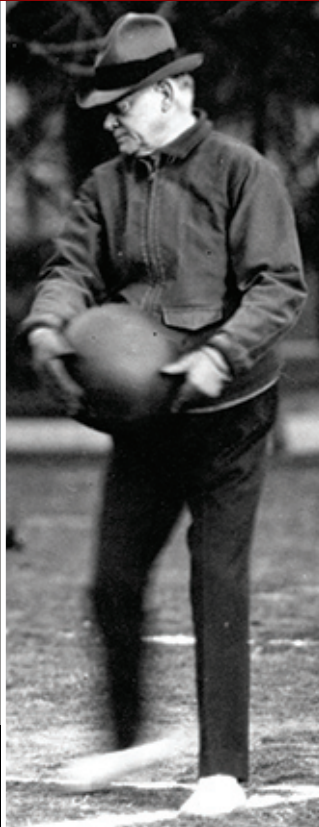




Whether running for president or to catch a medicine ball, Herbert Hoover was determined to leave his mark on the United States.



like tennis, except the server throws the ball over the net instead of using a racket. An opposing team member then has to catch the ball on the fly and return it in one motion. The goal is to toss the ball so no one on the other team can catch it. If the ball hits the ground, the serving side gets the point. You can also get a point if the other team serves it out of bounds or throws the ball into the net.

Hoover, who was so punctual that clocks asked him what time it was, played every morning at 7 a.m. sharp for a half-hour with a group of men dubbed the “Medicine Ball Cabinet.” Rumor has it that he canceled only one day of Hoover-ball throughout his presidency — and he did that only because he had to wake up early to write a message to deliver to the Senate.

While the game might sound a little ridiculous, the men who played with Hoover swore it was exhausting. One of his friends, Will Irwin, wrote about it in a 1931 article for *Physical Culture* magazine called “The President Watches His Waistline.” He wrote: “It is more strenuous than either boxing, wrestling or football. It has the virtue of getting at nearly every muscle in the body.”

William Atherton DuPuy, a *New York Times Magazine* reporter (and the man who named the game Hoover-ball), wrote the following after taking in a few contests for another 1931 article called “At the White House at 7 a.m.”: “Stopping a six-pound ball with steam in back of it, returning it with similar steam, is not pink-tea stuff.”

I have no idea what pink-tea stuff is, but I’m assuming it’s on par with something like basket-weaving or origami. This means Hoover-ball was one strenuous, bad-ass sport. In fact, the man who co-invented it, Adm. Joel T. Boone (Hoover’s White House physician), figured out exactly how strenuous it was, estimating that playing a half-hour game was three times more exercise than tennis, which makes it 500 times more exercise than Hoover’s favorite sport: fishing. **M&F**

FROM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES. COURTESY OF HERBERT HOOVER PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM

RECESS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Abner Doubleday invented America’s pastime but never spent time as commander in chief. Dr. James Naismith created roundball but never occupied the Oval Office. Walter Camp is known as the father of American football but never sat in the same seat as the father of our country. No, when it comes to the spawning of a new sport, our 31st president set the precedent. Who was the esteemed No. 31? None other than Herbert Clark Hoover. The sport? Hoover-ball, of course.

If you happened to miss last year’s Hooverfest in Iowa (seriously) and don’t have a clue what Hoover-ball is, here’s a quick intro straight from Hoover’s Presidential Library and Museum: “[Hoover-ball] is a combination of tennis and volleyball played with a medicine ball...the court is 66 feet by 30 feet, the net is 8 feet high and the medicine ball weighs 6 pounds...

teams consist of 2-4 players...and the scoring is exactly like tennis.”

Why a 6-pound medicine ball? Because throwing a ball heavier than 6 pounds at a president isn’t a game, it’s an assassination attempt; also, the 9-pound ball with which they experimented was too heavy to be thrown over the net and caught — the object of the game. Basically, the game is scored

