

# Team Handball: The Best Sport You Never Heard Of

Prepared by the American Handball Association ([www.handballamerica.com](http://www.handballamerica.com))

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Photos courtesy of the International Handball Federation



Handball, called here in the US "Team Handball", is a fast and furious game, demanding quick reflexes for speedy on-target catching, throwing and jumping. There are various forms of handball: the popular version is Team Handball, but other forms include Field Handball (which is played outdoors and is fast disappearing), and the increasingly-ubiquitous Beach Handball.

Like football (soccer), the object in handball is to score more goals than the opposing team, in this case by throwing the ball into their goal. A handball match is made up of two 30-minute halves, and is arbitrated by two referees. Each team is made up of twelve players; two goalkeepers and ten field players, although only one goalkeeper and six players are allowed on the court at any one time. Substitution may take place at any time, as long as one player is off before the next goes on.

Play progresses as the team players (excluding the goalkeeper) throw, pass, bounce or strike the ball with their hands, arms, head, body, thighs and knees, in order to reach the back of the target goal. Each player may hold onto the ball for up to three seconds and may take up to three steps whilst holding it, after which he/she must either pass or shoot. Dribbling on the move is fine, as long as the ball is batted downwards. The ball must not touch the legs

below the knees.

Similarities to football (soccer) include the fact that after a goal is scored play resumes in the centre of the court, with the ball in possession on the non-scoring team. Additionally, when the ball goes out over the sideline the opposition automatically takes possession and re-starts the game with a throw-in.

Unlike football (soccer), if the goalkeeper knocks the ball over the backline when making a save, he/she retains possession, but if it is a defender who deflects it over the backline the ball goes to the attacking team. Any missed shot by the attacking team means a goal throw.

The goalkeeper is the only player allowed in the goal area and is also the only player allowed to touch the ball with his/her feet (in order to save a shot), although kicking the ball is forbidden.

