

Kabaddi in Hong Kong

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In one breath, how much can you do? Kabaddi is a game that puts your fitness, agility and strength to the test. It is a game quite similar to the Chinese children's game, "The Eagle and the Chicks". With seven members in a team, players work together on collective self-defense as well as individualized, against-all-odds, raiding. The raiding has to be done in one breath, so you need to be extremely focused. Are you ready for the challenge?

INTRODUCTION

Kabaddi is a traditional game played throughout South Asia. The word "Kabaddi" means "begin living". It is believed that the game has evolved out of early human encounter with dangerous wild animals, and has been popular since the Vedic age (1750-500 BCE). The earliest reference claimed that this game was played by Lord Krishna (a Hindu deity) as a young boy.

The forms and rules of this game used to vary from place to place. During the early 20th century, under the influence of the nationalist movement in India, this game was formalized and standardized. After gaining independence, India exported this game to other countries. In Nepal, this game is played not only by school children but has also been adopted as a training program in the army.

RULES OF THE GAME

The game is played by two teams with seven members each. The teams are separated by a line in the center of the court. Each team sends one person, the raider, across the line in turn, to tag members of the opposition, "the stoppers". As the raiders cross the line, they must keep saying the word, "Kabbadi, Kabbadi..." Before the raiders run out of breath, they must return to their own side. If the raider succeeds to touch a stopper, this person will be eliminated. The objective of the stoppers is to capture the raiders before they can return to their own side. If the raider is captured, the stoppers' team gets one point. If the raider successfully returns across the central line, then the raiders' team gets points, depending on how many stoppers are tagged.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAME

This game trains both mind and body as well as individual skill and team work, as players have to develop strategies to “raid” independently and “defend” themselves as a team from the raider. Furthermore, it is “a sport of the masses”. Unlike many other organized sports, it does not require a huge field nor does it require expensive equipment and can be played by both men and women, a mixed gender game.

Kabaddi has been globalized and gained popularity internationally. It is not only a national game in South Asia countries, but also one of the events in the Asian Games. Kabaddi also has its own World Cup and World League.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Play the game. Compare it with your experiences in other sports.
2. Choose one of your favorite sports. Find out its history and discuss how it is in relation to culture, society and politics.

FURTHER READING

Alter, Joseph S. 2000. “Kabaddi, A National Sport of India: The Internationalism of Nationalism and the Foreignness of Indianness.” In Noel Dyck, ed., *Games, Sports and Cultures*, pp.83-115. New York: Berg.

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