

[10 Sports They Don't Teach You in Gym]

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10
[the_ten list]



1. Quoits

When the pilgrims sailed away from England's shores, they left behind religious tyranny—and quoits. The sport, which involves throwing metal rings at a stake (called a hob), quickly became the overshadowed sibling of horseshoes. The game was invented in Britain during the first millennium C.E.; either in the early Middle Ages or even further back, when the Isles were part of the Roman Empire. Either way, it's definitely a British game. The shape of the throwing device is the only major difference between quoits and horseshoes, meaning that close now counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, slow dancing, and quoits.

2. SKITTLES

Even though you know it only as a type of candy, skittles is a sport that's been popular in Britain for centuries. It's similar to modern-day bowling, in that a ball or disk is thrown at pins, but skittles employs nine pins instead of 10. Also, scoring is based on how many throws it takes to knock over all of the pins, rather than the American two-hurl limit. Another difference between skittles and bowling is that, with bowling alleys, the beer came to the game. In Britain, the game came to the beer—skittles competitions originated in pubs and inns.

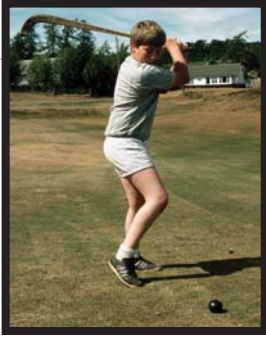


3. SEPAK TAKRAW

Once upon a time, volleyball and soccer were in love, but their parents disapproved and kept them apart. Now, the only remnant of their brief union is a lovechild called sepak takraw. The sport inherited its mother's net and, sadly, its father's aversion to using his arms. Consequently, the game challenges a player to pass the ball over the net using the feet, legs, body, and head. Commonly played on a badminton court, takraw (as the pros call it) was first introduced in Southeast Asia. Today, it's the national sport of Malaysia and an official event at the Asian Games.

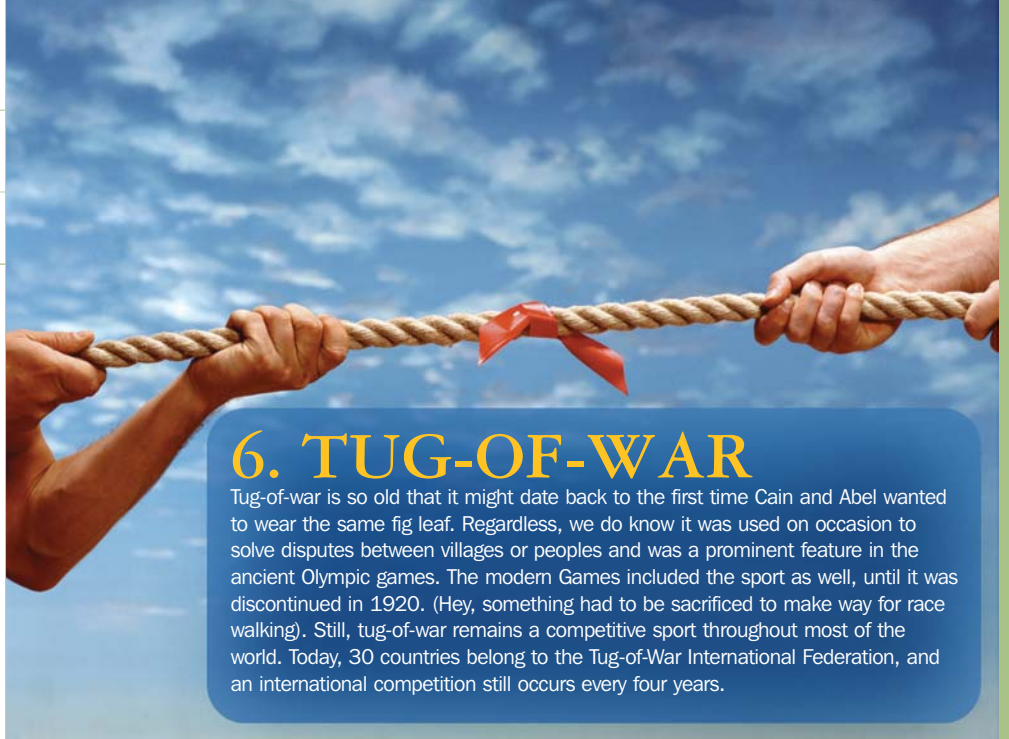
4. Land Sailing

In land sailing, as the name entails, water's not included. Instead, a competitor must sit onboard his vessel and use his hands and feet to push the boat along the ground (usually a dried-up river bed). Normally, that would be next to impossible, but land sailing involves the correspondingly bizarre land yacht, equipped with three wheels. This quirky pastime might sound like something invented by the morons on MTV's "Jackass," but—truth is—the sport is more than a century old. That said, it does have its sillier modern-day incarnations. Every year, Australians hold the Henley-on-Todd Regatta, in which wheels are disregarded, and contestants actually carry the boat to the finish line.



5. Shinty

Leave it to the Scots to make an already-violent game even more bloodthirsty. Similar to field hockey, the Scotland-born sport of shinty involves two teams of players using curved sticks to knock a ball into the opponent's goal. However, there's no offsides rule, meaning "accidental" run-ins with the goalie aren't illegal. The sport thrives today in Scotland, where modern rules for the centuries-old game were first established in 1879. Surprisingly, neither skirts nor kilts are part of the uniform.



6. TUG-OF-WAR

Tug-of-war is so old that it might date back to the first time Cain and Abel wanted to wear the same fig leaf. Regardless, we do know it was used on occasion to solve disputes between villages or peoples and was a prominent feature in the ancient Olympic games. The modern Games included the sport as well, until it was discontinued in 1920. (Hey, something had to be sacrificed to make way for race walking). Still, tug-of-war remains a competitive sport throughout most of the world. Today, 30 countries belong to the Tug-of-War International Federation, and an international competition still occurs every four years.

7. Unicycle Hockey

Sometimes, games involving large, toothless Canadians armed with wooden sticks can seem a bit too easy. So how do you make ice hockey more difficult? Play it on unicycles! Following the same basic rules as ice hockey, "uni-hockey" enjoyed scattered success for nearly 25 years in America, Europe, and Asia. Leagues even formed in Germany and Great Britain. Then the new millennium arrived, complete with plenty of flashing lights and pretty zeroes. Distracted by all the excitement, the few remaining enthusiasts climbed aboard their one-wheel chariots and rode off into the sunset.

8. BANDY

If unicycle hockey is ice hockey's more challenging cousin, then think of bandy as its kinder, gentler big brother. Bandy originated in 18th-century England (before ice hockey, which uses a smaller skating surface), and it's played with a ball, not a puck. Also, to avoid all that unpleasant fighting and bodychecking players do in ice hockey, bandy teams are confined to a designated half of the playing field. These days, the sport is most popular in Scandinavia, the Baltics, and mainland Asia.

<< 9. KORFBALL

Have you ever been bored to tears watching an NBA game and thought, "If only this were a co-ed sport without all of that distracting dribbling and running." Well, Nico Broekhuysen read your mind. In 1901, the Dutch school teacher invented Korfbal, a game in which two teams attempt to score points by passing a ball through a basket at either end of a court. The trick? Players are confined to particular zones (either attack or defense) on the field and can't run when they're holding the ball, meaning they have to pass the ball to have any shot at advancing. The Netherlands quickly caught korfbal fever, and enthusiasts there formed the first league in 1903. Today, the International Korfbal Association serves teams in more than 30 member countries.

10. BOG SNORKELING

Late each August on Summer Bank Holiday in the U.K., you can travel to the quaint Welsh town of Llanwrtyd Wells for the World Bog Snorkeling Championship. Sponsored by Ben and Jerry's ice cream (yeah, we don't know why either), bog snorkeling requires competitors to swim a total of 120 yards through muddy, peat-filled waters armed with only a snorkel, fins, and the recommended—though not required—wetsuit. The slimy sport was conceived by hotel manager Gordon Green, who—incidentally—is the same man responsible for the annual Man-Versus-Horse Marathon, the Real Ale Ramble (a pub crawl, only more cardiovascular), and the even more challenging World Mountain Bike Bog Snorkeling Championship. Green's scheme? Create wacky sporting events to bring visitors to Llanwrtyd Wells (and his hotel), which is the smallest town in Britain. His reward? A 2001 MBE medal for his "services to tourism in Mid-Wales." 🙌