

Basketball

Introduction:

Basketball is a team sport in which two teams (five players each) compete with the primary objective of shooting a ball through the defender's hoop while preventing the opposing team from shooting through their own. A successful shot is worth two points, unless made from behind the 3-point line (than it is worth three points). Free-throws are worth 1 point, those usually occur after a foul play. The team with more points at the end of the game wins.

History of the game:

The history of basketball could be tracked all the way back to England. However, it's real origin dates to the end of 19th century to the US. The game as we know it today was created in Massachusetts by Canadian professor James Naismith. He was searching for an indoor activity to keep his students occupied and at proper levels of fitness during the long winters. Interesting fact is that dribbling was not part of the original game (except for the bounce pass) to teammates. Dribbling was common by 1896.

In the 20th century the game was popularized in the US primarily thanks to YMCA (Youngs men's Christian association). YMCA was responsible for developing and spreading the game especially in high schools and colleges throughout the United States but also Canada, however amateur clubs jumped on board soon after.

Basketball became popular after the first world war and by 1920 there were hundreds of pro or semi-pro clubs throughout the United States. After the second war the BAA (Basketball association of America) and NBL (National basketball league) were formed to govern the game. Those two organizations merged by 1950 and created NBA (National basketball association). Today the NBA is the top professional basketball league in the world in terms of popularity, salaries, talent, and level of competition.

Organisation of basketball in the world:

The world basketball today is run by FIBA (international basketball federation). FIBA was founded in 1932 by 8 national federations (Czechoslovakia's basketball federation was one of them). At the time, the organization only oversaw amateur players and clubs.

FIBA is responsible for organization and promotion of international basketball (both men and women). Biggest events that are being organized by the federation are FIBA World Cup and basketball tournament at the Olympic games (sanctioned by IOC). FIBA divides the world into 5 commissions, each roughly based on a continent. Those commissions are than responsible for their own competitions such as EuroBasket (European basketball championship) in Europe.

Basketball in Czech Republic:

Basketball was introduced to the Czech public at the end of 19th century by a teacher of Vysoké Myto's grammar school Jaroslav Karasek. Vysoké Myto also hosted the first basketball match in Austrian-Hungarian empire. In 1924 the Czechoslovakian basketball and volleyball federation was founded. In 1946 the two sports separated, and the Czechoslovakian basketball federation was formed. The federation was operating under different names until 1992, when the federation split into separate federations after the division of Czechoslovakia.

ČBF (Czech basketball federation) today is responsible for organization of Czech competitions (most prestigious being Kooperativa ČBL) promotion of basketball in the country and management of national teams.

Rules:

Games are played in four quarters of 10 or 12 minutes (depending on competition) of actual playing time with 15-minute half-time break and five-minute break between quarters. Five players from each team may be on the court at one time. Substitutions are unlimited but can only be done when play is stopped. Each quarter starts with a centre jump.

The object of the game is to outscore one's opponents by throwing the ball through the opponents' basket from above while preventing the opponents from scoring into your own. An attempt to score is called a shot. A successful shot is worth two points, three if it is taken from behind the three-point line. A one-point can be earned when shooting from the foul line after a foul play (free throw). After a team has scored, the play is resumed with a throw in by the non-scoring team.

Ball can be moved around the court by dribbling or passing. Player is allowed to take only three steps while holding the ball in both hands. After the three steps are taken the ball must be passed or shoot, the player cannot resume dribbling.

Positions:

Point guard: is usually the fastest player on the team, organizes the team's offense by controlling the ball and making sure that it gets to the right player at the right time. Ex: Steph Curry, Magic Johnson, Kyrie Irving, Tomáš Satoranský.

Shooting guard: creates a high volume of shots on offense, mainly long-ranged and guards the opponent's best perimeter player on defence. Ex: Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, James Harden.

Small forward: is often primarily responsible for scoring points via cuts to the basket and dribble penetration, on defence seeks rebounds and often steals the ball. Ex: LeBron James, John Havlicek, Kevin Durant.

Power forward: plays offensively often with their back to the basket. On defence, plays under the basket or against the opposing power forward. Ex: Draymond Green, Dirk Nowitzki.

Center: usually the tallest player in the team. Operates near the basket both in defence and offence. The best centres are powerful in the middle, excellent shot blockers, and excellent rebounders. Ex: Bill Russell.

International Competitions:

Olympic Games:

Men's basketball competition was first introduced at Berlin summer Olympics in 1936. Women got their Olympic debut 40 years later in 1976 in Montreal. In 1989 FIBA allowed NBA professionals to participate in the Olympic tournament. Since the inclusion of the NBA players USA national team pretty much dominated the Olympics. They won last 3 tournaments (2008, 2012, 2016). The 2004 team (even though they did not win the tournament) is still considered one of the best teams in the history and rightfully called the Dream Team.

FIBA World Cup:

First World Cup was played in 1950 in Argentina, women got their first World Cup Three years later in Chile. World Cup is played once in a four years with total number of 32 teams competing for The Naismith Trophy. Last World Cup was held in China in 2019 where Spain beat Argentina in the final. Our national team qualified on the tournament for the first time since the division of Czechoslovakia and finished 6th, which was a big surprise and great achievement for Czech basketball. Last Women World Cup took place in Spain in 2018. USA won the tournament. Our biggest achievements are three 2nd places, last one in 2010 where we were the hosts.

Club competitions:

NBA:

National Basketball Association is a professional basketball league in North America played by 30 teams (29 in the United States and 1 in Canada) and is the most prestigious and famous men's professional basketball league in the world. NBA is divided into Western and Eastern conferences. After a regular season in which every team plays against every team, 8 teams from each conference gets to the play-off. Winners of each conference than play against each other in the NBA finals. Play-offs are played on four victories. Current champions are LA Lakers.

NBA is one of the biggest club competition in the entire world in terms of salaries, talent, broadcasting and marketing. The most successful teams are LA Lakers (17 titles), Boston Celtics (17 titles), Chicago Bulls and Golden State Warriors. Throughout the history the league produced such stars as Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Bill Russell, Shaquille O'neal or Kobe Bryant. The faces of todays NBA are LeBron James, Steph Curry, James Harden, Kevin Durant and Jannis Antetokounmpo.

WNBA:

The Women's National Basketball Association is a professional women's basketball league in the United States. It is currently composed of twelve teams. The league was founded in 1996, as the women's counterpart to the NBA. The regular season is played from May to September, followed by the WNBA Finals at the end of September. Current champions are Seattle Storm. In its beginnings WNBA was actually not profitable due to a lack of viewership and interest from a genral public, however the situation got better over time and all WNBA teams are making money now.

Kooperativa NBL:

Is the highest Czech basketball league. It started in 1993 after the division of Czechoslovakia. The league is played by 12 teams. The season is divided into two parts, regular season and playoffs where teams need three victories to get through each Play-off round. The most successful team by far is ČEZ Basketball Nymburk that has won 13 titles since 1993. The most dominating team in women's category USK Praha.

EuroLeague basketball:

Known as the Turkish Airlines EuroLeague, is the top-tier European professional basketball club competition, organized by Euroleague Basketball. Introduced in 2000, the competition replaced the FIBA EuroLeague, which had been run by FIBA since 1958. The EuroLeague is one of the most popular indoor sports leagues in Europe. The league is considered to be the second most competitive basketball league in the world (After NBA) and the best one in Europe.

18 champions from European basketball leagues participate in the league every year. The EuroLeague title has been won by 21 clubs, 13 of which have won the title more than once. The most successful club in the competition is Real Madrid, with ten titles. The current champions are CSKA Moscow, who defeated Anadolu Efes in the 2019 final, winning the club's eighth title.

Variations of basketball:

3x3/ Streetball/ Half-court:

Probably the most popular variation of basketball thanks to its availability and simple rules. Only one basket is used, and the ball must be "taken back" (passed or dribbled) outside the three-point line each time possession of the ball changes from one team to the other. This game is very popular among casual basketball players in the street of big American cities. The popularity of the game is expected to grow even more since it became an Olympic sport three years ago and going to be featured in Tokyo.

Slam dunk contest:

Is a competition in which players try to get the ball through the hoop by using different acrobatic skills. The slam dunk contest is also part of the NBA-All-Star Game and the winner is considered to be most skilful finisher.

Wheelchair basketball:

Started in 50's. It used to be played primarily between American World War II disabled veterans. Wheelchair basketball is included in the Paralympic Games. The Wheelchair Basketball World Championship is played two years after every Paralympic Games.

