

## Games We Used To Play

It is fascinating to reflect on the games we played as children. They helped to shape our characters. Popular games also reflect national characteristics. Take this game from my dishevelled past: British Bulldog.

I played this game as a kid while living in England from age 7 to 12. You don't see it much these days because we are more concerned with child safety and 'getting along'. It was a brutal game, played in concrete schoolyards more often than parkland, and much favoured by boys. Girls were far too sensible to play it.

What would happen is that some boy would be nominated by the others to be the 'bulldog'. He was often a strong lad or even the school thug; it was more fun that way than picking the school wimp, although that had its moments as well. The other kids in the group would line up on one side of a made-up square and run past the bulldog who would try and grab one of them to throw to the ground or lift him off the ground. That kid would then become a 'bulldog' as well, and together with his mate have to catch other kids as they ran back the other way. Back and forth it would go until there was only one kid left who had not been caught by the bulldogs as he ran past. He was declared the winner. Sometimes the winner was the fleetest of foot; other times he was just too strong for the other kids; or both. What fun! The game was very rough because no rules applied as such, although eye-gouging and kicks to the head or other sensitive regions were frowned upon. Sometimes the game degenerated (if it can be said to do that) into a series of fights which watching teachers would have to break up. Occasionally a teacher would be clobbered in the process and that was even more fun. Those were the good old days.

When I came to Australia, this game was sometimes played but more often it was end-to-end football which was more popular. A bunch of kids divide into two ends and kick a footy to each other which the tallest or most athletic would mark while the rest squealed in delight or swore in frustration. When I played any football code (Soccer or Australian Rules) I would usually be made a defender due to my consummate lack of skill. As a back-man I don't think I ever got many kicks, but due to wearing my opponent like a second skin (and having a mean disposition), neither did he. I exuded negativity and took my opponent, and anyone who came close to me on the field, into what I called 'the dead zone'.

British Bulldog at its brutal best demonstrates the characteristics of bravery and dogged determination (no pun intended). Suits Britain and Australia.