

VOLLEYBALL EVOLUTION. ASPECTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN VOLLEYBALL

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ABSTRACT. This scientific article presents the inception, evolution and the development of the volleyball game as it happened in time, due to the geopolitical and social influences. Though it appeared in the US it quickly spread worldwide due to a consistent and sustained promotion, but also brought by the US military and the First World War. Romania contributed as well to the development of the game, being a founding member of the International Federation. Nowadays volleyball still is a fashionable game, present in Olympics and all major sports competitions.

Keywords: *starting, evolution, development, volleyball game;*

REZUMAT. Evoluția jocului de volei. Aspecte în dezvoltarea voleiului în Romania. Acest articol științific prezintă debutul, evoluția și dezvoltarea jocului de volei, așa cum a avut loc în decursul timpului, datorită influențelor de natura geopolitică și socială. Deși a apărut în US, acesta s-a răspândit în toată lumea atât datorită promovării consistente și susținute cât și prin detașarea trupelor militare americane în decursul primului război mondial. Romania a contribuit și ea la dezvoltarea jocului de volei, fiind membru fondator al federației internaționale, participantă la Jocurile Olimpice și la toate competițiile majore.

Cuvinte cheie: *debut, evoluție, dezvoltare, jocul de volei.*

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Introduction

The current state of the volleyball game is the result of a series of actions in which different playing means and ways have been experienced in order to improve the content.

Analyzing the evolution of this game, from its origins till now, one can notice that volleyball has experienced significant transformations caused mostly by the geopolitical events at a worldwide level.

This paper aims at showing using a systemic approach the order of the most important events that contributed to defining the game that we call today volleyball. The reason why I decided to use such an approach is based both on the way sports develop and also the variety of synergies and exchanges that led to the development of the game.

Based on the theory of the systems (Radulescu et al., 1978), a system can be defined as a multitude of elements that interact with one another or with other elements in order to reach finality. Analyzing volleyball as an integrative system, having a continuous interaction with different elements, both internal and external, through merging, one can say that the game gained new qualitative properties, which led to a continuous evolution.

The objective of this paper is to ensure historical background documentation regarding the evolution of volleyball game in general, with a specific approach towards the Romanian volleyball.

Volleyball as it is today, among other factors is a consequence of a game whose evolution is due to the political and social events worldwide.

Methods

Documentation was the method of study we used. This involved the study of different papers written on volleyball, studies that were about the history and the evolution of the sports field chosen for this research. More than that, a series of electronic sources on this particular theme, as well UNEFS Bucharest library collection of books on volleyball.

A considerable number of websites which provided information on the history of the volleyball game, especially from the USA have been accessed. We started from the premises that these websites can provide more accurate information from original sources dated back in the pre-electronic era.

In what concerns the Romanian volleyball, we consulted personalities from the Romanian Volleyball Federation and professors from UNEFS in Bucharest, in order to clarify the evolution of volleyball in Romania. We had discussions based on the thematic survey method.

We have studied different classical and electronic documentation sources and databases of the Romanian Volleyball Federation.

Documentation Results

William G. Morgan (1870-1942), born in New York remained in history as the inventor of a game originally called "Mintonette". Morgan has been most often represented as an old man, with white hair (Fântâneau, 1981), generally speaking, the image of the inventor of the volleyball game is that of a mature man. This is an inconsistency since in 1895, when the new game was officially invented and recognized, William G. Morgan was 25 years old.

Describing his first experiments Morgan said "In search of an appropriate game, tennis occurred to me, but this required rackets, balls, a net and other equipment, so it was eliminated, but the idea of a net seemed a good one. We raised it to a height of about 6 feet, 6 inches (1.98 metres) from the ground, just above the head of an average man. We needed a ball and among those we tried was a basketball bladder, but this was too light and too slow. We therefore tried the basketball itself, which was too big and too heavy." (<http://www.fivb.org/en/volleyball/history.asp>). This note, mentioned on the official website of the International Volleyball Federation comes in contradiction with several sources of the Romanian Volleyball Federation saying that a basketball bladder would have been the first volleyball (Bădău & Tanase, 2006; Bic & Pop, 1995; Croitoru & Serban, 2002; Ghenadi, et al. 1995; Mateescu & Popescu, 1977; Murafa et al., 1963; Stroeie et al., 1987) etc.

Eventually, Morgan asked A.G. Spalding & Bros to make a special new ball that was manufactured at the factory near Chicopee, Massachusetts. The ball was covered with leather, had a rubber bladder, between 25 and 27 inches (63.5-68.6 cm), weighing between 9 and 12 ounces (252-336 grams).

The first name of this new game was Mintonette. Having witnessed the demonstration and Morgan's explanations, Professor Alfred T. Halstead proposed to change the name - from Mintonette into Volley Ball, more descriptive and from the expression "to volley the ball back and forth over the net". This name was accepted by all the participants to the Springfield conference.

The rules remained the same until 1900, when Mr. W.E. Day modified them for the first time. One can notice that the accelerated popularization of volleyball in the early years has almost entirely been done by the YMCA missions that were scattered around the globe. A second role was played by the US soldiers quartered in military bases, especially in Central America and Asia.

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), founded 1844 by George Williams, was an association of young men, having the main objective "improvement of the spiritual condition of the young men engaged in houses of business, by the formation of Bible classes, family and social prayer meetings mutual improvement societies, or any other spiritual agency" (fig. 1) (Shedd, 1955).



Fig. 1. *Missionaries playing volleyball*

Retrieved from <http://www.sportsknowhow.com/images/volleyball-ymca-lrg.gif>

In 1906, Augusto York, an officer in the US army, takes part in the second military intervention of the US in the Caribbean's, and this seems to be the first contact of the volleyball game with Cuba. Two years later, in 1908, Hyozo Omori, graduate of Springfield College, demonstrates the new game on the YMCA Tokyo field. Later, in 1911 volleyball is played in China, endorsed by Max Exner and J. Howard Crokner. In Filipine volleyball was promoted by Elwood Brown, director of YMCA Manila.

In 1913 volleyball was important enough for the Asian countries to be included in the Far East Games (PanAsian Games today), which was held in Manila. The games were played between teams of 16 players from China, Japan and the Filipines (<http://www.fivb.org/TheGame/ChronologicalHighlights.htm>).

Volleyball began to spread worldwide to a big extent starting with the beginning of World War I, when George Fisher, secretary of the YMCA War Office, included volleyball in the recreation and education program for American armed forces in 1914. This is why American soldiers fighting in the First World War in

Europe brought volleyball in Normandy and Brittany. The game knew a rapid growth, but became famous especially in the Eastern countries, where the climate was colder and made gym sports particularly attractive. World War I was the one which made volleyball spread to Africa, where Egypt became the first country to learn the official rules in 1915. In 1917, at the Allied Forces air base in Porto Corsini, American airmen introduced the volleyball into Italy, and thus in the Mediterranean region. In 1919, Dr. George J. Fisher, as Secretary of the YMCA War Work Office, introduced volleyball in the program of the military training camps, both in the USA and abroad, in the Athletic Handbooks written for those responsible for sport and recreation in the Army and Marines. A whole industry developed, as thousands of balls (more than 16, 000) and nets were sent overseas to the US troops and were also presented to the Allied Army's sports directors. (<http://volleydome.net/Canuck/PDF/The%20History%20of%20Volleyball.pdf>)

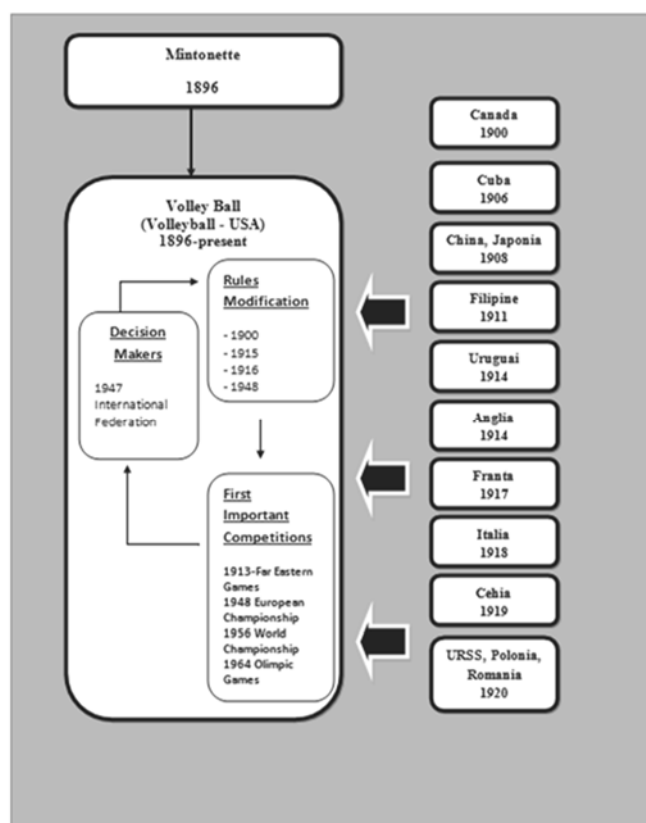


Fig. 2. Systemic approach regarding the evolution of the volleyball game.

Starting by 1914, volleyball penetrated Europe: in 1914 the first games are played in England, then in 1917 in France, in 1918 in Italy, in 1919 in Czech Republic, in 1920 in USSR, Baltic countries, Poland and Romania, in 1924 in Spain and Yugoslavia. The first national federation was founded in 1922 in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria followed quickly afterwards. The first National Championship was held in the United States, without YMCA teams (fig. 2).

One thing that is not mentioned in any Romanian sources and appears only in electronic resources is that volleyball appeared as discipline of the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, just as a demonstrative game. (http://www.forzaragazze.it/la_pallavolo/storia.php).

The program included a section "American sports" and it would be interesting to mention that this edition, from 1924, is the first in which Romania had an official delegation.

In the USSR, later on, in 1933 the first National Championship was held and included over 400,000 players and the match between Moscow and Kiev was an important event of the year. We notice that at that time the game was played in many parts of the world but without a unitary set of rules to be obeyed everywhere. Each country and competition was having its own set of regulations, thus impeding the deployment of large-scale competitions. An international forum was needed to unify the rules and organize an international and competitive activity.

William G. Morgan died in 1942 at the age of 68 years, witnessing the success of his invention. On the grave stone it is simply written "inventor of volleyball".

The Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 1964 became the first edition including volleyball in its official program. In 1948 the first European Men Championships were organized in Rome and the first World Men Championships in 1949 in Prague. In parallel took place the first Women's European Championships too.

In 1947, the political and social conditions made possible the creation of an international federation. The founding members were Romania, along with France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Egypt, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Turkey, Brazil, USA, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. The main thing for the new game rules was standardizing and organizing international competitions.

The congress in 1953, held in Romania, made possible substantial improvements regarding the rules and gave great advantage of the attack, which led to the spectacular growth and creativity. On the same occasion the referees' actions and terminology were defined.

In 1956 the first World Championship held in Paris – Men and Women brought together 24 countries from 4 continents. Czechoslovakia won men's competition and USSR, the women's.

In what Romania is concerned, volleyball first entered in 1920, being introduced by the American soldiers.

In 1921 the first championship for high school teams was organized, with the participation of the teams Dimitrie Cantemir, Spiru Haret, Mihai Viteazul, Gheorghe Lazar, George Șincai and the School of Commerce.

Later, in 1931 the Romanian Volleyball Federation was established. Also in 1931 first national men's championships were organized, with the participation of: "Sportul Studențesc", "Juventus", YMCA Turda, "Viforul Dacia", Tennis-Club and "Apărătorii Patriei", who also won the first place. In 1958, after a period of changes in the name of the first national federation, it is decided to be called the Romanian Volleyball Federation and remains totally independent until today.

A successful Romanian numismatic was immortalized on the occasion of the issued and winning the European Championship in 1963 (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Stamp printed during the European Championship by winning the men's Romania volleyball team

The period between 1946 and 1980 is when teams get the best Romanian sports performance internationally both club teams and national teams.

In volleyball, over time, there have been several Romanian members of governing bodies of international sports federations and international sports organizations recognized by the International Olympic Committee.

In women competition between 1950 and 2014 were played 64 editions. The only year in which Romania's National Championship wasn't played was in 1964 - when it was replaced by the RPR Cup. Between 1950 and 1969 all the titles remained in Bucharest, the percentage of champions over time is clearly in favor of the teams in Bucharest (72%).

Bucharest won 46 titles; Craiova won 5 titles; Bacau and Galati won 4 titles; Iasi and Constanta won 2 titles; Piatra Neamt won 1 title (fig.4).

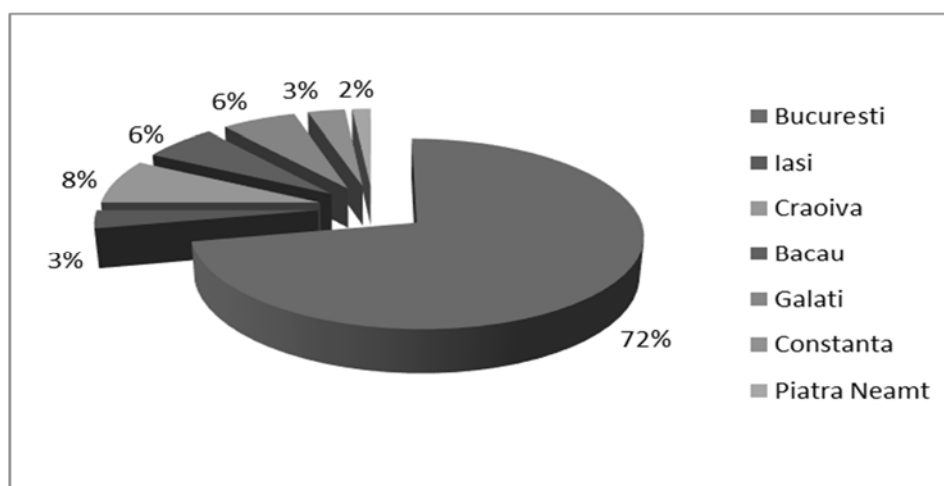


Fig. 4. Won titles in volleyball statistics between 1950 and 2014

Between 1949 and 2014 was 65 editions of Men National Championship were played, missing the 1964 edition when only RPR Cup was played. It is important to mention that between 1949 and 1992 all the titles have been won by teams from Bucharest. After this year the title was won by the teams in Bucharest only twice.

Bucuresti won 45 titles; Zalau won 6 titles; Ploiesti won 4 titles; Tulcea and Constanta won 3 titles; Baia Mare and Cluj Napoca won 1 title (fig.5).

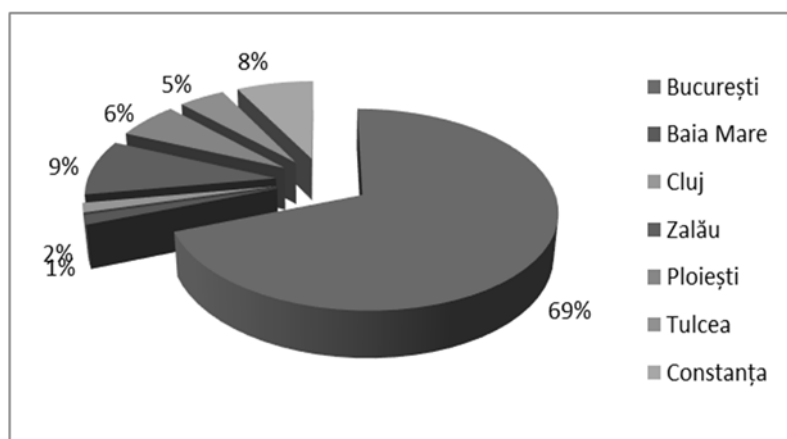


Fig. 5. Statistical won the men's volleyball titles between 1949 and 2014

Conclusions

The data collected and the sources presented create a clear frame of the context in which volleyball developed as a game. It is undoubtedly, that in the first years of its evolution, the accelerated promotion of volleyball was almost entirely due to YMCA worldwide missions. A secondary role was played by the US military in the bases located in Central America and Asia. The big expansion started with the beginning of World War I, when the secretary of the YMCA War Office included volleyball in the recreation and education program for American armed forces. Being spread world wide, volleyball developed differently in two perspectives: game rules and tactical aspects. This ended in 1947, when the International Federation was created, having 14 countries as founding members to reunite and standardize all game rules. Under these circumstances, based on the facts presented, the research study can be confirmed.

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