Kabaddi

Site of Documentation

Urban Malay and Indian community of inner-city George Town, Penang, Malaysia

Description

*Kabaddi* is a fast paced, high energy team game that involves lots of contact between players and is similar in some ways to the sport of rugby. In the game, players must score points by entering enemy territory and fending off opponents to make it back to their own territory safely. Well known, the game is played by Malay and Indian children living in the city of George Town, Malaysia.

Who plays?

To play *Kabaddi* two equal sized teams must be formed, each with a maximum of seven players. Both boys and girls aged between 10 and 16 years old can play. Teams can be single sex or mixed, depending on preferences and who is available to play. As an active game that requires both speed and strength, children need to possess a high level of fitness.

Accessories/Equipment

To play the game you only need an object to mark out the Game Zone on the ground. This could be chalk, a stick or sharp stone, depending where the game is being played.
Time and Place

*Kabaddi* can be played throughout the year at any time of day, as long as it is light and dry. As the game requires a lot of running and contact between players, it is best to avoid playing in wet weather when the ground is slippery and dangerous. Basketball or badminton courts which have pre-marked lines make ideal play areas. Each round of the game usually lasts around 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the skill and fitness of the players.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

Players have to be quick and agile if they are to make it to the other side of the Game Zone and back without being caught. Fast runners or those who are skilled at dodging opponents often make the best players. Physical strength is also very important if a player is to break free when caught by the other team. Like 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

*Kabaddi* has been popular in Malaysia for many years. At present, although the game is played less frequently, it still holds its appeal with many young people. Typically, children learn the game from peers, parents or older siblings and usually play during school break time when there are plenty of other children around and lots of open space.

History of the Game

*Kabaddi* is a very old game that originated from South Asia and was later brought to Malaysia, where it has been enjoyed by children, particularly from the urban Malay and Indian communities, for many generations. As the game involves lots of physical activity and contact between players it was once used as form of recreational combat training. Over time the game has changed, with certain elements or rules being introduced or omitted. For example, players once were expected to take a deep breath and repetitively shout the word *Kabbadi* as they went on their raid, which is not true nowadays.

Preparation

1. To prepare, lines for the Game Zone need to be drawn on the ground as shown in this diagram. The size of the area will depend on the number of players in each team.

2. Players can draw on the ground with chalk, use a stick or stone to drag a line in the sand or use markers, colorful cones or flags to define the areas.

3. The game can also be played on surfaces with pre-existing lines, such as basketball, badminton or netball courts.

4. Once drawn, the Game Zone needs to be divided into three smaller territories: one for Team A, one for Team B and one space in the middle, separating them.
5. The territory for each team needs to be about five metres long. The territory in the middle needs to be smaller, about three metres long. Mark these territories with the letters ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ (in chalk or using your memory).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team A</td>
<td>5 meters</td>
<td>3 meters</td>
<td>Team B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 meters</td>
<td>3 meters</td>
<td>5 meters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How is the Game Played?

**Step 1: Choosing the Team Leaders**

The game needs two equal sized teams, each with a maximum of 7 players. It is up to the players to choose their own teams.

a. The teams then play *1-2-SOM!* to determine which team will start the game and be the first to select a territory. *1-2-SOM!* is very similar to *Rock, Paper and Scissors*.

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

c. Next, both representatives must face each other and say, *1-2-SOM!* As they say *SOM!* each player must form either a bird, rock or water sign with their hand. The winner is determined by the following:

- Rock kills birds: rock defeats bird
- Bird drinks water: bird defeats water
- Water wears down rock: water defeats rock
d. The winning team can now choose a ‘territory’, either the area between line A and B or between line C and D. They also win the right to start the game.

**Step 2:** The two teams (Team A and Team B) stand in their territories at opposite ends of the Game Zone, ready for the game to begin.

![Image of two teams standing in their territories](image1.png)

**Step 3:** The starting team (Team A) selects the first player to send as a ‘raider’ into the other team’s territory. This player has to ‘conquer’ the opposition by crossing over into their territory, touching the furthest line and then making it back safely to their home territory. Once conquered, the next player from Team A repeats the exercise.

![Image of a team member crossing over into the other team's territory](image2.png)
Step 4: As each raider runs, the opponents (Team B) have to defend their territory by forcing the raider back into their own territory or, if the raider has already reached the end line, by forcing the raider over the line and out of the Game Zone, thus eliminating them from the game.

Step 5: The players who manage to conquer Team B’s territory, each win a point for their team. Those who fail, because they were either forced back into their own territory, or were pushed out of the Game Zone, are eliminated. Eliminated players can be rescued and put back into the game by a team mate who successfully conquers the opposing team’s territory.

Step 6: The game is complete when players in Team A have either all conquered Team B’s territory or have all been eliminated.

Rules

1. Only one ‘raider’ can enter into their opponent’s territory at any one time.

2. ‘Raiders’ must touch the furthest line in their opponent’s territory and make it back to their own territory to score a point.

3. ‘Raiders’ that step out of or are pushed out of the Game Zone are eliminated from the game.

4. Eliminated team players can be brought back into a game by team mates who ‘conquer’ the other teams’ territory.