(25) SPORTS OF THE PAST

ACTIVITY 1: Read the text and answer the questions TRUE or FALSE.

Pitz, the first team sport



The first team sport was a ball-game already played by the Olmecs in the first millennium BCE (Before the Common Era). It was later adopted by other Mexican societies and it was particularly popular **among** the Mayas. It was **known as** *pitz* among the Maya and as *õllamaliztli* among the Aztecs. Although the exact rules are unclear, the game was played by two teams with 2-4 players each. The object was to keep a large rubber ball in motion by means of the hips. The games were played in large ball courts with enthusiastic **crowds** betting on the outcome and cheering on their favorite teams. **Successful** ballplayers were celebrities in Mayan society, adored by women and favored by the gods. Occasionally ball games would serve as a **substitute** for war. Instead of fighting it out on a battlefield, two kings would confront each other in a ball court. It was also a way for noblemen to resolve conflicts.

But the game had religious connotations too and they **feature** in the creation myths of the Maya. According to a legend which often was depicted on the walls of the ball courts themselves, two twins, Hun Hunaphu and Xbalanque, made so much noise playing ball that the gods of the underworld were **annoyed** and challenged them to a game. The game ended with one of the brothers being decapitated and his head being used as a ball. From the decapitated trunk blood squirted out which fertilized the earth. Ordinary ball games made references to this **myth**, but in addition commemorative games were occasionally held when blood-lettings took place and

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human beings were sacrificed. **Yet** ordinary games could be quite brutal too. The large **rubber** ball would bounce around in an unpredictable fashion and they could hit the players with devastating effect. To protect themselves they used belts and helmets.

There are still many ball-courts left in Central America. In the Chiapas region of Mexico alone there are some 300, and there is a ball court as far north as in the U.S. state of Arizona. In fact, the game is still played in parts of Mexico. Today the rules are similar to those of volleyball, but played without a **net**.

1. The Mayans were the only people that played ball games. _____
2. There were 2 - 4 players in each team. _____
3. The object of the game was to kill the opponent with the ball. _____
4. Pitz was only used for religious rituals. _____
5. According to the myth, the gods of the underworld always won the game. _____

ACTIVITY 2: Choose 5 words from the bold words in the text and translate them into Spanish. Use 3 of these in your own sentences.

ENGLISH	SPANISH	ENGLISH	SPANISH

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ACTIVITY 3: Watch the video about Pitz, a Mayan ball game (from minute 3:53). Complete the sentences with the words from the box.

video

1. 556 ball _____ have been discovered in the Mayan _____.
2. Some courts were used to play the _____ game, some to _____ and some were just a symbolism of the game.
3. The ball game had _____ importance, it was in fact the most _____ practice of the Mayan.
4. According to the Mayan _____, the Hero Twins played the _____ twice against the Lords of Xibalba.
5. The first time they _____ and were beheaded.
6. The second time they triumphed defeating the _____.
7. We had some _____ of how the game was played thanks to the _____ of the Spanish conquistadors.
8. The goal of the game was to _____ a big heavy rubber _____ through the hoops.
9. Players were depicted _____ shields on their arms, chest, knees and _____.
10. All players used their elbows, thighs and _____ or basically, any body part other than their _____ and feet.

BALL BALLGAME BIBLE COURTS CHRONICLES ELBOWS EMPIRE IDEA HANDS HIPS LOST PASS PRACTISE REAL RELIGIOUS SACRED UNDERWORLD WEARING

ACTIVITY 4: Look at the box and change the sentences 1 - 5 in the past.

OBLIGATION IN THE PAST		
PRESENT	**PAST**	EXAMPLE
MUST HAVE TO	**HAD TO**	They **had to** wear shields.
MUSTN´T CAN´T	**WAS/WERE NOT ALLOWED TO**	They **were not allowed to** use their feet to kick the ball.
DON'T HAVE TO	**DIDN'T HAVE TO**	They **didn't have to** practise much.

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CAN	**WAS / WERE ALLOWED TO**	They **were allowed to** make up their faces.

1. Players don't have to wear special clothes.
2. They can use their hands.
3. They can't hit the ball twice in a row.
4. They must make only three passes.
5. They have to put the ball in the other team's basket.

ACTIVITY 5: Watch the second video. video

Complete the sentences stating the rules of Pitz, the Mayan Ball Game with the correct alternative.

1. The players ***had to / didn't have to*** hit the ball with their hips.
2. They ***were allowed to / were not allowed to*** use their feet.
3. They ***were allowed to / didn't have to*** have two, three or four players in each team.
4. They ***didn't have to / were not allowed to*** wear the same clothes.
5. They ***had to / were allowed to*** pass the ball through the hoop.

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