



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# Sanbaing

'san-ba-ing'



All school-age groups (K–12)

Post-school age

## Background

In parts of Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands players of both genders were observed playing a game of sand-ball throwing. It required a deal of expertise to perform successfully and was often played all day.

## Language

This activity has been named *sanbaing*, which means 'sandbank' in Torres Strait Creole.

## Short description

Players make 'bombs' out of sand and throw (lob) them into the water.

## Players

- A group of players of a manageable size

## Playing area

- A sandy beach area

## Equipment

- A ready supply of suitable sand near water

## Game play and basic rules

- The players make little oval balls of sand in their hands and throw them up into the air to fall into the water. Players take turns.
- The object of the game is to count how many sand balls in a row can be thrown into the water without them breaking apart. If the balls fall whole into the water they do so with a hollow sound. The higher the balls are thrown — a high underarm lob works well — the greater the measure of success.

## Scoring

As each sand ball drops into the water as a whole, the thrower makes a mark on the sand with his or her feet, to remember how many successful throws in a row he or she makes. If one of the balls breaks up in the air or in contacting the water a player has to rub out the marks and start again. The player with the most successful throws in a row is the winner.

## Suggestion

To make the sand 'bombs,' start with a handful of wet sand and add progressively less wet layers and smooth over with dry sand. It is recommended that fist-sized or slightly larger 'bombs' only are made for safety reasons.

## Variation

As a recommended pool-based alternative to the outlined activity it is possible to use very large rubber medicine balls or balls filled with water — these can either float or sink. Players line up on the side of the pool and throw the balls high into the air to make the biggest splash, individually or all together. After all players have thrown the ball a signal is given and players dive in and retrieve the ball for the next group. For the balls that float the players can attempt to 'catch' them underwater before they return to the surface.

## Teaching points

For rubber medicine balls into the pool:

- Line up with a ball each. Remember to throw it high.
- Up and away.
- Big splashes. Ready. Go.
- Wait. Retrieve.

