

Longest drive on the ice in the middle of the 17th century

Jan Six van Chandelier (1620-1695) was a rich Amsterdam business, dealing in spices. For his business he travelled to different countries in Europe, among others to Germany, England, Italy, and Spain. Sometimes he devoted his free time to composing poems.

One of his better-known poems is called ‘ ‘s Amsterdammer Winter’, which he wrote in 1650 when he was on a business trip in Italy. In this poem, containing 850 lines the poet wrote, in a nostalgic atmosphere about individuals how they spend their lives during the winter period in his hometown Amsterdam. One of such Amsterdammer individuals who was portrayed was a colf player, preparing for a colf match on the frozen surface of the waters in or near the town. The detailed description gives an interesting picture about this amazing ice variant of the game of colf in the 17th century.

The relevant part of the poem:



The original text

De kolver bindt syn ysspoor aan,
Of heeft iet strams om op te staan,
Want 't gladde glas, is 't onbesneeuwt,
Met effe soolen licht, en spreeuwt,
En naa het looten van paarty,
Schrapstaande slaat syn esp, met bly
Verswaart, of syne schotse klik,
Van palm, dry vingers breed, een dik,

Met loot der in, den Pennebal
Van 't druifje onsichtbaar voor haar val,
Van ballemerkers opgemerkt,
Voorts kolvende aan een paal geperkt.
Of slaat om 't verdst, slach om slach,
Om witjes, of een vaan in 't lach,

Gekorven op een dunnen tak,
Die ieder veur in 't wambais stak,
Mids wie syn kerfstok niet neemt waar,
Uitveegen zal voor allegaar.

Translation from old Netherlandish into modern English by the late Ayolt Brongers

The kolfer ties his ice steps on
or finds something rough to stand on,
when slippery ice is snow less
it laughs and jests at smooth soles,
after the sides have been drawn,
standing surely strikes his ash with lead
weighted or his Scottish cleek
of boxwood, three fingers wide, one
thick,
with lead in it, the feather ball,
from the tee, invisible until its fall
observed by fore-caddies
and colfing on, striking a post,
for the longest drive, stroke by stroke,
for the agreed wagers or a gallon (of
beer) in the tavern,
notching on a slender stick
that each places in the front of his coat.
For he who does not mind his tally-rod
shall erase the score altogether