

# BORP Goalball Handbook

## Introduction

Welcome to Bay Area Goalball! This document is intended to give a brief introduction to the sport of Goalball and how it is played in the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP). Goalball is an international sport and is played recreationally and competitively by thousands of blind people all over the world. The BORP Goalball Program welcomes players of all levels of experience--from complete beginners to Paralympic champions--and provides a supportive atmosphere within which all may play, improve, and enjoy.

This handbook is intended to provide new players with the basic concepts and rules of Goalball. It is NOT a complete rule book, and some of the rules as stated here may be different from those used in National and International competitions. For complete official rules, please visit the International Blind Sports Association (IBSA) web site ([www.ibsa.es](http://www.ibsa.es)).

Goalball is played by two teams, each consisting of three blindfolded players. The court is 18x9 meters in size. The two teams face each other from opposite ends of the court and try to roll a bell ball past the opposing team. If the ball gets past the defending team a point is scored. The team with the most points at the end of the game is the winner. This may sound simple, but many rules and a fast pace keep the game extremely exciting and physically demanding. The following sections of this Handbook provide a basic description of the court and the rules governing play.

## Court Description

The Goalball court is eighteen (18) meters long and nine (9) meters wide. At either end of this rectangular court is a Team Area the full width of the court (9 meters) and 3 meters from front to back. The back line of the Team Area (which is also the narrow end of the court) is called the Goal Line. The front of the Team Area, facing the opposite end of the court, is called the Front Line. Each team has its own Team Area at either end of the court. The Landing Area extends 3 meters in front of each team's Front Line. Between the two Landing areas, in the middle of the court, is the Neutral Area.

There is a line dividing the Landing Area from the Neutral Area called the High Ball Line, and there is a line across the middle of the court called the Mid Line.

The Team Area is divided into several sub-areas. All lines in the Team Area are marked by thin cords covered by line tape to provide tactile landmarks.

Half way between the Front Line and the Goal Line there are two Wing Lines that serve as a divider between the front and back of the Team Area. These Wing Lines extend 1.5 meters in from both the left and right sides (wings) of the Team Area. A Center Line marks the midpoints of both the Front Line and the Goal Line. Both of these Center Lines extend 0.5 meters into the Team area. Along the Front Line, and 1.5 meters in from each wing, are Orientation Lines. These extend 0.25 meters from the Front Line toward the Goal Line.

The Goal Line of each Team Area is divided into five segments. They are numbered from one to five from left to right as you face the Goal Line from inside the court. These numbers are not indicated tactilely on the court, but are used as a means of discussing locations along the Goal Line.

## Playing the Game

### ***Team Members***

The team consists of three players: the Center, the Right Wing, and the Left Wing. Generally speaking, the Center is a defensive position (more blocking than throwing), while the Wings are more offensive (more throwing than

blocking). However, this generality tends to be only a guideline. Wing players are always critical for good defense, and Center players are an important part of any offensive lineup.

The Center position plays in the front of the Team Area: in front of the Wing Lines. S/he generally stays at the center of the Front Line, and is expected to be able to defend against a throw no matter where it is aimed. Thus, the Center must be able to move quickly and confidently all the way from one side of the Team Area to the other.

Each of the Wing positions play behind hir corresponding Wing Line, and to the right or left of the rear Center Line. The Wing players are responsible for doing most of the throwing in the game. The main defensive job of the Wing players is to guard the wings against throws made along the extreme edges of the court--the most difficult throws for the Center to block.

In order to avoid collisions, each player is expected to stay within hir own area during defensive play. Players may move out of their area while throwing the ball, but good communication between players is critical in situations where one player moves into another's area.

### ***The Referee***

The Referee keeps the official time (usually ten minutes of play per half) and uses a whistle to start and stop the clock. The Referee is also responsible for calling Penalties and Infractions, announcing goals, keeping score, calling balls that are thrown or blocked out of bounds, and many other important jobs. We are always nice to the Referee.

### ***Throwing the Ball***

Throwing the ball is not as easy as it sounds. The ball must be rolling on the ground before leaving your Landing Area, and should be thrown with as much speed and accuracy as possible. Good throwing usually requires a lot of practice. The basic throw is a sort of bowling motion. The ball is cradled in one hand while taking a few quick steps in the direction of the throw. Meanwhile, the arm with the ball swings back (underhand). During the final step, the ball comes forward and is released as close to the ground, and with as much force in the forward direction, as possible.

### ***Defending***

When defending, it is your job to make sure the ball does not cross your Goal Line. Ideally, each player will cover as much of the Goal Line as possible. This means that a fundamental position for defense is to stretch out on your side, parallel to the Goal Line, with your toes pointed and arms extended above your head. Your head should be tilted slightly back behind your arms to protect your face. Since it is easier to hear the ball when you are not stretched out on your side, most players start out in a crouched position and then stretch out or dive to where they believe the ball is coming. As in throwing, there are too many defensive strategies to include them all here.

### ***Communication***

It is important to remember that Goalball is a team sport, and that good teamwork requires good communication. The main communication methods used in Goalball are talking (usually in a low voice to avoid being heard by the opposing team) and tapping the floor (usually to let another team member know where you are). The Center generally acts as a team leader or coordinator because s/he is best positioned to be well heard by both Wings simultaneously. Time is often critical when playing, so it is important to respond quickly when called.

### ***Passing***

It is often necessary to pass the ball to another team member after blocking it. To pass the ball, call the name or number of the team member to whom you are passing, and wait for hir to respond (for example by tapping the floor) before passing. Goalball is a time-sensitive sport, so it is important to pass the ball quickly. However, accuracy is also critical in order to avoid either passing the ball out of bounds or across your own Goal Line. A good pass begins with a gentle toss of the ball toward your team mate. The ball should hit the ground once, so your teammate can hear where it is, and roll the remaining distance of the pass.

## **Scoring**

Points are scored when the ball crosses the Goal Line. Which team threw the ball does not matter. Thus, if you accidentally knock the ball across your own Goal Line, you will score a point for the opposing team...

## **Time Out**

Either team, or the Referee, may call a Time Out. When a team calls a Time Out, the clock stops for 45 seconds, giving that team time to discuss, reorient, or otherwise catch their breaths. A Time Out may only be called during a break in play (for example immediately after a goal is scored), or when the calling team has control of the ball. The request for a Time Out is indicated to the Referee by holding up one hand vertically, and placing the other palm horizontally above it (to form a print letter t).

Each team is permitted to call three Time Outs per game. The Referee may call an unlimited number of Time Outs for whatever reason, and of whatever duration s/he wishes. Often the Referee will call a Time Out if line tape is in need of repair, or if s/he needs to consult with another game official.

## **Substitutions**

A team may consist of more than three players, but only three may play at any given time. In order to substitute an active player for one that is off-court, play must be stopped with a hand signal to the Referee. To make this hand signal, hold up both hands and roll them around each other in front of you as if you were winding a string around your wrist. In practice, the Referee will sometimes stop play half way through a Half for player substitutions.

## **Infractions and Penalties**

There are a number of Infractions in Goalball that result in a turn-over of possession of the ball. In these cases, the clock is stopped and the ball is given to the other team before play is resumed. A Penalty is a major violation either by an individual or by a team. When a Penalty is called, the clock stops and the Referee announces the Penalty. Please see the following section for a list of Infractions and Penalty-worthy violations.

When a Penalty is called, one person must defend the Goal Line on his own. The other two players step off the court and a member of the opposing team is allowed one throw (a Penalty Throw) against the lone defender.

There are Personal Penalties and Team Penalties. They are similar in effect. The only difference is who must defend against the Penalty Throw. In the case of a Personal Penalty, the violating player must defend against the Penalty Throw. In the case of a Team Penalty, the last person to have thrown the ball must defend against the Penalty Throw.

### **Infractions**

**Premature Throw:** If the ball is thrown before the Referee calls "Play," control of the ball is turned over to the opposing team.

**Step Over:** When releasing the ball during a throw, some part of the player's body (and the ball) must be within the bounds of the court. Otherwise, the clock is stopped and control of the ball is turned over to the opposing team.

**Pass Out:** If the ball accidentally goes out of bounds during a pass, the clock is stopped and control of the ball is turned over to the opposing team.

**Ball Over:** If the ball rolls across the Mid Line during defensive play, the clock is stopped and control of the ball is turned over to the opposing team.

### **Penalties**

**Short Ball:** A throw that comes to rest before reaching the defending team's Front Line is a Short Ball. A player throwing a Short Ball must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**High Ball:** A ball that does not touch the floor at least once in the Team Area or the Landing Area after being thrown is a High Ball. A player throwing a High Ball must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Long Ball:** In addition to touching at least once in the Team Area or the Landing Area (see High Ball), the ball must also touch the floor at least once in the Neutral Area. Otherwise, it is called a Long Ball. A player throwing a Long Ball must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Eye Shades:** If a player touches his eye shades at any time during a game without explicit permission from the Referee, then that player must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Third Time Throw:** Each player may throw only two consecutive times. A player making a third throw must defend against a penalty Throw.

**Illegal Defense:** Blocking the ball in the Landing Area, without having any part of your body within the Team Area, is called an Illegal Defense. A player making an Illegal Defense must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** If either an individual or a team consistently engages in behavior that the Referee finds “inappropriate” or “unsportsmanlike”, s/he may require the individual or team to defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Noise:** If either an individual or a team is responsible for excessive noise that interferes with play, the Referee may require the individual or team to defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Ten Seconds:** When a throw is blocked, the defending team has ten (10) seconds to make a throw. This time period begins at the moment that the defending team makes contact with the ball. If the clock is stopped during the ten second period, the ten second period is NOT reset. The throw must be made in the remaining time after the clock is restarted. If the ball is not thrown during this ten second period, the last team member to have thrown must defend against a Penalty Throw.

**Illegal Coaching:** Only the members of the team who are currently on the court may communicate with one another. Any communication between an active player and someone off-court results in the last team member to have thrown defending against a Penalty Throw.

## **Recommended Equipment**

It is sometimes possible to borrow equipment from BORP, or from other players. However, if you plan on playing with any regularity, we suggest you make the small investment in the following items. They may be purchased at any local sporting goods store.

**Pads:** Many kinds of soft pads designed for other sports may be used for protection when playing Goalball. Soft elbow and knee pads of the sort used in volleyball or wrestling are strongly recommended. Many players (particularly women) also use hip protection in the form of football pads or hockey pants. Experimentation with different types of padding is encouraged. Goalball is a relatively rough sport and it is easy to bruise yourself without proper padding.

**Protective Cups:** The ball is sometimes thrown hard and fast. In defensive play it is not unusual to be hit with the ball in the groin or chest. This can be extremely painful and we strongly recommend some kind of athletic protection.

**Shoes:** We play in an indoor gym whose floor can be easily marked by black-soled shoes. When playing Goalball please wear shoes that will not leave marks on the gym floor.

**Eye Shades:** Any kind of eye-covering is reasonable for playing. Blacked out ski goggles are recommended for competition. During practice we are not so strict and often use soft “sleep shades” as might be found in a drug or travel supplies store.