**Volleyball**

Volleyball is a team sport in which two teams of six players are separated by a net. Each team tries to score points by grounding a ball on the other team's court under organized rules.

Origins

In the winter of 1895, in Holyoke, Massachusetts (United States), William G. Morgan, a YMCA physical education director, created a new game called Mintonette, a name derived from the game of badminton, as a pastime to be played (preferably) indoors and by any number of players. The game took some of its characteristics from other sports such as tennis and handball. Mintonette was designed to be an indoor sport, less rough than basketball, for older members of the YMCA, while still requiring a bit of athletic effort.

Beach volleyball, a variation of the game played on sand and with only two players per team, became a FIVB-endorsed variation in 1987 and was added to the Olympic program at the 1996 Summer Olympics. Volleyball is also a sport at the Paralympics managed by the World Organization Volleyball for Disabled.

Volleyball has been part of the Summer Olympics program for both men and women consistently since 1964.

Now it is one of top 5 most popular sports in the world.

The **longest single match** involved a team from Poland and a team from Germany. It took place on a beach and **lasted approximately 25 hours.** The players played from Saturday all the way into Sunday morning, and the fans continue to support everyone in order to keep going.

Skills

Competitive teams master six basic skills: serve, pass, set, attack, block and dig. Each of these skills comprises a number of specific techniques that have been introduced over the years and are now considered standard practice in high-level volleyball.

Serve

A player stands behind the inline and serves the ball, in an attempt to drive it into the opponent's court. The main objective is to make it land inside the court; it is also desirable to set the ball's direction, speed and acceleration so that it becomes difficult for the receiver to handle it properly. A serve is called an "ace" when the ball lands directly onto the court or travels outside the court after being touched by an opponent; when the only player on the server's team to touch the ball is the server.

* Underhand: a serve in which the player strikes the ball below the waist instead of tossing it up and striking it with an overhand throwing motion. Underhand serves are considered very easy to receive and are rarely employed in high-level competitions.
* Sky ball serve: a specific type of underhand serve occasionally used in beach volleyball, where the ball is hit so high it comes down almost in a straight line
* Topspin: an overhand serve where the player tosses the ball high and hits it with a wrist snap, giving it topspin which causes it to drop faster than it would otherwise and helps maintain a straight flight path.
* Float: an overhand serve where the ball is hit with no spin so that its path becomes unpredictable, akin to a knuckleball in baseball.
* Jump serve: an overhand serve where the ball is first tossed high in the air, then the player makes a timed approach and jumps to make contact with the ball, hitting it with much pace and topspin. This is the most popular serve among college and professional teams.
* Jump float: an overhand serve where the ball is tossed high enough that the player may jump before hitting it similarly to a standing float serve. The ball is tossed lower than a topspin jump serve, but contact is still made while in the air. This serve is becoming more popular among college and professional players because it has a certain unpredictability in its flight pattern. It is the only serve where the server's feet can go over the inline.

Pass

the pass is the attempt by a team to properly handle the opponent's serve or any form of attack. Proper handling includes not only preventing the ball from touching the court but also making it reach the position where the setter is standing quickly and precisely

Set

The set is usually the second contact that a team makes with the ball. The main goal of setting is to put the ball in the air in such a way that it can be driven by an attack into the opponent's court.

Attack

The attack, also known as the spike, is usually the third contact a team makes with the ball. The object of attacking is to handle the ball so that it lands on the opponent's court and cannot be defended.

Block

Blocking refers to the actions taken by players standing at the net to stop or alter an opponent's attack

Dig

Digging is the ability to prevent the ball from touching one's court after a spike or attack, particularly a ball that is nearly touching the ground.

From these 6 basic skills is derived player specialization

Libero

1 player on the pitch, 1 on the bench

**Player specialization**

There are five positions filled on every volleyball team at the elite level. Setter, Outside Hitter/Left Side Hitter, Middle Hitter, Opposite Hitter/Right Side Hitter and Libero/Defensive Specialist. Each of these positions plays a specific, key role in winning a volleyball match.

Setters have the task for preparing the offence of the team. They aim for the second touch and their main responsibility is to place the ball in the air where the attackers can place the ball into the opponents' court for a point. They have to be able to operate with the hitters, manage the tempo of their side of the court and choose the right attackers to set. Setters need to have a swift and skilful appraisal and tactical accuracy and must be quick at moving around the court. At elite level, setters used to usually be the shortest players of a team

Middle blockers or Middle hitters are players that can perform very fast attacks that usually take place near the setter. They are specialized in blocking since they must attempt to stop equally fast plays from their opponents and then quickly set up a double block at the sides of the court. In non-beginners play, every team will have two middle hitters. At elite levels, middle hitters are usually the tallest players, whose limited agility is countered by their height enabling more effective blocks. 2 of them

Outside hitters or Left side hitters attack from near the left antenna. The outside hitter is usually the most consistent hitter on the team and gets the most sets. Inaccurate first passes usually result in a set to the outside hitter rather than middle or opposite. Since most sets to the outside are high, the outside hitter may take a longer approach, always starting from outside the court sideline. In non-beginners play, there are again two outside hitters on every team in every match. At elite level, outside hitters are slightly shorter than middle hitters and outside hitters, but have the best defensive skills, therefore always re-placing to the middle while in the back row.

Opposite hitters or Right-side hitters carry the defensive workload for a volleyball team in the front row. Their primary responsibilities are to put up a well-formed block against the opponents' Outside Hitters and serve as a backup setter. Sets to the opposite usually go to the right side of the antennae. Therefore, they are usually the most technical hitters since balls lifted to the right side are quicker and more difficult to handle (the setters having to place the ball while slightly off-set to the right, and with their back to the attacker), and also having to jump from the back row when the setter is on the front row. At elite level, until the 1990s several opposite hitters used to be able to also play as middle hitters (e.g. Andrea Zorzi, Andrea Giani), before high specialization curtained this flexibility in the role.

**Formations:**

The three standard volleyball formations are known as "4–2", "6–2" and "5–1", which refers to the number of hitters and setters respectively. 4–2 is a basic formation used only in beginners' play, while 5–1 is by far the most common formation in high-level play.

**Volleyball variations:**

Aquatic volleyball

Main articles: Biribol and Water volleyball

Biribol was the first aquatic variant of volleyball. It was invented in the 60's in Birigui, Brazil, and has moderate popularity in the country.

Aquatic volleyball is a team sport similar to volleyball, but adapted for competition in a shallow swimming pool. It is also referred to as "pool volleyball", and sometimes as "aquapolo", not to be confused with water polo. Players must change sides after each round for it to be fair. Each round is up to 15 points, however you need to win by two points. If the ball hits the edge of the pool but bounces back in, that is fair. If the ball hits the edge of the pool and bounces out, that is not fair.

Beach aquatic volleyball

Beach aquatic volleyball is an individual or team sport similar to aquatic volleyball adapted for play in the shallow water of a beach.

Beach volleyball & shooting ball

Main article: Beach volleyball

Rows of beach volleyball nets in Huntington Beach, California.

A variation of the game rivaling the original sport of volleyball in popularity, beach volleyball evolved from the recreational games of volleyball played on many beaches around the world. It became an official Olympic sport in 1996. This version, rather than being played on indoor hard courts, is played on sand courts which may either be formed naturally or built specifically for the purpose. Instead of a team of six, each team consists of only two players, but otherwise the rules are almost identical with some exceptions including:

* The size of the court (16m x 8m)
* The block counts as the first contact
* The banning of the open-hand dink or dump plays where a player uses his or her finger tips to redirect the ball into the opponent's court instead of a hard spike. A dink may be performed with a closed hand or knuckle
* Stricter rules around double-contacts during hand setting
* The time limit for serve is 5 seconds
* Games are usually played to 21 points, rather than 25 as common in indoor volleyball. The first team to win two sets wins the match. If a third deciding set is required, it is played to 15.

Footvolley

Main article: Footvolley

Footvolley combines beach volleyball and soccer skills. The difference is that the players may not contact the ball with their hands or arms; instead they can use all other body parts including their feet, head and chest, etc. The sport originated in Brazil, but is quickly becoming popular in the US, Europe, and Asia.

Indoor sand volleyball

This is a newer variation of beach volleyball. As beach volleyball took volleyball outdoors, indoor sand volleyball takes beach volleyball indoors. In the United States, a growing number of colleges are now considering switching from hard court indoor volleyball to sand court indoor volleyball. The biggest reason for the possible change is the reduced rate of injury of players. Secondary reasons are: 1) bad weather doesn't cancel play, something that commonly happens with beach volleyball; 2) it is thought to make the game more appealing to spectators since sand courts do not require players to wear knee pads or shoes.

Indoor sand volleyball teams vary from two to six members, college teams having six. Normally, rather than using a purpose-built hall, an indoor basketball court is converted. A protective tarpaulin covers the floor of the basketball court and "soft" sand is laid a foot deep over it. The boundaries are commonly marked off with lines in the sand. However, a recent innovation uses colored lasers that illuminate the lines in the sand.

In some venues, there exist sand courts that are used as usual during the spring, summer, and fall months, but during the winter months, a large tent (usually dome-shaped) is erected over the courts.

Snow volleyball

Main article: Snow volleyball

Snow volleyball is a variant of beach volleyball that is played on snow. The rules are similar to the beach game,[1] with the main differences being the scoring system (best of 3 sets played to 15 points) and the number of players (three starters and one substitute).

Bossaball

Main article: Bossaball

Bossaball is a mix of volleyball, football (soccer), gymnastics and capoeira. The court is a combination of inflatables and trampolines, divided by a net. The headquarters of the sport is in Spain.

Ecua-volley

Main article: Ecua-volley

Ecua-volley is a variant of volleyball invented and played in Ecuador. Differences include a higher net (2.8 meters tall) and the use of a soccer ball. It is very popular among people that live in the USA. Each court side measures 9x9 meters. There are 3 players on each side known as the spiker, the setter, and the flyer (libero). Being that the ball is heavier than an American volleyball, players are allowed to slightly grab the ball however, the grab must be quick (less than 1 second). Matches are typically played up to 15, 12, or 10 points depending on what is agreed upon. No player is allowed to touch the net, the poles or pass the dividing line separating the two opposite court sides. Upon doing so is considered a point or change serve for the opposing team. Points are made on a serve only manner (meaning only the side that serves the ball can make a point, otherwise it is a change serve for the opposing team). Other rules apply as well but the rest of the game is played as your typical American volleyball.

Fistball

Main article: Fistball

Fistball (written in German as "Faustball") has many similarities with volleyball and was known in Central Europe at least from the 16th Century, thus of different origin. The game came to the USA in 1911 with Christopher Carlton. It is often played in 5 player teams, outdoor on a grass field 50m x 20m. One bounce is allowed between each hit.

Footbag net

Main article: Footbag net

Footbag net is similar to Sepak Takraw and footvolley. It is played with feet instead of hands. Footbag net combines elements of tennis, badminton, and volleyball. Specifically, the court dimensions and layout are similar to those of badminton; the scoring is similar to the old scoring system in volleyball (you must be serving to score); and serves must be diagonal, as in tennis. It is played one on one or in teams of two. Footbag net games can be played to eleven or fifteen points, although the winners must win by at least two points.

Hooverball

Main article: Hooverball

Popularized by President Herbert Hoover, Hooverball is played with a volleyball net and a medicine ball; it is scored like tennis, but the ball is caught and then thrown back. The weight of the medicine ball can make the sport to be quite physically demanding; annual championship tournaments are held annually in West Branch, Iowa.