



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# kokan

'ko-kan'



SCHOOL  
YEARS  
4–6

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
7–9

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
10–12

Post-school age

## Background

Various hockey-type games were played in many areas of the Torres Strait and Papua and New Guinea. A hockey game called *kokan*, which was played on Mabuiag Island, was the name of the ball itself. This ball was 6–8 centimetres in diameter.

The game was played over a long stretch of the sandy beach. The *kokan* was hit with a rough bat or club, *baiwain* or *dabi*, which was usually cut from a piece of bamboo 60–85 centimetres in length on which a grip was cut. On Mabuiag Island the game was played by both genders.

## Short description

This is a form of hockey in which players are allowed two touches of the ball — usually one to control the ball and another hit to pass or shoot for goal. More-skilled players could use one contact only.

## Players

- Teams of four or five players

## Playing area

- A tennis court or similar sized area

## Equipment

- Each player has a hockey or unihoc stick (for the *baiwain* or *dabi*).
- Use a softball-sized, perforated ball (unihoc), a tennis ball or a larger, light ball as the *kokan*.
- Use markers or goal 60 centimetres high and about 1.2 metres wide. Mark out a goal area 4 metres wide and 2 metres in front of the goal. Goals may be placed against the walls/fences at the end of the court. There is no goalkeeper and players are not allowed in the goal area.

## Duration

- Play for 10–15 minutes.

## Game play and basic rules

- The game is started with a player hitting the *kokan* from the centre of the playing area to be contacted by another player. There is no offside in the game.
- Either side of the *baiwain/dabi* stick may be used to hit the ball.

- The main method of play is to hit/drive the *kokan*, with no dribbling allowed (push passes are strongly recommended). To reduce the risk of the *kokan* being dangerously lifted into the air, two ‘touches’ will be allowed for a player — one contact to control or stop the ball and one to hit it. More-skilled players may use one touch but can use two touches to shoot for goal. A player must be over halfway to shoot at goal.
- For safety, players must have two hands on the stick at all times. No body contact or deliberate hitting of another player’s stick is allowed. (All forms of physical contact or intimidation are to be avoided.)
- A player is not allowed to use his or her body to stop the ball, but unintentional contact/rebounds of the body are allowed, except where it greatly advantages the player or team in possession (free hit to the other team).
- If the ball goes out it is hit in by the other team — play off side fences in a single court. Players should stay away from fences as much as possible.
- The ball must not go above knee height at any time (it should travel along the ground as much as possible) and the head of the stick is not to be lifted above waist height. Push passes combined with running into space are encouraged as the main ways of moving the ball around.
- Players attempt to pass the *kokan* to players in their team and keep it away from players in the other team.
- For infringements or if the ball is out of play, a free hit is awarded to the other team. Defenders are to be at least 3 metres away (body and stick) when a free hit is taken. No free hit can be taken any closer than 3 metres from the goal. Intentional contact or entry into the goal area by a defender is a penalty goal attempt (attacker has a push pass into an open goal from 3 metres in front of the goal to score).
- The *kokan* must not be handled or touched in any way other than by the *baiwain/dabi*.

### Scoring

Score one point for each successful goal.

### Variations

- Keep-away: One point is scored by a team when a set number of passes (such as ten) is made between players of the same team without being intercepted by players of the other team.
- Play a two-on-two one-touch game using push passes in a small area.
- Two teams of three or four players. Use a tennis court, a large, soft inflated ball the size of a volleyball and Kanga cricket bats. Players attempt to hit the ball into a goal that is 2 metres wide. The first team to reach ten points with a two-point lead is the winner. Players are only allowed to hit the *baiwain/dabi* once before it is played by another player.
- Use a goalkeeper, who is restricted to the goal area. Players may enter the goal area to hit the ball.
- Players might be restricted to areas of the court. For example, two defenders who stay in their own half, two attackers who stay in the attacking half and a centre who can go anywhere (instead of a centre, a goalkeeper may be used). Players rotate around positions.

### Teaching points

- Teams ready. No offside. Point the way you are going.
- Sticks down. Ready. Go.
- Pass and move. Two hands on the stick.
- Keep the sticks down. Ball below the ankles.
- One to control, one to pass. Push and pull on the stick to pass.
- Call for the ball. Move to space.
- No contacts. Be careful.
- Defend. Do not hit their stick.
- Do not use your body to stop the ball.
- Play on. Keep going. Good.

