

12 Goalball

Goalball is inspired by handball and bowling and is played on a double-square pitch measuring nine meters on each side.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, many people who had become blind or visually impaired began to play this sound ball sport, the result of Austrian and German cooperation in occupational therapy.

In the 1970s, thanks to the evolution and worldwide development of media coverage, it spread to North America, and was included in the Canadian Paralympic Games in Toronto in 1976.

It's a team sport in which two teams of blind and partially sighted people compete against each other. To compensate for unequal vision, all players wear opaque masks and often knee pads. This is because all the action takes place at ground level, and all the players crouch, slide or lie down to prevent the noisy ball from penetrating the defended goal. Spectators must remain silent to help them locate the ball's movements by ear.

Individually, this sport improves spatial awareness and multisensory capacities.

Plate 12 shows two teams of three blindfolded players. On the top half-page, the attackers. On the lower half, the defenders.

In the background, posts and nets on either side of the pitch mark the wide, nine-meter-wide goals.

In fact, each team has a nine-meter square space at its disposal. In its total length of eighteen meters, the pitch is divided into six three-meter strips in front of each goal, i.e. three strips on either side of a central axis: a neutral strip for the ball rebound, a strip for the throw-in and the strip for the players.

Above, in the middle, the center forward prepares to throw the sound ball hard with his left hand.

He is looking to his right, with his right elbow resting on his right knee. His left leg, with its discernible knee protector, is angled parallel to his left arm, maintaining the balance of his forward-leaning body. To give the ball more momentum, the most powerful shots are rotated.

On the right, the other attacking player, without the ball, is in a waiting posture, his head in profile, turned towards the shooter, resting on his hands and arms. In the background, his left thigh is on the ground and his right leg is bent so that his foot is flat, in horizontal extension of his left thigh.

Below, the floor band marks the limits of his space.

On the left, at the top, near the number, the attacking player has his head facing us, in a vigilant hearing posture, his body turned towards the thrower, he's in a crouched position, both vertical arms resting on the ground, on his hands. He prepares for the ball's return.

Similarly, the floor strip marks the limits of his space.

Below, the three defenders listen attentively.

Each of them has the right to move once the ball has been thrown, and to block it with any part of the body. The one on the left is on all fours, leaning forward, leaning on his arms, his body at an angle and in the background, his left leg supporting his knee on the ground, while his right leg is ready to dive on the ball as soon as it is seen nearby.

The central figure, the captain, is also on all fours, but in profile, facing to the right. Behind the mask, the ear is attentive. Hands forward, arms slightly bent at the elbow. The body is

horizontal, and the legs are bent, one behind the other, ready to pounce to block the sonorous ball.

The masked defender on the right is also in profile, on all fours, but in a slightly different posture. The bent legs provide support and are ready to give a leap of extension, should he decide to dive full height to stop the ball. On this player, the elbow and knee protectors are particularly noticeable.

Each team takes it in turns to attack and defend. They also include substitutes.

The strips are marked on the floor by a slight relief, usually the thickness of a string stuck under a large piece of tape.

A sighted coach can give directions to the players during stoppages in play.

The two teams play for two twelve-minute periods. Stoppages in play are counted, and the team that scores the most goals wins the match.

The ball has a diameter of twenty-five centimeters, weighs one kilo and two hundred and fifty grams, and is usually made of rubber.

The Olympic events will take place at Aréna Paris south, from August 29 to September 05, 2024.