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# Playing in the Sand

Beach volleyball emerges as a global sport. BY DALIAH SINGER

Sitting in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, the beach volleyball courts were one of the hottest tickets in town during last summer's Olympic Games in Paris. Celebrities filled the bleachers at Champ-de-Mars park, and DJs blasted club music.

While the sport receives considerable coverage every four years at the world's biggest competition, beach volleyball is actually a year-round pursuit, with tournaments taking place across the globe. Once dominated by U.S.-based athletes — the game got its start on the beaches of Hawai'i and Santa Monica, California — it's now an international contest.

This year, major tournaments take place in Virginia Beach, Virginia (USA Volleyball Beach National Championship, July 16–21); Chicago (2025 AVP League Championship, Aug. 30–31); Düsseldorf, Germany (European Beach Volleyball Championship, July 30–Aug. 3); and Adelaide, Australia (FIVB Beach Volleyball World Championships, Nov. 14–23). The FIVB culminates months of Volleyball World Beach Pro Tour events taking place across 10 countries and five continents.

Teams to watch in 2025 on the men's side include Germany's Nils Ehlers and Clemens Wickler and reigning Olympic gold medalists David Åhman and Jonatan Hellvig from Switzerland. Top-ranking women's duos to keep an eye on are Anastasiya Samoilova and Tina Graudina from Latvia and Germany's Svenja Müller and Cinja Tillmann.

The sport differentiates itself from its indoor counterpart in a few ways: There are two players per team; matches comprise best-of-three set contests to 21 points (or 15, if there are three sets); and, of course, the game is played on a sand court.

Beach volleyball surged in popularity in recent years as one of the fastest-growing sports at the collegiate level in the United States. Fans enjoy the pace of the game; athleticism required; and its outdoor setting, often in beautiful locales.

There may never be a more iconic setting for a beach volleyball tournament than beneath the Eiffel Tower, but upcoming matchups will still bring the drama.



**Jump and Dive:** Brazilian duo Carolina Solberg Salgado and Barbara Seixas de Freitas face the Australian duo Manafé Artacho del Solar and Taliqua Clancy in the semi-finals at the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics (top), and Solberg Salgado plays the ball against Team Japan (bottom).

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