

Seven Savage Sports

by [anri11](#)

Premise

I have to start saying that, as my native language is not English, many sport terms I used are probably not the correct ones. I quickly checked the document before posting, but I may have missed some of them.

Also note that I'm definitely not a sport person. So while I know most of these sports and their basic rules, I probably messed up some rules... especially in sports I never practiced nor extensively seen, like (American) football and rugby.

Finally, I haven't played any rpg specifically made to emulate a sport, so my knowledge in that court is definitely lackluster.

To summarize the points in my post: the problem of sports in rpg, beach volley, the concept of zones, volley, tennis, golf, basketball, footballs, rugby.

Turnaround

The hard part in making a team sport feel real in rpgs is that a lot of things happen at the same time. That's why combat uses initiative and turn orders, after all.

Basketball, football, rugby... are sports that rarely follow an exact turn order. It's more affordable with turn-based sports, like volley, tennis, golf, curling, and in some aspects American football... So we will start from there, and then proceed with other sports.

Beach Volley time

I tried a Beach Volley minigame when a party of mine visited a vacation island.

It started as a modified Dramatic Task with Deluxe rules, but now I upgraded it with SWADE rules.

Each team is made by 3 players (we had 5 PC and an NPC I controlled). The most important skill is Athletic (Throwing) because it's used for almost all attacks and defences.

As for the normal initiative, you give a card to every character during their team round, when they are "active" (they are rolling to defend and attack). This is mostly used for having the classical Dramatic Tasks modifiers (Clubs and Jokers, and in this case also Figures), as the characters in each team can go on hold to wait each other, and so the card are revealed because they only serve to determine if there are penalties (Clubs), bonus (Jokers), and if someone can attempt a block (Figure, Ace or Joker).

The active team receives the ball, using Athletics (Throwing) to avoid making it fall. The rolls are made at -2 for each raise the opposing team has gained (more of it later). Having three characters, up to each one of them makes a Support roll (to benefit the following player) with Athletics (T) to keep the ball in air, except the last one, who *has to* attack with A (T), making the ball go to the other side. Note that the last one doesn't always mean the third: he can be the second one or the first (especially in case of a wall).

- Failure when Supporting makes the character Shaken, but the ball is still in air, while Failure for the last character means failing the shot. Critical failure in A (T) always mean missing the ball.

- A Shaken character tries to Un-Shake at the start of his turn, otherwise the character can't act. If no other players can catch the ball, it's automatically a failure.

So, let's say the attacking team raises the shot: the first defending player rolls A (T) with -2, failing (but not critically). He is Shaken. The second player receives the ball and rolls A (T) (-2), raising. So the third player, who now attacks, roll A (T) with no penalty (since the -2 and +2 balance each other).

These are the basics, now let's see how to develop them.

Block. If one (or more) of the defending players has a Figure, Ace or Joker, and he isn't Shaken, he can try to block the incoming ball with A (T). When he does that, he ignores the raise of the attacking team (but still considers other penalties, like Distracted): if he is successful or raises, the ball goes to the other side as normal, with a failure a teammate can try to save the ball (the normal A(T) roll, and he suffers the penalties of the attacking enemies raises), while, as usual, a critical failure means dropping the ball and giving a point to the opposition. As for the simplification operated for multi-touch, blocking is considered as an action/touch too.

Called Shot. When the active team defends, it can go in any order. However, if the attacker takes the roll at (-2) he can choose whichever character has to defend first. Another character can try to interrupt, but only by making his roll at (-2) (plus other penalties).

Cards. Because this is derived from a Dramatic Task, Clubs inflict a -2 penalty to the player, while Jokers give +2 to the roll and a single Benny, that remains in the team pool and can be used by any character of the team instead of going to each player.

Foul. Before rolling, you can voluntarily decide to commit a foul (double touch, crossing the line, and so on...) obtaining a reroll for the A(T). However, you HAVE to roll both the rolls, and if they both come as failure, the referee discovers that and gives the point to the other side. The foul is also revealed by a critical failure.

Multi-actions. You are only allowed to roll A(T) once per turn, because a player can only touch the ball once. This is different from the real life rules, that consent non-consecutive touches (player A, player B, player A) in order to limit multi-actions penalties and allow every one of the 3 players to play. Note that, as you can simply use your action to Test and let the other two players attack, you can do other multi-actions, like Testing and Touching the ball (both at -2), or Touching the ball and Testing two times (all at -4).

Serve. Of course, only one character rolls for the Serve, and only once for each point. The characters that makes the Serve has two benefit: first, it's a Called Shot with no penalties (he decides which defender rolls first) AND he receives +2 to the A (T) roll. Thus a Wild Card fails the roll only on a Critical Failure.

Test. Feints, provocations, distractions and similar (while be sometimes anti-sportive) can be used as Tests against a single target. For the way the game works, usually is better to inflict Distracted than Vulnerable.

#The problem of positioning

Beach Volley works fine because the game court is relatively small and contained, and it's easy to move in every point. Take normal Volley, for example, and the court is quite bigger, and full of other players. Because we don't want to bog down in minutiae, we divide the game court in segments or "zones" (à la Fate).

Each character can go from a zone to an adjacent one with the normal movement. Moving diagonally is considered as moving two zones.

Sprinting. Moving two zones or more is considered as taking a multi-action for each extra zone. So you can move up to four zones, taking a penalty of -2 for every extra zone (from -2 for a total of two zones to -6 for the fourth one).

Then, if you take an action (of course you can only take the third action if you ran no more than two extra zones), roll with said penalties. If you don't take any action, as a free action, you have to roll the best between A(T) and Vigor, with half the penalties: therefore, you never actually roll with a -6 (unless for some power/effect you are allowed to make a fourth action), but only with a -3. If the total roll of your action(s) (or the forced free action) in that turn is 1 or less, you also take a level of Fatigue for each action failed in this way.

Note that if you run the extra zone, do a Test and throw the ball (3 actions) you roll with a -4 (because you did three multi-actions after all) both the Tests skill and A(T), and if both end being 1 or less, you take two levels of Fatigue. Don't be greedy!

Now, instead of characters, you make Called Shots to target zones. If you don't make a Called Shot, the other team decides in which zone inside their court the ball goes.

In our volley game, a character that moves two zones to respond to a called shot for another player's zone rolls A (T) at -4: -2 for the Called Shot made by the opponent, and -2 for the extra zone.

I suggest using miniatures or tokens to keep track of the positioning. A sheet of paper with the appropriate game court drawn on it and divided into its zones will suffice, but you can also use another set of cards to quickly create the field, each of them representing a zone, like in a Chase.

In the court of the Volley King

Volleyball courts can be divided into six zones (3 horizontally x 2 vertically), one for every player.

The players that don't do any action can freely move in any zone during their turn.

During the opponents turn, the players can freely move one zone each, after the second touch of the active team. Note that if the responding team uses only one action, the passive team gains no free movement.

For all other purposes, it can work the same way of Beach Volley.

Tennis, the struggle of two

Tennis is mostly based on making a lot of called shots. You essentially try to make the opponent go from one side of the court to the other, until he isn't fast enough to catch the ball.

Now each player's side is 4 horizontally x 3 vertically . The central 2x2 zones are the effective game sides, while the other are beyond the baseline and the single sidelines, forming a "U" around the central zones: a 1x2 vertical branch to the left side, the other 1x2 vertical branch to the right side, and the 4x1 zones beyond the baseline.

```
o o o o
o - - o
o - - o
net_net
o - - o
o - - o
o o o o
```

O = outer zones, - = inner zones.

(I'm a better game designer than a tennis court designer, I swear).

Because now called shots depend even more on positioning, they are reworked in this way.

- To cross more than two zone, the roll takes a -1 for each zone besides the first two. So a -1 for the third zone, a -2 for the fourth, and so on.
- You have to target an inner zone, but the ball can bounce in another zone: each time you are successful in throwing the ball to the other side, take a d4, and cover it with your hand. With a 1 the ball remains in the same zone after the bounce, with a 2 goes one zone beyond to the left, with a 3 goes one zone beyond to the centre, and with a 4 four one zone beyond to the right (these directions reflect the point of view of the defending player).

```
1
2 3 4
```

- Then, the opponent can choose: freely move one zone and only one zone, knowing well the distance of your strike (thanks to the malus of the called shot), or stand still in his zone.
- After his decision and eventual movement of the defender, the attacker reveals the d4.
- Each extra zone of movement costs the defender a -2 to his A(T) roll, plus another -2 for every raise of the attacker. The defender makes the roll with those penalties, or he can choose one of the following:
 - o He makes the roll with halved penalties, but then he takes a level of Fatigue.

o He makes the roll with halved penalties, but the opponent chooses the zone where ball bounce (but not its direction after the bounce, meaning you still do the d4 trick).

A throws the ball to the other side. It is going to bounce in t, but in what direction? With A covering the d4, B decides to stand still.

```
O A O O
O - - O
O - - O
  net
O - t O
O - B O
O O O O
```

But then the d4 is revealed! It's a 2! The balls move one zone below and to the left!

```
O A O O
O - - O
O - - O
  net
O - - O
O t B O
O O O O
```

Now B has to sprint to the left, with the -2 malus (one zone traversed!).

Cards. Because we only have two players, there is no need to deal cards. However, you can always deal them revealed, using their suits as in Dramatic Tasks (-2 for Clubs, +2 for Jokers).

Effect. The attacker can take (another) -2 penalty to give the ball an effect. Now instead of a d4 he takes a d10: the number are in counter-clockwise order, as illustrated below, and each of them represents a zone, with 1, as before, being the same zone of the bounce. The attacker cannot choose a zone inside his part of the court to make the ball bounce back. For example, if the ball is going to bounce in the zone following the net, the attacker can't choose 8, 7 or 6, because they represent a zone inside his court.

```
8 7 6
9 1 5
2 3 4
```

Fatigue. After a character scores a point, both players can roll Vigor (with their Fatigue level penalties). A success removes one level of fatigue, a raise two. A critical failure makes the character Distracted until the end of his next turn.

Serve. The player who does the Serve rolls at +2 while standing in a O zone beyond the backline. Because the ball has to traverse two zones (no malus) plus one zone diagonally

(counts as two moves, so -2), the roll is actually made without penalties (+2 and -2 cancel each other).

Standing still. When a character doesn't move, he is considered as having used the Aiming manoeuvre: he ignores up to -4 points of penalty or adds +2 to his roll if there are no penalties.

Tests and Shaken. Because the ball falls down with a failure of the A (T) there is no actual way to be Shaken, besides for effect of a Test. You can do your free movement while Shaken, and then you can attempt to Un-Shake, otherwise you automatically fail the A (T) roll. Besides the Test of Serving described below, attempting a test while swinging the racket results in multi-actions penalties as usual.

Test of Serving. Do you want some tension? Before serving (and preparing to receive the serve) both player can attempt a Test, normally with a social skill like Intimidate, Taunt or Persuasion. While the actions can happen within a short temporal distance (like the serving player Intimidating the defender, and this one replying with a witty comment), the rolls to attack with the Test are made at the same time, and so are the rolls to defend.

A failure when attempting the test doesn't cause a penalty, but with a critical failure (as the player attempting the Test or the player resisting it) the attacker is too shocked to serve well (and fails it), while the defender is too shocked to counter it (and thus gives the point to the attacker). Treat the other outcomes as usual.

Volley. Before the ball bounces, you can try to intercept it if you are in the same zone or you can use the movement to enter that zone. Roll with the lowest between Strength and A(T).

Golf

Golf is quite easy if we still borrow our zones.

A (T) to hit the ball is, again, the basic. Next, we divide the swings into two broad categories: ranged and short.

Ranged swing: to throw the ball in the next zone, you roll A(T) with no penalty. Two zones? -2. Three zones? -4. You can decide if you want the player to throw it to the extreme. Perhaps different golf clubs lessen the penalty, or the deviation, or increase the zone you can aim.

Normal failure: the ball deviates in an arc fashion from the aimed point. Roll a d4: 1 no change, 2 down left, 3 down center, 4 down right. Repeat it for every -2 points of penalty the A(T) had.

Critical failure or a total result of 1 or less: the ball is nowhere to be seen: the player will need an entire turn and a A(T) (-2) (plus any other penalty of the original roll) to make it return to the point originally aimed. Halve those penalties to make it simply return to the point where the ball was lastly swung.

Standard deviation:

```
- - - - -  
- - 1 - -  
- 2 3 4 -
```

- is a zone, 1, 2, 3, 4 represent where the ball stops after a deviation.

Short swing: when the ball enters the last zone, there are still 3 microzones ahead.

Consider them in the same way you considered zones (so a no penalty roll for 1 zone, -2 for 2, and -4 for 3). The hole is the last microzone. Use the d4 discussed above for the normal failure. For a critical failure, the ball goes d3 (d6/2) microzones beyond the hole.

Note that if you are feeling really lucky you can combine the penalties and attempt to directly aim for the hole from a great distance. You just have to add the penalties together, allowing you to attempt a 3 zones + 3 microzones roll with a -10 penalty (since the first one doesn't impose penalties). Good luck!

The actual **zones** may change the nature/effect of the swing. Perhaps to save the ball from the mud you have to roll Strength instead of Athletics, and on the small hill if you don't overcome the slope (aim for a 2+ far zones) the ball may roll back with a failure.

You can also use **action cards**, not for initiative, but to determine modifiers: maybe the suits change the effect of the deviation and/or give a bonus (+2) if you aim for a specific zone.

Basketball, shared zones

Now, how do we make all of these work for sports that share zones between the two teams?

First, the court is made of 3x6 zones. Here comes another attempt:

A T A
O A O
O O O
O O O
O A O
A T A

O = normal zones, A = 2 point areas, T = three seconds zones. Between the two "OOO" zones lies the centre circle, but since it's only used to start the game, and can be shared among the two central "O", we don't have to care a lot about it.

5 players per team is a good number to keep track in a 18 zones court, as 6 is for volley. In the same fashion of volley, each basketball player can move independently from the rest of the team, but we change their position at specific times.

Cards. Deal the action cards, but use them only to decide who goes first when two or more characters are attempting similar or conflicting action in the same area. Otherwise movement and throws happen at the same time.

Movement. Each player moves at the same time. To avoid meta-gaming that, you can use a d10 for each player: like in tennis, choose a number, cover it with your hand, and then reveal it once everybody has done the same: with 1 being the zone where the character is standing (he doesn't move), all the other numbers are his movement in the corresponding zone.

Remember that moving diagonally counts as two movements and thus can cause multi-actions penalties.

The d10 scheme (when used as randomizer, reroll the 10s):

8 7 6

9 1 5

2 3 4

Acting. A character with the ball is considered as constantly making it bounce (dribbling). Throwing the ball is the classic A(T) roll, with no penalty for one zone of distance, -2 for two zones, -4 for three and so on. This represents both passing the ball and aiming the basket.

Blocking the passage. If a character wants to travel in/through a zone occupied by an opponent that chooses to block them (it's an action), they make an opposed Athletics roll: the first to dribble the opponent and go beyond, the second to prevent it. With a critical failure the player also loses the ball (roll the d10), while the blocking character that critical fails can't act loses his next turn and action.

Yes, you can block a blocker in order to prevent him blocking a teammate (remember the card order!).

Catching the ball. If a character is in the trajectory of the ball or in the zone aimed, he can roll A(T) to catch it. The roll is made against the thrower result and, on a tie, the ball bounces in a random zone, following the d10 scheme. If the ball is bouncing for a missed throw, the TN is 4.

Cheating/foul. As usual, cheating gives a free reroll that must be used, exposing the character if all rolls fail and/or with a critical failure.

Gang Up. For each other ally attempting to block the passage, catch the ball or steal the ball, the character receives a +1 (up to +4). This bonus is lessened by 1 for every opponent in the area (besides the first) that can interfere.

Holding the movement. You can go after the other if you use an action, knowing where the others are going. Declare your movement after the others, but resolve it at the same time. If other players Hold their action, make the d10 selection with them after the others non-holding character have declared their movement.

Outside the court. If the ball goes out of the court, when thrown back, the A(T) is considered made within the nearest zone the ball was before going out of bounds.

Receiving a passage. A character must roll A(T) to catch a ball aimed at him or his zone. With a failure, the ball fall from his hand, bouncing in another zone, as the d10 scheme.

Sprint. The character uses an action and moves another zone. Follow the rules in **The problem of positioning**, and take another d10 or two to select the zone if you want to sprint for prolonged distance, making zig-zags between the opponents.

Stealing the ball is an opposed A(T) roll with a -2 for the one who steals, but if the two rolls end in a tie, the ball instead bounces in a random zone (use d10).

Time. Keeping track of exact time is boring. So instead, for each quarter we will use an Usage Die. It starts as d8, and it's rolled each time the time is stopped for any reason. With a

failure (1-3), it drops by one type (d8 -> d6 -> d4). Upon failing with a d4, the quarter will end after 3 interruptions.

Three Seconds area. The zone called T grants a +2 when throwing the ball in the basket, but an attacker can stay in it only one turn/movement. When making a free throw, the character is considered in this area, thus he receives the +2 bonus.

Football. Also known as soccer.

I pulled a sneaky on ya. The American football is in the next paragraph.

For the other football / soccer, it works similarly to basketball, but with the following exceptions.

The pitch:

O A G A O
O A A A O
O O O O O
O O O O O
O O C O O
O O O O O
O O O O O
O A A A O
O A G A O

O = normal zone, A = area, C = central circle, G = goal zone (the goal it's actually beyond the lastline, of course).

Kicking the ball into the door is the normal A(T), causing the goalie a -2 to his A(T) (against the TN of four) for every raise. The attacker can also target (**called shot** at -2, besides the range penalties, no penalties and +2 when attempting a direct free kick) one of the 6 microzones of the goal (up left, down left, up central, down central, up right, up down). When the attacker does that, both him and the goalie take a d6, choose a number and cover it, then reveal it simultaneously.

- If the numbers correspond, the goalie makes the defending roll with a +2.
- If there is only one zone of difference, the goalie has no penalty.
- If there are two zones of difference, the goalie has a -2 penalty, -4 if three.

You can use a scheme like this

5 4 3
6 1 2

If the goalie fails, the attacker scores. With exactly a success, the ball bounces back in a random zone: use the d6 scheme above, with the 4 being the zone in front of the goalie. With a raise, the goalie keeps the ball.

Time die is a d12+1 for every 45 minute half. The die is rolled, as usual, after an interruption and goes d12+1 -> d12 -> d10 -> d8 -> d6 -> d4 -> 3 stops.

11 players per team seems like a nightmare. I would suggest to try with 5 per team, and then increase their number once acquired familiarity with the movements.

The same can be said for the following...

American football. Also known as Handegg.

Sorry for the meme. As an European, you know I had to do it.

Use the rules for basketball and soccer, with the following exceptions.

The field is made of one zone for every 10 yards, for a total of 9 (length) x 5 (width) zones, plus two other 1x5 zones as the touchdown zones, for a grand total of 11x5.

Instead of only Blocking the passage, you can **Push** down the character (remember to add +2 if you moved at least one zone) or **Grapple (Tackle)** him. Remember to add the Gang Up bonus to those rolls, since your teammates "force" the opponent to move into your action. When Grappled or Pushed, a character loses the ball with a roll result inferior to 4. A character attempting or suffering a Push or Grapple scoring a critical failure also takes a Wound (can be Soaked).

Recovering from Prone consumes one zone of movement.

Remember that you can Support a teammate when he attempts a push or tackle.

It seems to me that the game requires a lot of interruptions, so the **time die** should be a d10 for every quarter. Thankfully these interruptions allow everyone to easily reposition.

For the distance and failure of the kicks, especially kickoff, use the normal penalties and deviations defined in the Golf part.

Rugby

Exactly as above, but without protections (but it doesn't actually impact on the mechanics) and the following changes:

Time die: d12+1 for every 40 minute half.

When a player is Pushed down or Grappled and he doesn't lose the ball, he can throw it to a teammate. A character can voluntarily decide to be pushed down or grappled, gaining a +2 to the roll to resist (he still falls, it only serves to determine if he maintains the ball) and to throw the ball to an ally.

Conclusion

What should have been a short answer ended up being 9 pages of – not properly ordinated – content, wrote in a span of two days before the guilt feels attack for not having studied for the incoming exams. However, I think that while the content is still rough, its basics are solid.

From them you can easily elaborate other sports: target archery (Shooting, -X/+X to target a specific ring, deviation as shifting the arrow 2dX to the external side in case of failure, completely out with a Critical Failure), boules/curling (with a penalty to target a specific ball), bowling (it requires a way to easily spread the pins touched), baseball (A(T) to throw, A(T) to hit the ball and start running, with one base of movement for each success and raise, perhaps the game of guessing of the hidden die to determine if the hand throw is high, medium, low or with an effect) and so on...

You can also add a "Dream version" à la Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games with semi-random powerups if you want a bizarre/fantastical/videogame-y sport. After all, these are *savage* sports.

If someone is interested, please suggest a sport to be converted into these basics! I will gladly try it in the spare time and compile a proper document to hold them.

Until then, may your dice always ace!