

# KORFBALL

SPORT IN THE MIXED ZONE





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## An extra dimension

– that no other sport can offer



Welcome to korfball, the world's only mixed team sport. Since its earliest development, korfball teams have consisted equally of male and female players. In all instances, from korfball's foremost international athletes, to children in the playground, this is an activity where

both sexes play together on completely even terms. In play, korfballers only directly oppose members of their own sex, therefore the game is structured to dilute advantages of height, speed or strength that would otherwise make mixed team sport impossible to achieve with any degree of equality. As a mixed team sport, korfball creates a unique social environment. Like many sports, korfball provides participants and spectators a full range of intense emotion – doing so with and against team-mates and opponents of both sexes adds an extra dimension that no other sport can offer.

**Mixed team sport**



# A ball sport played by hand

## Competing and co-operating on equal terms



Korfball is a ball sport played by hand. It takes a few moments to learn, but a lifetime to perfect. By passing and quick movement players must elude their personal opponents to shoot the ball through a korf – the Dutch word for basket. In the standard game, teams consist of eight players – four male and four female. The korf is set in from the end of the playing area, enabling shots from 360 degrees. Players assume either attack or defence roles. After two goals, defenders and attackers switch – placing emphasis on the development of all-round skills: each player should be able to defend, attack, shoot and support his or her team-mates. A player ‘defended’ by a personal opponent is not permitted to shoot, meaning quick shots, based on specific technique, are most effective. Korfball is based on co-operation between players – dribbling and running with the ball are classed as ‘solo play’ and are outlawed. Although contact between players does occur in korfbal, that contact is controlled – players may not gain advantage from contacting their opponents.





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## A simple way of including boys and girls within the rules



Korfball's originator, Nico Broekhuysen, taught pre-teen boys and girls in one of Amsterdam's poorer districts at the turn of the twentieth century. Inspired by an early version of basketball he saw demonstrated while attending a physical education summer school

in Sweden, Broekhuysen established korfball in 1903.

Unlike many other team sports that were developed for single sex schools, Broekhuysen's stroke of genius was to find a simple way of including boys and girls equally within the rules of his game. Nico Broekhuysen's challenge was to organise a co-operative yet competitive physical activity for boys and girls together. Korfball was his solution – a quite different path to that taken by those who developed the many other superficially similar – but single sex – team sports with their origins in schools around the same period, many of which are also played worldwide today.

**Origin familiar, yet unique**



## Social attitudes worldwide have caught up with the sport



After its conception, in the early decades of the twentieth century, many korbball clubs formed and the sport quickly became established in the Netherlands and Belgium. The International Korbball Federation was founded in 1933 as a continuation of the International Korbball Bureau,

established in 1924 by the Dutch and Belgian national associations. Korbball was played as a demonstration sport at the Olympics of 1920 (Amsterdam) and 1928 (Antwerp). Accelerated expansion has occurred since the late 1970s as social attitudes worldwide have caught up with the progressive, innovative nature of the sport. The first korbball World Championships were contested in 1978 and have taken place on a four-year cycle since 1987. Korbball was recognised by the International Olympic Committee in 1993 and has been played at the World Games since 1985. Continental championships are also contested on a four-year cycle in Europe and Asia-Oceania. Originally played

outdoors on grass, korbball is now played on many other surfaces: hard-court, artificial grass, on the beach, and even – at a recreational level – in the water. Most elite-level international korbball is played indoors.







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## Expanding network active in international exchange



The spirit of co-operation, critical to the rules of korfball, is also a characteristic of the sport's international governing body and of the wider international korfball community. The International Korfball Federation now numbers approaching 50 member countries, on five continents, and is active in introducing korfball into

new countries at every opportunity. Although the sport is most solidly established in Europe – particularly the Netherlands and Belgium: the pioneer countries – it also flourishes in countries such as Chinese Taipei, Australia, India, Russia and South Africa and is gaining ground in the United States and China. The sport's expanding network is active in international exchange programmes, physical education schools and tertiary education institutes. As a progressive and innovative sport, embodying principles of equality and co-operation, korfball has immense potential to assist in establishing relationships, building communities and strengthening organisations – qualities the International Korfball Federation's development activities seek to capitalise on. In providing affiliated countries with financial, material and structural support, the International Korfball Federation aims to create stable local administration, thus enabling the sustainable development of korfball in each.



Spirit of co-operation



[www.korfball.org](http://www.korfball.org)