



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

aurukun

'aru-kun'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10-12

Post-school age

Background

This game comes from the Aurukun Aboriginal community in north Queensland, where it is known as 'bat and ball'. It is a modern game that has links to traditional hitting games of Aboriginal people in the area. It is the most popular of all the games played at Aurukun and can usually be seen being played at lunch time in schoolyards. However, it is usually played in the afternoons around the streets when it is cooler and the sun has begun to set. This game is outlined on the authority of Herbert Hudson and Stanley (Bo) Ngakyumkwokka, both students of the Aurukun Community School.

Language

The name of the game has been taken from the town of Aurukun, where the game was observed being played.

Short description

In this bat-and-ball game players in teams take turns and attempt to hit a ball back and forth.

Players

- Numbers are unrestricted for this activity.

Playing area

- A large open area such as a cricket oval is suitable. The more players the larger the area required.

Equipment

- Equipment required is minimal; simply a tennis ball and 'bats' (sticks) such as Kanga cricket stumps. Less-skilled or younger players may use a small bat or racquet. Each player has his or her own 'bat'.

Game play and basic rules

- The idea of the game is to create a fast forward-and-back momentum of the ball in a tennis-like fashion. Players in a team rotate turns. Play can be designed to make it a continuous fun activity or teams may attempt to win each round or turn.
- Players are divided into two teams separated by a middle line (usually unmarked, for example, using two trees or similar structures).
- Once the teams have been chosen, four to six players from each side stand in single file, with a space between players of approximately 1.5 to 2 metres. The heads of the line of players face each other 5–10 metres back from the middle or separation line. If there are more than six players in each team the remainder on each team stand well behind the line of players and close to the playing area boundaries to act as ‘back stops’. These players swap into the game.
- To begin the game the ball is thrown underarm from the front player of one line to the front player of the other. This throw must bounce at least once before reaching the hitter and once the ball is in hitting range the player attempts to strike it.
- Regardless of whether this player makes contact with the ball, fails to hit it, or hits it and the ball does not clear the middle/separation line, the hitter immediately rotates, either to the back of the single line of players or to a back-stop position, depending on the number of players.
- The ball is in play when it clears the middle/separation line. The player who first threw the ball attempts to contact the ball and after his or her turn rotates to the end of his or her team’s line.
- Note: The ball may bounce more than once but is ‘out of play’ once it is rolling. When this occurs it is picked up and thrown to the front player of the appropriate line to re-commence play.
- If a thrown or hit ball is missed by the front player in the line the player directly behind him or her is able to attempt a strike and so on down the line until either the ball starts rolling or a player makes contact to keep the ball in play. Players should move out of the way if they miss the ball to allow the players behind them the chance to hit the ball.

- A receiver/hitter is allowed to control the ball by either bouncing the ball with the bat similar to bouncing a basketball or by hitting/volleying the ball up in the air and then hitting it, comparable to lifting/juggling a soccer ball and then kicking it to another player.
- If the ball travels past all the players in the line the backstops come into play and they either hit the ball back to the opposition to keep the ball in play or for safety simply retrieve the ball for the next round.
- Disputed possession: If the ball stops on the separation line the two head players of each line move forward to perform the act of ‘Hockey 1, hockey 2, hockey 3’. The players stand facing each other separated by the middle line with their bats and feet either side of the ball. On the call of ‘Hockey 1’ the players clap sticks in the middle above the ball, and then they return their sticks to the starting position. This continues until ‘Hockey 3’ when, after clapping or hitting sticks in the middle, players attempt to ‘win’ the ball for their team.

Variations

- A volleyball style of play could be introduced into the game, whereby each side is allowed a maximum of three hits/volleys between players before hitting the ball to the other team.
- Tennis-court play: Play with tennis racquets and ball. Use a tennis court with one player on the court at each end and the other players behind the baseline. After starting the game with an underarm hit the player joins the end of his or her group behind the baseline and is replaced by the next player. Play as a continuous rally or attempt to score a point.
- Teams alternate roles to start a new turn/round. After a round has ended the team that previously hit the ball restarts with an underarm throw of the ball.
- Introduce a scoring format into the game whereby each successful hit that is unplayable registers one point and award two points for a home run (outside the boundary on the ‘full’). Play the first to ten.

Comment

After each successful hit players usually clap sticks in a 'high five' type fashion in celebration of the achievement and to reinforce team spirit.

Safety

Players should be reminded of the danger associated with the swinging of bats when other players are standing nearby. It is important always to enforce the 1.5–2-metre separation of players standing in single file. Effectively survey the playing area prior to commencement and be sure to remove any potentially dangerous obstructions.

Teaching points

- Two teams.
- Spread out. Ready.
- Roll in turns. Who's first?
- Bend down. Fingers towards palm up.
- Good work.
- Stop the ball with the sole of your foot.
- Next turn.
- Keep going.