



Handball Games of the Late Classic Maya



**Yes, the Maya did use their
Hands on ballgame balls
(but different sized balls)**

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Introduction to handball games of the Late Classic Maya

99% of what is written on the Classic Maya ballgame states that hands were not used. Yet the FLAAR Photo Archive has a Late Classic Maya vase scene showing one player clearly with the ball in his hand. And two vases in the Kerr rollout database also show players with balls the size of a large grapefruit or small watermelon. Plus at Bilbao, Cotzumalhuapa balls are held in the gloved hands of the players in that non-Maya cultural area.



This Late Classic Maya handball scene is from Peten or adjacent (Belize or Campeche). This ballgame scene is totally authentic in every aspect. Both players have "hunter" headdresses, which is common in ballcourt ballgame scenes. Otherwise neither "player" has ballcourt athletic outfits whatsoever. The stepped mound has no steps but is evidently where they are playing this game. None of the nearby scenes on this vase are known from traditional ballgames (no surprise since handball is different game). The tree at the far right is probably a *Crescentia alata*, calabash tree, not a cacao tree (pods are too short).

Rollout by Justin Kerr, K1288



Rubber balls the size of a large grapefruit.



Rubber ball the size of a small watermelon.



The middle player is in traditional ballcourt ballgame outfit, as is the slightly different player to the left. I am not totally convinced, yet, that this vase is a forgery. It could be authentic. Rollout by Justin Kerr, K666o



Close-up of the handball player on this Late Classic Maya vase.



Digital rollout photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, 1999-2004, FLAAR Photo Archive. Trumpets are frequent in warfare, hunting, and the ballgames. The clothing worn by the two players has no relationship with the thick outfits worn by traditional ballplayers in the ballcourts. This handball game is totally different in this scene.



Digital rollout photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, 1999-2004, FLAAR Photo Archive. The handball games of the Maya and Bilbao area (Cotzumalhuapa) deserves a PhD dissertation.