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Full Blood Indian
Sac and Fox.

My husband formerly owned around twenty of these ball-sticks, but now we have only these three.

They are made from a hardwood tree, such as pecan, hickory, or walnut. To start with the sticks are about four inches in diameter. They are seasoned in the sun or fire while they are this size and then whittled down to about an inch and a fourth in diameter. At one end a circle is whittled about three and a half inches in diameter, and small holes bored at equal intervals around the circumference. Buckskin string is fastened across in order to make a cup  in this manner.

The diagram shows the top of the cup.

A buckskin ball just a little larger than a golfball. Buckskin string is wound round and round in a perfect ball until the size wanted is obtained. It is then covered with a buckskin covering cut similarly to the baseball covering, and sewed with buckskin thongs.

I shall now tell you how the Indian ball game is played by the Memomones, Omahas, Winnegagos, Chippewas, Iowas, Kickapoos, Pottawatomies, and the Sac and Foxes.

The team is composed of from thirty to sixty men on each side.

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The score is kept by points. At each end of the field, which is about the size of a football field, there are two goal posts set ten feet apart, and which are eighteen to twenty feet high.

The idea of the game is to pick up the ball without the aid of the hands, and to get it across the line between the enemy's goal posts by running with it or throwing it. The other side tries to recapture the ball by knocking it out of the other's stick with their own, or catching it when it is thrown, or picking it up off the ground. Hands are taboo. Only those who were skilled could catch the ball in the air, and run with it. To keep the ball in the cup they use a curious circular motion with their arm as they run.

Foul play was in evidence sometimes. A player would intentionally hit an opponent on the back, and often fights resulted from it. This did not interfere with the ballgame, however, for the men went on playing as if nothing were happening.

The game usually lasted for hours at a time. A definite score was set as a goal, and the first team reaching this goal won the game. Five or ten points was the average points for getting the ball across the line.

The Indians used these ball games as a recreation. Whenever one was set, notice was sent around to the different villages, and everyone always turned out for them. They usually camped for two or three days, too.

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The players had a special dress for the game. They wore a headdress called a deertail (made out of porcupine quills and deer tails), breech cloths, and mocassins, and painted their bodies with red or grey war paint, according to which side they were on.