Beach Volleyball, formerly called Sand Volleyball, became the 90th NCAA Championship Sport in January of 2015. The NCAA will conduct their first championship in May of 2016. The name changed from Sand to Beach was adopted to provide uniform nomenclature across the college, Olympic and professional ranks in identifying this sport, irrespective of whether the sand is located on a beach, in a park, on a campus, or in an indoor facility. The sport moved from Emerging status to Championship status in just four years and reflects the growth in interest and ability among girls and women in the sport.

In 2015-16 over 60 four-year colleges, including all three NCAA divisions and several NAIA schools, and over 30 two-year colleges will sponsor varsity programs. Almost 50% of collegiate beach programs have scholarship support that is separate from the dollars dedicated to their court team. High schools in California, Florida, and Texas are engaged in organized competition and Sand Volleyball is a state high school association sanctioned sport in Arizona.

Below is a series of frequently asked questions and answers which will assist state high school administrators in evaluating this sport:

**Questions & Answers**

**Q**

Is beach volleyball a different sport from indoor volleyball?

**A**

Yes, at all levels - collegiately, internationally (Olympics) and professionally - beach volleyball is a different sport from court volleyball. The sport is played by two players in sand using different rules, unique skills and strategies, and specialized equipment. There are separate scholarships in NCAA programs, six in DI and five in DII. As with other new sports, many students on the first teams will be cross-over players from other sports, and we anticipate that many beach players will come from the indoor ranks in the early years. Regulating beach volleyball as a separate sport as soon as high school and club teams begin to emerge will minimize the regulatory and potential legal problems should participation grow sufficiently to warrant the addition of beach volleyball as a sanctioned sport by the state association.
What is the format for team play?

The interscholastic/intercollegiate version of beach volleyball is similar to team tennis with each school fielding a number of doubles team stacked by ability. Collegiately each school fields five teams of two. The winning school is the one that captures three of the five matches.

What do the competitors wear?

The standard uniform looks very similar to track uniforms, a set of shorts/briefs and a singlet or tights and long sleeves for cooler weather competitions. Regulations require that the midriff is covered similar to other collegiate and high school sports.

When is the season?

Beach volleyball is a spring team sport in college with a similar season to softball, baseball, lacrosse, tennis and track/field.
Will only warm weather states be interested in adding beach volleyball as a sanctioned sport?

It is certainly easier to schedule outdoor activities in more temperate parts of the country. Other spring sports, however, like softball, baseball, and tennis are sponsored across the nation, and lacrosse, began in the intemperate northeast. Beach volleyball is played internationally in a variety of climates and temperatures, and like golf, the ability of players to manage the wind is a differentiating factor among competitors. Currently, Nebraska, Colorado, Maryland, Washington, Idaho and Oregon have colleges with varsity beach teams and youth play is growing in all parts of the country. We have no reason to believe that beach volleyball, which is not reliant on a beach, just sand, will not spread around the country, similar to soccer and lacrosse which started in the northeast, or court volleyball which started in the west.

Will beach volleyball add participation opportunities?

Yes. Many first-year beach volleyball players will come from the indoor team, similar to soccer & lacrosse or swimming & water polo, but as players become more skilled, specialization will occur between court and beach volleyball as it has in these other sports. Evidence from the 1st five years of collegiate play bears this out as the number of crossover players decreases as the beach volleyball skills increase. Among institutions in their 5th year of sponsorship, 77% of volleyball-playing student-athletes compete in only one of the two sports; also, among those players competing for the 2015 beach championship, 90% played only beach volleyball.
Are high schools adding Beach/Sand Volleyball?

Arizona (AIA) added Sand VB as a sanctioned sport in November of 2012. California and Florida both have numerous high school leagues, and sanctioning issues are under discussion in their High School Associations. Per the Sports and Fitness Industry research (SFIA), participation in the 6-17 year-old female demographic increased by 64% between 2007 and 2013 to 356,000. USA Volleyball also saw a 450% increase in participation in their female U12-U18 programming.

What does it cost to build a sand volleyball court?

Sand volleyball courts can be built for $15,000 to $20,000 per court if the school owns the land. Each court takes 220-250 tons of sand; the recommended depth is 12-15 inches for outdoor courts, 15-18 inches for indoor courts. Trucking distance is the major factor determining cost. A school v. school dual match can be played on two courts in two hours and in 90 minutes on three courts.
Is the Equipment/Officiating/Scoring/Coaching different?

The court is one meter (39.4”) narrower and two meters (58.8”) shorter than an indoor court to accommodate playing on sand with only two players. The ball is slightly heavier and less pressurized with a more durable cover. One person can officiate a beach VB match as there is no overlap and ball marks replace lines judges. Overhand passing (setting) is called very tightly and players may not tip the ball over the net with an open hand. Strategies differ markedly between court and beach volleyball because of the number of players and the surface. Coaches take different certification courses and often specialize in coaching one sport or the other. A match is two sets to 21 points with a 15 point 3rd set if needed; all sets are rally scoring. Players switch sides of the court every seven points in the first two sets and every five points in the third set to equalize sun and wind conditions.

Where can I get more information about beach volleyball?

The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) has been very involved in the development of beach volleyball as an intercollegiate/interscholastic sport. Go to www.avca.org and look under the Beach tab for general information. Specific questions can be sent to Kathy.DeBoer@avca.org or reach her at 859.219.3554.