard in tight quarters, or some other action. While everyone learns differently and at a different pace, bear in mind that one over-aggressive player can put any number of other players off of shinty for good. While it is always a shame to lose a player, if push comes to shove, it can be better to lose the one “problem” player than five or six regular club members.

There are a number of exercises suggested in the Camanachd Association training manual (available Resources section) that will help new players learn proper technique and safety. We will also continue to add material

drawn from our experiences as well as contributions from other US Clubs. If you have questions or suggestions related to teaching/coaching, please email us directly at info@uscamanachd.com.



TOP TIPS

Here are a few things to look out for as you teach basic shinty skills, especially hitting.

Golfers will want to interlock their fingers on the caman, but try to break them of this habit. Interlocking fingers makes using the wrist snap very difficult and generally interferes with the kind of swinging one needs to do in shinty. Remember that a player is generally moving while hitting in shinty, which is completely unlike golf! As far as American sports go, a baseball swing is actually more like a shinty swing than is a golf swing.

Encourage players to spend time on their own hitting the ball, playing 2 or 3 players games and generally working alone or in small groups between club training sessions. Remember that we Americans did not grow up playing shinty and so we have a lot ground to cover. Think about whatever sport you played as a youngster, and how many hours you put in after school, on the weekends, and during the summer without even realizing it. How many times does a kid hit or throw a ball before they are 13? Hundreds of thousands? A million times? Bearing this in mind it is important to recognize that every time a new player hits a shinty ball, or stops a ball, it is a significant percentage of all the times they have done either of these things in their life. 20 minutes of hitting against a fence can be a big help in improving and growing skills.



Here you can see one challenge that can face US shinty players... grass length! The photo on the left was taken at the excellent Eilan in Newtonmore, the photo on the right in a Bay Area municipal park.

Top Tips for a successful training session

Having a good experience at your training sessions will be one of the biggest assets for growing your club. If people know they are going to have fun, they are more likely to come out, and more likely to encourage friends to become involved. Here are a few things you can do to give your sessions a boost towards success.

- Make sure your venue is available, reserve fields if necessary. There is nothing worse than getting your gear, driving to your session, and then having to cancel because the field is not available.
- Be prepared! Have a plan for your session ahead of time, and make sure equipment (cones, goals, sticks, balls, etc.) is on hand.
- Some drills and exercises will help people become better players, which will allow them to enjoy the sport more.
- Remember to allow water breaks, which also gives you a good opportunity to discuss the drill/game/scrimmage.
- Make exercises fun through having races and games. A penalty shoot out can be a fun end to a session, for instance.
- Goal shots can be fun, but are not necessarily the best practice for game situations. By adding in a pass or some kind of movement/dribbling, you can help improve skills.
- Know where the bathrooms are located.
- Bring a mobile phone or have some plan for communication in case of emergency.
- Have ice and a simple first aid kit on hand. You will want to bring water as well, or let people know they should bring their own.

Some tips for first timers

When someone is trying to hit with a caman for the first time here are a few easy things to help in coaching:

- The three elements of hitting – 1) a proper grip; 2) step to the ball with the front foot (the foot on the side to which they are hitting the ball); 3) keep your eye on the ball all the way through your swing.
- Check how they are holding the caman – make sure they are using a baseball style grip (hands stacked, thumbs wrapped around handle) and not a golf grip (fingers interlocked, thumb along the shaft).
- Relax the shoulders, use a firm but not overly tight grip, and an easy swing – let the stick do the work.
- A wrist snap, like breaking the wrists in a baseball swing, is one of the secrets to improving your hitting.
- Be positive in your coaching, feel free to offer advice and correct mistakes, but do not criticize.

Suggestions for the first time coach:

- Be positive.
- Keep things simple.
- Talk less, do more.
- Have fun – you will find that fun is contagious!

Recruiting and spreading the word

First thing to consider, who are the best candidates for shinty players? Who do you want to recruit? We have found that people who have played soccer or ice/street/field hockey possess a lot of skills that are useful in shinty. In fact any sport that emphasizes hand-eye coordination is a good starting point for shinty (baseball, tennis, cricket), and of course golf, being a cousin of shinty, tends to give players a head start on hitting. So you might want to think about finding people who are already participating in these sports and who are looking for a new challenge.

One avenue that seemed logical to us and has worked well is to tie-in with the local Scottish American community. This might include societies (St. Andrews Society or Caledonian Club, for instance) or other similar special interest groups. We have made presentations to these kinds of groups to help raise awareness of the sport, and in doing this have found some players along way.

Along these lines we have also worked with local Scottish Highland Games. These events give us the opportunity to set up an information booth as well as staging demonstration matches, both great recruiting tools. At this point in our evolution we are even organizing tournaments and cup matches at Highland Games whose facilities support full-scale field athletics. We suggest making friends with the Heavy Athletes too. You might be able to share a field (by having shinty during their lunch break, for instance), and you will have things in common with them. And remember, if they (or any other group) feel threatened by shinty, they can make life hard for you.

We have also used internet outlets and social media to recruit and communicate. Besides managing a mailing list we have posted to Craigslist (placing free ads in the “activity partner” section), Meetup, and Facebook, amongst other sites.

Other recruiting methods might include asking a local newspaper to print a human-interest story about your club – this has worked well for us. Posting flyers at local colleges has helped as well. One thing we have done, which is not a common practice in Scotland (though this is changing a little), is to play with co-ed teams. It helps with numbers and also allows families to play together.

Until fairly recently shinty was a winter sport in Scotland (the season ran from September/October to March/April) so most people traveling in Scotland during the spring and summer months never saw or heard of the sport. Part of what you may need to do is simply educate folks as to what shinty is, why they have not heard of it, and why they should care. There are a number of resources for the history and context of shinty available via the US Camanachd website – visit the History, Links, and Resources sections for more information.



Fun events like beach shinty can be great recruiting tools – use lengths of PVC for your goal posts and a First Shinty ball to make it easy.

How to stage a demo match

One option for getting the word out about your club, and shinty in general, is to stage a demo match at a local event. Scottish Games are a natural venue, but other community gatherings might provide good opportunities as well.

To make your demonstration/exhibition match function well within the context of another event you should consider the following points:

- Be aware of the limitations imposed by the venue/event: make your pitch small, mark the boundaries clearly, consider spectator safety.
- Adjust team size to suit the size of your pitch. Playing 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 can still present a great show for the audience.
- Use a First Shinty or safety ball for spectator safety, especially when you are playing in a crowded area where not everyone may be following the action closely.
- Use an announcer to explain the game and provide some ongoing commentary. This is especially easy and effective if there is already a sound system or PA in use.
- Be a good collaborator/guest at the event: be ready to play at your scheduled time, and finish your match at the scheduled time; leave the venue as you found it; be aware of your equipment and do not leave it where it is a hazard to the public or where it might be taken; be aware of the aims of the overall event and do your best to help the organizers have a successful event.



One of our favourite and most successful events was the Dunsmuir Highland Games, the field was obviously not flat (or square), but we were right in the center of the event!

Organizing the chaos

Once you begin to set up a club proper, a posted schedule and structure will become necessary. We have found that setting up regular events can be a real aid in getting people to commit to your club. Will you have a limited season or play year around? Will you have training sessions separate from games, or roll the two activities into one? Will you want to have social outings beyond your shinty sessions? There are many alternatives here, find the ones that suit you and your group.

As your membership grows, especially when it extends beyond a casual gathering of friends, you will want to think about a couple issues right away. In the US it is important to be aware of potential liability issues, and take measures to protect everyone involved. We recommend having participants sign a hold harmless waiver, and that minors have signed permission from their parents. A template for this release is included in the appendix (as well as being available on the US Camanachd website in the Resources section), not the final word, but something to get you going in the right direction. In addition it is worthwhile considering an insurance policy, especially if your group is involved in public events or playing in venues in which spectators could be considered to be in harm's way. Our club has not yet had to make a claim, but having insurance in place has allowed us access to fields and events to which we would not otherwise be allowed.

In a related vein, being prepared for emergencies is important in any athletic and/or public event. Proper preparation will be your best defense against injury and liability. A simple First Aid kit and a cooler of ice can make a huge difference to the personal safety and comfort of your players. Make sure a phone is available in case of emergencies. In fact a published emergency plan is a good idea for all groups, a simple and comprehensive procedure that is known to all involved, perhaps available via the club website.

It's a good idea to keep an eye on your players' equipment to make sure that everyone is safe. The wearing of basic protection (cup and shin guards) should be encouraged if not required, not only for the benefit of the player themselves, but for the peace of mind of the other players. Just imagine how bad someone will feel if they injure you simply because you were not wearing minimum protection. Also keep an eye on the soundness of all camans – a crack or chip could potentially lead to a shattered stick, and that is definitely not safe!

Other organizational options might be seeking out a non-profit organization, perhaps a Scottish-American one, to sponsor your efforts or include you as part of their organization. Failing that you might want to form your own non-profit. Despite the work involved in the long run it can help with everything from reserving fields, to getting money donated for equipment. We are looking into providing this option through US Camanachd, but have not ironed out the mechanics of this yet.

You will probably want to put together some kind of presentation for potential benefactors, to educate them about shinty and to let them know why they should care about what you are doing. Tell them a little about yourselves and what you are doing. The same presentation can be used at other venues (such as social clubs, schools, and Highland Games) to recruit, so it is well worth the effort! We can help with some materials for such a presentation, please contact us via email.

Top Tips – things to think about when forming your club

Here are some bullet points that might be helpful as you get your club together.

- Camaraderie is one of the most important elements of most social groups, whether oriented around a sport or another common interest. Don't neglect it in your shinty club! This might mean including spouses and children, scheduling some non-shinty outings, or something else. This aspect of your club can bring you a lot of joy!
- The attitude and enthusiasm of the leaders will be contagious. Sure there will be challenges along the way, and not very minute will be the height of fun, but keep your eyes of the prize!
- Expectations can be motivation or the cause of disappointment. Try to manage expectations for your club, both individually and as a group. Set realistic goals, build your club slowly, give everyone the best chance of success and your group will thrive.
- Delegate responsibilities and tasks from the very beginning. Sure there will be a few people that become the prime movers, but do not be afraid to ask others to contribute. Assign rotating tasks, like bringing the first aid kit, or a cooler of ice. It keeps members involved and relieves you of some responsibilities.
- Recruiting opportunities can come in many forms, from participating in Scottish Games, to speaking to community groups. Use whatever social media and networking skills you have available. Keeping people informed of your activities is important, and you never know where your next recruits are going to come from.
- Once you get going, whenever possible play with a referee. This can be done by having everyone in the group take a turn. Combine this with discussing a few rules during water breaks and everyone will be learning the game together. This also helps address players' expectations regarding the level of play and what is permissible.
- Make sure everyone who comes out understands the risks and is responsible in their behaviour. One way to approach this is to have all participants sign liability waivers (we have included a template in this packet), and as your group grows, purchase sports insurance. Having insurance will provide some protection to you as an organizer, and will also help with field rentals and participating in other events such as Highland Games.
- Don't forget to document your activities! Having some good photos to share with local newspapers, websites and other media is really helpful. You never know when you might be asked for pictures!
- Enjoy!

Philosophizing, or the part many readers will ignore

After reading some of the history of shinty and its place in Scottish culture, it struck us how much the place of sport and athletics in our society has changed in the last centuries. Shinty had a life as a folkway, a social interaction, and even a warrior's training regime for many generations. None of these roles resembles the remove at which we hold modern "professional" athletics. Sport as a pastime and folkway is an active pursuit, not a passive one. Games of all kinds are a way for groups to bond and share an exciting experience. Sure there is winning and losing to be experienced in matches, but sport features much more than just that. Athletics at their best are a venue for self-improvement and for testing one's limits. In this sense it is about doing the best that you can, and in the context of team sports, supporting and interacting with your teammates to help them do the best that they can. It may be a cliché, but the lessons learned in these sorts of sports can be taken into other parts of life, and the history of a sport such as shinty demonstrates that.

For the group that originally developed shinty here in Northern California camaraderie was one of our core motivations for playing, we were a group of friends looking for things to do. Team sports can certainly bring friends together, as well as creating opportunities for new friendships. As Northern California Camanachd has developed, we have played together and also found new friends here in the Bay Area. And beginning with our 2005 trip to Scotland and our trips on the West Coast of the US, I feel as if we have found new friends elsewhere as well. All this came about because of shinty. And that's why you should form a club!

Best of luck!



Playing at the Levenhall Sixes in Scotland, and another example of a portable goal.

Appendices

These links and documents are not intended to be the final word on the subject, but are merely an attempt to bring a number of tidbits of information under one roof. The Basic Rules reproduces a one-sheet put together by the Camanachd Association in Scotland, and the Rules Summary and Referee Tips one-sheet was assembled by Colleen McAvoy for a NCC workshop. The liability waiver constitutes neither a binding legal document nor legal advice, but is intended only as a starting point for considering the liability issues inherent in running a shinty club. If you have information and/or suggestions of things that should be included here please drop us a line via info@uscamanachd.org.



Equipment resources: general

US Camanachd can help to coordinate equipment procurement, please emails us with your requests. Of course you can also pursue your own equipment through the outlets listed here. These listings are neither comprehensive nor an endorsement, merely a resource of vendors with whom we have dealt.

The Shinty Shop (DCR Sports) and Argyll Shinty Shop are now a one-stop online shop for all things shinty. They offer everything from camans to gloves and jerseys. They are located in Scotland, so shipping to the US will not be cheap, but I have found them to be friendly and quite easy to deal with.

The Shinty Shop

Russell Fraser or Helen MacLennan

sales@shintyshop.com

<http://www.shintyshop.com/>

<http://www.dcrsports.co.uk/categories/Shinty-Shop/>

Argyll Shinty Shop

Jocky Martin

<http://www.argyllshintyshop.co.uk/>



Equipment resources: camans

There are new makers cropping up all the time, so this list does not pretend to be complete, but does include makers with whom we have had dealings through the years.

- **AB Camans:** <http://www.kylescamans.co.uk/>
- **Heron Camans:** <https://www.facebook.com/heron.camans>
- **Kyles Camans:** <http://www.kylescamans.co.uk/>
- **Munro Camans:** M. & J. Sloggie, Achadhluachraich, Invergarry. PH35 4HR (Tel: 01809 501 248)
- **Tanera Camans:** <http://www.awmjoinery.co.uk/>

Equipment resources: balls/sliotars

US Camanachd can help with the purchase of shinty balls. In addition, it may well be possible to order balls from many clubs these days, as most clubs are having their own balls produced, and it may even be possible to purchase them through the Camanachd Association. And, of course, the one-stop shops offer a variety of grades and colours of balls as well.

If you want to try playing with other types of balls more easily at hand, you can try tennis balls and Pee-Wee League safety balls. They're not a great substitute, but we have had some luck with IncrediBalls (Youth League safety balls as made by Easton, for instance – see link below), especially when doing demos amongst a crowd of people at events. These balls do not behave exactly like a real shinty ball (they are much bouncier), but they are also softer and might be a way to get people used to using their bodies to stop the ball. We have also used First Shinty balls for the same purpose, as well as for demos in crowds.

- Easton IncrediBalls
<http://baseball.eastonsports.com/youthbaseball/details.php?scid=148&d=softouch&t=Accessory>



An assortment of balls (from upper left): tennis, safety baseball, plastic shinty, shinty leather, Tighnabruaich shinty leather



Equipment resources: shin guards

There are several styles of shin guards available, but in general more coverage is better than less as they will protect you from accidental dings from the caman.

Hard shell style - generally speaking these are Field Hockey shin guards, and they will wrap more around the leg than soccer, especially on the inside of the leg. There are many sources here are a few we have used:

- Brine Field Hockey Oxygen Molded Shin Guard. These can be found at <http://www.train4golf.com/sports-23/BrineOxygenMoldedFieldHockeyShinGuards-1303433.htm> These need to be worn with a “Shin Guard Sleeve” which is purchased separately.
- Mercian Xtreme Guard. These and other models can be found at: http://www.field-hockeydirect.com/stores/fhd_protection.asp?groupid=4 or <http://www.trysportsdirect.com/hockprot1.html>.

Soft shell style - for those who would like a shin guard that does not wrap around as much. Some of these can be pushed down when you are not playing and would not require the wearing of knee socks. There are many sources here are a few we have used:

- Cranberry Deluxe Field Hockey style Shin Guards, part# 971515.
- STX Contoured Field Hockey Shin Guards, item # 683415.
- STX OSi Field Hockey Shin Guards, item# 99587
- Brine Field Hockey Shin Guards Item#: 1102602



*Several types of shinguards with larger coverage of the leg:
soft with rigid inserts (left) and molded plastic with inserts (right), of which newer versions have velcro straps.*



Equipment resources: gloves

Some players may wish to wear gloves, either for grip (such as baseball batting gloves), or for protection. For players with large hands field hockey gloves will often be too small, but there are some other alternatives that provide varying degrees of protection as well as a better grip. Cycle Cross/Mountain Bike/BMX are one possibility that often have padding and/or carbon shields on the back of the hand. One particular brand/model

we have experience with is called the “Fortress” glove and is made by Specialized (<http://www.specialized.com>). Another option is the TRX Glove, which is not as protective, but is less expensive. Other gloves which could be used include baseball batting gloves and even golf gloves, though these would be more from grip and less for protection. It may also be worth looking at other kinds of gloves, for instance gloves designed for construction workers or mechanics (cold weather gloves, for instance) that offer some protection and are sometimes less expensive than the purpose designed alternatives, or Motocross gloves.

Field Hockey gloves - there are many styles here are a few we have used:

- Brine Gel Field Hockey Gloves – These run a little small size wise.
- STX Specialized Field Hockey Gloves,
- Grays Anatomic Glove and Grays Pro Glove



Equipment resources: helmets

There are a number of options for suitable helmets in the US, including many styles of lacrosse and ice hockey helmets. Additionally there are now some baseball batting helmets with protective cages that can work and provide a brim for extra protection from the sun. We have found the face cage to work better than a face shield as the shields tend to fog up, but newer technologies have created remarkable anti-fogging capabilities. Make sure to test that the face cage has appropriate spacing to keep the ball out! We especially recommend helmets with cages for goal keepers and youth players – in fact we require helmets for anyone under 18.



An ice hockey helmet with modified cage (at left) and a clear shield (at right) – both are designed to protect head and eyes, and could be worn in combination with a mouthguard.

In Scotland the standard issue helmets are based on hurling helmets, with a purpose made cage for the smaller shinty ball and different shaped caman. In fact, the Camanachd Association in Scotland has an approved helmet (as of 6 February 2006), manufactured by Mycro Sports in Ireland (<http://www.mycroport.com>).



This is a dedicated shinty helmet based on the current hurling helmets

Equipment resources: safety glasses

There are several options for protective eyewear, including industrial safety glasses and lacrosse cage goggles (more common in the women's game). It's important to make sure that any glasses worn during play are impact resistant. Standard safety glasses are available at many hardware or industrial supply stores, and many sporting goods shops will have baseball glasses which are impact resistant.

- Safety Glasses - <http://www.elvex.com/safety-glasses-start.htm>

Equipment resources: shoes

There are many options in athletic shoes these days, and a great deal will depend on the playing surface. Soccer cleats, field shoes (such as baseball, lacrosse, or football), or turf shoes can all work well, though some folks may prefer cross training or running shoes. Obviously the playing surface will most likely dictate your shoe choice. The main thing to remember is that NO METAL studs are allowed, so traditional baseball spikes or golf shoes are definitely out!

Equipment resources: goals

Acquiring official shinty goals in the US is virtually impossible, so at some point you will need to either custom order something from a company (such as Kwik Goal), or build something yourself. Our club has built several sets of goals over the year with different designs, and we will be providing more photos of portable goals that have been built by US clubs over time. We have also used other types of equipment for goals, such as a golf hitting net, which has similar dimensions, though of a different shape. Do not let the absence of a proper sized goal keep you from playing shinty, these are merely suggestions for how to acquire a regulation sized goal at some point.



At left: one of the current NCC portable goals, regulation sized with flat-faced uprights and crossbar. Ideally the net would be held back from the crossbar at the top, but these goals have been great. They are very lightweight because the pieces are all hollow. The wear and tear of putting them up and taking them down means they are not quite as perfectly square now as they were 10 years ago when they were new, but that's a good long life-time!

At right: this was sold as a golf hitting net. The height in the center is very close to that of a shinty goal, though obviously the arc-shape misses out the corner areas that would exist in a square goal. We replaced the shock-corded tent poles with flanged PVC conduit for added strength and stability. With the addition of tall stakes this has been a great portable goal for training sessions.

Basic Rules of Shinty

Stopping the Ball

- When stopping the ball with your feet, feet should be on the ground
- Only the goalkeeper can handle the ball and then only using an open hand
- Heading the ball is not permitted.

Player Contact

- Players are allowed to have shoulder-to-shoulder contact.
- Players may not push another on the back.

Hitting the Ball

- The ball may be struck at any height providing that this does not endanger another player.
- A player may play the ball using only one hand on the caman providing it is not being swung in a dangerous or reckless manner.
- A player may play the ball while lying on the ground providing they do not endanger themselves or another player.

Tackling with the Caman

- A player may use their caman to prevent another from striking the ball by placing their caman over the ball (blocking) or by deflecting the downward travel of a player's caman. (clicking/ clecking)
- No tripping or impeding an opponent.

Shies/Hit-ins

- The ball must be struck directly above the takers head, with the taker ensuring that both feet are perpendicular to, and behind, the line and not moving.

Offside

- An attacking player cannot enter the semi circle goal area (10-yard area or "D") before the ball has entered the area.

Fouls

- Unless the foul is committed in the semi circle goal area, all fouls are non scoring free hits i.e. you cannot shoot direct from a free hit.
- If a foul is given then **all** players apart from the taker must be at least five yards away from the ball
- If a foul is committed by the defending team in the semi circle goal area (10-yard area or "D") then a penalty shall be awarded

Player Safety

- Players may not participate in the game without their caman.
- All players under the age of 14 must wear a helmet when participating in a game



SHINTY RULES SUMMARY AND REF TIPS

THE TOSS-UP (THROW-UP): Opponents cross sticks, stand 1 yard apart, referee tosses ball at least 12 feet up. Players cannot jump or shift stance to hit the ball until the ball touches the ground.

THE HIT-IN (SHIE): Player must stand square to the field, feet behind the sideline. All players must be 5 yards away. Caman must be drawn back “directly overhead”, and ball struck by caman “directly overhead”. Breach means other team’s shie. No second touch by shier. A goal may be scored directly from a shie.

GOAL HIT (BYE-HIT): Goalkeeper or teammate can take this anywhere within the D. All players must be 5 yards away. No second touch. A goal may be scored directly.

CORNER HIT: All players must be 5 yards away. No second touch by hitter. A goal may be scored directly from a corner hit.

FREE-HIT: All players must be at least 5 yards away. Hitter cannot take second touch. Hitter cannot score directly from Free-Hit. Ball must roll its circumference, if not it is a re-take.

PENALTY-HIT: Penalty Spot (20 yards from goal line). All players at least 5 yards away and behind the Spot. Ball must be struck directly at least as far as goal line (if not, ball is dead and defense takes a goal-hit). Keeper must stay on or behind goal line until ball is struck. If ball bounces off keeper or goal frame, or is parried by keeper, ball is live and can be played (except that ball deflected off frame cannot have second touch by hitter).

OFF-SIDE: Off-side is judged at moment the ball crosses into the D. If an attacker is already in the D (body or stick) at that moment, attacker is offside. Other team gets a foul-hit from the location of the offside opponent. A player may exit the field over the goal line (but not into the goal) to avoid being offside, but cannot re-enter the D until the ball exits.

SCORING A GOAL: Entirety of the ball must cross completely over the goal line, inside the goal frame.

FOULS: Hitting the ball with arm, hand or head (keeper in D may hit with open hand). Playing without caman in hand. “Kicking” the ball (that is, foot is moving, unless heels together). Dangerous play. Tripping, kicking, pushing, hitting, obstructing opponent. Holding opponent or opponent’s stick. Charging from the back. Ok to hit opponent’s stick up (but not down) if within playing distance of ball. Rules require “intention”.

REF TIPS: Keep up with play, close enough to watch for fouls. Anticipate. Keep visual contact with line refs. Ref is to “signal” all restarts of play - this may be with word, gesture or whistle. Traditionally, whistle would always be used before a penalty hit is taken. Rules require whistle before toss-up. Ref signals what offense has been called, and indicates the type of restart.

If referee cannot tell which player last touched the ball before crossing the end line, call it a goal hit. If neither ref nor line judge is sure whether a ball completely crossed into the goal, do not call a goal. If line judge indicates a goal, a shie or offside, referee considers that input but makes the call.

Ref keeps time, enforces the rules, and keeps the game safe.

(Insert your full and abbreviated club or organization name here),
GENERAL RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND AGREEMENT NOT TO SUE

Because Camanachd/Shinty Is Potentially Dangerous, We Require All Participants And Parents Of Minor Participants **TO ASSUME ALL RISK OF INJURY OR DEATH** By Signing This General Release And Agreement Not To Sue.

I/we acknowledge that Camanachd or Shinty, like Hockey, Soccer, Lacrosse and other related activities is a HAZARDOUS activity and that I/we have made a voluntary choice to participate in this activity despite the risks that it may present. In consideration of my/our being permitted to participate in the activities of the *(Insert your full and abbreviated club or organization name here)*, an organization of private individuals with no official standing, I/we agree to assume **ANY AND ALL RISKS OF INJURY OR DEATH** which might be associated with or result from my/our participation in *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; events or activities. Such risks of injury or death may be caused in whole or in part by: field conditions, contact made by balls, contact made by camans (sticks), contact made with other players, referees or judges, heat injuries and related conditions, cardiac conditions, failure to follow the rules of Camanachd or Shinty. (Note this is NOT a list of all hazardous activities related to playing or officiating Camanachd or Shinty). Accordingly, even if injury or death is caused by some other risk or hazard not listed above, I/we still agree to assume any and all risk of injury or death which might be associated with or result from my/our participation in *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; activities and

INITIAL _____

_____ INTIAL OF MINOR

I/we further release, waive, discharge and covenant not to sue the *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*, the organizers of any *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*, event, the trustees of, officers of, agents of, sponsors of, or members of the *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; or any owner, lessor, or lessee of any property on which the *(Insert your club or organization name here)*, conducts any activity from all liability to myself, or any party claiming an interest through myself/ourselves (including, but limited to, heirs, spouses, children and beneficiaries), for all loss or damage or demand therefore on account of injury to the person or property or death of myself, whether caused by their **NEGLIGENCE** or for any other reason, while preparing for, practicing for, traveling to or from, or participating in, any *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; event.

INITIAL _____

_____ INTIAL OF MINOR

I/we understand that the wearing contact lenses, eye glasses or sunglasses while participating in *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*, activities maybe hazardous and is done so at my/our own risk.

INITIAL _____

_____ INTIAL OF MINOR

I/we further **INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS** the parties released above, and each of the parties released above, and each of them, from loss, liability, damage or claim they may incur due to the presence of my/our actions during *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; activities whether caused by their negligence or otherwise.

INITIAL _____

_____ INTIAL OF MINOR

It is the intent of the undersigned that the above release of liability and agreement not to sue, be as broad and inclusive as allowed by law, and that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect. The activities which promote participation in *(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)*; sanctioned events, or the preparation for travel to such events, and does not confer release upon parties not acting in such capacity.

INITIAL _____

_____ INTIAL OF MINOR

I/we, the undersigned, have read and understood this release and all its terms. I/we warrant that the above is true and correct in all respects and that no representations, statements or inducements apart from the foregoing have been made. I/we consent now to whatever medical care might be provided or available for injury occurring during the above activities.

INITIAL _____ INITIAL OF MINOR _____

SIGNATURE _____

PRINTED NAME _____ DATE* _____

SIGNATURE OF MINOR _____

PRINTED NAME OF MINOR _____ DATE* _____

For parents of minors (All children under the age of 18):

I/we, the undersigned, have read and understood this release and all its terms. I warrant that the above is true and correct in all respects and that no representations, statements, or inducements apart from the foregoing have been made. I warrant that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor child whose name appears above and warrant and represent that I am empowered to execute this release on his or her behalf.

I/we consent now to whatever medical care might be provided or available for injury occurring during the above activities if I am absent at the time. I authorize the members of the **(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)**; to consent to, authorize, or contract for medical treatment for the above minor required as the result of illness or injury, which occurs during the participation in or while traveling to or from any **(Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here)**; activity if I am not on site at the time of injury. (NOTE: Parent/Legal Guardian must initial all items on reverse side as well as this section).

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN _____

PRINTED NAME OF PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN _____

DATE* _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION for either adults or minors:

Printed name(s), relationship and phone number(s)

_____ Rel: _____ Ph# _____

_____ Rel: _____ Ph# _____

*This liability release is in effect up to December 31st of the year it is signed.

Do not fill in for (Insert your abbreviated club or organization name here); use only:

Guest player fee paid - Date: _____

Membership fee paid - Date: _____

Status: Player ____ Referee/Line or Goal Judge ____ Other ____ (explain _____)



*What's older than kilts?
What's Scotland's oldest team sport?*

shinty!

(Camanachd in Scots Gaelic)



Come play the sport of the Scottish Gaels!

Shinty (or *Camanachd* in Scots Gaelic) is a modern stick and ball game that is played in Scotland and whose origins date back thousands of years. Shinty, a cousin to English Field Hockey and Irish Hurling, can claim itself a predecessor of both Golf and Ice Hockey. Shinty has continued to grow and change through the years and it is played today by both men and women in Scotland and here in the United States. More details about the sport can be found on our web site, and a brief history of the game can be found on the reverse side of this flyer.

Shinty is a fantastic Highland team sport, something in a different vein than the more familiar solo Scottish Heavy Field Athletics such as the caber toss. We invite you to try out this fast-paced game, no previous experience or Scottish background required! If you want to be involved but don't want to play, referees, goal and line judges are needed too. We have loaner equipment, so this is the perfect opportunity to discover a great sport that is at once new and ancient – all are welcome!

For more information:

For a brief description of the game and other info please see reverse side

Contact us for the latest schedule

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SCOTTISH SPORT OF SHINTY

What's older than kilts? Shinty!

Shinty (*iomain* or *camanachd* in Scottish Gaelic) is a team sport of the stick and ball variety that has been played in the Scottish Highlands for many generations. Shinty's origins date back nearly 2,000 years, and it can claim hockey and hurling as cousins, and ice hockey and golf as descendants. Through the years shinty has also served as training for warriors, the physical skills required for the game mirroring combat skills.

Why haven't I heard of Shinty before?

The Shinty season has traditionally run from Fall to Spring and so most folks who visited during summer vacation did not have an opportunity to see the game being played. In addition, Shinty is not played in all parts of Scotland. The game has close ties with the Gaelic culture and has generally flourished in the *Gaidhealtachd*, the area where Gaelic is spoken. A number of teams can be found in close proximity to the Great Glen, between Inverness and Fort William, though teams also exist in other locales, including Skye and Glasgow. In 2004 the season shifted to run from Spring to Fall, so now tourists are more likely to be able to see a match.

A brief overview of the rules

Two teams (usually of six or twelve players a side) play on a field similar to a soccer pitch, but much larger. The players use *Camans* (hooked/curved sticks with a triangular cross section) to strike the shinty ball, either in the air or on the ground, with the intention of scoring goals. As in soccer, a goalkeeper guards the goal nets, which measure 12 feet across and 10 feet high and is the only player allowed to use his hands, though only with open-handed stops and slaps. A twelve-a-side shinty match is 90 minutes in length, divided into two halves with a short break between. A referee regulates play, enforcing rules and calling fouls for illegal and/or dangerous play. There are also side judges and goal judges to assist in calling side-outs, end-outs and goals.

The history of Shinty

From its earliest days through the late 1800's Shinty matches were often connected with celebrations, particularly of the New Year, and generally involved the male populations of one parish, village or district playing another. In this sense it has long held an important role in Scottish communities and continued to be played by Highland Immigrants in the Eastern United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Of course "the sport of the Scottish Gaels" also suffered from the repression that plagued Scottish culture after the 1745 Rebellion, with attempts to legislate against it (along with golf) led both by the Kirk and English authorities. Despite these efforts Shinty has endured to the present day.

The sport has had many regional variants over the years. Beginning in 1869 Shinty clubs began to form and soon District Organizations sprung to life as interest in the sport continued to grow. In 1880 the first set of universal rules was adopted and the foundations of the modern game were laid. The Camanachd Association was founded in 1893 and functions as the world governing body for the sport.

Shinty has continued to exist both as a formalized sport, under the auspices of the Camanachd Association, and as a traditional pastime of the Scots at more casual and/or social

events. The game was played by the Highland Regiments during both World Wars, and WWII POWs from the famous 51st Highland Division even formed teams while being held in Stalag IX. Shinty is currently played in Scotland by many organized teams, including school and university squads, and the Camanachd Association oversees a number of leagues for different age groups of both men and women.

Five facts about shinty in the US

1. Bandy (another name for shinty in the US) was played in Jamestown in 1610.
2. Shinty was part of the oldest Highland Games event in the US, the "first sportive meeting" of the Highland Society of New York, which took place in October 1836.
2. Henry David Thoreau wrote of encountering boys playing hawkie (shinty/bandy), and sketched a stick in his journal.
3. Many famous Americans played some version of shinty, President Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) reportedly spent many hours at bandy as young child.
4. Not only were the stick and ball games of the Scots and Irish popular, but many of the North American Indian tribes had similar games, rules in common with shinty often included no kicking the ball or use of hands.

How can I find out more?

There are several websites that provide further information, photographs and even video, see URLs below:

The US Camanachd website (USA)

www.uscamanachd.org

Shinty resource center, including rules, and other information.

The Official Camanachd Association website (Scotland)

www.shinty.com

A source of information about rules, league standings and other facts of the game.

Shinty videos online (Scotland)

<http://www.youtube.com/user/camanachdassociation#p/>

Watch matches from the current season on the Camanachd Association's YouTube channel!

And you can always contact us via email at

info@uscamanachd.org.

Below: Northern California Camanachd in Scotland!

