



THE 411 ON 3X3

This new discipline is fast breaking, fast growing, and perfect for parks and rec departments

BY MARY HELEN SPRECHER



3x3 basketball might have been new to the Olympics (where the American women's team won the gold medal), but it wasn't new to anyone in the park and rec world, or those familiar with basketball in urban areas. In fact, the discipline—which has its roots in the urban game—has long been a staple of recreational play.

The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) first introduced 3x3 basketball (pronounced three-ex-three, not three-on-three, three-by-three, or any other permutation) as a sanctioned sport at the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

Since then, 3x3 has grown internationally to include 3x3 World Cups at the U18 and open (adult) divisions. 2011 saw the first 3x3 U18 World Cups in Rimini, Italy. A year later, the FIBA 3x3 World Cups for the open divisions debuted in Athens. Countries, including China, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Spain, have all played host to FIBA 3x3 World Cups or FIBA 3x3 U18 World Cups.

3X3 BASKETBALL IS A GREAT TEACHING TOOL FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SPORT, AND TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PLAYING AS THEY'RE LEARNING, SINCE ANYONE ON THE COURT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYING OFFENSE AND DEFENSE.

USA Basketball is on a mission to grow it here. And park and recreation managers are the key to that growth.

“We’re hoping for development of the sport at the park and rec level,” says Jay Demings, who, as USA Basketball’s Youth & Sport Development Director, oversees all facets of the organization’s 3x3 teams, as well as youth basketball initiatives.

3X3 101

The sport is easy to onboard in any scenario. All it takes is a half-court, one net, and six players total. (In formal competition, each team has four players, three of whom are on the court, and one is an alternate). Each game is 10 minutes long, and the first team to reach 21 points wins, making it easy—and less time-consuming. It also makes it easy to schedule, should park departments want to create league play.

Because the games are fast, they are as fun for spectators to watch as they are for players.

“Its greatest feature is that it’s so digestible,” says Demings. “It’s fast-paced. People enjoy watching it as much as players love playing it.”

The game is a great teaching tool for those who want to learn the fundamentals of the sport, and to take an active role in playing as they’re learning, since anyone on the court is responsible for playing offense and defense. It’s also a fun discipline in sports camps and anywhere players are interested in improving their skills.



Logistically, 3x3 courts can be set up as part of multi-sport facilities, either outdoors or indoors. (In the case of these facilities, such as places where basketball hoops are located on tennis or pickleball courts or other surfaces, managers may need to schedule when practices and play can take place, in order to avoid conflicts between user groups).

It’s not uncommon to find single-hoop courts at a park—but two 3x3 games can also be hosted simultaneously on a traditional two-hoop court since each game only occupies one end. (In formal play, shot clocks and scoreboards are used, but recreational facilities largely will not need such amenities, particularly at the youth level.) Formal games also use a 3x3-specific ball; however, play is absolutely possible with a traditional ball as well.

While the Olympic game (and many games at the highest level) are played indoors, park and rec facilities are largely outdoor, and USA Basketball is excited about the game’s potential for outdoor spaces.

So, if you’re interested in hosting 3x3 basketball, how do you begin?

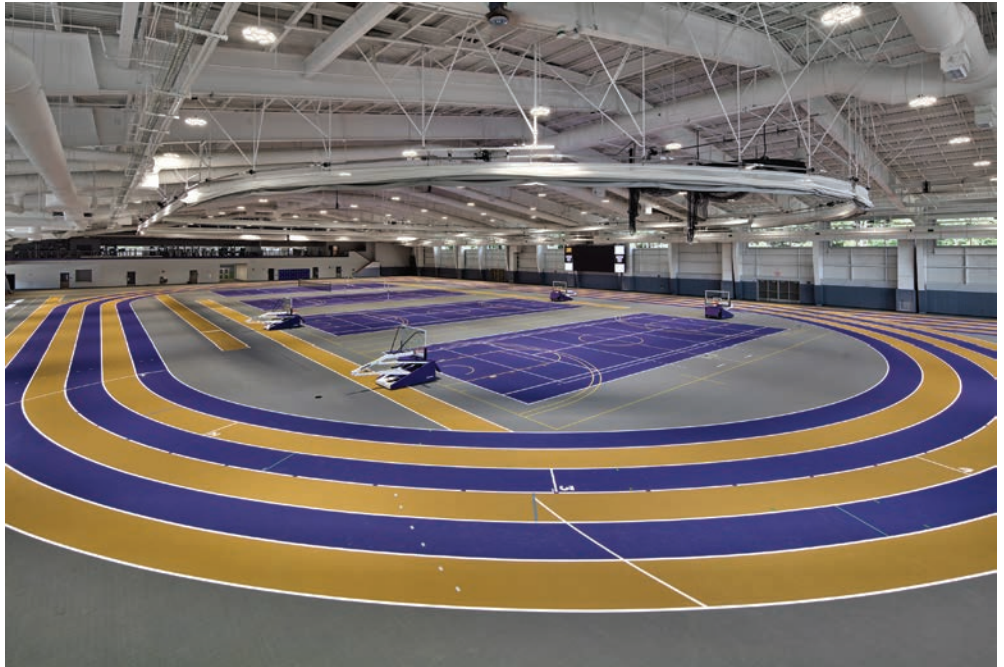
First, check in with USA Basketball. The organization wants this discipline to grow, so has made it easy to get the resources you need. Head over to <https://www.usab.com/3x-3/3x3-opportunities-and-resources> for information on rules, setting up programs, and more.

Second, make sure your facilities are up to par. The American Sports Builders Association (www.sportsbuilders.org) has information that allows users to look up the names of builders of sports facilities, free of charge. Simply scroll down on the website and choose the button on the left-hand for “Find a Member.” Working with a builder who has sports-specific experience means gaining a better, more comprehensive knowledge base of the sport and of the surfaces needed for play in a given situation.



COURTESY OF TD SPORTS, INC. - SPORT COURT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (TOP)
COURTESY OF ALL SPORTS ENTERPRISES, INC. (ALLSPORTS) (BOTTOM)

3X3 BASKETBALL CAN BE PLAYED INDOORS OR OUTDOORS. ALL YOU NEED IS A HALF COURT, ONE NET, AND SIX PLAYERS TOTAL.



IF TREES ARE NEAR A COURT, MAKE SURE ROOTS ARE TRIMMED BACK TO KEEP THEM FROM GROWING UNDER THE PAVEMENT, CAUSING THE SURFACE TO HEAVE UPWARD.



Many outdoor facilities, colloquially known as hard courts or all-weather courts, have a concrete or asphalt base, on top of which an acrylic coating is applied. A sports contractor may suggest a product that is designed to work well with basketball play; for example, an experienced contractor will know that the action on a 3x3 court is heavily concentrated in the key area, and that a tougher acrylic emulsion will be needed when coating and lining courts. Another option is interlocking modular tiles that can also be placed over a paved surface.

In all cases, the recommended slope of any pavement is one inch in 10 feet with a permissible maximum of one percent. The court should drain in one true plane from side to side, end to end, or corner to corner; it should not be crowned or lower in the center. To tell if a court

has been built with the correct slope, check for puddles or any areas of standing water once a court has been hosed down and the majority of the water has drained off.

MAINTENANCE

Hard courts are playable during most seasons of the year and are thus a popular choice for municipal facilities. However, even in warm weather, the surface can become slick because of mud, mold, or algae. Keep courts clear of debris. If some areas remain a problem, consult a contractor, who may advise pressurized washing or another mechanical form of cleaning. Additionally, if trees are near the court, make sure that roots are trimmed back to keep them from growing under the pavement, causing the surface to heave upward.

All asphalt courts will crack over time as the pavement ages and shrinks; however, some cracks are indicative of more serious problems. A contractor can give advice on what

various cracks mean, and how to address them.

While court-specific shoes (those with non-marking soles) are suggested for play on sports surfaces, it is usually not possible to regulate footwear on courts that are open for public play. Ask a contractor about surfaces that are easy to clean—and be prepared to put up signage asking users to wear court shoes.

There is something else to consider: Since 3x3 basketball is so fun to watch, put up some seating. Park benches or bleachers (portable or permanent) are great options. By bringing in spectators, you can bring in enthusiasts—and possibly grow the game.

And standing behind it all is USA Basketball, which plans to implement more resources for those who want to implement the discipline. Want to know more? E-mail them at 3x3@usabasketball.com. **PRB**



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