Poison Ball (*Bola Beracun*)

**Site of Documentation**

Urban Malay, George Town, Penang, Malaysia

**Description**

*Bola Beracun* is a very popular team game played by Malay children living in urban communities in George Town, Penang, Malaysia. In the game players have to avoid being hit by a 'poison' ball that is thrown by their opponents.

**Who Plays?**

This game requires a minimum of 10 players, although groups can be up to 20 in size. Both boys and girls can play aged 7 to 12 years old. The teams need to be of equal size, so there should be an even number of players in total.

**Accessories/Equipment**

This game requires players to have one small rubber ball.
Time and Place

A game of *Bola Beracun* usually takes around 10 to 20 minutes to play. It can be played at any time of the day as long the weather is cool and dry. Children like to play this game in school lunch breaks, at home in the evenings or during holidays. The game requires a large area of flat ground either indoors or outdoors. Players should ensure that the game area is positioned well away from fragile glass windows.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

This game is very physical and requires players to be able to run and doge the incoming ball. For the throwers, good hand eye coordination and an excellent aim are essential. As with many games, team work can be the key to a successful win. Teams that can work together to form strategies, will always have the advantage over those that do not.

Popularity

The game is played for fun during school lunch breaks or in Physical Education classes. The game is gradually being played less by the children out of school and has increasingly become part of their formal exercise programmes in school.

History of the game

This game was also played by members of the older generations when they were young, much in the same way as it is played today.

Preparation

1. All the players must stand in a long row. One of the players must walk down the row and say, “One, Two, One, Two, One” and so on as they pass each player. When they reach the end of the row and all the players have been given a number, they can form teams. All of the “One’s” form one team, and all the ‘Two’s’ form another.
2. The teams then play 1-2-SOM! to determine which team takes on which role. 1-2-SOM! is very similar to Rock, Paper and Scissors.

   a. To start the game, each team must elect a player to represent them.

   b. Next, both representatives must face each other and say, 1-2-SOM! As they say "SOM!" each player must form a Bird, Rock or Water sign with their hand. The winner is determined by the following:

      • Rock kills Bird: Rock defeats Bird
      • Bird drinks Water: Bird defeats Water
      • Water wears down Rock: Water defeats Rock

   The winning team chooses which role they want to play in the game. They can play the team that is throwing the ball (Team A), or those that are dodging the ball (Team B).
How is the Game Played?

Step 1. Team A forms a large circle, surrounding all the players in Team B.

Step 2. Players from Team A have to then throw the ball into the centre of the circle, with the aim of hitting one of their opponents. They are only allowed to aim below the player’s waists. If they succeed in hitting an opponent, that player is eliminated from the game and must exit the circle. Team B players must keep moving around inside the circle and dodging the ball as it is thrown. If they step out the circle at any time, they are also eliminated.
**Step 3.** Team A must keep throwing the ball until only one member of Team B is left inside the circle. They then have five chances with which to hit this player. If they succeed they win the gain, but if they fail, Team B wins.

**Step 4.** In each new round of the game, a representative from each group plays 1-2-SOM! to determine which side they play on.

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**Rules**

1. Players inside the circle are not allowed to exit the game area during play; if they do they are eliminated from the game.

2. Those throwing the ball are only allowed to aim below the waist of the players inside the circle.

3. If the final player in the circle is not hit within five shots, the team throwing the ball loses the game.