

READING 19

Take me out to the Ballpark

Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie... you just can't get more American than that! Frank Bell gives us a look at baseball, no longer just America's favourite sport!

Baseball is sometimes called a national pastime in America because it is a much loved national sport. Of course, baseball is not limited to the USA. It has played for many years in the countries of South America and is very popular in Japan. Europe is another matter, not many baseball teams exist in Europe today. That, however, is slowly changing. Since baseball is an Olympic sport, more and more countries are putting together teams and joining the game! (A)

Going to baseball games is a way of life for many fans. They sit in the stands on hot and sunny spring and summer days, eat hot dogs or popcorn, sip cola or lemonade and enjoy the game. Adults and children alike attend games, and it's a sport that everyone seems to love. Baseball is such a part of American life that nearly everyone's favourite childhood memory includes a day at the ballpark.

When and where did the game of baseball start? Well, people have been playing games with a stick and a ball for hundreds of years! Modern baseball, however, about 150 years ago in New York, USA and has been a popular sport ever since. It has changed a little bit over the years but the basic game remains the same.

Baseball is played with a bat, which a stick about 100 cm long is made of metal or wood, and a small hard ball. Each player also wears one heavy leather glove to catch the ball. Baseball gear usually consists of a lightweight shirt and trousers that come down just past the knees. (B)

Baseball is played on a special outdoor field which has two parts, the infield and the outfield. In the infield is an area shaped like a diamond that indicates the boundaries of the playing area. On the diamond, there are also the three bases that the players must run over to score. The outfield is an open grassy area where players wait to catch balls that are hit by other players.

The game of baseball is divided into nine parts, called innings. During an inning, each of the two teams takes its turn to bat, which means trying to hit the ball that is thrown to them by the pitcher of the other team. After the ball is hit, the player tries to run and touch three different bases before running to home base. The team not batting tries to catch the balls that are hit and stop the runners before they score. The team that scores the most runs by

the end of the ninth inning wins. It's a game that can go very slowly for a while then suddenly have a series of fast and exciting moves! **(C)**

Fans love baseball games! The stands are usually filled for the games. People enjoy a day at the ballpark cheering on their favourite team and relaxing in the summer sun. So what are you waiting for? Put on your baseball cap and give it a try! **(D)**

1. The writer says that baseball
 - A. is played only in America.
 - B. is not popular in countries like Japan.
 - C. started in South America.
 - D. is becoming more popular all over the world.
2. According to the text, baseball is played in more and more countries because
 - A. it is an exciting game.
 - B. it is included in the Olympic Games.
 - C. Many American people live there.
 - D. It is easy to play.
3. Which sentence isn't true about baseball?
 - A. It was first played during the 1850s.
 - B. It is an Olympic sport.
 - C. The rules have changed quite a lot over the years.
 - D. It started in New York.
4. Which piece of equipment is not mentioned in the text?
 - A. bat
 - B. ball
 - C. glove
 - D. mask
5. In which space (marked **(A)**, **(B)**, **(C)** and **(D)** in the passage) will the following sentence fit?

Players wear shoes with spikes to help them run, just as football players do, and a baseball cap, which is something everyone is familiar with!

- A. **(A)**
- B. **(B)**
- C. **(C)**
- D. **(D)**

6. What is the baseball field like?
- A. It has an infield, an outfield and a middle field.
 - B. There are three diamonds on the ground.
 - C. There are three bases on the diamond.
 - D. It is usually in an indoor stadium.
7. The game is divided into
- A. two halves.
 - B. nine innings.
 - C. three bases.
 - D. an infield and an outfield.
8. The object of the game is to
- A. catch as many balls as you can.
 - B. hit the ball the farthest.
 - C. score the most runs.
 - D. bat as often as you can.
9. What is true about a baseball match?
- A. It's slow.
 - B. It often takes place on **hot summer days**.
 - C. Spectators are not allowed to bring foods to the ballpark.
 - D. The speed of the match may change suddenly.
10. According to the text, most American people have
- A. childhood memory at a ballpark.
 - B. a baseball gear.
 - C. experience of participating in at least a baseball inning.
 - D. all of them