Tarik Upeh

Site of Documentation

Rural Malay community, Titi Teras, Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia

Description

Tarik Upeh is a race that is played by Malay children from the village of Titi Teras near Balik Pulau in Penang, Malaysia. The aim of the game is for a player to drag their partner who is sitting on a palm frond, across the game area in the fastest time. The first team to cross the finish line, wins the game!

Who Plays?

This game requires a minimum of two players. As the game is played by pairs of players, it is important that there is an even number of participants. Both boys and girls can play, aged 7 to 12 years old.

Accessories/Equipment

Each pair of players will need to find one dried palm tree frond. These are easily located in towns and villages throughout South East Asia. In the absence of palms, fronds from other similar species of tree, such as a coconut can also be used.
Time and Place

On average, a game of Tarik Upeh only takes around 10 to 15 minutes to play. The game is usually played outdoors, in large open areas such as fields or gardens, as long as the ground isn’t rocky or wet. It can only be played during the dry season, when dried palm fronds are plentiful and the ground is dry. Early mornings or evenings when the weather is cool is an ideal time to play.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

This is a game of strength and balance. The best players are those who can successfully pull their team mate across the game area in the quickest time. Players who ‘ride’ the palm fond must be able to keep their body in the correct position, while holding onto the frond. Team work between each pair of players is important if they are to beat their opponents.

Popularity

This simple game is popular among both adults and children living in rural villages and is played regularly for fun and to pass free time. Typically children learn this game through watching other’s play or being taught it by elder siblings, parents or peers.

History of the game

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

Preparation

1. First, players need to find a strong dried palm tree frond, which is wide enough to accommodate the Rider’s body.
2. Using a stick or stone, players have to drag a start and finish line in the sand. Other indicators such as chairs or trees can also be used to mark out the game area. The length between the lines is decided upon by the players, but is usually several metres in length.

3. Next, players must get into pairs and decide which of them will be the ‘Rider’ and which will be the ‘Puller’. Usually the player who is bigger in size and stronger will be the puller, while the smaller, lighter player is the Rider.
How is the Game Played?

**Step 1.** Each pair needs to position themselves on the start line. One player should be sitting on the palm frond, while their team mate is holding onto the palm frond with both hands, ready to pull.

![Image of people preparing to play the game](image1.jpg)

**Step 2.** One of the Riders counts, “One, two, three”. On “Three” each of the Pullers must begin to drag their team mates towards the finish line. If a Rider falls off the palm frond the Puller must wait for them to get back on before setting off again. Each pair must travel in a straight line and be careful not to block their opponents. The first team to cross the finish line wins the game.

![Image of people pulling](image2.jpg)
Rules

1. If players want to make the game more challenging, they can switch positions as they cross the finish line and drag the palm frond back to the start. The first team to cross the start line wins.

2. If there are not enough players to make a competition, players can pull each other along – just for fun!