

marutchi

'mar-ut-chi'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

Background

Marutchi or black swan was a water game played by the Jagara (or Jagera) people in the Brisbane area. It was often played among inhabitants from different areas. Some of the players were very clever and could avoid being caught. If a player became tired he or she could be replaced by another player. Spectators were not allowed to help the catchers in any way.

Language

One source of information refers to *maroochyng* as a swimming game played in the Sunshine Coast area of Queensland, in mimicry of the *moroochidore*, or black swan.

Short description

This is a swimming-and-catching game in which a player swims around and avoids being caught by other players.

Players

- A group of six to 20 players

Playing area

- A 25-metre pool, waterhole or beach area of similar size

Game play and basic rules

- One player (the *marutchi*) starts on the opposite side of the pool to the other players (the catchers).
- On a signal to start both the *marutchi* (black swan) and the catchers (between three and five at a time) jump feet-first into the water.
- The *marutchi* attempts to avoid being caught for as long as he or she can. No players may leave the water during the game.
- The *marutchi* is caught when he or she is tapped lightly on the head while on the surface of the water. No other physical contact is allowed.

After being caught the *marutchi* plays 'dead' and is taken ashore by the catchers — a lifesaving tow may be used.

- Although the catchers and the *marutchi* may not wrestle with each other, the *marutchi* can do anything else to avoid capture. This usually involves swimming underwater — care should be taken to avoid too much of this (restrict to three times and only 10 metres at any time).
- While the *marutchi* is able to avoid capture he or she attempts to amuse the catchers and spectators with some antics. He or she calls out like a *marutchi* and flaps the wings (arms) up and down.

Variations

- Play in teams with one player at a time as the *marutchi*. Catchers touch the *marutchi* on the head while the player's head is above the water. No players can touch the sides of the pool during the game.
- Time how long it takes to catch each *marutchi*.
- Have a number of *marutchis* at a time.
- Allow one *marutchi* and only two catchers at a time.
- The *marutchi* starts in the middle of the pool.
- Have players represent different waterbirds (such as a duck or a crane).
- The catchers have to wear a shirt and the *marutchi* wears a bathing cap.
- Allow the *marutchi* to use a boogie (or body) board, or swim fins.
- Play with two teams. Time how long it takes for one team to tag all the players (*marutchis*) of the other team.

Suggestion

This could be used as a fun activity or a swimming fitness game.

Comment

In a similar game played in the northwest central districts of Queensland, a group of people would swim together in the river and while some would imitate the action and 'calls' of various waterbirds, others would hunt for and try to catch them.

Teaching points

- Players ready. Go.
- Swim around. Keep chasing. Catch them.
- Be careful. Work together.
- Well done.