

## SANIBEL SHELL SHOCKED

Summit in Sanibel

By Art Stevens

Now it can be told. Obama and Putin held a secret meeting in Sanibel recently to discuss the details of a proposed updated nuclear arms treaty and a resolution to the North Korea situation. There was no fanfare, no procession of cars, no secret service agents with rifles on the roofs of the Recreation Center or Bailey's.

The meeting was so understated that it took place on a bocci court with Obama and Putin posing as bocci players. Obama favored this person to person dialogue in an attempt to remove the summit meeting from international scrutiny. Putin favored such a meeting because it gave him an excuse to get out of Moscow for a few days. Besides, he had never tried blackened fish before and his Kremlin cronies told him that next to Russian caviar, blackened fish in Sanibel was a gourmet delight and worth a meeting there with Obama.

So there they were, these two great world leaders, walking up and down the Sanibel bocci court each holding a bocci ball as though it were a nuclear weapon ready to blow up the world.

"So, Michele is well, I trust?" Putin said.

"Yes, Mr. Chairman. She sends her deep respects to you and Mrs. Putin and thanks you for your recent generous gift. She wears the vintage Red Army boots on any occasion she can."

"We in turn thank you, Mr. President – uh, may I call you Barry? Mr. President is so formal. We in turn thank you, Barry, for the autographed basketball of all the Miami Heat players. That LeBron James can sure dunk. He reminds me of a Russian missile. But I still marvel that you allow one of your American baseball teams to be called 'Reds' -- the Cincinnati Reds. So unlike you careful Americans," Putin chuckled.

"Oh, I think I've just made a score with my bocci ball, Mr. Chairman. Do you mind if I call you Pootie? Pootie, what kind of game is bocci anyway? I'm used to playing three-man basketball and world domination dominoes. This ball isn't shaped at all like the Pentagon. I think I'll put it in Hillary's soup and see what her reaction is. I have such a serious cabinet. They just can't take a joke."

The two world leaders continued throwing their bocci balls without the slightest idea of how to play the game. They walked up and down, holding and throwing their bocci balls and looked out onto the vast expanse of Ding Darling. Putin cleared his throat which was his usual signal that polite banter must now come to an end.

“Barry, we’ve got a sticky problem to deal with. We must both return to our capitals with a deal or the political hacks will be on our backs. Hey, that rhymes.”

“Pootie, the key issue is on-site inspection. I’d like to propose that our famous international ambassador John McEnroe represent both our countries and be designated the official nuclear testing inspector in North Korea. John will win the North Koreans over with a display of his sportsmanship. Besides, five years in North Korea would do Mr. McEnroe a world of good,” Obama said.

Putin picked up what he thought was a bocci ball, realized it was a hard boiled egg and threw it back...

“John McEnroe. Not a chance, Barry,” he said. “The first thing he’ll do is say to the North Koreans, ‘you can’t be serious’. I have enough trouble holding my party together without having to worry about special hearings on McEnroe diplomacy in prime time. What sacrifices we world leaders have to make for the cause of peace. But how about this? Suppose we use Baryshnikov as the Russian on-site inspector in North America?”

Obama pulled up sharp. “Baryshnikov? But he’s one of ours. He defected to our side.”

Putin chuckled. “Barry, that’s what we wanted you to think. We couldn’t stand him in Russia. He was making all the girls pregnant. So we told him that we were going to make him a KGB agent in America and concocted that whole defection nonsense. Sorry to spring this on you now, Barry, but we must be truthful with each other.”

Obama stared hard at Putin. “Well, Pootie, if we’re being truthful with each other, did you ever wonder why your wife insists on shopping at a fur factory on the outskirts of Moscow when there are so many much closer to home?”

“You mean?”

“Yes, Pootie, your wife is an American agent. She grew up in Boise, Idaho and learned Russian at Ohio State.”

“Barry, you sly devil. I would never have known. No wonder her favorite song is ‘Why, Oh, Why, Did I Ever Leave Ohio?’ Thanks for being truthful with me. I promise not to create an international incident over this startling revelation. Unfortunately, my poor dear wife will have to disappear altogether in the very near future. I say again what sacrifices we world leaders have to make for the cause of peace. But please, Barry, let’s get on with our negotiations. I’m getting bored with this bocci charade. My afternoon vodka awaits me.

Putin continued. "If you agree to destroy one hundred medium range ballistic missiles by 2015, we will agree to give Cuba back to you. But there's one condition. You will have to agree to hold the 2014 World Series in Moscow."

Obama frowned. "I don't know if I can get Bud Selig to go along with that. He'd be concerned that you might not allow Derek Jeter to leave Russia. But how about this? If we allow you on-site inspection on U.S. soil, then you have to agree to turn over the Bolshoi Ballet to the United States."

Putin said, "If you agree to let me host Saturday Night Live, I think we might have a deal. I have some new North Korea jokes I want to try out. By the way, is the purpose of bocci to throw the ball directly at someone's head?"

Obama was elated and didn't bother to answer the question. "I can hardly wait to see Castro's face when he learns that Cuba is our 51<sup>st</sup> state. That news might do him in altogether. Pootie, we have a deal. How shall we celebrate?"

Putin picked up another bocci ball, thought for a moment and said, "Can you introduce me to Serena Williams? I've always wanted to meet the American who keeps knocking off our teenagers."