



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

tha'an

'tha-an'



SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10-12

Post-school age

Background

The pushing game of *tha'an*, similar in nature to tug-of-war, was played by young and old men living on the upper reaches of the Batavia River and at McDonnell in north Queensland.

The 'fun' of the activity consisted mainly in balancing the pushing pole against the side of the body for a few minutes and then letting it fall with a deep grunt of relief.

Language

The name of the game was taken for the word 'to push' from the Wik-Mungkan language of north Queensland.

Short description

This is an activity in which players push against each other using a pole.

Players

- Teams of one or two players

Playing area

- Mark two lines 8 metres apart and a line in the centre, or use a circle with a clearly marked diameter of 8–10 metres. Other players and spectators should be controlled to a minimum of 5 metres beyond the marked circle/lines.

Equipment

- Use a strong pole about 3–4 metres in length and 7–10 centimetres in diameter (commercially available from hardware stores). The pole is padded at both ends. A mark is made around the middle of the pole and another 'no-hold' area is marked 30 centimetres each side of the centre mark.

- Players may be barefoot or wearing flat-soled sports shoes and may skid or slide around within the circle — shoes with spikes are not allowed. Gloves or mittens may be worn.

Game play and basic rules

- Instead of pulling, players push against each other while holding the pole. The activity involves one player against another player or two players versus two.
- Competition version: *Tha'an* could be played as a competitive (strength and stamina) activity.
- Start: Players face each other and carefully pick up the pole. Each player holds the pole with both hands (gloves allowed) and firmly under one arm (no higher or lower), bends the knees a little and leans forward. At least 10 centimetres of the end of the pole should project behind the players. The centre of the pole must start over a mark in the middle of the circle/area before the contest begins. Players are on different sides (as well as ends) of the pole.
- In a two-versus-two contest, the pole may be held between the waist and shoulder. Players on the same team are on opposite sides of their end of the pole.
- Movement: On the signal to start, each player/team pushes forward on the pole attempting to push the other player/team out of the marked circle. Pushes should be in a straight line and with little sideways movement of players. There should be no 'twisting' actions.
- Attempts: The competition is the best two out of three rounds for single or double elimination or round-robin contests and the best three out of five in the final of these contests.
- A round is considered a draw if no player is pushed out of the circle within 60 seconds (30 seconds for children under 12 years of age).
- If all three rounds are drawn a tie-breaker is held, with no time limit, until a player is pushed out of the circle. A team is not allowed to move up on the pole to avoid being pushed out.

- Note: Individuals/teams must push forward at all times and are not allowed to swing the pole (move sideways) around or let go — both a cause for immediate disqualification. Pushes should be a continual push forward and not a 'pumping' or 'rest and push hard' action. A player loses the round if he or she falls over, places a knee on the ground, or allows the end of his or her pole to touch the ground. No player is allowed to knock the opponent off balance by pulling on his or her pole (loss of round). Contestants are in age and weight categories.

Comments

Suggested competition format: Overall competition could be a double elimination with pairs determined by a draw.

Safety

For safety reasons the ends of the pole are padded. Players must follow all directions and stop pushing immediately if instructed to do so. The pole should not be dropped at any time but carefully placed on the ground. Players should not push from the end of the pole but may be allowed in some circumstances to place one hand on the end of the pole for better grip — but the body should be in front of each end of the pole.

Teaching points

- Line up ready. Hang on tight. Go.
- Push hard. Hold it straight.
- Bend lower. Keep going.
- Rest and then push hard.