

BOCCE TOURNAMENT

Showdown set for weekend

The sign on 24 hours' lunch room door reads, "Bring on the bocce," in advance of the newspaper's first rooftop tournament. It's a tip of the hat to a financial adviser who brought bocce to Vancouver.

Jason Del Vicario, founder of *bocce.ca*, says spreading his love of the Italian sport that awards points to the pair of players who can land a ball closest to a target is his pleasure and pastime.

"I derive a particular amount of joy when I introduce someone to the game for the first time," he explains. "Nine times out of 10 they're just like, 'Oh my god! This is so much fun.'"

Tomorrow Del Vicario and his cabal of bocce ban-

dit's head to Spanish Banks to host the fifth annual Bocce by the Beach. The open afternoon is set to raise money for Kids Up Front and Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre, two local children's charities.

Del Vicario plans on raising \$10,000 for the charities by summer's end.

The tournament has been a draw for the young and hip as much as it has for the old and not-so-hip. According to Del Vicario bocce is an easy sport to get into.

"Once you've bought a set of balls that's pretty much your financial commitment and the rest of it is time," he says. "And if you want to buy a bottle of wine or a beer or two, all the better."

- Dharm Makwana, 24 hours



- Rob Kruyt, 24 hours

On-the-beach bocce ballers from the left are: Connie Brown, Jason Del Vicario and Amber Rowell.

Rally for the 'Five'

"Free the Cuban five, now! Justice for the five, now!"

That was the rallying chant for more than two dozen people who gathered to protest in front of the U.S. consulate on West Pender Street yesterday afternoon.

It was the eighteenth time members of the protest group "Free the Cuban Five Committee - Vancouver" had assembled in front of the consulate.

"The U.S. has done every-

thing to block information about the five Cubans in jail," said Noah Fine, the coordinator of the committee.

The "Cuban Five" are Antonio Guerrero, Roman Labanino, Fernando and Rene Gonzales as well as Gerardo Hernandez, who were arrested in Miami in 1998 "because they simply defended their country, Cuba, from terrorist acts by extremist right-wing groups of Cuban exiles in Miami," Fine explained.

- Jana Tilz, 24 hours



Protestors gathered outside the U.S. consulate yesterday to call for the release of the "Cuban Five".

- Jana Tilz, 24 hours

What's on your mind?

■ **RE: CUPE LABOUR DISPUTE:** The crucial issue is the proposed contract length. The City of Vancouver wants a 39-month contract, while CUPE wants 36 months, so they can use the Winter Games as a once-in-a-lifetime bargaining chip. Strike action now will be disruptive. Strike action in 2010, CUPE's real purpose for this dispute, will be devastating to the reputation of the city, the province and the nation. While the City of Vancouver thinks of the future, CUPE only thinks about itself.

- Philip Hochstein, President, ICBA

■ **I GUESS IT'S GREAT** that people have changed their light bulbs to energy efficient ones, but as long as they are getting into their cars to drive to the store to get them, and letting the store clerk put them in a plastic bag to carry them from the store to the car, and from the car to the house, they've pretty much nullified what little good that light bulb can do. In a province like B.C., famous for tree hugging, I'm appalled to see all the plastic bags I see people carrying everyday.

- C. Mayes, via e-mail

E-mail us at feedback@24hrs.ca

NDP's thoughtful words on A-stan

Last week's column where I attacked Jack Layton's repeated call to withdraw from Afghanistan provoked a firestorm of criticism.



ian king
KING'S CORNER

ply that the mission is too combat-intensive for instinctively pacifist New Democrats?

Vancouver Centre NDP candidate Randall Garrison, who

was in Kandahar in 2002, provides a more nuanced view and an alternative.

"My objection isn't to the mounting toll. It's the mounting toll on the wrong mission," Garrison said. He wants NATO to embark on a three-phase plan to undercut the insurgency.

The first of Garrison's suggested phases is for the international community to pressure Pakistan to no longer provide sanctuary to Taliban leaders.

Next, the alliance has to address the two biggest sources of fresh insurgent troops - young Afghan men with no economic prospects and refugees.

Garrison notes there are three million refugees in camps in Pakistan and Iran, and both countries are pressuring the refugees to return to Afghanistan. "When you do that, you're pushing people back as recruits for the insurgency."

The final part was to ensure that the Afghan state is healthy by ensuring independent supervision of the government. Several respondents pointed out the Karzai government is rife with warlords and mercenaries, and that I was blind to that fact. Not so.

On the other hand, Garrison says that the Karzai government "is the government we have to deal with," and alternative scenarios are an academic exercise. He's absolutely right.

I remain unconvinced that Canada should pull out now, but I am reassured that there are thoughtful New Democrats whose criticism of the war go beyond simple pacifism and anti-imperialist rhetoric.

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In turn, I challenged New Democrats - rank-and-file members - to tell me why Layton was right.

Many have responded thoughtfully, so I offer them this column to respond.

First, I must apologize to the NDP. I claimed that the party supported the Harper government's 2006 and 2007 budgets; in fact, they opposed the government in 2006 and inadvertently supported it in 2007.

Peter Thurley, an NDP youth officer in Kitchener-Waterloo, says that the NATO mission isn't in line with the theory of a just war. In his view, Canada and NATO have failed to provide a proper-post-war environment.

"The failure of NATO to properly contribute towards a just post-war situation in the 90 per cent of the country that is post-war constitutes a violation of the principles of justice," Thurley wrote. He pointed to the fact that Afghanistan is still among the poorest countries in the world, and that most Afghan women aren't receiving proper schooling.

Fair call, but the situation can be used to argue for more robust development just as surely as it can be used for withdrawal.

Nanaimo-Cowichan party activist Peter Kelly says our mission has evolved beyond what Canadians were promised, and what we can accept.

"It has gone from a popular peacekeeping action that Canadians typically support, to Vietnam-style guerrilla war with an enemy that doesn't care whether they live or die."

Tough words - but is it sim-

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