

Picigin

Picigin is beach game, originating from city Split in Croatia. It started around the time after the first world war, in year 1923. in the shallow water of the sandy Bačvice beach. This near 100 year old tradition has been constantly changing and evolved to a demanding and dynamic sport what we can see today.

It requires a tennis ball, stripped to the rubber interior and evenly abraded down to a thickness of 3-4mm or 27g in weight. The ball is hit most oftenly with the central part of the palm, but it is allowed to be hit by any body part as long as the "only" rule is not broken – To keep the ball dry! One game is over when the ball is dropped into the water.

The game does not have a scoring system, because there is no winner. The evaluation is more provisional similar to skateboarding or ice skating. Therefore the team tries to keep the ball in the air as long as possible but through creating difficult to reach forward passes and athletic jumps cushioned by the sea. A good player will always jump on a large surface of his body like the chest or back, preventing injury to his limbs and joints.

The characteristic Bačvice beach appearance allowed this game to develop, because it is long and shallow. The depth while playing picigin should be at around the height of the ankle for all players. The game is strictly played between five players in a form of a pentagon, and the perfect forward pass should fall on the circle inscribing the pentagon. The size of the field is adaptable depending on the age and skill of players, but an average diameter is approximately 10-15 meters. There are three different positions depending on athletic and ball passing abilities of players. Each player has a specific part of the field which they cover but the nature of the game is improvisation which will often lead to temporary change in positions.

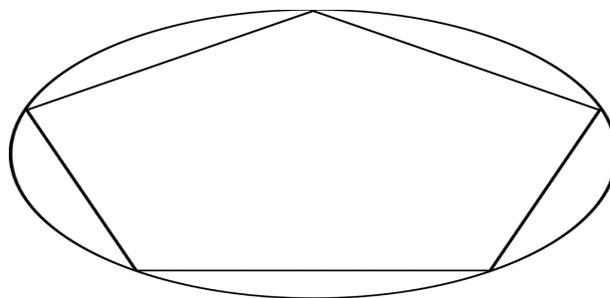


Fig. 1 Shape of the field. The tips of the pentagon are player positions and circle the imaginary line where the ball is passed to.

Picigin has spread to other beaches of Croatia, but only in Split it is played in this specific form and all year around! It has also become a symbol of the city and protected by Croatian Ministry of Culture.

To keep their game at a high level, during the windy winter season, some younger players have made a competitive variant to Picigin called "Picigol" several years ago. It is now played indoors with two teams, each consisting of four people trying to score a goal and compete to a score of 6.

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