

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Concept
Entry ID: AWE2273

Netball

(1900 -)

Born 2 January, 1900

Occupation Sport

Summary

Netball is said to be the largest participant sport for girls and women in Australia, with four hundred thousand players registered with the All Australia Netball Association by the late 1990s, and an estimated further three hundred and fifty thousand not registered. It was a foundation sport of the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra in 1981. Ian Jobling and Pamela Barham suggest that the popularity of netball among women can be attributed to its versatility (it can be played on all surfaces at all age and skill levels), and its organisation by women for women.

Details

Netball began as a derivation of the American game of Basketball (and in fact was known in Australia as 'women's basket ball' until 1970). As early as 1890, the game was introduced to England where it was taken up with some enthusiasm by the ladies:

In England in 1895, ladies using broomsticks for posts and wet paper bags for baskets played the basketball game on grass. Their long skirts, bustle backs, nipped waists and button up shoes impeded running and their leg-of-mutton sleeves restricted arm movement making dribbling and long passes difficult. The ladies decided to adapt the game to accommodate these restrictions. (Source: <http://www.netball.asn.au>)

By the early twentieth century, the game was being played in Australian primary and secondary schools, presumably introduced by teachers from England. Interschool competitions had begun by 1913. In 1926, the first recorded interstate match took place between Melbourne and Sydney teams, and the following year saw the formation of the All Australian Women's Basket Ball Association (AAWBBA). After Australia's first international match against New Zealand in 1938, the Association took steps to introduce international rules for the game incorporating Australian, New Zealand and English codes of play.

In 1956, after negotiations with the All England Netball Association, an Australian team was selected to tour England. They clocked up an amazing sixty-four wins, with just three losses. This tour led to the establishment of the International Federation of Basketball and Netball Federations (now IFNA) as a body to preside over the standardisation of playing rules. In 1960, the Federation proposed an international netball tournament to be held every four years. The first World Netball Championship was held in Eastbourne, England, in 1963. Australia was victorious over ten other teams and continued to dominate the competition in subsequent years. Australian teams have claimed eight of the eleven championships held to date.

Published resources

Booklet

Golden Jubilee Souvenir Booklet, 1927-28 - 1977-78, All Australia Netball Association, 1978

Book

Netball Australia: a socio-historical analysis, Jobling, Ian and Pamela Barham, 1988

A Netball History in Tasmania: 'The First Bounce' - An Account of the History of the Sport in Tasmania, Barker, Pauline, 2005

Site Exhibition

She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html>

Edited Book

The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, Vamplew, Vray; Moore, Katharine; O'Hara, John; Cashman, Richard; Jobling, Ian, 1997

Archival resources

Private Hands (These regards may not be readily available)

[Netball Australia - Papers](#)

Author Details

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