

TWR2

THE MAZTICAN BALL GAME



A MAZTICAN SOURCEBOOK AND ADVENTURE



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

With all of the adventuring, monster slaying and treasure collecting that goes on daily in the Realms, it might be hard to imagine that there are also activities that don’t require spells or swords. Though culturally, the consequences might still be important, the Maztican Ball Game may be exactly such an activity.

This book gives game mechanics for a sport known as òllamaliztli which, over the centuries, has become a cultural phenomenon for the whole of the True World. In addition, the sport has spread to Faerun, and one day soon we might see Waterdhavian nobles drinking copious amounts of octal while watching their favorite athletes perform.

In addition to the mechanics (some of which are optional), this book also defines the Grand Tournament – a competition that occurs in Kultaka once every five years and whose winners become historical figures in the True World.

The tournament portion of this book is really designed for characters of any level and if you are following the TWR series of accessories and adventures, the characters will likely be close to levels 7 or 8 which is perfectly appropriate.

Perhaps this year’s winners are outsiders who only recently arrived from the mainland of Faerun? Perhaps you are local heroes? Either way, winning the Grand Tournament will insure the players’ names are remembered forever.



THE BALL GAME

The Maztican ball game has existed for hundreds, if not a thousand or more years in the True World. None know who actually invented the game but all are certain that its origin was in one of the city-states of Huacli. The game's true name is pokolpok, whose origin is actually from the dead language Téenek. Téenek was last spoken in its pure form over 1,000 years ago in Huacli, though some words and phrases can still be found in modern times.

The Nexalans were the first to popularize the game and they gave it the name òllamaliztli which is the most commonly used name today, though in Payit, "tlachtli" has also maintained some popularity. In their ignorance and difficulty with the Nexalan inflection, the newcomers from Faerun called the game poke-atok, a derivative of the Téenek name, but those who use this name today are often ridiculed.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ÒLLAMALIZTLI

The Maztican ball game has grown in popularity and changed its rules into many forms. It has held religious significance, and both its winners and losers have been the subjects of sacrifice to the gods in varying locations and times.

Plutoq is known to favor the game, and his more bloodthirsty priests tended to lead the ceremonies of sacrifice in the past. Typically, Plutoq's priests only sacrificed the willing winners of major tournaments that often lasted many years in Huacli and the participants were considered honored and guaranteed a place by Plutoq's side in the afterlife.

Plutoq is even rumored to have taken the form of a human in the past to observe or even participate in the game. Strangers are known to be treated like royalty in Otomi in particular if they demonstrate exceptional natural talent. After all, they could always be the mountain god in disguise.

Zaltec, not to be outdone, used the game in Nexal and Kultaka as an excuse to slaughter. In almost direct opposition to Plutoq's tournaments, only the best players or teams avoided the ministrations of the obsidian blade.

Kiltzi and to a lesser extent Qotal look upon the game favorably as its outcomes have often been used to settle local disputes peacefully in the past.

THE ÒLLAMALIZTLI COURT

The court is 50 feet wide by 100 feet long and sunken 30 feet below into the ground with solid stone walls on all sides and a compacted clay floor. Grandstands rise up from the edges of the walls on all sides. The court is divided in two halves by a midcourt line. At the midcourt line, 15 feet up on either side is a vertical ring 12 inches in diameter. Along the back portion of each court half (the baseline) is a goal that is recessed into the wall. The goal is 20 feet wide, by 10 feet high, by 5 feet deep. Typically, a removable hemp net is attached to the goals, but on occasion these are replaced with retractable fences. Some courts have secondary uses, such as gladiatorial battles, and the goals can be used as holding pens for combatants and wild beasts. A dashed line 20 feet from each goal runs the width of the court. Another dashed line surrounds the vertical rings at a distance of 10 feet. There is a cross mark at center court. Some courts have floors which angle slightly starting 15 feet from each side wall that reach 5 feet up when they intersect the walls.

RULES OF THE BALL GAME

SETUP

The Ball Game is played by 2 teams of 4 players each, though it may be played by more in some scenarios as long as both teams have even numbers. The game is played with a 6 inch diameter solid rubber ball made from native Maztican rubber trees.

OBJECTIVE AND SCORING

The first team to 3 points wins the game. The best out of 3 wins a match. Most afternoon contests consist of a single match. In playoff or tournaments, longer set or series can be played which is the best out of 3 matches.

Throwing the ball into your opponent's goal earns you one point. Throwing the ball through a vertical ring earns your team 3 points - an automatic victory for that game. This is exceedingly rare and doing so will make that player something of a local legend. Shots can only be attempted from inside the associated zones (i.e. from within 20 feet of a goal, or 10 feet of a vertical ring).

STARTING PLAY

The game begins with one player from each side coming to center court at the cross mark. A referee holds the ball at the game's start within the palm of his hand. On his whistle, each player attempts to smack the ball out of his hand, backwards towards one of their team-mates. This "slap ball" procedure is repeated to get the ball back into play after a goal, or if it is ever knocked into the grandstands. This is the only time a player may touch the ball with his hand on offense.

ADVANCING THE BALL

The ball can be advanced by touching it with any part of your body except feet and hands. The ball can be advanced by "dribbling" it on one's knees in sort of a high-stepping motion, or with their elbows by bouncing it off the court. The ball is more commonly advanced via passing.

Opponents may use any part of their body, including feet and hands, to intercept a pass or block a shot. However, they may not grasp the ball at any point.

Shoving or "checking" is totally legal, and a fan favorite part of the game.

POSITIONING

Players may begin the game wherever they like, so long as they are behind their team mate who is participating in the "slap ball" (in other words, on their side of the court).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The use of magic, weapons and racial magical abilities (like misty step) are strictly forbidden in

the ball game. Participants may also not use any other form of movement such as flying or burrowing while playing.

GAME MECHANICS DURING PLAY

Start by rolling initiative for all players as you would in a standard combat.

Note that every check in this section that is given an unassigned DC Ability check, is the player's choice of either Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) as some player's use finesse, while others try to muscle their way to victory.

SLAP BALL

Each team picks one player to go to center court to participate in the "slap ball." Each player makes a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, the player with the higher score successfully knocks the ball back to a team mate of their choice.

ACTIONS

Actions are basically the same rules as in combat. Players can move, dash, disengage, attack (though the only attack allowed is a shove/check), steal, block, pass, dribble and shoot.

DRIBBLE

A player must succeed on a DC 5 check to get the ball under control to dribble it with their knees or elbows. If successful the player can then move, but their movement is slowed by 5 feet (dribbling a hard rubber ball is tougher than just running straight ahead).

A player can choose to move more carefully when dribbling which negates the DC5 check. In this case, the player takes a penalty of ½ of their movement

DASH

As in combat, the same rules apply.

PASS

A player must succeed on a DC 8 check to pass the ball. The ball can be passed 30 feet. For every increment of 5 feet beyond 30, add 2 to the DC. On a failed check, the ball is fumbled and is now a loose ball in that player's square. Any other player within reach can obtain the ball as a bonus action.

Passes can be bent up to 45 degrees at a cost of ½ the travel distance. Passes can also be bounced off the sidewalls and ricochet in a direction the passer intends at a cost of ½ the passes travel distance.

RECEIVE A PASS

Receiving a pass is done as a reaction to a ball coming into a player's zone, and thus doesn't take an action or movement. To receive a pass a player must succeed on a DC 5 check to successfully receive and control a pass. On a failed check the ball is fumbled and is now a loose ball in that player's square, any other player within reach can obtain the ball as a bonus action.

Any time a player receives the ball on a pass, as a reaction/free action they can either shoot or pass immediately.

INTERCEPTING A PASS

As a reaction, a player can intercept a pass with a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check when the ball goes through a square within their reach. If the ball actually passes through the square the player is occupying, they have advantage on the roll.

STEALING THE BALL

Any player within reach of the player possessing the ball can attempt to steal it. Each player makes a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, the winner now possesses the ball. On a steal attempt the player who started with the ball has advantage on the check.

GOAL SHOT

Any player within the 20 foot strike/attack zone may attempt a shot on goal. It is a DC 10 check to shoot accurately on goal which is slightly more difficult than simply advancing the ball. A failed check results in the ball being fumbled, it is now a loose ball in that player's square and any other player within reach can obtain the ball as a bonus action.

Missed shots on goal result in the ball being fumbled in front of the goal and it becomes a loose ball

RING SHOT

Players may attempt to score on either vertical ring. Any player within the 10 foot strike/attack zone of a vertical ring can attempt a shot. Given the circular nature of the attack zone, players only need to be standing partially in the circle (representing at least one foot in the attack zone). A successful DC 20 check is required to put the ball through the ring and score. A failed check results in the ball being fumbled, it which case it is now a loose ball in that player's square and any other player within reach can obtain the ball as a bonus action.

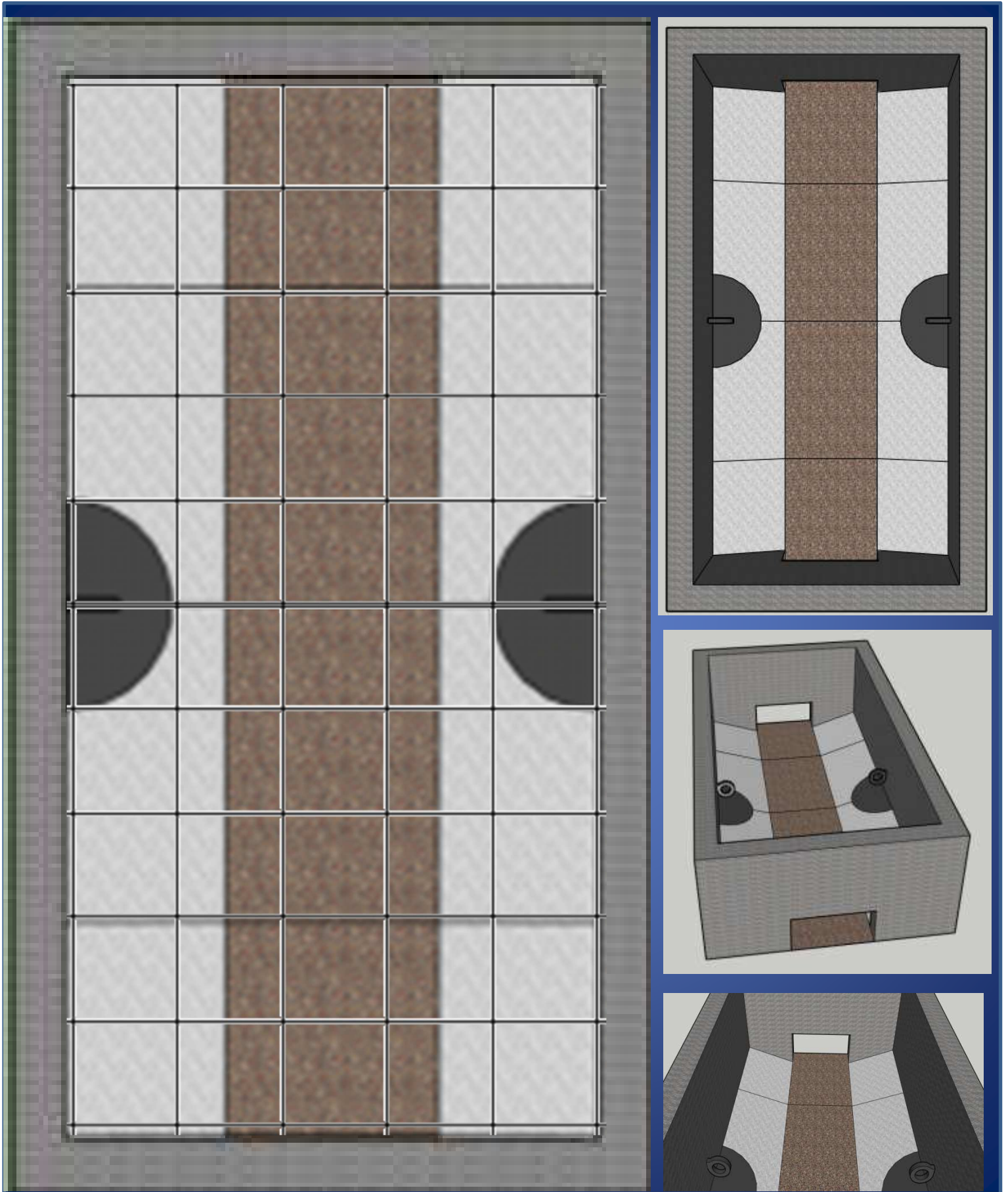
Missed shots on a ring result in the ball being fumbled in front of the ring and it becomes a loose ball

BLOCKING A SHOT

As a reaction, any player within reach of a player shooting, or within reach of a player's target, can attempt to block with a DC 15 check. On a successful block the player who blocked the ball can deflect the ball 10 feet in any direction or gain its possession. On a failed check, it may be blocked by another defender within reach, or it reaches its intended target – possibly resulting in a score.

SHOVING/CHECKING

Players may shove opposing players as they would in combat. The shoving player must use Strength (Athletics) versus the "victim's" Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics)



save (victim's choice). If the shove succeeds the player who was shoved is knocked prone.

HELP

Much as it is in combat, players can help one another. If a player is within reach of a teammate they can help them on their next action, providing advantage to that player's check. This assistance is thematically something like setting a pick or perhaps lifting a teammate up into the air to help them get a shot off over the other contestants.

DELAY

As in combat, a player can delay their turn in initiative and trigger it as a specified time.

WALL RUN

Players can run up the side walls, up to ½ their speed, with a DC15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. This has multiple uses - a player can wall run to be out of the reach of an opponent's opportunity attack. More notably though wall runs are often used to help score Ring Shots. A player can attempt to wall run, receive a pass and then shoot a ring shot. A Ring Shot attempted from a position on the wall is at advantage unless of an opponent has also done a successful wall run and is within reach. A player who finishes their turn on the side of the wall falls prone, which is often considered a price well worth paying if you've just scored a Ring Shot.

A tactical move that often leads to a Ring Shot is if Player A possesses the ball, while Player B attempts the Wall Run. Player A delays their action until Player B is in position. Player A then fires a pass to Player B who can still receive the pass and attempt to shoot it through the ring.

OPPORTUNITY ATTACKS

As in combat, be careful crossing through your opponent's reach, he may shove you over!

OPTIONAL RULE: THE LONG SHOT

You might want to allow players to shoot from greater distances, and different regions of Maztica have different variations on this rule.

If you choose this option, players can attempt shots from outside the associated "attack zones". The first 3 squares beyond the goals are at a DC15, the next 3 are DC20. Shots may not be taken from beyond half court. For ring shots, the next 3 squares outside the main attack zone are at DC30, then DC35 beyond that.

OPTIONAL MECHANIC: INJURIES

If you want to take into account that players might become injured, roll a Constitution save every time a player is knocked prone by either being shoved, or falling from a wall run. The save DC is 5 for being shoved and DC 10 for the wall run. If they fail the save, they are injured and must either make a substitution for another or continue to play while moving at half speed and taking Disadvantage on all game checks.

Most venues will stop the game for a substitution, at which point a new Slap Ball occurs at the midcourt line.

OPTIONAL MECHANIC: HOME COURT

If the DM wants to include the effects of a home court advantage, each player on the team could be given inspiration on a single ability check during a game. This may also be given if the DM determines the crowd is particularly raucous for either or both teams during a high stakes, or championship game.

OPTIONAL MECHANIC: SCALING THE GAME

The mechanics for òllamaliztli are designed for characters in the first tier to maintain a competitive game. High level characters - particularly if they have proficiency in acrobatics or athletics, can be quite effective at the game, defeating the competition in short order. When there is a level imbalance, this is as it should be - as higher level characters are assumed to be greater in talent.

When teams are more evenly matched in level, however, the game should not always be a quick win. Great offense will undoubtedly be negated or at least slowed by equally great defense.

Take the average level of all players on each team, and the average level of all players on the court. If the average level of each team is greater than three levels, do not use this mechanic – let the far less talented team get slaughtered. However, if the teams are evenly matched (average levels are three or less) you should adjust all of the game DCs according to the overall average as follows.

Average Player Level	DC Increase
1-4	+0
5-8	+1
9-12	+2
13-16	+3
17-20	+4

THE GREAT TOURNAMENT

Although the sport may have begun long ago in Huacli, the Kultakans currently have the largest tournament of *ōllamaliztli* in the True World, and they have for close to a century. Teams come from all over and are even diverse enough to include the occasional Nexalan team of orcs. This is the only time that any such creature would ever be allowed to walk into Kultaka without being slain instantly. The tournament itself is held in a village that lies within sight of that poisoned homeland of the beasts of the Viperhand.

The village is named Tonaltzintli and when the Grand Tournament is held, it becomes a bustling city for many moons before and after.

The tournament is known everywhere and the names of its champions are spread long and wide by the traveling merchants known as *pochteca*. It only occurs only once every five years so teams practice and train hard during these long delays.

The prizes for winners are known to be grand, but the pride for one's home nation is also worth more than any amount of gold to most of those who compete. Champions become legends as much as any adventurer ever could.

ENTERING THE TOURNAMENT

Teams need to be sponsored by a nation or other power group which they will represent in the tournament. In the past, the Payit, the Far Payit, the Kultakans, the Otomi (representing all of Huacli), Kolan, Pezelac, the Green Folk, the Tabaxi, the Desert Dwarves, Helmsport (representing New Amn), the Short Folk and yes, even the orcs of Nexal have fielded teams. There are also teams that specifically represent a single faith or deity – Plutoq, Qotal and Eha all have teams sponsored by their temples.

A decade ago, the dragonborn put together a team of their own, but have yet to truly master the game rules. They have lost in the first round on both of their appearances, but this year's team is said to be much improved.

If the players want to be included, they need to find a sponsor. If the players approach a power group, the DM can simply determine that the group has decided to be a sponsor or they may require the PCs to perform some kind of task in order to insure sponsorship. This can lead to other adventures if the DM so desires.

One sponsor that is currently looking for a team is a druidic order dedicated to the dead goddess Maztica. Members of this organization have been cropping up all over the True World in recent years waiting for what they believe will be the return of the goddess – and a victory in this tournament will bring them the needed attention.

The tournament does not require any sort of entrance fee. The marketplaces in Kultaka are flooded with monetary exchange during this event and locals benefit greatly. All costs are provided by the Kultakan government due to the economic surge and the individual athletes are for want of nothing during their stay in Kultaka.

TOURNAMENT RULES

The tournament is a bracket competition where matchups are randomized. The number of teams in the competition occasionally requires teams to receive a bye, and their selection is also random.

Violence of any sort is strictly prohibited, and there are over two dozen of Kultaka's finest jaguar knights, *hishnashapers* and *hishnacasters*



ensuring that rivalries or standard hatreds do not reach the point of bloodshed.

THE GAMES: DAY 1

The games will occur in the order given below with some colorful descriptions of the happenings and results of each game. When the players' game comes up, statistics and a description of the opposing team will be given along with relevant game modifiers.

Note that the tournament lasts four days in total. There are four games on the first, second and third days, with the two semifinal games and finals on the fourth.

TABAXI VS THE PAYIT

This game is an energetic and perfect first matchup between two teams with similar playing styles. The tabaxi turn out to be simply too quick for the Payit team (who incidentally

made it to the semifinals five years prior) and win the match 3-1.

The Payit and their fans are disappointed, but after the loss, most stay and switch their allegiance to a second favorite such as Far Payit or Pezelac.

PEZELAC VS NEXAL

No matter whom they are actually at the tournament to watch, the entire crowd roots for Pezelac in this matchup. This gives the players inspiration and Klatilli – the team's sole female member – scores within the first minute of the game.

Though it falls short of actual jeering, possibly out of fear of the orcs, the crowd is all but silent when the orcs score or make a move. Other than their reactions, this game goes quite smoothly.

Alas, to everyone's disappointment, the orcs are simply too big and they muscle their way past Pezelac 3-2.

Pezelac's fans keep their interest as the next match includes the dragonborn – relative newcomers to their nation.

DESERT DWARVES VS THE SHORT FOLK

This matchup causes great mirth among the spectators and disparaging comments about height are quite frequent in the crowd.

The dwarves use their strength to overpower the Short Folk and the score is 2-0 rather quickly. Then one of the dwarves falls to the floor and begins drooling after being checked by a filthy looking halfling that swears incessantly in his native tongue. The short folk come back after a substitution is made and tie the game 2-2.

As the teams continue to compete, Hishnashapers detect that the dwarf was poisoned using kurari poison. All of the halflings are searched and as suspected, the dirty halfling was wearing a hishna ring that could inject poison on contact. The halflings are ejected from the tournament and banned for the following decade. The dwarves, who were highly favored to at least make it to the finals this year, are more than angry that their best player could not finish the tournament.

This incident has the potential to cause diplomatic issues between the two peoples.

DRAGONBORN VS THE GREEN FOLK

The dragonborn have yet to ever win a game since they first entered a team. This game is extremely defensive and remains 0-0 for an extended portion of time. No one can seem to score until the unthinkable occurs.

One of the dragonborn, an agile member of the Maztican newcomers named Tekamal, takes a random shot at one of the side rings and miraculously, it scores! The normally stoic dragonborn fly into a fit of celebration and the crowd goes wild. The dragonborn remain the beloved underdog team that wins the hearts of many. This goes a long way towards changing opinions of the newcomers to the True World.

The Green Folk, mysterious and silent as they are, disappear within moments of losing, as do the few that came to watch them.

THE GAMES: DAY 2

The second day of the tournament starts earlier as most that have come to observe the games have already arrived in Kultaka and there are short interludes of entertainment between the games.

Whoever the PCs are playing for, they are the first to play. As a relative unknown going up against a mediocre team, the game is not well attended.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS VS KOLAN

Kolan's team consists of four players and one substitute should anyone get injured. The team consists of the following players, all of whom are level 3 characters (class is irrelevant and proficiencies are given below).

Player 1: Dexterity 15 (+2), Proficient in Sleight of Hand and Acrobatics (+2). This player starts the game with the Slap Ball.

Player 2: Dexterity 16 (+3), Proficient in Acrobatics (+2). This player is the leading scorer for Kolan.

Player 3: Strength 14 (+2). Proficient in Athletics (+2). This player loves to shove other players and sometimes does so when the move isn't even particularly tactical. The crowd seems to love it, and he enjoys the response.

Player 4: Strength 13(+1). Proficient in Athletics (+2). A younger player with a good future in the game, but has yet to really reach his potential.

Substitute: Dexterity 13 (+1). Proficient in Acrobatics (+2). A veteran of these tournaments, this player is past his prime, but was once a crowd favorite. He is not as agile as he once was and repeated injuries, in addition to advancing age, have slowed him down. If he enters the game, the crowd will go wild, giving him inspiration.

If the players win by two points or shut out the other team, they too will become crowd favorites and will draw attention the following day in the

markets. Merchants will offer them heavily discounted wares (50% off) if they agree to wear or hold the purchased materials during the tournament.

KULTAKA VS FAR PAYIT

This game is mildly embarrassing and frustrating to those who traveled many days to watch Far Payit play. The highly skilled Kultakans aid and assist each other repeatedly, performing wall runs and blocking almost any shot the Far Payit attempt. The game is over quickly and Far Payit loses 3-0.

ENTERTAINMENT – THE GLADIATOR

After the Kultaka/Far Payit debacle, two dozen jaguar knights ring the edges of the court and at least as many drums begin to beat from among the crowd.

A muscular Kultakan enters the court from one goal to the roar of the crowd. He wields a massive macahuitl in one hand and wears only war paint and a small loincloth.

At the opposite goal, the players will first hear a roar that silences the crowd, and then they gasp as a purple black puma-like creature enters the court. The creature is no ordinary puma, however, as its six legs and pronged tentacles would suggest. The creature is hard to place in any one location and its movements are difficult to follow.

The Nexalans, who have otherwise behaved quite well during the tournament, are riled by this creature's presence.

*At this point, the DM has an option. If he would like an actual encounter to occur that requires combat, the orcs of Nexal could start a riot. As found on page 81 of the **Monster Manual**, this creature is a **displacer beast**, which in some ways is sacred to the Beasts of the Viperhand. While these competing orcs are not members of that vile organization, they are quite used to obeying their jagre masters – ogres who can themselves take the form of a displacer beast.*

The distraction causes the gladiator to lose focus and he is ultimately slain by the displacer beast's tentacle attack. Worse yet, a small

tabaxi child falls to the court floor only 30 feet from the displacer beast and gains the beast's attention.

Busy with calming the riot and getting the orcs under control, the Kultakan jaguar knights are of no help during the battle.

There are a number of potential rewards for rescuing the tabaxi child. For one, the child's clan approaches the players the following day and hands to them a beautifully woven hemp necklace. The necklace is not magical, but it depicts an extremely skilled figure of what they explain to be the Cat Lord – a god of sorts worshiped by the tabaxi. The necklace does not contain any precious materials but could be worth 300 gp for its craftsmanship. Its true value, however, is more in its use as an indicator that the wearer has provided some great service to the tabaxi. Any first encounter with tabaxi will always give the wearer advantage in any Charisma based checks unless the wearer attacks.

*The Kultakans will also be grateful that their tournament was not ruined by the death of the tabaxi child. The team will take it easier on the players during the championship game (see *The Championship Game* below), and the crowd will no longer give the Kultakans "home court" advantage.*

QOTAL VS THE OTOMI

As the crowd simmers, the players may be surprised to see that the orcs have not been slain, nor have they caused any damage to anything living. The incident is quickly passed on by as two new contenders enter the court. The Otomi ignore the pooled blood that stains their half of the court while those who represent Qotal look upon it in disgust.

After such an exciting afternoon, the game goes relatively without incident. After a particularly hard shove, it is thought that one of Qotal's team members was injured, but he returns to score what ends up their only goal. In the end the Otomi win 3-1.

PLUTOQ VS. HELMSPORT

If there is any team that is despised more than the Nexalans, it is the players of Helmsport.

Plutoq's faithful consists of two desert dwarves and two stocky humans who appear to be almost as dwarven as their teammates. Shockingly, the PCs might eventually notice that one is, in fact, a female.

Plutoq controls the ball for the vast majority of the game and the folk from Helmsport really don't stand a chance. Perhaps they could have beaten the dragonborn, but there was no way otherwise that they would advance to the second round. Plutoq's faithful muscle their way to a 3-0 victory.

Chants of "poke-a-tok!" resonate from the crowd – a pejorative name once misused by the invaders from Amn in reference to the game and now used only to embarrass Amn's pale skinned descendants.

ENTERTAINMENT – THE BARD AND THE BIRDS

Qotal's faithful brought a contingent with them to help entertain the crowd and garner favor with the Kultakans (where not many temples of Qotal are located). This troupe takes the form of a **humanoid plumazotl** bard and five **bird plumazotl** (found in *TWC1 The Maztican Campaign Guide*).

Very few of the attendees have ever witnessed such creatures and even after the chaos and excitement of the game (along with copious amounts of octal being drunk), the crowd quickly quiets.

The humanoid is shaped like a man but his body is comprised completely of feathers. His assortment of instruments is also apparently formed of the same plumage.

The bird plumazotl which accompany him sing while he plays. Somehow the music is both haunting and uplifting and though he plays for only a few short songs, the crowd leaves satisfied and ready for the playoffs the following day.

THE GAMES: DAY 3 (PLAYOFFS)

The excitement during the playoffs is palpable both on and off the field. Now that the less talented teams have been eliminated, the competition gets stiffer and the games become

more intense. Shoving and wall running moves increase dramatically as every player wants to please the crowd.

TABAXI VS THE DESERT DWARVES

This game is a pure pleasure to watch, with the extremes of both styles of play competing at the highest of levels. The tabaxi finesse their way through the desert dwarves and score quickly with a wall run, but the dwarves answer back by shoving their way through to the goal.

The game is 1-1, then 2-1, then 2-2. Finally, the most talented player on the tabaxi team takes an unnecessary shot at the ring and he fumbles the ball. The desert dwarves pick up and dribble the ball past the last of the tabaxi defenders (who misses a steal) and the desert dwarves win 3-2. Both teams share a good natured and sportsman-like goodbye at the games conclusion.

THE DRAGONBORN VS NEXAL

Tekamal, the dragonborn player who scored the Ring Shot in the match against the Green Folk continues to show his skill in this game, scoring a few minutes in against the much more talented Nexalans. This is all to the great delight of the crowd, many of whom are still reeling from the earlier riot the orcs caused. Many called for the disqualification of the team, but since nothing technically occurred during a game, the Kultakans didn't think it appropriate.

One to nothing soon became 1-1, then 1-2 and finally 1-3. The dragonborn left the court to a standing ovation – undoubtedly a team to watch in the next Grand Tournament.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS VS THE OTOMI

The Otomi are experienced players who come from a long tradition of playing the ball game. With the exception of one player, they are mostly a finesse team, aiding each other where needed and constantly trying to steal the ball. If they are down 2-0 at any point or seem outmatched, they will start taking more shots at the ring, hoping to put the game away in one lucky moment. These players are all level 5

characters (class is irrelevant and proficiencies are given below).

Player 1: Dexterity 16 (+3), Proficient in Sleight of Hand and Acrobatics (+3). This player starts the game with the Slap Ball and he rarely loses. He is known to be a bit of an all-star and comes from many generations of players. The player is aging, but it hasn't slowed him down a bit.

Player 2: Strength 18 (+4), A bit of an oaf, this player is fond of shoving other players, but he isn't otherwise a very talented player. He fits well on the team, however, filling a role of neutralizing other large players. He stands at over six and a half feet tall and is rather difficult to knock down.

Player 3: Dexterity 15 (+2). Proficient in Acrobatics (+3). Though not as purely talented as Player 1, strong as Player 2 or as nimble as Player 4, this female Otomi is both smart and patient. She almost never makes mistakes and keeps herself positioned far from others when controlling the ball. Controlling the ball is what she considers good strategy, and she believes that scoring will come when a good moment presents itself.

Player 4: Dexterity 17(+3). Player 4 is the youngest on the team and the most inexperienced but she is a natural talent. She loves to try the wall run and Player 2 has been trained to aid her in her favorite move.

Substitute: Dexterity 13 (+1). Proficient in Acrobatics (+3). The substitute was only recently replaced by Player 4 and he is not taking it well. He despises his teammate and is willing to embarrass her simply out of spite. He carries a mirror hidden in his tunic.

This team is slightly more difficult to beat than the team from Kolan and really should be considering how popular the Ball Game is in Huacli. However, the players should still win this matchup if they use decent tactics.

If you would like the players to gain a bit of an advantage, have the substitute player sabotage their own team by reflecting a light in Player 4's

eyes every time she attempts to shoot or make another important move. This will give Player 4 disadvantage on whatever maneuver she is currently attempting. The judges, crowd, and even Player 4 herself will not be able to detect the source of the distraction considering it is coming from one of her own teammates!

If the players win by two points or shut out the other team, they will receive even greater benefits and discounts than they received after their first win (75% off). Admirers of the opposite sex will flock to the players as well, leading to all manner of roleplaying possibilities.

KULTAKA VS PLUTOQ'S FAITHFUL

Another intense game to watch, this match lasts longer than all the others so far before the score is even 1-1. The defense is incredible, and judges mark a record number of blocked shots and steals.

Plutoq's faithful are outmatched talent-wise, but they manage to take advantage of their physical strength and position themselves in such a way to keep their main scorer in possession of the ball. Eventually they strike again leading Kultaka 2-1.

The unthinkable happens for a second time in this tournament however, as the jaguar knight player Ach-to walls runs and scores a near perfect Ring Shot. The second one of the tournament! Kultaka advances to the semifinals.

THE GAMES: DAY 4 (SEMIFINALS AND CHAMPIONSHIP)

The rest of the tournament assumes that the PCs have won both of their first matches. If not, the Otomi would currently be in their position and would eventually defeat the Desert Dwarves, only to lose to Kultaka in the finals.

If the Players have reached this point, the "adventure" is already considered successful and the Druids of Maztica have received the exposure they are looking for. The Players will receive the rewards from their benefactors at the end of the tournament.

The remaining teams in the semifinals consist of the player characters, the Desert Dwarves, the

Nexalans and Kultaka. Out of those four, the orcs are the only to actually fear the players and one of their players approaches the PCs just before the next match.

THE OFFER

The orc, smallest of his team but amiable in his own way, approaches one of the PCs in the early hours of the morning – long before the crowds arrive for the semifinals. He approaches in peace, with no obvious weapons or ill intent.

He offers one of the players a small talisman of hishna shaped like a small beetle. The orc (truthfully) explains that the beetle is actually a fetish of a water bug common in Nexal known as axayacatl and a primary food source for the Beasts of the Viperhand.

This particular talisman is magical and can be chewed upon once each day. After the talisman is chewed upon (which requires an action), it will allow the user to make a single non attack action at advantage, even if the talisman is no longer in the character's possession. This action could be a saving throw or proficiency check, but either way it can only be used once each day (and only by one person or being).

The orc claims that the talisman is a gift that can help the players defeat the desert dwarves, whom the orcs despise.

The Axayacatl Talisman truly is a gift, but the orc's intentions are not to defeat the desert dwarves. Rather, the uncommonly perceptive Nexalans have determined the players are actually more of a threat than the dwarves. When a being carries the blessing of the talisman (whether or not the actual talisman is in their possession or not), they detect as magical. This is a side effect the orc will not mention.

The players can refuse the talisman, take it and use it, or simply claim that it will be used and pocket the item. If it is used, one of the hishnashaper judges will undoubtedly detect its magic and the players will be immediately disqualified, allowing the dwarves to advance. If it is refused, the orc grumbles his disapproval but does not push any further. Pocketing the item will anger the orcs, but there is nothing that they can do – the orcs fear their own disqualification in case the ruse is exposed.

Players who try to cheat their way through the tournament get what they deserve.

THE PLAYERS VS THE DESERT DWARVES

The desert dwarves are a cheerful lot and they are perhaps the most excitable of all the teams. They long for this type of competition and the current level of the teams they are playing make them all the more giddy.

The dwarf team is pure strength, and despite their otherwise kind nature, they tend to play a bit rough. The players should not leave this game, win or lose, without a plethora of bruises.

Remember, the players do not need to win this match in order to have earned a great deal of respect and satisfy Maztica's druids.

These players are all level 9 characters (class is irrelevant and proficiencies are given below).

Player 1: Dexterity 13 (+1), Strength 17 (+3) Proficient in Sleight of Hand and Athletics (+4). This player starts the game with the Slap Ball. The dwarf is a talented player, but he doesn't usually win the Slap Ball against the more competitive teams.

Player 2: Strength 18 (+4), Proficient in Athletics (+4). Short and built like a rock, this player loves to shove others, and there have been times where the entire opposing team was left lying on the court because of his style of play.

Player 3: Strength 16 (+3). Proficient in Athletics (+4). Another solid player who uses brute force to dribble his way into shooting range, this dwarf is the highest team scorer, mostly due to assists from others who clear his way to the goal.

Player 4: Dexterity 14 (+2). Proficient in Acrobatics (+2). The sole female player on the dwarf squad and also the only one that uses any semblance of finesse – she took over this position in the game against the Short Folk. She has remained a starting player because the substitute has lingering effects still from the poison.

Substitute: Unavailable

KULTAKA VS. NEXAL

If the players defeated the desert dwarves, this game is believed by most to be the actual championship game. The rivalry between Kultaka and Nexal runs high considering both nations are continuously at war with each other. The players (yes, even the orcs) for the most part, try to keep national politics out of the game and this isn't the first time the two have matched up. Though the teams play and act as if they despise each other, there is more than a bit of mutual respect between the athletes. Pleading by the Kultakan players is in fact the deciding factor that the orcs weren't disqualified for their rioting.

As expected, the game is top notch when it comes to pure talent. There are very few fumbles but still numerous blocks as each team manages to keep control of the ball for extended period of time. The orcs score first, but are answered in quick succession by two Kultakan goals – one after a wall run that seemed to go half the length of the court!

Feeling as if they were on the defensive and accepting the fact that they were simply outmatched by the Kultakans, the orcs started to take more frequent Ring Shots. One took a strange bounce and played right into the front of their own goal where a Kultakan picked it up and put Nexal away for good, 3-1.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

If the Kultakans are up against the Desert Dwarves in the championship, the game plays out much like the game against Nexal, except one of the Kultakans gets badly injured after a hard shove. If the PCs are in this final game, they will be the heavy underdog, but the respect they have gained from the crowd will be palpable (as well as the other teams in the tournament).

The Kultakan strategy is relatively straightforward. They use a combination of strength and finesse moves (with the aforementioned penchant for wall runs) and favor assisting each other continually. Their strategy is impeccable, and the DM should play them as so. The Kultakans are all 9th level characters.

Player 1: Dexterity 18 (+4), Proficient in Sleight of Hand and Athletics (+4). This player starts the game with the Slap Ball. Known to be the best player in the tournament, he has been known to singlehandedly defeat entire teams.

Player 2: Dexterity 16 (+3), Proficient in Acrobatics (+4). This female player is quick and light. She is known for her lengthy wall runs which are nearly impossible to stop.

Player 3: Dexterity 16 (+3). Proficient in Acrobatics (+4). This player never scores, but is somehow involved in almost every goal with an assist. The other players are really as good as they are because of this silent hero's tactical play.

Player 4: Strength 16 (+3). Proficient in Athletics (+4). This player positions himself to defend, allowing his more agile teammates to play offense. He is almost impossible to get by and his block shots have been known to send the ball almost out of the court.

Substitute: Dexterity 16 (+3). Proficient in Acrobatics (+4). This talented player would certainly be a starter on pretty much any other team, but the Kultakans are stacked with all stars and thus he has sat waiting for his chance in the last two tournaments (now three). He is not bitter or jealous of his teammates and cheers his team on relentlessly.

Note that if the player characters saved the young child from the displacer beast earlier in the tournament, the Kultakans will take it easy on the players as almost a subconscious sign of respect. They will attempt repeated Ring Shots for one, which is not the best strategy for this team. If the players go up 1-0, they will unleash their full skill set.

In addition, Kultaka is the home team and the crowd will be raucous to say the least. This activates the "Home Team" game option and each player will have inspiration for one check. This too is negated if the players saved the child as the crowd roars for them just as loudly.

REPERCUSSIONS AND REWARDS

As stated earlier, the goal of this adventure/game was to give exposure to a new power group in the True World. The Druids of Maztica rightfully believe that in order for the goddess to return to the world, there needs to be a significant amount of belief. If the players made it to the semifinals they have more than accomplished this goal as their story spreads across the continent. The druids will likely be in contact with their heroes again at some point, and certainly have grown to trust the PCs.

Literally every nation and almost every power group in Maztica participated in this tournament. There were dozens of the traveling merchants known as *pochteca*, which will spread tales of the PCs talent and deeds far and wide. Players should not be shocked (particularly if they won it all) if they are recognized in the far corners of the continent.

Tangible rewards are in no shortage either. The Druids of Maztica are not technically all actually druids and they count a number of plumaweavers in their organization. If they make it to the semifinals, the players will each be given what amounts to a *Quaal's Feather Token* of their choice (DMG page 188), except that the tokens are woven with an image of the goddess Maztica's symbol. These tokens only function once, but do not disappear upon use and might have other unforeseen uses in the future. They will continue to detect as magical even after use.

The reward for winning the tournament in the distant past has always amounted to some religious significance which in some cases led to sacrifice. After Cordell and the Amnians invaded, however, their influence has led to some actual rewards in the last century. The winners of the tournament (and only the winners, there is no second place prize) receive a large golden annulus molded in the shape of the ball game's ring which is worth 5,000 gp for its gold content alone. With the craftsmanship included an interested buyer might pay as much as 8,000 gp.

Finally, the players receive experience awards for their success in the tournament. Award them the following experience values.

Action	Experience
Defeat Kolan	CR3 (700 XP)
Defeat Otomi/Huacli	CR5 (1,800 XP)
Kill Displacer Beast	CR3 (700 XP)
Refuse Orc Offer	CR2 (450 XP)
Defeat Dwarves	CR7 (2,900 XP)
Defeat Kultaka	CR9 (5,000 XP)

OTHER TOURNAMENTS

If the PCs express satisfaction in their participation or victory, perhaps the DM might want to develop some tournaments of his or her own.

Follow the format given in these pages, but the tournaments elsewhere could be much smaller if desired, sometimes consisting of only four teams. It is said that the Ball Game is even spreading as far as mainland Faerun in cosmopolitan cities like Waterdeep.

Remember, the PCs are famous now, and there will be plenty of upstarts and young players who want to find fame of their own with a single lucky Ring Shot against Maztica's champions.