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## International volleyball federation: Function and importance

**Parveena Begum and Dr. Sandeep Bhalla**

### Abstract

Volleyball was introduced to the Olympics in 1964 but the beach volleyball phenomenon arose only at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games in Atlanta. The international governing body for volleyball is the Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. The FIVB is the world's largest sports federation, with more than 200 member nations. Under the direction of its president, the FIVB oversees the administration of volleyball throughout the world and is responsible for producing several major events, including the Olympic Games, World Championships, World Cup, World League and World Grand Prix. The FIVB's main activity is worldwide planning and organisation of volleyball events, sometimes in conjunction with other international governing bodies such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The FIVB also maintains extensive special programmes aimed at the advance of world volleyball. This includes the constitution of development centers in areas where the sport is still unpopular, as well as support (in instruction and equipment) for organizations that fail to meet the quality standards required on an international level. Another relevant area of concern is the promotion of volleyball in a worldwide scale. Part of the FIVB's activities in this area consists in attracting media partners and sponsors through negotiation of commercial rights for broadcasting and coverage of major events. The FIVB Working closely with national federations and private enterprises the FIVB aims to develop Volleyball as a major world media and entertainment sport through world-class planning and organisation of competitions, marketing and development activities. As the global guiding organisation for volleyball, the FIVB upholds the highest standards to ensure the legacy and excellence of the sport is experienced and enjoyed around the world. The FIVB's key role is to provide leadership to over 500 million players and 33 million licensed athletes.

**Keywords:** Volleyball, beach volleyball, international volleyball federation (FIVB), international Olympic committee (IOC), men's world championship, women's world championship

### Introduction

The Volleyball sport is very finely balanced between power and speed. Hence while strength and height have become vital components of international teams, the ability of teams and coaches to devise new tactics, strategies and skills have been crucial for success at the Olympic Games. Volleyball was introduced to the Olympics in 1964 but the beach volleyball phenomenon arose only at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games in Atlanta. This discipline, although still very young, has become very popular. There is a men's and women's volleyball event and a men's and women's beach volleyball event. Volleyball takes place indoors in controlled conditions. Beach volleyball takes place outside, where the athletes have to compete with the added variables of the sand, the sun and the wind. Volleyball matches are played to the best of five sets. The first four sets are played to 25 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. A team must win a set by two points. There is no ceiling, so each set continues until one of the teams gains a two-point advantage. In beach volleyball, matches are played best of three sets using the rally point system. The first two sets are played to 21 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. Again, a team must win a set by two points [8].

### Description

The International Volleyball Federation, commonly known by the acronym FIVB, is the international governing body for all forms of volleyball. Its headquarters are located in Lausanne, Switzerland.

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## History

Before the FIVB was founded volleyball was part of the International Amateur Handball Federation. The FIVB was founded in France in April 1947. In the late 1940s, some of the European national federations began to address the issue of creating an international governing body for the sport of volleyball. Initial discussions eventually lead to the installation of a Constitutive Congress in 1947. Fourteen national federations representing five different continents attended the meetings where, between 18 and 20 April, the entity was officially formed, having Frenchman Paul Libaud as first president. The first Asia volleyball championship was held at Tokyo (Japan) in 1995 and in this championship India had beaten Japan in final. One of the main goals of the 1947 Congress was achieved two years later with the establishment of the first international major volleyball event, the World Championship. In 1952, a women's version of the tournament was also introduced. In 1964, the IOC endorsed the addition of volleyball to the Olympic programme. By this time, the number of national federations affiliated to the FIVB had grown to 89. Later in that year (1969), a new international event, the World Cup was introduced. It would be turned into a qualifying event for the Olympic Games in 1991. Following Libaud's retirement and the election of Mexican Rubén Acosta Hernandez for the position of president in 1984, the FIVB moved its headquarters from Paris, France to Lausanne, Switzerland and intensified to an unprecedented level its policy of promoting volleyball on a worldwide basis.

Measures taken in this direction include the establishment of annual competitions for men's and women's volleyball (the World League, in 1990, and the Grand Prix, in 1993), the indication of Beach volleyball as an Olympic event (1996) and a number of changes in the rules of the game with the purpose of enhancing public visibility. On 19 June 2008, Wei Jizhong of China, who during this period served as the 1st Vice president took over during the 31st World Congress in Dubai when Dr. Rubén Acosta decided to step down. Mr. Jizhong Wei became the third president in the history of the FIVB. The handover of the presidency took place on 24 August 2008 in Beijing. As of 2020, the FIVB counted 222 affiliated national federations.

## Activities

The FIVB's main activity is worldwide planning and organisation of volleyball events, sometimes in conjunction with other international governing bodies such as the IOC. This involves defining qualification procedures and competition formulae for tournaments, as well as more specific details such as player line-up and replacement restrictions, venues and hosts. The FIVB participates directly in the organization of continental volleyball events which have an attached international significance, such as Olympic and World Championship continental qualification tournaments. Amongst others, the FIVB organizes the following international volleyball tournaments:

- Olympic Games: since 1964, quadrennially
- Men's World Championship: since 1949, quadrennially
- Women's World Championship: since 1952, quadrennially
- Men's World Cup: since 1965, quadrennially
- Women's World Cup: since 1973, quadrennially
- World Grand Champions Cup: since 1993, quadrennially
- Men's Nations League: since 2018, annually
- Women's Nations League: since 2018, annually
- Men's Challenger Cup: since 2018, annually

- Women's Challenger Cup: since 2018, annually
- Men's Club World Championship: since 1989, annually
- Women's Club World Championship: since 1991, annually

## Defunct

- World League (Men): 1990–2017, annually
- World Grand Prix (Women): 1993–2017, annually and the following international under-age volleyball tournaments:
  - Youth Olympic Games: 2010
  - Men's U21 World Championship (Junior): since 1977, biennially
  - Women's U20 World Championship (Junior): since 1977, biennially
  - Boys' U19 World Championship (Youth): since 1989, biennially
  - Girls' U18 World Championship (Youth): since 1989, biennially and the following international beach volleyball tournaments:
    - Olympic Games: since 1996, quadrennially
    - World Championship: since 1997, biennially
    - World Tour: since 1989, annually and the following international under-age beach volleyball tournaments:
      - Youth Olympic Games: since 2014, quadrennially
      - U23 World Championships: since 2013, annually
      - U21 World Championships: since 2001, annually
      - U19 World Championships: since 2003, annually
      - U17 World Championships: since 2014, annually

The FIVB also maintains extensive special programmes aimed at the advance of world volleyball. This includes the constitution of development centers in areas where the sport is still unpopular, as well as support (in instruction and equipment) for organizations that fail to meet the quality standards required on an international level. Therefore, FIVB organizes congress, workshops, courses for referees, coaches and teachers, to promote grassroot volleyball development, such as:

- Volley All Festival
- Good Net Project in 2019
- School Volleyball Congress in 2007
- Volleyball Medicine Congress in 2011
- Symposium on Match Analysis in 1981
- Symposium on Mini Volleyball in 1985

Another relevant area of concern is the promotion of volleyball in a worldwide scale. Part of the FIVB's activities in this area consists in attracting media partners and sponsors through negotiation of commercial rights for broadcasting and coverage of major events. As reported by Olympic news outlet Around the Rings, the FIVB recently launched a new "FIVB Heroes" promotion in Rome. The campaign uses billboards, posters and statues of the top beach volleyball players situated around the city to enhance visibility and profiles of the athletes. The FIVB is responsible for the standardization of volleyball rules. In recent years, many changes were implemented in connection with its promotional and marketing vision, in an alleged attempt to improve public visibility and make the sport comply to the demands of sponsors and media organizations. These changes range from ingenuous, almost commonplace restrictions, such as the obligation of a "fashionable" uniform – meaning tight clothing, supposed to be more appealing to the audience because it makes players bodies salient –, to very drastic

changes in the format of competitions (e.g., the rally-point system). The FIVB is the ultimate international authority in volleyball, and judges (or is involved at least to some degree in the judgement) issues such as doping, regulation of player transfer, nationality changes and gender determination. It also publishes the FIVB World Rankings, used as basis for seeding in international competitions.

#### **The FIVB is also responsible for the volleyball games at some regional competitions as**

- Asian Games
- European Games
- Pan American Games
- Lusophony Games
- All-Africa Games

#### **Organization**

- **World Congress:** The supreme authority convened every two years, electing the President and members of the Board.
- **Board of Administration:** Responsible for the overall management of the FIVB, overseeing the work of the national federations, confederations, commissions and councils and appoints officials including members of the Executive Committee.
- **Executive Committee:** Composed of Board members and each member is charged with important and specific responsibilities, assisted by Commissions, Committees and Councils.
  - Legal Commission
  - Finance Commission
  - Communication Commission
  - Rules of the Games and Refereeing Commission
  - Technical and Coaching Commission
  - Medical Commission
  - Development Commission
  - Beach Volleyball Commission
  - Athletes Commission
  - Sports Events Council
  - Beach Volleyball World Tour Council
  - World League Council
  - World Grand Prix Council
  - World Championships Council

#### **Judicial Bodies**

- FIVB Disciplinary Panel
- FIVB Appeals Panel
- FIVB Ethics Panel
- FIVB Tribunal

#### **The FIVB also presides over five continental confederations**

- Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) in Asia and Oceania
- Confederación Sudamericana de Voleibol (CSV) in South America
- African Volleyball Confederation (CAVB) in Africa
- European Volleyball Confederation (CEV) in Europe
- North, Central America and Caribbean Volleyball Confederation (NORCECA) in North America. Each continental confederation, by its turn, presides over a number of national federations located in its domain of action.

#### **FIVB Heroes**

"FIVB Heroes" is the official image campaign of the FIVB.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of the players' athletic achievements and to increase the worldwide interest in the sport. "FIVB Heroes" features 33 volleyball and 29 beach volleyball players from 19 countries, who were selected due to their outstanding performance<sup>[9]</sup>.

#### **International Volleyball: An American Perspective**

Many Americans incorrectly believe the sport of volleyball rises to prominence only once every four years as part of the Olympic Games and/or that it is primarily a recreational game to be played in the backyard or at picnics. In fact, volleyball has major international competitions every year and, at its highest level, is a physically demanding sport played by some of the world's most elite athletes. Of course, volleyball is also a popular recreational activity enjoyed by more than 37 million persons in the U.S. (more than any team sport but basketball) and more than 800 million persons globally, making it the world's most popular participant sport. This fact sheet is designed to provide more understanding about international volleyball and its major competition, including the Olympic Games<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### **International Governing Body**

The international governing body for volleyball is the Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. The FIVB is the world's largest sports federation, with more than 200 member nations. Under the direction of its president, Dr. Ruben Acosta of Mexico, the FIVB oversees the administration of volleyball throughout the world and is responsible for producing several major events, including the Olympic Games, World Championships, World Cup, World League and World Grand Prix.

#### **National Governing Body**

The national governing body (NGB) for volleyball in the U.S. is USA Volleyball, formerly known as the United States Volleyball Association. Founded in 1928, USA Volleyball is responsible for the administration of all forms of volleyball in the United States, including producing the annual U.S. Open Volleyball Championships, Junior Olympic Volleyball Championships, and U.S. Outdoor National Championships. As mandated by the 1978 Amateur Sports Act, USA Volleyball is responsible to the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) and the FIVB for training and nominating the teams which represent the United States in the Olympic Games and other important volleyball competitions worldwide.

**Major Competitions:** The four major events on the international volleyball calendar are the Olympic Games (men and women, indoors and beach) World Championships (men and women, indoors), World Cup (men and women, indoors) and World League (men, indoors)/World Grand Prix (women, indoors). All events are conducted quadrennially, with the exception of the annual World League and World Grand Prix.

#### **Olympic Games**

Volleyball made its Olympic debut in 1964 at Tokyo. Two-player beach volleyball will debut at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Indoors, 12 men's and ten women's teams will earn the right to compete in Atlanta, based on the following criteria:

#### **Men's**

Host Country

#### **Women's**

Host Country



1992 Olympic Champion	1992 Olympic Champion
1994 World Champion	1994 World Champion
1995 World Cup Champion	1995 World Cup Champion
1993 NORCECA Champion	1993 NORCECA Champion
South American Zone Champion	South American Zone Champion
European Zone Champion	European Zone Champion
Asian Zone Champion	Asian Zone Champion
African Zone Champion	Winner and Runner-up, Olympic Qual. Tournament
Winner, Olympic Qual. Tournament A	
Winner, Olympic Qual. Tournament B	
Winner, Olympic Qual. Tournament C	

1994 - Italy (USA, 3rd)

1994 - Cuba (USA, 6th)

**World Cup**

The World Cup is held every four years, in the year prior to the Olympic Games. Though originally held at various sites, it has been hosted by Japan since 1977. Prior to 1991, the World Cup took place in the year immediately following the Olympics. The 12 berths in the World Cup for men and women are gained in the following manner:

- Host Country
- Defending World Cup Champion
- The highest-placed team (of each zone) not qualified for the Olympic Games, in accordance with the ranking of the zone championships.

The second-place team in a particular competition listed above will qualify for the Olympics if a previously qualified team wins that competition. If both the first- and second-place teams in a particular competition listed above are previously qualified, the third-place team will qualify, and so on. Teams participating in Olympic qualification tournaments (held in the Olympic year) will be the host country and the highest-ranking; non-qualified teams from each zone.

**Olympic Champions (Men's)**

1964 - Soviet Union (USA, 9th)  
1968 - Soviet Union (USA 7th)  
1972 - Japan (USA, DNQ)  
1976 - Poland (USA, DNQ)  
1980 - Soviet Union, (USA, DNQ)  
1984 - USA  
1988 - USA  
1992 - Brazil (USA, 3rd)  
1996 -

**Olympic Champions (Women's)**

1964 - Japan (USA, 5th)  
1968 - Soviet Union (USA, 8th)  
1972 - Soviet Union (USA, DNQ)  
1976 - Japan (USA, DNQ)  
1980 - Soviet Union (USA, DNP)  
1984 - China (USA, 2nd)  
1988 - Soviet Union (USA, 7th)  
1992 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1996 -

Beach volleyball will feature 24 men's and 16 women's teams, three of each from the U.S. Qualification procedures are being determined

**World Championships**

The World Championships are held every four years in the second year after the Olympics. The site, usually separate for the men's and women's competitions, is determined by the FIVB, based on bids received from interested cities. The 16 berths in the World Championships for men and women are gained in the following manner:

- Host Country
- The Seven Highest Finishers in the Previous World Championship
- The Winners of the Five Zone Championships
- The Top Three Finishers at the World Challenge Cup (held early in the World Championship year and thus, a special qualifying tournament).

**World Champions (Men's)**

1949 - Soviet Union (USA, DNP)  
1952 - Soviet Union (USA, DNP)  
1956 - Czechoslovakia (USA, 6th)  
1960 - Soviet Union (USA, 7th)  
1962 - Soviet Union, (USA, DNP)  
1966 - Czechoslovakia (USA, 11th)  
1970 - East Germany (USA, 15th)  
1974 -  
1978 - Soviet Union (USA, 19th)  
1982 - Soviet Union (USA, 13th)  
1986 - USA  
1990 - Italy (USA, 13th)

**World Champions (Women's)**

1952 - Soviet Union (USA, DNP)  
1956 - Soviet Union (USA, 9th)  
1960 - Soviet Union (USA, 6th)  
1962 - Japan (USA, DNP)  
1966 - Japan (USA, 2nd)  
1970 - Soviet Union (USA, 11th)  
1974 - Japan (USA, 12th)  
1978 - Cuba (USA, 5th)  
1982 - China (USA 3rd)  
1986 - China (USA, 10th)  
1990 - Soviet Union (USA, 3rd)

**World Cup Champions (Men's)**

1965 - Soviet Union (USA, DNP)  
1969 - East Germany (USA, DNP)  
1973 - Soviet Union (USA, 7th)  
1977 - Soviet Union (USA, 10th)  
1981 - Soviet Union, (USA, DNQ)  
1985 - USA  
1989 - Cuba (USA, 4th)  
1991 - Soviet Union (USA, 3rd)

**World Cup Champions (Women's)**

1973 - Soviet Union (USA, 6th)  
1977 - Japan (USA, 7th)  
1981 - China (USA 4th)  
1985 - China (USA, DNQ)  
1989 - Cuba (USA, DNQ)  
1991 - Cuba (USA, 4th)

**Zone Championships**

The volleyball world is divided into five international zones. The U.S. is in the NORCECA (North America/Central America/Caribbean) Zone, with championships held every two years at various sites. The other zones are Europe, Asia Africa, and South America the frequency of zone championship competition varies in each of the five sections. Any nation in a particular zone may participate in its zone championships whenever such a competition is conducted.

**NORCECA Champions (Men's)**

1969 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1971 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1973 - USA  
1975 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1977 - Cuba, (USA, SE)  
1979 - Cuba (USA, 5th)  
1981 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1983 - USA  
1985 - USA  
1987 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1989 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1991 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1993 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)

**1995 NORCECA Champions (Women's)**

1969 - Mexico (USA, 6th)  
1971 Mexico (USA, 3rd)  
1973 - Cuba (USA 3rd)  
1975 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1977 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1979 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1981 - USA  
1983 - USA  
1985 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1987 - Cuba USA, 2nd)  
1989 - Cuba (USA, 3rd)  
1991 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)  
1993 - Cuba (USA, 2nd)

**World League and World Grand Prix**

The World League features the top dozen men's volleyball teams in the world in competition for a total purse that has grown to \$6-million (with \$1 million to the winning team) since the inaugurate season of 1990, during which the total purse was \$1-million. Teams are divided into three, four team pools and each team play the other teams in its pool four times (twice at home, twice on the road). The winner and runner-up in each pool advance to a seeded playoff round. The regular season is played in May and June, with playoffs in early July.

The World Grand Prix is the women's volleyball counterpart to World League and offers a total purse of \$1.5-million (with a \$300,000 championship prize) to its 12-team field Teams play in different four-team pools each weekend, at round-

robin tournaments hosted by cities throughout Australia and Asia. The three teams with the best records join the host country for the Grand Prix Finals. The regular season is played in August and early September, with playoff; in mid-September.

#### **World League Champions      World Grand Prix Champions**

1990 - Italy (USA, 4th in pool)	
1991 - Italy (USA, 3rd in pool)	
1992 - Italy (USA, 1st in pool, 3rd overall)	
1993 - Brazil (USA, 5th in pool)	1993 - Cuba (USA, 7th reg season)
1994 - Italy (USA, 4th in pool)	1994 - Brazil (USA, 5th reg season)

#### **Recent Developments**

The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has teamed up with marine conservation group Ghost Fishing Foundation (Ghost Fishing) to launch Good Net, a project designed to recover discarded fishing nets from the world's oceans and recycle them into volleyball nets for community use. Launched on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, the home of beach volleyball, Good Net is part of the United Nations' Clean Seas Campaign, which has the full support of the International Olympic Committee. As part of the launch, young people from the local area were invited to take part in volleyball masterclasses with Brazilian Olympic champion Giba, as well as a number of other volleyball stars. Children also learned more about the problem of ghost nets. Every year, 640,000 tonnes of fishing gear finds its way into the oceans, where it continues to trap marine wildlife, including whales, dolphins, turtles and fish of all kinds. Good Net aims to raise global awareness of the problem while also contributing to the solution. "As volleyball players, nets are at the centre of our game and of our joy. And we love the beach. So, for us, it was really hard to learn that, in the oceans, there are so many nets that are doing so much harm out of sight," Giba said at the launch. "With volleyball, we have the most watched sport at the Olympic Games. Who better to team up with groups like Ghost Fishing, so we can act as one to make Good Net?" On this World Water Day, an outcome from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to ensure clean drinking water for all by 2030, the FIVB's commitment to supporting the removal of plastics from the world's oceans is another step by an IF to ensure the sustainability of natural sporting arenas and protect the environment for future generations to come <sup>[11]</sup>.

International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has elected 24 members and two gender-in-minority members who will join the governing body's Board. The officials were elected during the second day of the virtual FIVB World Congress today and will join FIVB President Ary Graça and the five Continental Confederation heads to form the new Board. Asian Volleyball Confederation members to be elected included Australia's Craig Carracher, China's Cai Yi, Iran's Mohammed Davarzani, Cook Islands' Hugh Graham, Thailand's Kiattipong Radchatagriengkai and Japan's Kenji Shimaoka. African Volleyball Confederation members included Nigeria's Habu Ahmed Gumel, Ivory Coast's Sanga Issouf Kone and Botswana's Daniel Molaodi. Italy's Renato Arena, Croatia's Zdeslav Barač, Belgium's Geert De Dobbeleer, the Netherlands' Michael Everaert, Slovakia's Lubor Halanda, France's Annie Peytavin, Poland's Mirosław Przedpełski and Russia's Stanislav Shevchenko will represent the European Volleyball Confederation. The South American Volleyball Confederation will be represented by Paraguay's Roberto

Wilfrido Escobar Gonzalez, Argentina's Juan Antonio Gutierrez and Brazil's Marco Tullio Teixeira, while the North, Central America and Caribbean Volleyball Confederation will see Canada's Mark Eckert, Trinidad and Tobago's Mushtaque Mohammed, Honduras' Félix Ambrosio Sabio Gonzalez and St Kitts and Nevis' Glenn Quinlan on the FIVB Board. The FIVB confirmed Cuba's Alejandrina Mireya Luis Hernandez and Scotland's Margaret Ann Fleming were elected to the FIVB Board as gender-in-minority members. They received 137 and 120 votes respectively, with Venezuela's Judith Rodriguez missing out after securing 38 votes. The FIVB Congress also approved the appointment of the internal auditors, with Majoré Louis Timba and Terry Sasser selected, with Julio Perez Alfaro approved as the substitute internal auditor <sup>[12]</sup>.

#### **Conclusion**

The FIVB is the governing body responsible for all forms of Volleyball on a global level with currently 221 affiliated national federations and five continental confederations. Working closely with national federations and private enterprises the FIVB aims to develop Volleyball as a major world media and entertainment sport through world-class planning and organisation of competitions, marketing and development activities. The FIVB is part of the Olympic Movement, contributing to the success of the Olympic Games <sup>[13]</sup>. As the global guiding organisation for volleyball, the FIVB upholds the highest standards to ensure the legacy and excellence of the sport is experienced and enjoyed around the world. The FIVB's key role is to provide leadership to over 500 million players and 33 million licensed athletes <sup>[14]</sup>.

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