

Quality invasion games: red rover or British bulldog?

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Red Rover (Queensland name) and British Bulldog (Victorian name) are conceptually the same game as both require a player to travel across their opponents' space without being 'caught'. The call inviting an individual player to leave their starting safety zone in attempt to run to the end safety zone, in Queensland was "Red Rover, I call over", followed by the chosen person's name. If the runner (attacking) was caught, the player in the middle (defending their playing space) would say "Red Rover – one, two three, Red Rover – you are he/she". Victoria had a similar invite and saying when caught, replacing the term 'Red Rover' with 'British Bulldog'. When "Bull Rush" was called everyone not in the middle would attempt to get through the playing zone without being captured. Many would be familiar with either version or a game very similar. Red Rover/ British Bulldog fit within the invasion game category and will be examined as this edition's quality game.

I enjoyed playing both versions of invasion games during lunch breaks at primary and secondary school. However, the games at times could be played in an unsafe manner which would rightly be stopped. As a teacher I changed particular rules within this game for safety reasons and modified rules to intentionally exploit the many positive aspects that I enjoyed as a child/adolescent. In this way, the students' could benefit technically and tactically in a safe environment. While this game is suitable for children in middle to upper primary school, it is possible to play with even younger children if further modified and depending on their experience and ability.

Red Rover/ British Bulldog reinforces and further develops locomotor skills (walking, jogging, sliding and running) and non-locomotor skills (bending, twisting, stretching, turning and swinging). Furthermore, the game has a focus on the fundamental motor skills of dodging. These skills are vital for many games and sports, in particular the techniques of evading opponents and chasing and/or tackling. Hence, Red Rover/ British Bulldog if implemented safely can develop and refine children's skills under increasing pressure (less time to perceive, decide and act). This game can also, develop awareness of tactics that can be transferred to other invasion games.

The purpose of invasion games is to invade your opponents defending area to score (often by a goal) while at the same time protecting your defending area. There are three phases of play synonymous with invasion games/ sports:

1. Attack (offense)
2. Defend
3. Stoppage (or ball in dispute).

Red Rover/ British Bulldog promote all three phases of play by introducing them one at a time to the participants and is therefore

an ideal game to introduce to novices. Sports that are commonly classified as invasion games include:

- Goal Striking Games** – Australian Rules, Sof-crosse, Soccer and Hockey
- Goal Throwing Games** – Netball, Basketball, Water Polo and European Handball
- Try Scoring Games** – Rugby Union, Rugby League, Touch Rugby and Gridiron

The version of Red Rover/ British Bulldog presented below introduces children to simplified, developmentally appropriate rules and concepts that logically relate to off-side try scoring games such as Touch Football (Rugby), Rugby League and Rugby Union. A simple rule change is used where tackling is omitted and capturing an opponent is identified through the use of 'flag belts' (Figure 2). Implementing the game in this way increases safety and enables all players to competently master one of the necessary skills of 'capturing'.

In the previous quality game presented (Vol 20, No 2) - 'Poison Ball', I identified aspects of quality games that are popular amongst all students and teachers (Figure 1):

- 1. Safe for all players.**
- 2. Inclusive – all players can participate. This involves having the skill level to participate safely and at an enjoyable level.**
- 3. Engaging – the players' participation is optimised. Waiting time is eliminated or minimal.**
- 4. Enjoyment is prioritised.**

Figure 1 Key aspects of quality games.

The simple replacement of tackling with the use of flag belts (Figure 2) plays a key role in maximising all four aspects.



Figure 2 Students wearing flag belts.

Another benefit of the flag belts (worn around the hips) is the focus it implicitly directs to the hips of the opponent. This assists the children with the technique of chasing and tackling. Although, Rugby football codes (League and Union) often involve tackling from a front direction, Australian Rules football's tackling is only occasionally from a front direction as it often involves various angles and directions. Nonetheless, in all codes a focus on the opponent's hips assists with chasing and tackling. The same principle applies to the children's tactical awareness (predicting and anticipating) their opponent's directional turns during attempted evasion. This focus can then be transferred to other invasion sports in a similar context.

Playing the game

Invasion games are dynamic and Red Rover/ British Bulldog is no exception. Even with tackling omitted, this game can become dangerous if the teacher is not consistent in applying rules, reminding the children of safety aspects such as students using their peripheral vision, and controlling and/or amending the game to enable an inclusive environment.

Equipment: Each game requires a number of markers (approximately 20), and a class set of flag belts (ideally five of each different coloured set e.g. 5 red, 5 blue, 5 green, 5 yellow and 5 orange).

Playing Space: A grassed area is required.

Formation: This game can be played amongst a whole class (20-30 children) or can be easily played using two smaller games (10-15 children). A space of 40 metres wide and 30 metres long would be needed to implement with a full class but the teacher should amend the size as required, depending on the age, size and experience of the children/ students.

Instructions: The markers are set out to make a large rectangle (40m x 30m). Colour coordinating the two 40m lengths one particular colour (eg. blue) and then the two 30m widths another colour (e.g. red) assists children to identify the boundaries and end point; the start, finish and sidelines (Figure 3). The children are grouped inclusively into five different groups. For example, the teacher randomly, yet sensitively allocates each child a particular coloured sash. Teachers can use prior knowledge of the children to have five even groups of mixed ability, and sex. Hence, for a class of 25 children we have five groups of five children; red sash group, blue sash group, green sash group, yellow sash group and an orange sash group.

One group of five children begin in the middle of the playing area (Defenders). They begin behind the third red cone (Figure 3) so that the opponents (Attackers) are given time to enter the playing area. One member from the middle group nominates a particular colour (e.g. Orange). Using colour groups in this manner eliminates children feeling 'picked on' for various reasons or discriminated against. When a group is nominated the aim of the attackers is for all five members to run (Attack phase) through the playing area to the finish safety zone without having a flag removed from their belt. If they make it through the defence they can rest in the finish safety zone until called through again in the next round. If an Attacker has at least one flag from their belt captured or step outside of the playing area marked by the cones, they are required to remove their belt (and flags), place in a pile at the side of the playing area (Stoppage

phase) and join the middle group (Defenders).

When the Orange group members have either successfully made it through to the finish safety zone or been caught, then the defending player who initially chose Orange calls 'bull rush'. This signals to the remaining children (wearing a red, blue, green or yellow sash) to attempt to run through to the finish safety zone without being caught. The game continues where a new member of the defending group can nominate another colour (other than Orange) to travel through, attempting to return back to the start safety zone. The game progresses until the teacher decides it is best to terminate and invite another colour group to begin a new game as Defenders. Each colour group should have a turn as Defenders in the middle.

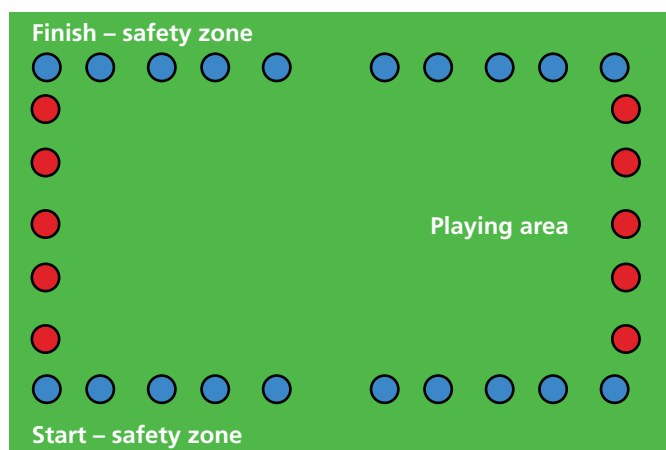


Figure 3 Red Rover/ British Bulldog positions and set up

Teaching Tips:

- It is recommended that flexible field markers are used (Figure 3) so that children can step on them safely and not twist or turn their foot awkwardly.
- To maximise safety the children must wear their flags hanging from each side of their waist (two in total). It must be reinforced that a flag cannot be hanging from the front.
- The children will need to be introduced and reminded of using their peripheral vision. It is natural for children to have tunnel vision and focus on what is directly in front of them, however I have seen children adapt to using peripheral vision quickly in games such as this.
- All players need to be competent at grabbing flags. A quick warm up game of 'tail tag' or a practice with a partner will soon determine this.
- Clothing must be tucked in so that there are no loose items. For example, shirts must be tucked into shorts or skirts so that the flags are not covered. Ideally, shorts and skirts do not have any pockets that may be a potential hazard to fingers.
- This is a non-contact game for both defenders and attackers. Defenders cannot grab or obstruct attackers and attackers cannot attempt to fend off reaching defender arms.
- The game can be terminated by the teacher when they deem in the best interest of all players. That is, this version of the game is not classified as a 'last person standing'.
- When beginning a new game acknowledge the players who survived as attackers and efforts of the coloured group who began in the middle as defenders.

Variations:

The most important variable in this invasion game is space. Space will influence the safety of players and the length of the game. While a smaller rectangle (playing space) may be developmentally appropriate for younger children who are being introduced to invasion games and where movement is at a slower pace, it will make it difficult for the attackers with older students as they have less space to move about in. An extension can be varying the fundamental motor skills where participants (Attackers and Defenders) are only permitted to skip, side step, or gallop. Another variation is where a horizontal line across the playing space is introduced (using cones) and the Defenders are only allowed to catch Attackers from this line. Again, side stepping along the line may be another rule introduced which assists Defenders in invasion court games such as netball and basketball. Two lines may be more suitable and is another variation supplementation.

Focus Questions: Focus questions that assist children to identify the choices they are making during the game include:

- Where are the spaces inside the playing area?
- How can the Defenders as a team cover the spaces?
- How can the Attackers best use their space?
- How can Defenders decide who to chase?
- Which Defender is in the best position to chase the Attackers?
- How can Defenders work as a team to catch an Attacker?
- What tactics did Attackers employ to avoid the Defenders?
- What tactics did the Defenders employ to catch the Attackers?

Student Reflections:

- Think about the time when you were an Attacker for the longest period of time. Was this the time when you were most active?
- Why were you able to stay an Attacker so long?
- When Defending did you talk to each other to help? What did you say?
- Did you improve your dodging and chasing? Why do you think this was?
- Think about times when you almost ran into a Defender or another Attacker. What could you do to help prevent this from happening?
- What skills do you need to have to play this game safely?

I am fond of Red Rover/ British Bulldog because it is another example of a traditionally popular yet at times unsafe game that can be made safe and inclusive through simple rule changes. Furthermore, all players are involved and engaged in the three phases of invasion games. That is, if they are not Attacking then they are Defending or in a Stoppage. The children can also compete against themselves rather than the other players or groups by measuring the amount of time that they remain as an Attacker, or mentally recording how many flags they have captured from belts as a Defender. When implemented in a safe environment this game can effectively assist players to progress their fundamental motor skills and tactical understanding of invasion games and therefore has a great deal to offer.

The Athlete's Kitchen Fueling the Ultra-Distance Athlete



© Nancy Clark, MS, RD, CSSD

If you are an endurance athlete who is training for an Ironman triathlon, century bike ride, or a swim across the English Channel, you need a food plan. Don't be the fool who comments, "My training program is good, but my eating is bad." Performance starts with fueling, not training! This article provides nutrition tips for ultra-endurance athletes as well as ordinary exercisers who want ultra-energy.

Tip #1. Acknowledge the power of being well fueled. I counsel many already-lean athletes who are convinced they will perform better if they lose just a few more kilos. They fail to realise they will perform better by eating, not dieting, and by being properly fueled. Despite popular belief, the lightest athlete may not be the best athlete. The best athlete tends to be well fueled, well trained, and genetically gifted.

If your hours of exercise have not resulted in loss of those last few kilos, listen to what your training buddies and loved ones are saying about your body. If they agree you have fat to lose, perhaps you do. But if your mother or spouse complains you are too thin, listen up! It's time to stop dieting and focus more on fueling better to perform better.

Tip #2. Optimize your daily training diet. Your goals are to constantly be fueling-up before workouts and then re-fueling afterwards by eating on a regular schedule carbohydrate-based meals and snacks (that also include some protein). By feeding your body evenly throughout the day (as opposed to skimping on wholesome breakfasts and lunches, then overindulging in "junk" at night), you'll have steady energy all day with no lags. The trick is to make your breakfast and morning snacks bigger and your evening food intake smaller.

When I counsel athletes, I sketch out sample meals that fulfill their energy needs. One ultrarunner needed at least 4,000 calories a day to fuel his 15-mile daily runs. I divided his

