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## International handball federation: An overview

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### Abstract

The International Handball Federation (IHF) is the administrative and controlling body for international handball. Handball is an Olympic sport played during the Summer Olympics. The IHF organizes world championships, held in odd-numbered years, with separate competitions for men and women. The IHF World Men's Handball Championship 2019 title holders are Denmark. The IHF World Women's Handball Championship 2019 title holders are Netherlands. The IHF is composed of five continental federations: Asian Handball Federation, African Handball Confederation, Pan-American Team Handball Federation, European Handball Federation and Oceania Handball Federation. These federations organize continental championships held every other second year. Handball is played during the Pan American Games, All-Africa Games, and Asian Games. It is also played at the Mediterranean Games. In addition to continental competitions between national teams, the federations arrange international tournaments between club teams.

**Keywords:** Handball, International Handball Federation, IHF World Women's Handball Championship, IHF World Men's Handball Championship, Olympics

### Introduction

Handball began as a game between two teams of eleven players and was played outdoors. It has evolved into an indoor sport with seven players on each team. Handball is a popular sport played at all levels from recreational to fully professional. The modern game's origins were in Scandinavia in the early 19th century. A kind of game from the Czech Republic was called "Hazena", a form of field handball which already included the division of the playing field into three parts characterizing field handball. However, countries such as Denmark, Germany and Sweden are considered as the real handball pioneers of modern times <sup>[1]</sup>. It is today played by around 19 million people (International Handball Federation, 2014), and has been an Olympic sport since 1972 for men and since 1976 for women <sup>[2]</sup>.

The International Handball Federation, which was established in 1947 oversees the game and it has 174 members associated with it <sup>[3]</sup>. The rules of handball are unified, regulated and controlled by the chief international organization, International Handball Federation (IHF). This task is fulfilled by the national organizations in the different countries. The International Handball Federation organized the men's world championship every 4 (sometimes 3) years from World War II to 1995. Since the 1995 world championship in Iceland, the competition has been every two years. The women's world championship has been played since 1957. The IHF also organizes women's and men's junior world championships. By July 2009, the IHF listed 166 member federations - approximately 795,000 teams and 19 million players. The IHF is composed of five continental federations which organize continental championships held every other second year. In addition to these competitions between national teams, the federations arrange international tournaments between club teams. The IHF's first president was Avery Brundage - an American who went on to become president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). International Handball Federation (IHF) tried to make handball playable in a hall as well, that is how indoor handball evolved. Popularity of the game increased, development of its motion material got faster. Since 1966 world championships have only been organised on small fields and indoor. Indoor handball was involved in the Olympic programme in 1972, in the Munich games. In 1976, in the next Olympics, in Montreal also female teams got the possibility to compete.

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Olympic tournaments have become crucial events of the sports for both sexes. By the 1990s handball had grown to be one of the most popular sports. Besides the former dominance of European countries nowadays popularity of the game is steadily increasing in Asian, African, American and even Oceanian countries.

Handball teams are usually organized as clubs. On a national level, the clubs are associated in federations which organize matches in leagues and tournaments. The administrative and controlling body for international Handball is the International Handball Federation (IHF). The federation organizes world championships, separate for men and women, held in uneven years. The final round is hosted in one of its member states. Handball tournaments are held every year in different countries. World Championship, Olympic Games, Summer Olympic, Asian Olympic, Common Wealth Games are the tournaments organised by international sports organizations. Apart from the above-mentioned major tournaments, handball tournaments are being organized at various places of the world, controlled by International Handball Federation.

### Description

The International Handball Federation (IHF) is the administrative and controlling body for handball and beach handball. IHF is responsible for the organisation of handball's major international tournaments, notably the IHF World Men's Handball Championship, which commenced in 1938, and the IHF World Women's Handball Championship, which commenced in 1957. IHF was founded in 1946 to oversee international competitions. Headquartered in Basel, its membership now comprises 209 national federations. Each member country must also be a member of one of the six regional confederations: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Caribbean, Oceania, and South and Central America. Dr. Hassan Moustafa from Egypt has been President of the IHF since 2000.

### History

The IHF was founded on 11 July 1946, in Copenhagen (Denmark) by representatives of eight national federations. The founding members were Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. The first president of IHF was Gösta Björk from Sweden. Björk was replaced in 1950 by Hans Baumann from Switzerland. In 1954, the first IHF Men's World Championship, was conducted under the aegis of the IHF, in Sweden with the participation of six national teams. In 1957, the first IHF World Women's Handball Championship was held in SFR

Yugoslavia with the participation of nine national teams. Handball was included in the Olympic Games for the first time under the auspices of IHF in Munich 1972 (men's tournament) and Montreal 1976 (women's tournament).

### Structure

#### • Laws and Governance

IHF is headquartered in Basel, and is a federation established under the Law of Switzerland. IHF's supreme body is the IHF Congress, an assembly made up of representatives from each affiliated member association. Each national handball association has one vote, regardless of its size or handballing strength. The Congress assembles in ordinary session once in two years (odd years) after the IHF World Men's Handball Championship. The congress makes decisions relating to IHF's governing statutes and their method of implementation and application. Only the Congress can pass changes to IHF's statutes. The congress approves the annual report and decides on the acceptance of new national associations and holds elections. Congress elects the President of IHF, its General Secretary, and the other members of the IHF Council. IHF's Council, chaired by the President, is the main decision-making body of the organisation in the intervals of Congress. The Council is composed of 18 people: the President, 5 Vice Presidents, and 12 members. The Council is the body that decides which country will host the World Championship. The President and General Secretary are the main officeholders of IHF, and are in charge of its daily administration, carried out by the General Secretariat. Dr. Hassan Moustafa is the current president, appointed in the year 2000 at the 28th Ordinary IHF Congress.

The IHF is composed of six continental federations which organize continental championships held every other second year: African Handball Confederation, Asian Handball Federation, European Handball Federation, North America and the Caribbean Handball Confederation, Oceania Continent Handball Federation, and South and Central America Handball Confederation. In addition to continental competitions between national teams, the federations arrange international tournaments between club teams. Until 2017, there were five continental confederations. On 14 January 2018, the IHF Council divided the Pan-American Confederation into the North America and the Caribbean Handball Confederation and the South and Central America Handball Confederation. The authority to divide a continental confederation was assigned to the IHF Congress, but the 36th IHF Congress in 2017 authorized the IHF Council to divide the Pan-American Team Handball Federation.

**Table 1:** IHF Presidents

S. No.	Name	Country	Term
1.	Gösta Björk	Sweden	11 July 1946 – 9 September 1950
2.	Hans Baumann*	Switzerland	9 September 1950 – 9 February 1971
	Paul Högberg (Interim President)	Sweden	9 February 1971 – 23 August 1972
3.	Paul Högberg	Sweden	23 August 1972 – 25 July 1984
4.	Erwin Lanc	Austria	25 July 1984 – 26 November 2000
5.	Hassan Moustafa	Egypt	26 November 2000 – present

- Hans Baumann died in Office on 9 February 1971 due to illness.

**Table 2:** IHF Executive Committee

Designation	Name
President	Hassan Moustafa
1st Vice-President	Joël Delplanque
Treasurer	Anna Rapp
Executive Members	Narcisa Lecuşanu
	František Táborský
Managing Director	Amal Khalifa

### IHF Council

The IHF Council is the IHF's main decision-making body between meetings of the IHF Congress. It is currently serving a 2017–2021 term.

**Table 3:** IHF Commissions

Commission	Chairperson
IHF Commission of Organising and Competitions	Per Bertelsen
IHF Playing Rules and Referees Commission	Ramón Gallego
IHF Commission of Coaching and Methods	Dietrich Späte
IHF Medical Commission	François Gnamian
IHF Commission for Development	Raquel Pedercini Marinho
IHF Athletes' Commission	Gro Hammerseng-Edin
IHF Arbitration Commission	Tomislav Grahovac
IHF Arbitration Tribunal	Zoran Radojičić
IHF Ethics Commission	Hussein Moustafa Fathy

### IHF Tournaments

- **Handball**
  - IHF World Men's Handball Championship
  - IHF World Women's Handball Championship
  - IHF Men's Junior World Championship
  - IHF Women's Junior World Championship
  - IHF Men's Youth World Championship
  - IHF Women's Youth World Championship
  - IHF Emerging Nations Championship
  - IHF Inter-Continental Trophy
  - IHF Confederations Cup (*proposed*)
- **Beach Handball**
  - IHF Beach Handball World Championship
  - IHF Youth Beach Handball World Championship
  - IHF Beach Handball Global Tour (*proposed*)
- **Wheelchair Handball**
  - IHF Wheelchair Handball World Championship (*proposed*)
  - Club Handball
  - IHF Super Globe
  - IHF Women's Super-Globe
- **Multi-Sport Events**
  - Handball at the Summer Olympics
  - Handball at the Youth Olympic Games (*Defunct*)
  - Beach handball at the World Games
  - Beach handball at the Youth Olympic Games

### Conclusion

In sum, International Handball Federation is the governing body for various handball tournaments over the globe. In the

first championship tournament only four teams participated, but now it has grown to a total membership of 24 teams. As handball gained popularity all over the globe, World Championship was planned and organized by IHF in a duration of every two years for both men and women category, since 1997. International Handball Federation (IHF) tried to make handball playable in a hall as well, that is how indoor handball evolved. Popularity of the game increased, development of its motion material got faster. Since 1966 world championships have only been organised on small fields and indoor. Indoor handball was involved in the Olympic programme in 1972, in the Munich games. In 1976, in the next Olympics, in Montreal also female teams got the possibility to compete. Olympic tournaments have become crucial events of the sports for both sexes. In addition, the (International Handball Federation) IHF Coaches and Teachers Education System encompasses a large number of coaching courses for different levels, including special courses for emerging national federations, Olympic Solidarity courses in cooperation with the International Olympic Committee, and, of course, Handball at School courses, all of which ensure a bright future for the sport.

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