

WORLD OF SPORT

*An energetic exploration
of the sports we play*

Written by
Lawrence Alexander

Illustrated by
Violeta Noy

**WORLD
OF
SPORT**

For Vidal, every book is now for you. – V.N.



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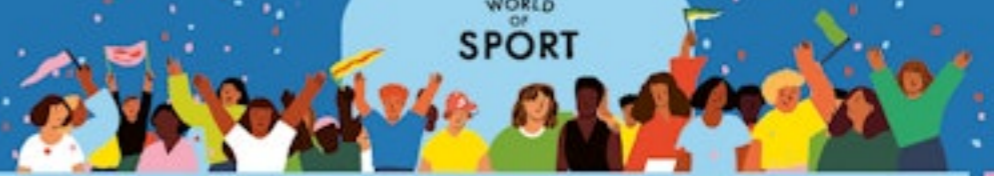
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HOW SPORT BEGAN

People have always enjoyed getting together and competing to find out who's the strongest, fastest or best at something. Humans have been playing sport since ancient times.

WHAT WAS THE FIRST SPORT?

Can you see any ancient cave paintings on the map? We don't know for certain what the world's first sport was, but we can guess from these ancient artworks.

GRAND BEGINNINGS

The first competitive sport we know about was recorded in a famous story, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, from 2100 BC. In it King Gilgamesh fights a wild man to see who is stronger.



Pelota purépecha was played in the ancient Mexican city of Teotihuacán as long ago as 1500 BC. It was a bit like hockey except the ball was on fire!

In *chunky*, played for centuries by Native Americans, a stone disc was rolled across the ground. Teams threw spears to predict where they thought it would land.

Wall paintings made in caves in Lascaux, France, around 20,000 years ago, seem to show people running and wrestling.

Some ancient Egyptian tomb paintings demonstrate wrestling positions.

The ancient Mayan ballgame of *pitz* was invented sometime between 2,000 and 4,500 years ago. Competitors had to get a ball through a stone hoop without using their hands.

Stone *pitz* hoops can still be seen in ruined Mayan ball courts in South America.

Sometimes rival cities settled disagreements with *pitz* instead of going to war.

The army of ancient Rome played *harpastum*, a dangerous sport a bit like rugby, as a way of training their soldiers.

During the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC), archery was part of the education of wealthy men.

Mongolian cave paintings from 7,000 years ago show people wrestling in front of spectators.

Surfing has been popular in the Pacific for hundreds of years. In Hawaii, chiefs competed in fierce competitions, and good surfers could win high social status.

In *boat jousting*, two people in a boat would fight with long poles or 'lances'. Ancient Egyptian carvings show fishermen jousting. They tried to push each other into the river Nile!

The Māori of New Zealand participated in a competition known as the Māori Games – often between neighbouring villages. Men, women and children all competed in canoe races, athletics and martial arts.

THE ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES

There were several major sporting competitions in the ancient world but the most famous was held at Olympia, Greece. The first written records of the Games are from 776 BCE but they may be much older – one myth says they were founded by the hero Herakles to honour his father, the god Zeus.

The Olympic Games were named for Mount Olympus, home of the gods.

Mount Olympus

THE FIRST PLAYING FIELD

For most of the time, the stadium at Olympia, Greece, was a field planted with wheat but once every four years, for one week, the whole area became a festival with at least 40,000 spectators. Look around the Olympic stadium to see which sports were played.

Javelin

At the ancient Olympic Games, all athletes competed naked!

Long jump

Boxing

Chariot races were open to anyone who owned a chariot.

Kyniska

A VICTORIOUS WOMAN

Women were not allowed to watch the games, but at least one found a way around the rules. Kyniska, daughter of a Spartan king, competed and won two victory laurels!

Discus

Shot put

Pankration was a dangerous martial art – a cross between boxing and wrestling.

Wrestling

Running



KOROIBOS

The first-recorded Olympic champion was a cook called Koroibos who won the stadion foot race – a sprinting event over 182 metres.

TAILTEANN GAMES

Ireland's Óenach Tailten (Tailteann Games) were first recorded around 632 BCE but could be even older! Alongside athletics and feats of strength, the most important events involved chariots and horse racing. There were also storytelling, music and dancing competitions.

The last Tailteann Games were held in 1169 but the remains of the ancient stadium can still be seen today.

COMPETITORS AND PRIZES

Any Greek man could compete but the event was most popular with soldiers, as many sports were based on military skills. Prizes were symbolic – wreaths made of olive branches, sacred to the god Zeus – though winners were often richly rewarded later by their home cities.

TRACK AND FIELD SPORTS

Track and field sports take place within an oval running track. Track events are running competitions and in field events, athletes compete in jumping and throwing contests.

JAVELIN

Javelins are descended from spears, one of humankind's oldest weapons. The first modern Olympic javelin event was in London, UK, in 1908. Women's javelin began in 1932.



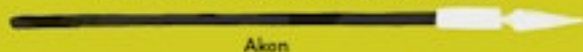
Competitors take a short run, then twist their bodies – but must not fully rotate – to get the best throw.

Javelins can reach speeds of up to 113 kilometres per hour.

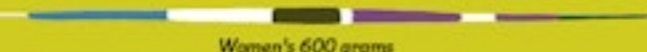


The javelin throw is the only athletic throwing event not held in a ring, and special precautions are taken to prevent injuries to spectators.

Modern javelins are similar to the akon used at the ancient Greek Olympics, though they are made of metal rather than wood and they no longer have an ankyle or strap.



Akon



Women's 600 grams



Men's 800 grams



JAN ŽELEZNÝ

We don't know how far ancient Greek athletes threw their javelins, but world record holder Jan Železný (1966–present), of the Czech Republic, threw his javelin 98.48 metres in 1996.

LONG JUMP

The long jumpers at the first Olympic Games were accompanied by musicians playing flutes. Athletes also used heavy stones to give them momentum. Today's long jumpers don't use weights and there's rarely flute music playing while they compete!

Athletes spend as much time perfecting their run-up and take-off as practising the jump itself.



1. Athletes sprint along a short, narrow course.



2. They jump from a wooden take-off board into a sandpit. If they miss the mark, they are disqualified.



3. Accurate measurements are taken to determine the winner.



GALINA CHISTYAKOVA

Slovakian Galina Chistyakova's (1962–) women's world record of 7.52 metres has stood since 1988!

DISCUS

One of the most famous statues from the ancient world is called the Discobolus or 'discus thrower'. The original sculpture is lost but Roman copies show us how athletes used to throw the discus.

The discus throw has been around since the very first ancient Olympic Games.

In today's sport, athletes start from a circle in the ground and whirl the discus while spinning themselves before letting go – a test of skill and control to send the discus as far as they can.



In Greek mythology Apollo and hero Perseus both accidentally killed people they loved hurling discuses.



RUNNING

Running was a key event in the ancient Olympics and races are still the pinnacle of today's Games. Athletes decide whether they're better at running short distances in a sprint or saving their energy to use carefully over a longer stretch.

The ancient Greek sprint race, the stadion, was run over 192 metres. According to legend, this was the furthest the mythical hero Herakles could run in a single breath!



SPRINT FOR VICTORY

Sprinting means running very fast over a short distance. Athletes can't run extremely fast for longer than about 30 seconds because their muscles use up all their reserves of a high-energy molecule called phosphocreatine.



Racers start on 'blocks' that keep their feet steady.

Today's standard sprinting distances are 100 metres, 200 metres and 400 metres. These distances are also used in Paralympic races.

RELAY RACES

In ancient times, people sent messages by foot. Over long distances, messengers passed news to other messengers to continue the journey.

Today's relay race has hardly changed. As one athlete finishes their part of the race, they hand the baton over to the next runner – who has already started running – before they leave a special exchange zone.



Competitive relay running began in the 1880s in the US.



Four runners compete in a relay team and typically the last runner is the fastest.

IT'S A MARATHON

A marathon is a 42.195-kilometre running race, but the first marathon in ancient Greece wasn't a race at all! A soldier called Pheidippides ran all the way from Marathon to Athens to tell the people that the Greek army had beaten the Persians. When he arrived, he shouted "Victory!", then collapsed dead from exhaustion.

Today, marathons are run in cities across the world. Professional athletes run with amateurs in a party-like atmosphere.



HURDLES

The history of hurdles dates back to ancient Greece but the modern form of hurdles as we know it began in the nineteenth century. Runners would jump over hurdles, land on two feet, and begin running again. Today, runners leap without a need to stop running.



KATHRINE SWITZER

Women weren't supposed to run marathons in 1967, but Kathrine Switzer (1947–) entered the Boston Marathon as K V Switzer and started with everyone else. An angry race official tried to pull her off the road, but Kathrine broke away and finished the race, becoming the first woman to officially run a marathon. Thanks to her bravery, women compete in marathons around the world.



USAIN BOLT

Usain Bolt (1986–) is often called the world's fastest man. He won three gold medals – the 100 metres, 200 metres and 4 x 100 metres relay – at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. He also won the same three medals in London in 2012 and in Rio de Janeiro in 2016! Bolt is not only known for his extraordinary speed but also for his ability to engage the crowd with his victory 'lightning bolt' pose.

AROUND THE WORLD: ATHLETIC SPORTS

The caber toss takes place at the Highland Games in Scotland. Athletes toss a huge log called a 'caber' into the air.

The caber is a log of Scottish pine, and it can be between 5 and 7 metres long.

In the Netherlands people used poles to leap over canals. The first official Fierljeppen ('far-leaping') competition was held in 1771. It's now a national sport.

It is similar to Olympic pole vaulting!



Steinstossen has been played in Switzerland for centuries. Athletes compete to throw heavy stones (63 kilograms for men and 34 kilograms for women) as far as possible.

The Zamaq of Yemen compete in camel leaping contests to see how many standing camels they can leap over.



In a tug-of-war two teams pull either end of a long rope to see which is stronger. It has been played for millennia in many countries including China, Egypt, Cambodia and Ireland. Traditionally, it was popular with sailors, who had to be experts with rope.



The lumberjacks of British Columbia, Canada, participate in axe throwing. They aim axes at a target in their battle to become 'Bull of the Woods'!



Mexico's Raramuri ('running people') are superb long-distance racers in mountainous terrain. Athletes compete in raramuri races that can be 200 kilometres long.



Fun runs are organised all over the world for people to run and, well, have fun!



Ultramarathons are marathons longer than the standard length. The most common distances are 50 and 100 kilometres – but can be even longer!



Wheelchair racing is a key sport in the Paralympic Games. It became popular among wounded veterans from the Second World War. The first official competition was at the Stoke Mandeville Games in the UK in 1952.

A heptathlon is a two-day event where athletes compete in seven disciplines. The men's event takes place indoors, and the women's outside.



Women run the 100-metre hurdles, while men run 110 metres.



Athletes use a pole to jump over a high bar in the pole vault.



Shot put is an ancient Greek sport where athletes threw or 'put' a heavy stone. Today it is made of solid metal, such as brass, steel or iron.

Throwing a javelin requires speed, momentum and power.



Athletes must clear a horizontal bar without knocking it down in the high jump.



In the running events, women run 200 metres on day one, 800 metres on day two. Men run 60 metres on day one, 1 kilometre on day two.



The long jump was a men's only event until 1948 when women were allowed to compete.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

American football started in North American colleges in the late nineteenth century and evolved from rugby and soccer. It is still extremely popular and millions follow professional teams.

AIM OF THE GAME

The aim of the game is to get the ball past opponents and score a 'touchdown', worth six points. A touchdown can be 'converted' into a goal, worth two points, if the team kicks it over the goal posts.

MEET THE TEAM

There are 11 players on the field for each team at one time, and lots of different positions to play. The offensive team has the most roles. It is made up of running backs, a fullback, a centre, offensive linemen, wide receivers, guards, a tight end and only one quarterback.

The opposite team try to 'tackle' the player with the ball to stop them scoring points.

American football has always been dangerous so players wear protective gear. Look at the player below to see each piece.



MAKING A PLAY

Offensive players try to score a touchdown using a complicated series of moves called 'plays'. Defensive players have to stop the other team scoring a touchdown.

Special teams come onto the field for plays that involve kicking such as field goals.



TOM BRADY

One of the greatest quarterbacks to ever play football, Tom Brady (1977-) led his team to win a record-breaking seven Super Bowls. It's no wonder he was voted the Super Bowl MVP (most valued player) five times!

RUGBY

According to legend, rugby was invented in 1823, at Rugby School, England, UK, when a pupil caught the ball in his arms and ran with it during a football game. No one knows if this is true, but the school established the rules in 1845.

Rugby is played with an oval ball, which players can carry as they run. Players can score points by touching it down behind the goal posts (a 'try').



A try is worth five points.

After a try, one player has to kick the ball over the high goal posts. This is known as a 'conversion'.



A conversion is worth two points.

The opposite team tackle the player with the ball to stop them.

Rugby players have to be good at dodging!

Wheelchair rugby used to be known as 'murderball' and is just as tough and combative as rugby. To score, the player must have a firm hold of the ball and two wheels of a player's wheelchair must cross the line.



New Zealand's All Black's Rugby Team is famous for performing a Haka - a Māori war dance - before games.



RYLEY BATT

Ryley Batt (1989-) became the youngest ever wheelchair rugby player to play in the Paralympics. He led his team to win gold at the 2012 London Paralympics, the 2014 World Championships and the 2016 Rio Paralympics.

BASEBALL

Baseball grew out of two games – cricket and rounders – brought to New England, USA, in the eighteenth century. The game is played by two teams, each with nine players. Batters on one team try to hit a ball thrown by a 'pitcher', then run around the four bases of the pitch before the fielding team recovers the ball.



Baseball is played on a diamond-shaped pitch.

Each baseball game is divided into nine periods, called innings.

After a batter hits a ball, they run between bases to score points, called 'runs', for their team.

When fielding, players wear a special giant glove to help them catch the ball.

If a batter runs around all the bases, they score a 'home run'!

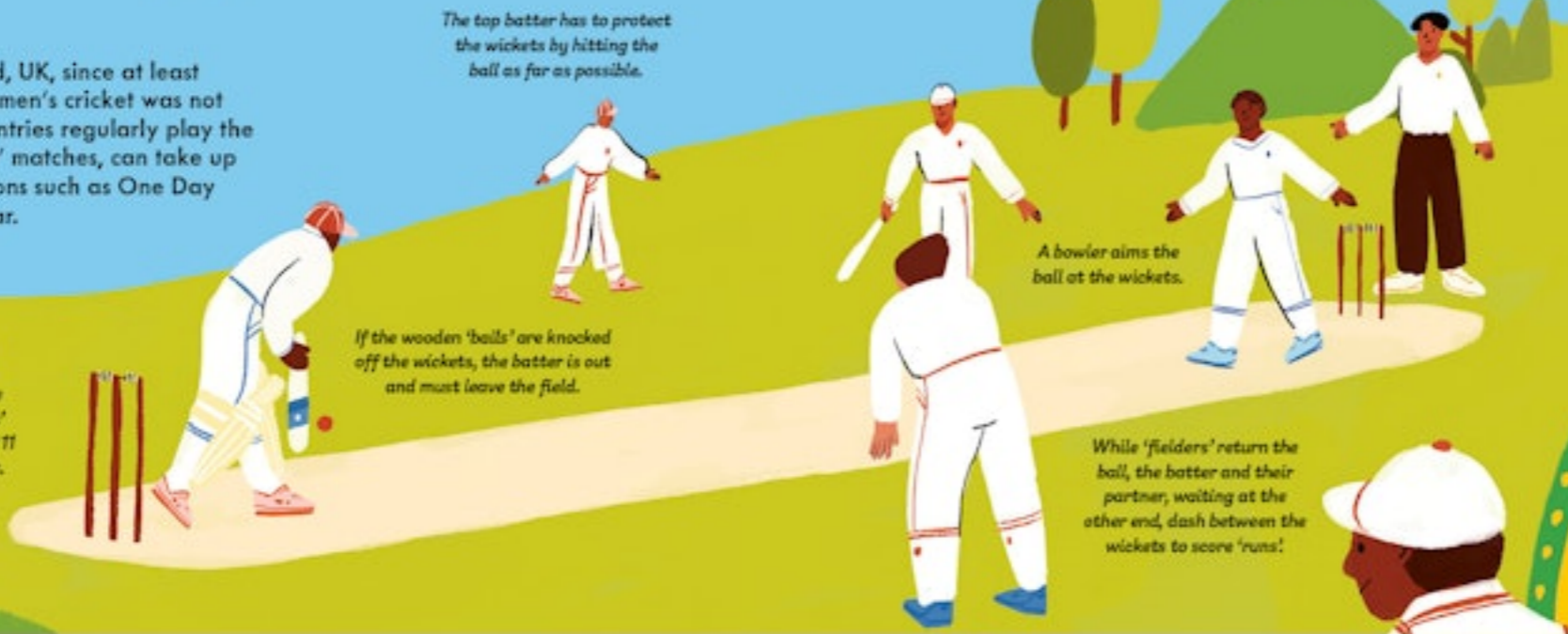


BABE RUTH

Seven-time World Series Champion George Herman 'Babe' Ruth (1895–1948) is still widely regarded as baseball's greatest-ever player.

CRICKET

Cricket has been played in England, UK, since at least the sixteenth century (although women's cricket was not played until 1926). Today, 125 countries regularly play the game. Some games, known as 'Test' matches, can take up to five days! Recently, shorter versions such as One Day and Twenty20 have become popular.



The top batter has to protect the wickets by hitting the ball as far as possible.

If the wooden 'bails' are knocked off the wickets, the batter is out and must leave the field.

A bowler aims the ball at the wickets.

While 'fielders' return the ball, the batter and their partner, waiting at the other end, dash between the wickets to score 'runs'!

Cricket is played on a large field with a small, rectangular 'pitch' in the middle. This has 'wickets' at each end. Two teams of 11 players take turns to bat.



MITHALI DORAI RAJ

One of the greatest female cricketers of all time, Mithali Dorai Raj (1982–) scored a world record 10,868 runs.



Cricket's most famous tournament is the regular 'Ashes' series between England and Australia. The ashes inside the trophy urn are the burnt remains of bails from 1882!

VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball is over 100 years old. It was invented by William G. Morgan in 1895, in Massachusetts, USA. William called his new game 'mintonette' until someone pointed out that people were 'volleying' the ball and suggested a name-change.

Two teams of six use their hands or arms to propel a ball over a high net.

To score, the ball has to hit the ground before the team's opponents can send it back.

Sitting volleyball has been a Paralympic sport since 1980. Players must keep their pelvis on the floor at all times.



HANDBALL

Handball is a fast-moving, seven-a-side game where players pass the ball among themselves along the court, trying to throw it into the opposing team's goal. Unlike football, players are not allowed to kick the ball.

Beach volleyball has fewer players and a smaller court because running on sand is more difficult than on a hard surface.

An early version of handball called jeu de paume was played in medieval France. Games like polo and croquet were just for aristocrats, but Jeu de Paume was played by everyone!

Handball is popular in European countries, such as Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, France, Hungary and Croatia. The Czech Republic has its own version of handball known as Czech Handball.

BASKETBALL

In 1891, bad weather stopped students at Springfield College in Massachusetts, USA, playing sport outdoors, so Dr James Naismith came up with a new game. He used a soft ball, and hung a peach basket above players' heads to score goals.

Today's game is very similar to early basketball. Two teams of five players each try to shoot the ball through their opponents' hoop. Running with the ball is not allowed, so players 'dribble' (bounce) or pass it to each other.

Wilt Chamberlain

Wilton 'Wilt' Chamberlain was one of the greatest basketball players of all time. In 1962, he became the first player to score 100 points in a game.

NETBALL

Dr Naismith brought basketball to England in 1895. Women liked the new game immediately but their long skirts and corsets made it very difficult to dribble or pass the ball. So they adapted the game into netball, which doesn't involve dribbling. Instead, players stand still to pass the ball.

Wheelchair basketball was originally adapted for servicemen injured in the Second World War. It has been played at every Paralympic Games.

In netball, each team has seven players: three attackers, three defenders and a centre, who attacks and defends. Although players don't run with the ball like in basketball, netball games are just as fast and exciting. Today men and women play both netball and basketball.

FOOTBALL

Modern football's rules were established in England in 1863. Football spread from Britain to Europe then, slowly, across the world. The sport's governing body FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) was founded in Paris in 1904. Today around 265 million people play the game!

A WIN FOR WOMEN

Women's football began in the 1890s and was very popular but, in 1921, the Football Association (FA) banned the sport, saying it was 'unsuitable for females'. The ban wasn't lifted until 1971! Today, women's football is huge, especially in the United States.

FAIR PLAY

Make sure you play fair! If a player commits a foul – an illegal action like kicking another player – they will be shown a card by the referee.

A yellow card acts as a warning.

A red card means the player is sent off the pitch, without being replaced.

PLAYING THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

A football match is played between two sides of 11 players, as each team tries to put the ball into their opponents' goal. Players usually move the ball by kicking, but other body parts – except hands and, in most cases, arms – can be used. Only the goalkeeper is allowed to use their hands. The winning team is the one with the most goals at the end of the game.



MARTA VIEIRA DA SILVA

Brazilian Marta Vieira da Silva (1986–) is one of the best women's football players of all time. When she was 14, she travelled for three days to try out for a team. She made her name playing for the Swedish team Umeå IK. Marta has scored 17 goals in world cups and has been named FIFA Player of the Year six times.



PELÉ

Brazilian Edson Arantes do Nascimento (1940–2022) went by his nickname Pelé. When he was 17, Pelé was picked up by the national team. He scored three goals in the semifinal and two goals for Brazil in the final of the 1958 World Cup. In 1969 he scored his thousandth goal! He was named Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee.

A HISTORY OF FOOTBALL

Historically there were many different versions of the game around the world. Many are still played today:

Calcio storico is still played in Florence, Italy. The 27 players on each team dress in Renaissance costume and are allowed to kick, punch, choke and wrestle each other. The game evolved from Roman *harpastum* – a ball game played in the Roman Empire.



Ancient Chinese football was known as *Cuju* ('kickball'). Everyone played, from peasants to royalty, including, occasionally, women.



In Europe, medieval 'mob' football involved hundreds of people kicking a ball (and each other!) through the streets, trying to take it to their own village.

LAWN TENNIS

In 1869, Major Walter Clopton Wingfield simplified the rules of a game known as real tennis and called it *sphairistike* ('ball game' in ancient Greek). His friends thought it was a mouthful and suggested 'Lawn Tennis' instead.



Royal (now known as 'real') tennis is an indoor version of the game, once popular among royalty. Charles I of England had a tennis suit made of primrose-coloured satin!



SERENA WILLIAMS

Serena Williams (1981–) of the United States is widely regarded as the most powerful female tennis player of all time. She and her sister Venus have dominated the women's game since the 1990s.



ROGER FEDERER

Roger Federer (1981–), from Switzerland, has won 20 Grand Slam singles titles. He has won at Wimbledon eight times.



American tennis player John Isner's fastest serve reached an incredible speed of 253 kilometres per hour.

In lawn tennis, players hit a ball over a net on a rectangular court.

Points are scored when a player fails to return the ball to the opponent's court, when the ball lands out of bounds, or when it bounces more than once before being returned, resulting in the loss of the point.

Tennis can be played on courts with a grass surface, clay courts made of crushed stone or hard courts made of concrete or asphalt.

Tennis's most famous tournament is held on grass courts at Wimbledon, in the UK. It was first held in 1877.

Tennis may also have developed from jeu de paume (see page 20). Jeu de paume players hit balls wearing gloves. Later they put the gloves on sticks. These eventually developed into rackets!



BADMINTON

Badminton is like the ancient game of battledore and shuttlecock, played in ancient Greece, China, Japan and Thailand.

Badminton is played with a feathered shuttlecock.



In an early Chinese version, *Ti Zhan Ji*, the shuttlecock was propelled by players' feet instead of being hit with rackets.

TABLE TENNIS

Table tennis began life as a parlour game in the 1880s when English lawn tennis players wanted a game they could play indoors!

Table tennis is popular in many places, but it is the national sport of China.



Table tennis spread to Asia in 1902 when a Japanese university professor who had visited England introduced it in his home country.

SQUASH

Squash may have developed from rackets, a game played in the nineteenth century by inmates in London debtor's prisons (prisons for people who owed money).

It uses squashy rubber balls, which heat up during the game as players repeatedly hit them against a wall – making them even bouncier!



AROUND THE WORLD: BALL SPORTS



The southeast Asian game of *sepak takraw* goes back to the fifteenth century. It's like volleyball except players kick the ball over the net.



Shomba is a game played in Zambia where players dodge a soft ball while trying to fill a sand pit.



In Orkney, off the coast of Scotland, people still play a medieval version of football called *ba*.



Icelandic *knattleik* was a Viking game very similar to lacrosse – with added chasing, fighting and, occasionally, death!



Angleball is a game of accuracy and skill based on *Anejodi* ('stickball'), a traditional Native American sport. *Lacrosse* is directly inspired by the game and became very popular in Canada in the nineteenth century.



Koolchee originated with Aboriginal People in south Australia. One team rolls balls along the ground, the others stop them with bats.



The Basque game of *pilota*, mainly played in France and Spain, is closely related to tennis and possibly the fastest sport in the world. The ball can reach speeds of over 320 kilometres per hour.



Kūūkiti is a version of cricket played in Samoa. It can have as many as 30 or 40 players per side, sometimes up to 200!



Ki-a-rahi is a Maori sport played with a small ball called a 'ki'. It is a fast-paced game incorporating skills similar to rugby, basketball and netball.



There are many games that resemble field hockey: *Irish hurling* is an early form, said to have been played by the mythical hero Cú Chulainn.



The Ethiopian version, *genna*, has such a large field sometimes grazing cows get in the way!



The Welsh version, *bando*, was played with curved sticks.



Hockey is very similar to *shinty*, played by Scottish Highland clans.



Mongolian *beikou* or *Daur* hockey was once played with tree branches and pieces of apricot root. Today's players often set the balls on fire for night-time play!



It's hard enough to balance on a unicycle but some brave folk play hockey while riding them! 16 countries have unicycle hockey teams.



Shinny hockey is played by Native American and Canadian First Nations People. A version of it was played on ice in the winter, inspiring ice-hockey.



The ancient game of *Kemari* was played in Japan. Today, players wearing traditional costume and 'crow' hats keep a ball airborne with any part of the body except arms and hands.



Quidditch, also known as *Quidditch*, is based on a fictional game from the *Harry Potter* books. Players run with 'broomsticks' between their legs!

GYMNASTICS

There are three types of gymnastics: artistic, rhythmic and acrobatic. A panel of judges award athletes points based on how difficult a move is and how well it is performed.

Artistic gymnastics involve vault, beam and floor routines.



In vault, athletes sprint along a runway...

take off from a springboard,

then jump over the 'vault table' in the most exciting way possible... before landing neatly on the other side.

Floor routines include a series of moves including flips, rolls, leaps and salsos - horizontal flips - across a 12-metre square floor.



The secret of the balance beam, which is just over 121 centimetres off the ground, is to execute difficult moves as well as if they were being performed on the floor.

At the 2019 US Gymnastics Championship, Simone Biles executed a double-double dismount from the beam - two twists, two flips - for the first time in history.



Acrobatic gymnastics are performed with a partner or in a group. Tall, strong athletes take 'base' positions while smaller gymnasts balance, somersault and twist on the top.

In artistic gymnastics, the pommel horse is used by male gymnasts to perform circular, rotating routines.



Male gymnasts also perform routines using two still rings hanging from the ceiling.

On the horizontal bar, men perform twists and turns while releasing and catching the bar.



SIMONE BILES

American gymnast Simone Biles (1997-) is the world's first African American woman all-around champion. As well as winning seven Olympic medals, she won her thirtieth World Championship medal in 2023. Simone is thought to be the greatest gymnast of her generation.

In artistic gymnastics, women swing between uneven bars, close to each other but at different heights.



Parallel bars are two frames, about two metres high. Male gymnasts perform a series of difficult moves between them.



Rhythmic gymnastics involves movement, spins and turns on a large mat, using various props, such as rope, ball, clubs, hoop or ribbon.



AROUND THE WORLD: MOVEMENT AND BALANCE SPORTS

Capoeira is a fast and graceful martial art invented by enslaved Africans and Indigenous Brazilians as a form of resistance and self-defence. It has elements of dance and acrobatics. It is played inside a ring called a *roda*.



In **tricklining**, competitors perform aerial tricks on a stable but bouncy 'slackline'. It is similar to circus tightrope walking, but international competitions are held with strict scoring.



Sometimes at night, capoeira players set the ring alight, making a circle of fire.

Ballroom dancing has had a competitive element for many years and TV tournaments are watched by millions. Dances include:



Para dance sport began in the 1960s as 'wheelchair dancing'. The world championships are held every other year.

Cheerleading involves energetic routines with leaps, stunts, dances and tumbling. The activity began in the United States in the 1880s, with students loudly encouraging their college sports teams from the sidelines. Today there are male, female and mixed-gender teams.

Kite flying is a leisure activity in some cultures, but a serious competitive sport in others. In Afghanistan players 'fight' with kites which fly on strings coated in sharp glass and glue. The aim is to slice the string of a competitor's kite so it falls down to the ground.



Indian mallakhamba was originally devised to help train and strengthen wrestlers. Gymnasts hold poses on and around the top of a pole.

Breakdancing began in the 1970s on the streets of New York, USA. It became an Olympic event at the Youth Olympics in Argentina in 2018, and in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.



Trampolines were invented by 16-year-old George Nissen from Iowa, USA, in the 1930s after he watched trapeze artists bouncing in a safety net. Today **trampolining** is a competitive and gravity-defying Olympic sport!

BOXING

Boxing dates at least as far back as ancient Egypt. Today the sport is divided between professional and amateur matches. Olympic boxers must be amateurs (not career fighters). All boxers wear padded gloves and mouthguards to protect themselves but it can still be a dangerous sport.

A professional boxing bout consists of 12 three-minute rounds. Boxers may not strike their opponent's kidney area, the back of their head or neck or 'below the belt'. If the boxer has fallen down, they must not be hit.

Athletes are classed according to their weight so fighters are equally matched. Heavyweights are the biggest at over 91 kilograms.



MUHAMMAD ALI

Muhammad Ali (1942–2016) was born as Cassius Marcellus Clay. He changed his name when he converted to Islam. In 1964, he became heavyweight boxing champion of the world. In 1967, he was stripped of his titles for refusing to fight in the Vietnam War, but regained them in the 1970s. He became as well known for his sense of humour and humanity as he was for his 56 wins as heavyweight champion, when he stopped boxing in 1981 to focus on religion and charity work.

The winner is decided either by knocking out their opponent or by scoring the most number of points.

Women's boxing didn't become an official Olympic sport until 2012, though there were some early female fighters. In 1728, Elizabeth Wilkinson Stokes entered the ring, fighting in petticoats!



MARTIAL ARTS

Many martial arts originated in Asia and often have a spiritual or philosophical element, making them more than just a physical fight. Some practitioners see their discipline as a way of life that takes years to master. For others, martial arts is a fun way to keep fit and learn self-defence.

Taekwondo is practised by an estimated 80 million people in 184 countries.



Matches consist of three two-minute rounds. Competitors score points by landing kicks and punches on their opponent's torso and head. They are not allowed to hit the face or attack below the waist.

Fighters win by either knocking out their opponent or scoring the most number of points. As practitioners get more experience their belt colour changes. Yellow is the most junior. Black is the most senior.

Jiu jitsu evolved so Japanese samurai warriors, who wore heavy armour, could fight if they were thrown off their horses or disarmed.



Judo was developed in the 1880s by Japanese athlete and educator Kano Jigoro Shihan, who adapted Jiu jitsu for the practitioner's personal development.



Meaning 'empty hands' in Japanese, karate may have evolved from a time when weapons were banned in the Japanese Okinawan Islands.



Muay Thai 'the art of eight limbs' sprang from the battlefields of Siam (modern-day Thailand) hundreds of years ago. Practitioners use feet, hands, elbows and knees.



Some claim the ancient art of kalaripayattu began in Kerala, India, 3,000 years ago. Moves are inspired by animals, such as tigers.



Tai chi is a graceful martial art from China, which is most often practised by individuals to develop health, internal strength and meditation.



AROUND THE WORLD: COMBAT SPORTS

Fencing is an elegant, highly skilled form of sword fighting. Combatants fight with three types of swords: foils, épées and sabres.



Some hugely popular professional wrestling tournaments are created purely for entertainment. They have choreographed moves and storylines that feature heroes and villains.



Japan's national sport sumo sees two wrestlers trying to force each other out of a circle or place part of their opponent's body onto the ground. Competitors are traditionally very large, giving them more stability in the ring.



In nineteenth-century France, wealthy men developed a new form of self-defence called *cane de combat* for use in dangerous cities. It is similar to fencing, but uses walking canes!



The *Kirkpinar oil wrestling* tournament is the oldest continuous sporting event in the world and has been held in Türkiye since the fourteenth century. Wrestlers cover themselves in oil so they are slippery, making the competition harder.



Kabaddi, practised across South Asia, is a team sport. One player, the 'raider', tries to touch opponents in their half of the field while chanting "kabaddi" and then return safely to their own side without being tackled.



Arnis, a martial art using sticks, is the national sport of the Philippines.



Japanese *kendo* or 'way of the sword' stems from ancient samurai traditions. Practitioners wear armour and fight with bamboo swords.



In chess boxing, players alternate three-minute rounds of boxing and chess.



Some wrestlers of Niger try to throw their opponent to the ground or push their opponent outside of a designated wrestling area.



Nguni stick fighting is a popular sport among young men of the Nguni people of South Africa, who once used the techniques in war.



Glima wrestling was practised by the Vikings 1,200 years ago. Competitors grapple using special belts around each other's waists.



Saureum is a type of ancient wrestling from Korea.



ARCHERY

Archery is an ancient sport which involves shooting at a target with a bow and arrows. Humans may have developed archery for hunting as long ago as 20,000 BCE.

Target archers have a designated number of arrows, a specific target and an official scoring system. This is the form of archery in Olympic competitions.



The Japanese martial art of *kyudo*, developed from a 2,000-year-old archery tradition. An archer's dignity and poise is more important than hitting the target.

Target archery developed in fourteenth-century England when the longbow was the army's most lethal weapon. Several English kings even banned football so men would practise archery!

The bows used in Olympic events are usually made of fibreglass and carbon.



In mounted archery, athletes must try to hit a target while riding a galloping horse. In Mongolia, horseback archery was originally used in war, but it was revived as a sport in 1921.



KIM SOO-NYUNG

Kim Soo-Nyung (1971-) is widely considered archery's finest sportswoman. She has won six Olympic medals including four gold, as well as two world championship titles. She began shooting at age nine and won two gold medals at the 1988 Seoul Olympics when she was just 17. At one point Kim held almost every outdoor title in archery!

Kyudo archers shoot short range, 28 metres, and long range, 60 metres.

Longbows could shoot arrows over long distances with accuracy and force.

Skilled archers with modern bows can shoot further than 775 metres.

In flight shooting, archers compete to shoot furthest.

SHOOTING

Gunpowder use in weapons dates from the early fourteenth century in Europe. Shooting festivals soon followed, with one of the earliest known shooting matches taking place in Bavaria in 1477.



Shooting was practised for hunting, defence and marksmanship training, with organised shooting competitions becoming more popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Athletes need to have great precision and physical fitness, but they must also prepare mentally to deal with the extreme pressure of a competition where winning or losing may depend on a single shot.

Athletes competing in rifle and pistol events shoot at static targets. Shotgun events use a moving target called a clay, or 'clay pigeon', fired from an automatic trap.

In today's Olympic Games, there are rifle, pistol and shotgun events.



AROUND THE WORLD: AIMING SPORTS

Lawn bowls players try to roll their ball closest to a marker called a 'jack'!

In France, boules players try to get their ball closest to a marker called a 'cochonnet' (piglet).

An early form of golf, where a stone was hit over sand dunes, was played in Scotland in the fifteenth century. Modern golf is played over 18 short sections called 'holes'. Players have to hit their ball around the course and into the holes in the fewest possible strokes.

Bowling is a hugely popular sport, from the United States and Canada to east Asia, Oceania and Latin America. Players roll a heavy ball down a long 'lane', trying to knock over a number of 'pins'!

Chuiwan, meaning 'hitting ball' in Chinese, was played on a small field. It originated in thirteenth-century China. Players hit a ball with a wooden stick into a hole marked with a flag.

GET A CUE

Billiards is a sport where players use a long stick or 'cue' to hit one ball into another. During play, they aim to knock the balls into pockets on the side of the table.

English billiards is played with three balls and players score points by pocketing balls. English and French billiards (or carom) have different rules.

In Latvia the national sport is Novuss. This is a bit like billiards in miniature!



When famous Filipino billiards player Efrén Reyes was learning the game as a child, he was too short to reach the table so stood on a Coca-Cola box.

Varpa was popular with Vikings and is played to this day on the island of Gotland in Sweden. It is similar to boules, but uses stone discs.

Jukskel is a South African game, invented in the eighteenth century by Afrikaans travelling with ox-drawn wagons. Two teams of four players each throw wooden pins at a peg in the sand, trying to knock it over to score points.

Boce is an Italian cousin of boules. It was even played by Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci!

Golf is one of only two sports (the other is javelin) to have been played on the Moon!

A 'hole in one' is a very rare shot where a player takes just one hit to get the ball into the hole.

In Diger, a sport from Bhutan, players throw heavy stones at a wooden target. It is usually played during celebrations and holidays.

Darts was originally a game played in pubs in the UK and is now a sport with tournaments played globally. Players throw darts – small, sharp projectiles – at a marked-up target or 'dart board'!

Snooker is played on a large table with 22 balls: one white, 15 red and six coloured. Players must pocket a red ball and then a coloured one. The game is won through precise potting and strategic positioning of the balls.

Pool is played on a smaller table with 15 coloured balls and one white.



SPORT ON HORSEBACK

Most mounted sports originate from the times when animals, usually horses, were part of everyone's daily lives. Horse and human work together, aiming for speed, agility and accuracy.

Polo is a mounted team sport from ancient Persia (modern-day Iran) played by both men and women around 2,000 years ago.



Each rider has a long mallet and tries to hit a small, hard ball through the other team's goal posts. Polo 'ponies' are actually full-sized horses.



Dressage began with the ancient Greeks, who trained their horses to evade or attack the enemy on a battlefield in a series of precise exercises. Modern dressage tests similar movements, where horse and rider accurately perform set routines.



Doma vaquera is a fast form of dressage from Spain. Horses must be able to gallop from a standing start then stop just as suddenly. Other moves include pirouettes and rapid turns.



Cross-country riders complete a course of 30 to 40 jumps and water features across different terrains.



In show jumping contestants take it in turns to complete a course of jumps in an arena without knocking over any obstacles or making any mistakes.



Equestrian vaulting requires feats of dexterity from both horse and rider. In this sport, gymnasts perform routines on horseback.



Gymkhanas are multi-game events that test the horse's and rider's skill and agility. In the United States, these events are sometimes known as O-Mok-See, a phrase from the Native American Blackfeet people meaning 'riding big dance'.

Western riding comes from techniques used by the seventeenth-century Spanish conquistadors. These were adopted on American ranches, where cowboys needed to spend long days in the saddle.

Riders control their mounts with one hand, leaving the other free to rope cattle. Western saddles are designed for many hours' riding.



In carriage driving, competitors drive a vehicle pulled by one, two or four horses.



Jereed is the ancient Turkish sport of horseback javelin-throwing. Teams of riders challenge and chase each other with light, blunt-ended spears.

CYCLING

Cycling as a sport has a history dating back to the nineteenth century, with the first recorded bicycle race taking place in Paris in 1868. Over the years, it has evolved to include various disciplines, from road racing and track cycling to mountain biking and BMX, with prestigious events like the Tour de France and the Olympic Games showcasing its global appeal.

BUMPY BEGINNINGS

The first two-wheeled vehicle was patented in 1817, but no one would have been able to race Karl von Drais's clumsy wooden 'hobby horse' – it weighed 23 kilograms! In the 1860s, pedals and gears were attached to 'velocipedes' or 'bone-shakers' and finally the world had rideable bicycles.



PENNY FARTHINGS

Penny farthings, popular in the nineteenth century, are named after old Victorian coins: a penny for the giant front wheel and a 'farthing' (quarter penny) for the tiny back wheel. Today enthusiasts have revived the machine's use, and events include road cycling, track cycling and even polo!



TOUR DE FRANCE

The world's most famous cycle event is a gruelling 23-day race over approximately 3,500 kilometres. The Tour de France is run over 21 stages with the most difficult section taking place in mountains. Although there is an overall winner, it's just as prestigious to win different coloured jerseys.

Teams race mainly around France, but sometimes start the race in different countries.

Yellow: The overall race leader each day
Green: The points-prize winner for each stage
White: The best young rider
White/Red Polka Dot: King of the mountains



In cyclo-cross, riders have to carry their bikes across any parts of the difficult obstacle-course they cannot cycle on, including steep slopes, rocks, grit, mud and bogs.



MARIANNE VOS

Marianne Vos (1987–), from the Netherlands, rides in a variety of events, including cyclo-cross, road racing, mountain biking and track racing. She started competing when she was eight years old. She has won two Olympic gold medals, is a three-time winner of the World Road Race and a seven-time winner of the Cyclo-Cross World Championship.



Mountain bikes have special tyres for tackling steep, rough terrain. Mountain bikers also deal with jumps, rocks and other obstacles.



A velodrome is an oval-shaped arena specially built for track cycling. It has smooth, steep banks so competitors can swoop up and pass their rivals while moving at speeds of over 85 kilometres per hour.

Modern cyclists wear special streamlined clothing and shaped helmets to reduce wind resistance.



AROUND THE WORLD: SPORTS ON THE MOVE

Formula 1 is the fastest form of motor racing, driven in single-seater cars over a series of 'Grand Prix' races across the globe. The highest top speed ever reached was 372.6 kilometres per hour by Juan Pablo Montoya at the 2005 Italian Grand Prix.



Today, karting is often a way into professional race-driving, but the first motorised go-kart was made in California in 1956 and used a lawnmower engine!

Once a year at Hell's Gate National Park in Kenya, people push teammates in highly competitive wheelbarrow races.



Hot air ballooning is not always about the fastest balloon from one point to another. Competitions also test pilots' ability to steer their balloons and land accurately.



In roller derby two teams of five people compete on roller skates to score the most points.



Roller skates have two rows of thick wheels.

In roller speed skating, athletes wear inline skates and race to be the fastest on a track.



Inline skates have thin wheels in a line under the foot, a bit like an ice skate.

Yak polo is a Mongolian variation of polo played on yaks.



The Air Race World Championship is held in different cities around the world. Pilots fly light racing-planes and navigate through a series of inflatable 'air gates'.



Motocross is off-road motorcycling involving a variety of surfaces including gravel, mud and grass.



In land sailing, players race across the ground in land yachts – three-wheeled boards powered by the wind in their sails. The world record land yacht speed is 202.9 kilometres per hour, held by Richard Jenkins of the UK and his yacht Greenbird.



The Dakar Rally is an off-road endurance race run across difficult desert terrain by competitors in several types of vehicle, including cars, trucks, motorbikes and quad bikes.



Tuk-tuk polo is a sport invented in Sri Lanka to replace elephant polo, which was discontinued in 2007.



Camel racing is an ancient tradition in African and Middle Eastern countries. The nomadic Tuareg people hold camel races at the annual Cure Salée festival in Niger.



SWIMMING

The earliest known swimming pool at Mohenjo-Daro in today's Pakistan dates back to 2500 BC. Today, swimming is an internationally popular sport and individuals or teams race through water using various strokes and techniques, with events ranging from short sprints to long-distance races.



Vikings held distance and speed swimming contests but their favourite water sport was water wrestling. Competitors tried to hold each other's heads underwater until someone gave up!



Modern swimming competitions emerged in the 1800s. In 1896 the first modern Olympic Games held four swimming events but they were very different from today. A boat would sail out to sea and drop competitors into the icy Mediterranean so they could swim back to shore. Women first competed in Olympic swimming events in 1912.



MICHAEL PHELPS

Michael Phelps (1985–), of the United States, is the most-decorated Olympic athlete of any discipline. Although he finished fifth at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games he was only 15 at the time! The following year he became the youngest world record holder in men's swimming with an astounding 1 minute 54.92 seconds time in the 200-metre butterfly. He has now won 28 Olympic medals, 23 of which are gold.

Breaststroke

The swimmer moves both arms and legs together, propelling themselves forward like a frog.



Backstroke

Swimmers lie on their backs, moving their arms alternately to travel backwards.



Front crawl or freestyle

Swimmers bring their arms alternately over their heads, scooping the water behind them.



Butterfly

The athlete raises both arms at once to move forward.



DIVING

Diving is about grace and agility. For hundreds of years, diving was mainly used for hunting, harvesting pearls and sponges, building bridges and for military purposes. The first recorded diving championship took place in Scotland in 1889. Divers jump from a fixed platform or a bouncy 'springboard'. Different types of dive include:



ELLIE SIMMONDS

British swimmer Ellie Simmonds (1994–) was just 13 when she won two gold medals at the Beijing Paralympics in 2008. She won two more at London in 2012 and another at Rio in 2016. She also became the first athlete in her class to swim the 200-metre medley in under three minutes.



Pike
The body is curved in two at the hips.



Tuck
The body is curled into a tight ball.



Somersault
The body twists in a complete circle.



Free
The body uses twists and combinations of other positions.



Straight
The body is in a single line with no bend.

Swimmers demonstrate all of the four strokes in a single race called a medley.

A panel of judges decide the winner. The best divers enter the water smoothly without making a splash. This is called a 'rip' entry.

SPORTS WITH BOATS

Being able to handle a boat has always been essential to humans, and not just for transport and fishing. Boat races are held just about everywhere that people mix with water.

Sailing is where the boat or 'yacht' is propelled by the wind. A yacht can be handled by one person or, more often, a team.



The Ocean Race is a yacht race around the world held every three years. The voyage usually takes teams around nine months to complete.

Yachting teams have competed for the America's Cup since 1851, making it the oldest international sporting trophy. The prize itself is known as the Auld Mug!



Wild water racing is also known as white water racing because the water is moving so rapidly it seems to foam.



In canoeing and kayaking people paddle themselves in a light vessel.



SEAFARING ROOTS

People across the Pacific, from New Zealand to Hawaii, have used boats known as waka ama for centuries. Waka ama were used for fishing, travelling and transporting goods but people soon discovered they were fun to race too. The sport became particularly popular in the 1980s and the World Va'a, or Championship, is held every two years.



The Boat Race is a famous rowing competition. It has been held between teams from Oxford and Cambridge universities on the river Thames in England since 1829.



In Kerala, India, people have raced long chundan vallams, (traditional boats in the shape of snakes) to the sound of powerful drum beats since the fourteenth century.



F1 powerboat racing is the water equivalent of Grand Prix motor racing.



DRAGON BOATING

According to legend, Hong Kong's dragon boating tradition began when a poet called Qu Yuan drowned when he heard his country had been invaded. Fisher-folk tried to rescue him, banging drums and throwing zongzi (rice cakes) into the water so the fish wouldn't eat his body. They never found Qu Yuan, but remember him every year at the Tuen Ng Festival in boats decorated with dragon heads, tails and scales. Athletes row to the beat of a drum and teams flock from around the world. Even today, zongzi are eaten as part of the celebrations.



AROUND THE WORLD: WATER SPORTS

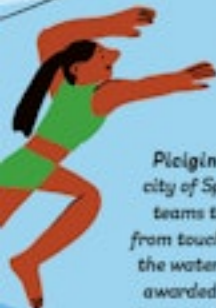
Waterskiing was invented in 1922 when Ralph Samuelson attached two planks to his feet and got a friend to pull him across Lake Pepin in Minnesota, USA.



In the traditional Australian Aboriginal game of **kaidu babu**, competitors swim underwater as far as they can in a single breath.



Picigin is played in the city of Split, Croatia. Two teams try to stop a ball from touching the surface of the water. Extra points are awarded for fancy jumps.



Kiteboarding and **kite surfing** both use kites like sails to pull the surfer across the waves.



Humans can explore the world beneath the waves, wearing a simple breathing mask called a **snorkel (snorkelling)** or carrying tanks of air for diving more deeply (**scuba diving**).



In **cave diving**, divers explore caves that can only be reached underwater.

The main difference between **polo** and **water polo** is that there are no horses. Teams of seven try to get the ball into their opponents' net while treading water.



Once called 'water ballet', **synchronised swimming** is a sport where swimmers perform routines similar to gymnastics in the water, to music.



The game of **biribol** is played in Brazil. It is very similar to volleyball but played in the water.



Beer can boating is a unique sport. Since 1974, the folk of Darwin, Australia, have used old drinks cans – and their imaginations – to build boats for the annual charity Beer Can Regatta.



Angling is often considered a solo pastime but it can also be a competitive sport where contestants try to catch the heaviest fish.

Surfing has been practised in Polynesian cultures, and especially Hawaii, for centuries. The sport became popular in mainland Australia and America in the 1960s.



In Nova Scotia, Canada, people hollow out giant squashes into boats and hold **pumpkin kayak** races.



Ice swimming is popular in Russia. Swimmers who enjoy diving and swimming in frozen rivers and lakes are known as 'walruses'.



SKIING

Archaeologists have found ancient wooden skis that are up to 8,000 years old preserved in bogs. In the eighteenth century, Swedish soldiers trained and raced each other on skis, through forests and across frozen fields.

In the nineteenth century, skiing became more competitive. Norwegian Sondre Norheim invented skis with curved sides and tighter bindings. He was also the first winner of Norway's first national ski competition in 1868.

There are a number of events in modern skiing:

Alpine skiing events are mainly downhill. Athletes compete to get down the 'run' in the fastest time.

In **slalom** events, the skier must negotiate in and out of a series of poles, in the correct order, without knocking them over or missing any out.

Cross-country skiing developed from the skills people needed to get around. There are seven events within the sport including straight-races, sprints and relays.

Snowboarding is similar to surfing - but without the tropical waves.

Snowboarding became an Olympic sport at the 1998 Nagano Games in Japan.

Ski jumping has featured in the Winter Olympics since 1924. Competitors take off from a curved ramp, fly into the air and (hopefully!) land perfectly.

Freestyle involves competitors skiing at speed then jumping into the air to perform a series of acrobatic moves.

THE WINTER OLYMPICS

The first official Winter Olympic Games were held in Chamonix, France, in 1924. It included bobsleigh, ski jumping, curling, ice hockey, Nordic skiing and skating. Since then, the programme has expanded to include even more death-defying events. The snowboard and ski half-pipe see competitors ride a U-shaped slope similar to skateboard ramps, leap off and 'hang' in the air - flipping, twisting and turning. Winter Paralympic sports include Alpine skiing, biathlon, ice hockey, snowboarding, cross-country skiing and wheelchair curling.

MARIT BJØRGEN

Norwegian cross-country skier Marit Bjørgen (1980-) is the most-decorated Winter Olympic athlete. Marit competed for the first time when she was seven years old. She competed in all five Winter Games from 2002 to 2018 and, in addition to dozens of championship prizes, has won 15 Olympic medals including 8 gold.



AROUND THE WORLD: COLD SPORTS

Ice hockey is hugely popular across the world. It is one of Canada's most important games.



Luge means 'sledge' in old Swiss-French. In this sport, one or two athletes hurtle downhill feet-first, on a fast toboggan.



Yukigassen means 'snow battle' in Japanese. Each February, at the foot of Mount Shōwa-Shinzan on the island of Hokkaido, teams from around the world throw snowballs at each other.

Every year the main street of Tromsø, Norway, sees the reindeer racing championship cup final, an important cultural event for the region's Sami people. The fastest reindeer usually have big noses, allowing them to breathe more air!



Mushing, or sled-dog racing, is Alaska's official state sport.



Snowshoes were first used about 6,000 years ago in modern-day central Asia, then the concept spread to North America. Today's hikers use these ancient inventions to walk across snowy landscapes when they are snow hiking.



Snow snake is a sport of the North American Haudenosaunee people. It involves throwing a long 'snake' stick furthest along a deep channel of snow. It was traditionally played when men returned from long hunting trips.



Invented in sixteenth-century Scotland, curling is similar to bowls. One player slides a large stone towards a mark and their team sweep the ice with brooms to control where it goes.



Koelven was like a cross between ice hockey and golf played in the Netherlands in the middle ages.



Played in Scandinavian countries, the Baltic countries and Mongolia, bandy is very similar to ice hockey except that it's played with a ball not a flat puck, which makes it faster.



Speed skating may have been invented by the Dutch who used to travel between villages by skating along frozen canals.



Figure skating became possible when American Edward Bushnell invented steel-bladed skates in 1850. The agility and sharp turns the skates allowed were combined with ballet moves to create winter's most graceful sport.



Competitors in the World Ice Art Championships held in Alaska have 36 hours to carve the best sculpture they can from a block of ice.

MOUNTAINEERING

Mountaineers scale tall peaks, battling a combination of dangerous rock, ice and snow. Competitive mountaineering began in 1760, when a prize was offered for the first person to climb Mont Blanc in the European Alps. The reward was claimed 26 years later by a French doctor, Michel-Gabriel Paccard, and his porter, Jacques Balmat.

NATIVE NAVIGATORS

Today, thousands of people attempt to climb Mount Everest in the Himalayas every year. They are often guided by skilled mountaineers from the Sherpa community – people who have lived in the mountains for many generations. They have developed ways of surviving in high altitudes with low oxygen and their expertise is admired throughout the world.

In Italy, many climbers follow the *via ferrate* ('iron ways'). These permanent, protected climbing routes were invented as a safe way for soldiers to cross mountains.

At higher altitudes mountaineers have to fight low levels of oxygen, which can make them feel faint or even pass out.



EDMUND HILLARY AND TENZING NORGAY

From the 1920s to the 1950s, there had been several serious attempts to climb Mount Everest. Many believed it couldn't be done. In 1953, a British-led team attempted the ascent but only two made it to the summit. They were New Zealander Edmund Hillary (1919–2008) and Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay (1914–1986). On 29 May 1953, they became the first people to reach the top of the world's highest mountain.

Some of the skills mountaineers need have become sports in their own right, like hiking and rock climbing.



SEVEN SUMMITS

Climbing the Seven Summits is one of the ultimate challenges for mountaineers. The goal is to climb to the summit of the highest mountain in each continent. These mountains are: Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (South America), Denali (North America), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Elbrus (Europe), Vinson (Antarctica) and Puncak Jaya (Oceania).



In *skyrunning*, athletes race on courses that weave through mountains. The very low oxygen levels and steep hills make running even harder than regular speed contests.

Rock climbing involves ascending a steep cliff. Athletes are attached to ropes anchored to the rocky surface for safety. Rock climbing can take place on natural surfaces, or on steep artificial climbing walls.



In *wingsuit flying*, athletes wear outfits equipped with specially designed webbed 'wings' that allow the wearer to glide from a high place. They open parachutes when gravity takes over.



Base jumping involves parachuting from a structure or cliff, with competitions based on landing accuracy.



Abseiling was invented by Jean Charlet Straton, a nineteenth-century mountaineer. After completing a solo climb of the 3,700-metre Petit Dru, he devised a safe way to get down using ropes to control the descent. His technique was adopted and adapted as abseiling. Today abseilers descend tall buildings and cliff faces – some even climb out of helicopters!



Caving is a sport which explores the underground world. In *extreme caving* athletes go further and deeper, and can be underground for days at a time in the world's deepest caves.



AROUND THE WORLD: EXTREME SPORTS



Parkour, also known as freerunning, began in France in the 1990s. Participants run, leap, climb and use various movement skills to improvise their way across any terrain.



The annual bog-snorkelling championships are held each year in Wales. Athletes swim through freezing, muddy peat-bogs.



Hang gliding is an air sport where the rider flies a non-motorised aircraft and glides on currents of air.



Bungee jumping owes much of its inspiration to land diving. Participants jump from a high place, connected by a rubber bungee cord.



Skydivers jump from an aircraft with a parachute.



Land diving is a traditional religious ritual from Pentecost Island, Vanuatu, in the South Pacific. Men and boys jump off wooden towers, connected by vines to break the fall.

At festival time in Catalonia, Spain, groups of castellers build precarious human towers.



In this new competitive sport called extreme ironing, daredevils iron clothes in really strange places such as on mountains and underwater!



In he'e hōlua, a traditional Hawaiian sport, competitors slide down lava rock tracks on a 'papa hōlua' sled made out of wood. The longest remaining ancient kahua hōlua ('sledding course') is over 1.6 kilometres and is believed to have been built in 1814 by King Kamehameha the Great.



In ice running, the runners in the Siberian Black Ice Race can choose between running a 'short' 250 kilometres or the 'long' 610 kilometres in temperatures below minus 40 degrees Celsius.



Each team in Japanese be-taoshi can include up to 75 people! One player sits on top of a pole, while his teammates defend it from the opposition.



Powerbockers perform crazy stunts while wearing special spring-loaded stilts.



For many sailors, sailing solo around the world is the most extreme sport of all.

THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

The Olympic Games were the greatest spectacle of the ancient world. In 393 CE, however, the Christian emperor Theodosius I banned them for representing 'pagan' beliefs. The idea was never quite forgotten though, and over time people tried to revive them.



The Cotswold Olympicks in England, UK, date back to 1612. They included strange events like shin-kicking and 'back-sword' – fought with a sword and dagger until someone drew blood!

Pierre de Coubertin saw the Wenlock Olympian Games in England, UK, in 1890. He enjoyed it so much he founded a worldwide version, the International Olympics Committee, in 1894. This committee organises and oversees the Olympic Games.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece. The venue was chosen to honour the original Games. A total of 241 athletes from 14 nations competed in 43 events.



Every athlete was male.

The first Olympic champion was American James Connolly who won the triple jump contest on the opening day.

THE UNOFFICIAL OLYMPIAN

The 1896 marathon was won by a Greek man, Spyridon Louis. Stamata Revithi, as a Greek woman, wasn't allowed to enter the Olympic Games. But Stamata was determined and ran the marathon anyway. She completed the course in five hours and thirty minutes. Sadly, the Olympic officials wouldn't let her inside the Panathenaic Stadium to finish her run, but Stamata was still the first woman to run a marathon.



During the Opening Ceremony, the Olympic flag is carried into the stadium.

Athletes enter in a 'Parade of Nations' in alphabetical order, carrying their national flags.

The Olympic Cauldron is lit during the opening ceremony.

At the end of the Olympic Games, the Olympic flag is lowered and given to the mayor of the city that will host the next Games and the Olympic flame is extinguished.

In 2016, Olympic athletes in Team Refugee represented the millions of people displaced from their homes. Instead of marching behind a national flag they entered with the Olympic flag.

The Paralympic Games are the second-biggest sports championships in the world. They were first held in Rome, Italy, in 1960.

The Winter and Summer Olympics are held every four years, staggered so they are held two years apart.

SPORT TODAY

Every sport played professionally is now governed by a set of rules that every athlete must follow. But the pressures of winning and competing can sometimes mean that athletes participate in practices, such as doping, where illegal drugs are taken to help boost performances and give an unfair advantage over other athletes. This is managed through organisations, like the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), to maintain fair and clean competition.

GLOSSARY

ABORIGINAL

A collective term used to refer to the diverse indigenous peoples, cultures and languages of Australia's original inhabitants.

ARCHAEOLOGIST

A person who studies ancient cultures and history.

ARISTOCRAT

A member of the nobility.

CONQUISTADOR

Spanish soldiers that sailed with explorers to colonise South America.

CONTINENT

A large continuous mass of land. Earth has seven continents.

DISPLACED

People forced to leave their homes due to conflict, persecution, natural disasters, or other crises, who seek safety and shelter elsewhere.

DOPING

The taking of illegal substances or methods in sports to gain an unfair advantage, enhance performance, or that break the rules of fair competition.

FIRST NATIONS

First Nations refers to the indigenous peoples in Canada, encompassing various tribes, nations and ethnic groups.

INDIGENOUS

The original inhabitants of a region or country, with distinct cultural, historical and traditional ties to the land.

LUMBERJACK

A person whose job it is to cut down trees.

MĀORI

The indigenous Polynesian people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

MAYA

An ancient Mesoamerican civilisation in what is now Mexico and Central America, known for their advanced knowledge.

MEDIEVAL

Sometimes known as the Middle Ages, this period lasted from about 500 to 1500 CE.

NATIVE AMERICAN

A collective term used to refer to the diverse indigenous peoples, cultures and languages of North America's original inhabitants.

NOMADS

A group of people that travel from place to place.

OLYMPIC GAMES

A global multi-sport event where athletes from different nations compete.

PAGAN

People from long ago who believed in many gods and nature's magic. Some still follow those traditions today.

PARALYMPIC GAMES

A major international multi-sport event for Disabled athletes, held in parallel with the Olympic Games.

PERSIANS

People who were part of the Persian Empire. The Persian Empire lasted from approximately 559 to 331 BCE and occupied the territory of what is now Iran.

PETTICOAT

A piece of clothing that women in the past used to wear under a dress or skirt.

POLYNESIA

A collection of more than 1,000 islands in the central Pacific Ocean.

REFEREE

A sporting official who watches the game and ensures all the rules are being followed.

REFUGEE

People who are forced to flee their home country to escape war, violence or conflict and seek refuge in another country.

RENAISSANCE

A time period beginning in the fourteenth century that saw a renewed interest in the arts and intellectual thought.

SAMURAI

An ancient Japanese warrior that followed a strict code of conduct.

SECOND WORLD WAR

A global conflict that lasted from 1939 to 1945 and involved virtually every country in the world.

SHERPA

A group of people from the mountainous regions of Nepal that are well known for their mountaineering skills.

SPARTA

A city-state in ancient Greece. People from Sparta were known as Spartans.

SUPER BOWL

The championship game of the National Football League (NFL) in the United States, known for its halftime shows and as one of the most-watched sporting events in the country.

VIETNAM WAR

A conflict that took place from 1955 to 1975, involving North Vietnam, supported by the Soviet Union and China, and South Vietnam, supported by the United States and other allies, which ended with the whole of Vietnam under communist control.

VIKINGS

The Vikings were warriors from Scandinavia. The Viking Age lasted from 790 to 1100 CE.

WESTERN ZHOU DYNASTY

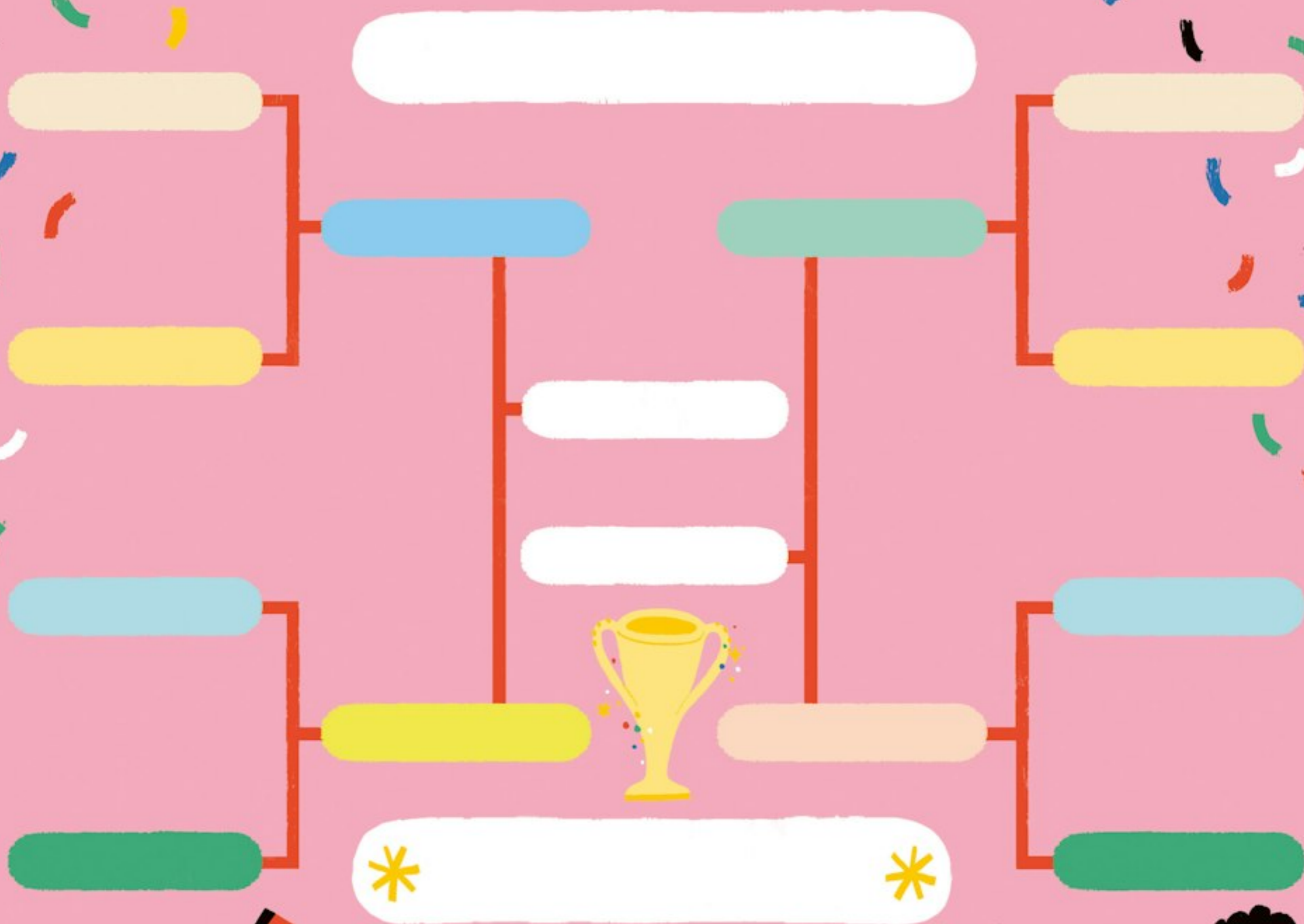
A period in ancient Chinese history that lasted from approximately 1046 BCE to 771 BCE.

ZARANIQ

A nomadic group of people that live in Yemen.

MAKE A TOURNAMENT

People have been competing to be the best at sports since the beginning of humanity. Today, we determine who is the best at a particular sport by holding a tournament. Use the chart and instructions below to make your own tournament for any sport you like.



WHAT TO DO

1. Write the name of your tournament at the top of the table.
2. Write the names of eight players or teams in the outermost boxes of the chart.
3. Have each pair of players or teams compete against each other in your sport, then when the winner has been decided, write the winner's name in the next box. This makes new pairs.
4. Keep doing this until you are left with two names in the middle – these are the players or teams who will compete in the final.
5. Have the final two players or teams compete until the winner is decided. When you know who the winner is, write their name in the champion box – now you've played a tournament!