

Netball

Netball is a ball sport played by two teams of seven players. Its development, derived from early versions of basketball, began in England in the 1890s. By 1960, international playing rules had been standardised for the game, and the International Federation of Netball and Women's Basketball (later renamed the International Netball Federation (INF)) was formed. As of 2011, the INF comprises more than 60 national teams organized into five global regions.

Games are played on a rectangular court with raised goal rings at each end. Each team attempts to score goals by passing a ball down the court and shooting it through its goal ring. Players are assigned specific positions, which define their roles within the team and restrict their movement to certain areas of the court. During general play, a player with the ball can hold onto it for only three seconds before shooting for a goal or passing to another player. The winning team is the one that scores the most goals. Netball games are 60 minutes long. Variations have been developed to increase the game's pace and appeal to a wider audience.

Netball is most popular in Commonwealth nations, specifically in schools, and is predominantly played by women. According to the INF, netball is played by more than 20 million people in more than 80 countries. Major transnational competitions take place, including the Netball Superleague in Great Britain and the ANZ Championship in Australia and New Zealand. Three major competitions take place internationally: the quadrennial World Netball Championships, the Commonwealth Games, and the yearly World Netball Series. In 1995, netball became an International Olympic Committee recognised sport.

Description and rules

The objective of a game is to score more goals than the opposition. Goals are scored when a team member positioned in the attacking shooting circle shoots the ball through the goal ring. The goal rings are 380 millimetres (15 in.) in diameter and sit atop 3.05-metre (10.0 ft.)-high goal posts that have no backboards. A 4.9-metre (16 ft.)-radius semi-circular "shooting circle" is an area at each end of the court. The goal posts are located within the shooting circle. Each team defends one shooting circle and attacks the other.¹ The netball court is 30.5 metres (100 ft.) long, 15.25 metres (50.0 ft.) wide, and divided lengthwise into thirds. The ball is usually made of leather or rubber, measures 680 to 710 millimetres (27 to 28 in.) in circumference, and weighs 397 to 454 grams (14.0 to 16.0 oz.). A normal game consists of four 15-minute quarters and can be played outdoors or in a covered stadium.

Each team is allowed seven players on the court. Each player is assigned a specific position, which limits their movement to a certain area of the court. A "bib" worn by each player contains a two letter abbreviation indicating their position. Only two positions are permitted in the attacking shooting circle, and can therefore shoot for a goal. Similarly, only two positions are permitted in the defensive shooting circle; they try to prevent the opposition from shooting

goals. Other players are restricted to two thirds of the court, with the exception of the Centre, who may move anywhere on the court except for a shooting circle.

At the beginning of every quarter and after a goal has been scored, play starts with a player in the centre position passing the ball from the centre of the court. These "centre passes" alternate between the teams, regardless of which team scored the last goal. When the umpire blows the whistle to restart play, four players from each team can move into the centre third to receive the pass. The centre pass must be caught or touched in the centre third. The ball is then moved up and down the court through passing and must be touched by a player in each adjacent third of the court. Players can hold the ball for only three seconds at any time. It must be released before the foot they were standing on when they caught it touches the ground again. Contact between players is only permitted if it does not impede an opponent or the general play. When defending a pass or shot players must be at least 90 centimetres (35 in.) away from the player with the ball. If illegal contact is made, the player who contacted cannot participate in play until the player taking the penalty has passed or shot the ball. If the ball is held in two hands and either dropped or a shot at goal is missed, the same player cannot be the first to touch it unless it first rebounds off the goal.

Indoor netball

Indoor netball is a variation of netball, played exclusively indoors, in which the playing court is surrounded on each side and overhead by a net. The net prevents the ball from leaving the court, permitting faster play by reducing playing stoppages. **Governance**

The recognised international governing body of netball is the International Federation of Netball Associations (IFNA), based in Manchester, England. Founded in 1960, the organisation was initially called the International Federation of Netball and Women's Basketball. The IFNA is responsible for compiling world rankings for national teams, maintaining the rules for netball and organising several major international competitions.

As of July 2012, the IFNA has 49 full and 24 associate national members in five regions. Each region has an IFNA Regional Federation.

IFNA Region	Regional Federation
Africa	Africa Netball
Americas	American Federation of Netball Associations
Asia	Netball Asia
Europe	Federation of European Netball Associations
Oceania	Oceania Netball Federation

The IFNA is affiliated with the General Association of International Sports Federations, the International World Games Association and the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations. It is also a signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code.

International competition

Netball is a popular participant sport in countries of the Commonwealth of Nations. Non-Commonwealth entities with full IFNA membership include Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Argentina, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and the United States, along with former Commonwealth members Zimbabwe, Ireland and Hong Kong. International tournaments are held among countries in each of the five IFNA regions, either annually or every four years. Netball was one of three new sports included in the 1998 Commonwealth Games and has been a fixture ever since.

Major championships

There are three major international netball competitions.

Netball's important competition is the World Netball Championships, held every four years. It was first held in 1963 at the Chelsea College of Physical Education at Eastbourne, England, with 11 nations competing. Since its inception the competition has been dominated primarily by the Australian and New Zealand teams, which hold ten and four titles, respectively. Trinidad and Tobago is the only other team to win a championship title. That title, won in 1979, was shared with New Zealand and Australia; all three teams finished with equal points at the end of the round robin, and there were no finals.

The World Series is a competition among the top six national netball teams, as ranked by the INF World Rankings. It is organised by the INF in conjunction with the national governing bodies of the six competing nations, UK Sport, and the host city's local council. The All England Netball Association covers air travel, accommodation, food and local travel expenses for all teams, while the respective netball governing bodies cover player allowances. It is held over three days, with each team playing each other once during the first two days in a round-robin format. The four highest-scoring teams advance to the semi-finals; the winners face each other in the Grand Final. Netball gained Olympic recognition in 1995 after 20 years of lobbying. Although it has never been played at the Summer Olympics, politicians and administrators have been campaigning to have it included in the near future. Its absence from the Olympics has been seen by the netball community as a hindrance to the global growth of the game by limiting access to media attention and funding sources. Some funding sources became available with recognition in 1995, including the International Olympic Committee, national Olympic committees, national sport organisations, and state and federal governments.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.