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volleyball, outdoor or indoor ball and net game played on a level court. An upright net, 3 ft (or 1 m) high, the top of which stands 8 ft (2.43 m) from the ground for men, 7 ft 4 1/8 in (2.24 m) for women, divides the court—60 ft (or 18 m) long and 30 ft (or 9 m) wide—in half. Three forwards and three backs compose a team. The inflated rubber or leather volleyball, about 27 in. (69 cm) in circumference, is served from behind the back lines of the court. Players bat the ball across the top of the net into any part of the opponents' court. Any part of the body (especially the open hand or fist) may be used to bat the ball, but players may not catch or carry it. A maximum of three hits per team is permitted in returning the ball to the opponents' court. Teams must return the ball without allowing it to touch the ground. Spiking is the game's most dramatic offensive maneuver, occurring when a player drives the ball forcefully downward into the opponents' court with an open hand at speeds of about 100 mph. Defenses attempt to block spikes at the net. Only the serving team scores points; if the receiving team wins the volley, it gains the next serve after the players rotate their positions clockwise. The team scoring 15 points first wins the game, though the margin of victory must be at least two.

William G. Morgan originated volleyball in 1895 at Holyoke, Mass; since 1928 the game's governing body in the United States has been the U.S. Volleyball Association. Changes introduced in 2000 allow a team to score whether it is serving or not and added the *libero*—a freely roaming, back-row defensive player—to the game. Although the game at high levels is technical and strategic, millions of recreational players enjoy it in indoor winter leagues and in the summer outdoors.

Beach volleyball is played outdoors on a sand court with two players instead of six. The court dimensions, the net and its position, and the scoring are similar to that of the traditional six-player game. Beach volleyball began in the 1920s in California and held its first men's tournament in 1947. The professional game developed in the 1970s, world championships were first held in 1987 (men) and 1993 (women), and the sport achieved Olympic status in 1996.

Bibliography

See G. Bulman, *Volleyball* (1989).

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