



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

noongar wana

'noon-gar wan-a'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10-12

Post-school age

Background

The young Noongar girls in the southwest of Western Australia played many skill games. In one of these a short stick was placed on the ground and the other girls attempted to hit the stick while the girl defended it using her *wana* (digging stick). Different versions of this game have been recorded by observers.

Language

A *wana* is a digging stick in the Noongar language of the south-west of Western Australia. This game is named for the Aboriginal people who played it.

Short description

Players use an underarm throw to hit a target, which is defended by the player with a bat. This version is suitable for older students or for use in the playground.

Players

- Groups of six to ten players

Playing area

- A designated area suitable for the activity

Equipment

- Softball-sized unihoc balls are ideal, or use soft tennis balls for the thrown *wanas* (digging sticks)
- A paddle bat or small Kanga cricket bat
- A large pin, marker dome or bin as the target

Game play and basic rules

- Place the target in the middle of a large hoop or marked circle with a 2-metre diameter. A batter stands near this area.

- A safety circle with a diameter of 5 metres is marked around this and no players may go into this area to retrieve a ball unless the game is stopped. Mark a circle or use cones to mark a larger circle with a diameter of 7–12 metres (depending on the age and ability of players).
- Players spread around the outer circle. Two balls are used and on a signal to start, players use an underarm roll or throw (below the knees) only to attempt to hit the target — no side or overarm throws. Players (fielders) must stay — with one foot at least — behind the outer circle when throwing the ball. The batter uses a bat (while standing outside the small circle) to hit balls away from the target.
- The ball can roll along the ground or bounce to hit the target. It cannot be thrown to hit the target on the 'full' and care must be taken not to hit the batter. A throwing player cannot have two balls in his or her possession at once.
- As soon as a player fields a ball he or she must throw it within 3 seconds. The two balls cannot both be thrown at once but can be thrown one after the other. If a ball goes past the players in the outer circle they chase it and return to the line to throw it or relay throw it back to another player in the circle. Players may pass (underarm throw) the ball to another player in the outer circle but cannot pass it across the 5-metre circle.
- The batter stays in the middle for a set time or can be replaced when he or she is 'out.' A player is 'out' and is replaced if:
 - he or she deliberately hits the ball hard past the players in the large circle. The ball should be tapped away to the fielders
 - the batter blocks the ball so it stays inside the 5-metre circle (this can be an optional rule)
 - he or she is caught out on the 'full' by a ball that is hit outside the 5-metre circle and inside the outer circle. A player may call for the ball and go into this area to catch the ball. If there is no call and the catch is made the batter is not out (a one-hand, one-bounce rule could also be used)
 - the ball travels past the outer circle on the full unless it has been touched/dropped by a fielder
 - he or she deliberately has contact with the ball using the body (such as kicking it away)
 - he or she displays poor sporting behaviour.
- The game is deliberately designed to make it difficult to stay in as a batter and thus there is constant swapping over. Newer players may be allowed two to three 'outs' before they are replaced.
- Whenever there is an 'out' or change-over of the batter, use either 'bat for ball' or take it in turns with players swapping into the middle. The game could also be played in teams with runs allocated to a set number of hits made (such as ten). A 'four' is scored if a catch is dropped, not called for (need to call, 'My ball!'), or a ball is hit along the ground past the players in the large circle — the ball must not be hit hard.
- The game is fairly continuous except when it is stopped for balls to be retrieved from inside the 5-metre circle, there is a delay in changing batters or while fielding the ball. (With two balls going and the batter working hard to defend the target the game can have a great deal of action.)

Variations

- Play in teams after agreeing on a scoring system. For example, two for a ball that goes between the 5-metre circle and the outside circle, four if it passes through the outer circle but is not hit hard, six for a misfield, dropped catch, catch not called, illegal play by the fielders ('no ball' by stepping over the outer line to throw the ball), etc.
- Play with two balls but the second ball can only be used when the first one has been hit or is being fielded. (This is recommended for the early learning stages of the game.)
- Play with only one ball.
- Vary the dimensions and other rules to suit the age, ability and interest of players.
- Play with two batters in the middle each with their own half of the inner 5-metre area.

- The ball must bounce at least once — no rolling along the ground — before it hits the target. The ball must be below knee height at all times.

Safety

Stop the game to retrieve balls from inside the 5-metre circle. Insist on observance of safety aspects, particularly in relation to throws/rolls at the target. Stop the game if it is not played in accordance with the procedures outlined, as this could be considered disrespectful to traditional owners and their intention to play the game with skill and enjoyment.

Suggestion

This game could be used as a warm-up activity for Kanga cricket or as a hitting and throwing activity for physical education as well as a playground game. If played correctly it proves to be an enjoyable game similar in some respects to 'French cricket'.

Teaching points

- Form a circle. Player in the middle.
- Thrower ready. Go.
- Good throws. Watch the ball batter.
- Tap the ball away.
- Field the ball. Next thrower.
- Catch the ball if you can.
- Keep going.