

Ou / Humming



Site of Documentation

Phnom Pehn, Cambodia

Description

Ou is a fast paced team game that is played by children living in the suburbs surrounding Phnom Pehn, Cambodia. In the game, players have to enter their opponent's territory, catch another player and make it back to their own territory safely, while continuously humming, "Oooooooooou". The "Ou" sound that the players make while they are 'attacking' their opponents is from where the game finds its name.

Who Plays?

To play *Ou* two equal sized teams must be formed, each with a maximum of five players. The game is most suited to boys and girls aged between 9 and 14 years. Teams can be single sex or mixed, depending on preferences and who is available to play.

Time and Place

On average, a game of *Ou* takes around 10 minutes to play. The game can be played either indoors or outdoors throughout the year, as long as the weather is cool and dry. The game area requires plenty of

space; for a group of 10 players an area of 5 x 3 metres is ideal. It is best played on smooth, flat surfaces such as lawns or school yards where the children are less likely to hurt themselves if they fall over.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

Players have to be quick and agile if they are to catch an opponent and return to safety while still humming “Ou”. Fast runners or those who are skilled at dodging opponents often make the best players. Physical strength is also very important if a player wants to prevent their opponent from reaching their own territory after they have been caught. Those that can hold their breath for a long time will always have the advantage over other players, as the longer they can hum, “Ou”, the longer they have to complete their task.

Popularity

Ou is a popular game particularly in suburban communities, where there is abundant space to play. Typically, children learn the game from peers, parents or older siblings and usually play during school break time when there are plenty of willing participants.

History of the game

Although the origins of *Ou* can not easily be traced, it is a relatively old game that has been enjoyed by generations of Cambodian children. The structure and rules of the game have not changed over time and the game played today is much the same as it always was.

How is the Game Played?

Step 1. First, the players need to divide themselves into two equal sized teams by playing *Oulampe*.



Step 2. Next, a representative from each team plays *Rock, Paper and Scissors* to determine a loser. The loser's team (Team A) will take turns attacking the winner's team (Team B) during the game.



Step 3. Before the game begins, each team needs to mark out their territory. The territories must be at a distance of at least 5 meters away from each other: Players can draw on the ground with chalk, drag a line in the sand or use markers, such as doorways or chairs to define their areas.



Step 4. Team A selects their first player to attack Team B. This player has to cross over into Team B's territory, touch an opponent and then make it back to their own territory while continuously making a loud humming noise that sounds like, "Oooooooooou".



Step 5. If the Team A player manages to complete this challenge while still humming, the Team B player they caught has to join their team. However, the caught Team B player can try to stop their attacker from getting back to safety by grabbing hold of them or blocking their path. If the Team A player runs out of breath and stops humming while being blocked by their opponent and still in Team B's territory, they fail their mission. If this happens, the Team A attacker has to join Team B instead.



Step 6. Team A players must continue to take turns attacking Team B. To win the game they will need to successfully steal all of Team B's players. When only one member of Team B remains, they are given a final lifeline. The last player is allowed to take a turn attacking Team A in the same manner. If they can cross over into Team A's territory, touch a Team A player and then make it back to their own territory while continuously humming, "Oooooooooou" they win an additional team member. If they fail their mission then the game is over.



Rules

1. If an attacking player can not catch an opponent, but still makes it back to their home territory while humming, "Ou" they can try again. However, if they fail to catch an opponent after taking three turns, they are eliminated from the game.
2. If an attacking player can not make it back to their home territory while still humming, they fail their mission and have to join their opponent's team.
3. The game can be played as many times as the participants like. There is no punishment for losers or prize for winners.