



VOLLEYBALL—LIKE ITS COUSIN, basketball—was introduced in China just years after being created in Massachusetts. The reason is simple: both were the inspiration of physical education instructors at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), an international organization that had become established in a number of major Chinese cities.

William G. Morgan, the director of physical education at the YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts, invented volleyball (which he called "Mintonette") in 1895. His intention was to create a simple, enjoyable indoor winter game to supplement what was otherwise an austere round of gymnastics-based physical conditioning exercises that were the lot of physical education students during the cold New England winter. Volleyball spread quickly because it featured clear and intuitively appealing goals.

Players hit the ball back and forth across the court net to keep the ball from touching the ground. It first spread through the United States, arrived in Asia in 1900, and reached China in 1905. Only later, in 1917, did it get to Europe, where it grew in popularity throughout the 1920s, particularly in France.

The Chinese volleyball team participated in the Far Eastern Championship Games in the 1920s and 1930s and was one of the strongest teams in Asia. The Soviets, too, became interested in volleyball, and the Soviets and their client states were to become, with Japan, major competitive players.

During World War II the number of players on a side decreased from sixteen or nineteen to six. After the war Europeans and Americans dominated international volleyball. Later Japanese women's volleyball created the "Japanese legend" under the coaching of

Hirofumi Daimatsu, who was referred to as the "demon coach" for his strict discipline and the unrelenting conditioning drills that he put his players through. Although Japanese female volleyball players were physically small, they won gold medals in the 1962 World Women's Volleyball Championship and the 1964 Olympic Games with their flexibility, indomitable spirit, and special style. They dominated world women's volleyball for more than ten years.

Volleyball's Global Appeal

With the establishment of its governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), in 1947, volleyball became an organized international sport. The first World Men's Volleyball Championship was staged in 1947, and the first World Women's Volleyball Championship in 1952, but it wasn't until 1964 that volleyball became an official

Beach Volleyball Takes Hold



Beach volleyball is similar to indoor volleyball in its structure and rules of play. However, unlike indoor volleyball, beach volleyball has no coaches to facilitate play, and a player has only one teammate to rely on.

Beach volleyball—an Olympic sport since 1994—began during the 1920s on the beaches of southern California and Europe. By the 1950s and 1960s tournaments were held in the United States, Brazil, Canada, and France, and in other parts of Europe. During the 1960s President John F. Kennedy

attended the first official beach volleyball event at Sorrento Beach in Los Angeles. During the 1990s the Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), with 214 national federations, began to govern international beach volleyball and volleyball. The FIVB World Tour, formerly known as the "World Championship Series," is the official international tour. The World Tour grew quickly since it began in 1992, and the groundwork for this growth was laid in the sands of sunny southern California.

■ KRISTINE DRAKICH

A member of China's men's volleyball team attempts to get the ball past two defenders.



Olympic event in the Eighteenth Olympic Games at Tokyo.

Volleyball, soccer, and basketball are the top three ball games in the world. As the only net sport of the three, volleyball is thought to have more of a sense of cooperation and even serenity, compared with intense rivalry of soccer and basketball. By 1997 the FIVB had become the biggest single sport organization, with members from more than 200 countries and regions, and the number of volleyball participants exceeding 150 million. Volleyball has become a popular sport with more than 800 million regular spectators, second only to soccer. (The color of the ball has changed from the original white to a vivid combination of blue, yellow, and white, perhaps giving those spectators a better view of the action.)

Today women's volleyball teams throughout the world embrace a variety of techniques and playing styles. Asian women's volleyball, represented by the Chinese and Japanese teams, is best known for its speed. Teams work around advantages their opponents might have in height and strength and defeat them with quick and flexible attacks. European women's volleyball, represented by the Russian team, generally adopts a traditional system of offense, noted for its high tosses and high spikes. Because the players are tall and

physically strong, strong attacks are the easiest way to gain points. Women's volleyball in the Americas, represented by the Brazilian team, adopts an overall tactic combining Asian and European characteristics, with an emphasis on strong attacks assisted by their quickness. The combination of, and confrontation between, different volleyball techniques makes the competitions exciting for spectators.

Men's volleyball games may be less nuanced but the strength of men players and the fast pace of the game also appeal to spectators. In men's volleyball the European and U.S. teams enjoy absolute supremacy.

Volleyball in China

In 1950 the Chinese team participated in a six-player-based international game for the first time. The team adapted the "quick spike" tactic from the former nine-player game to the new six-player game and invented a set of quick-attack cloak tactics centered on these quick spikes. The Chinese tactic of quick offense created a new style in world volleyball, mainly relying on strong-attack and individual-attack tactics. During the 1956 Paris Volleyball World Championship, the Chinese men's volleyball team created a furor with its quick spikes, which were dubbed "acrobatic tactics." Later, as volleyball rules changed, the Chinese men's volleyball team created a technique of blocking that resembled the action of "putting on a cap" and a technique of spiking called the "open spike." The team's new tactics played

an important role in promoting the development of world volleyball.

In 1964 Chinese Prime Minister ZHOU Enlai 周恩来 invited Japanese coach Hirofumi Daimatsu to China to train the Chinese national teams for one month, during which time the Chinese learned techniques used in Japan.

When the Third World Cup Volleyball Tournament was held in Tokyo in 1981, the Chinese women's volleyball team, with its flexible offense and strong defense, was called the "Wall of the Tian'anmen" and became the champion. This victory began an upsurge of interest in volleyball in China and ushered in a new "Chinese era" in world volleyball. Under the guidance of YUAN Weimin 袁伟民 and headed by the ace spiker LANG Ping 郎平, the Chinese women's volleyball team swept four more world titles: the 1982 World Women's Volleyball Championship, 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, 1985 World Cup Volleyball Tournament, and 1986 World Women's Volleyball Championship.

During the 1980s the Chinese women's volleyball team's spirit and success in winning five world titles in succession were the best example of the strong will of the Chinese people to excel and build their country. On 20 March 1981, at a preliminary match of the Asian district for the World Cup Volleyball Tournament, the Chinese men's volleyball team turned the tables on its opponent, beating the South Korean team 3-2, and qualified for the World Cup Volleyball Tournament matches. On hearing the good news, students of Beijing University became so excited

that they marched to the Gate of the Heavenly Peace, during which they shouted the slogan, "Let's unite and develop China!" The victories in volleyball games helped push forward China's opening up to the world and inspired the Chinese to conduct their reforms with more confidence.

During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the Chinese men's and women's volleyball teams suffered one setback after another and even lost their dominant positions in the Asian Games. In 1996 the professional league system was introduced into volleyball games in China, which turned out to be helpful in reversing the downward trend. The Chinese women's volleyball team finished second in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and first in the 2003 World Cup Volleyball Tournament, then won the gold medal in the 2004 Athens Olympic Games with a win over its strong Russian opponent.

The Chinese men's volleyball team experienced similar success, reclaiming the gold medal in the 1997 Asian Volleyball Championship. Both the Chinese men's and women's volleyball teams won the Asian Games in 1998.

Volleyball Resurgence

The history of the Chinese women's volleyball team in the twentieth century and the success of the current team have once again aroused the Chinese people's enthusiasm for the sport. In international competitions, there is the exciting prospect of Lang Ping, the head coach of the U.S. women's volleyball team, and CHEN Zhonghe 陈忠和, the head coach of the Chinese women's

volleyball team who was Lang Ping's assistant coach when Lang coached the Chinese women's team, meeting at the Olympics and at other volleyball competitions. The Chinese also hope for another period of success by the men's volleyball team.

Playing for China— Coaching for the U.S.A.

The legendary coach Yuan Weimin joined the Chinese national volleyball team as a primary setter in 1962. After his retirement as a player, he became head coach of the Chinese national women's volleyball team. Under his coaching, the Chinese women's volleyball team won gold medals at the World Cup in 1981, the World Championship in 1982, and the Olympic Games in 1984. Later he became the minister of the State Physical Culture

and Sports Commission and the chairman of the Asian Volleyball Confederation. Yuan Weimin's tactics of using full offense and full defense and combining height and speed, swiftness and flexibility became the trend in volleyball at that time.

"Iron Hammer" 铁榔头 Lang Ping was the best representative of Yuan Weimin's tactics. In her performance on the court, the element of height in the tactic of combining height and speed was fully demonstrated. Before Lang Ping joined the Chinese women's volleyball team, the team had boasted the fastest and most comprehensive offensive system in the world. The only element lacking was the ability to gain points in counterattacks and deadlocks. With her ability to make strong attacks during deadlocks or counterattacks and her steady performance in

critical situations, Lang Ping was the most effective strong-attack breaker for the Chinese women's volleyball team. The ability of Lang Ping and her teammates to hold and defend represented the first "full-offense and full-defense" strategy in the history of women's volleyball.

After her retirement in 1985, Lang Ping became a student at the Beijing Normal University. In 1987 she moved to the United States, where she continued her studies at New Mexico State University and received her master's degree in sports management. She coached the Chinese women's volleyball team and the Italian women's volleyball team after her graduation. She became the head coach of the U.S. women's volleyball team in 2005.

■ ZHANG LING 张玲