

Kabaddi: The rules for the casual viewer

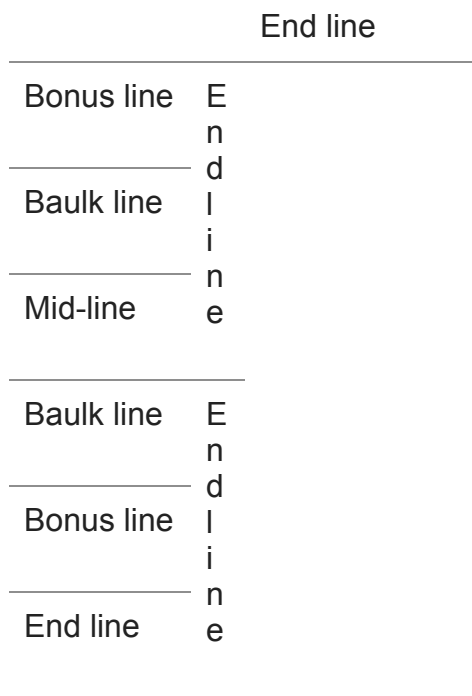
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The “minimum you need to know about a sport in order to watch a match and not be completely confused” mini-series continues with kabaddi, an ancient sport popular on the Indian subcontinent and surrounding areas, but not well known outside it.



- The rectangular **court** has a padded floor and is divided into two zones by a **mid line**. Close to each rear boundary is a **baulk line**. Between the rear boundary and the baulk line is a **bonus line**.
- Each **team** consists of seven players.
- Teams take turns **raiding** the opposing team: A single attacker (**raider**) enters the opponent’s zone and tries to touch one or more defenders (**anti-raiders** or **antis**), and then escape to his zone.
- The raider must complete the **raid** in one breath. To prove that the raid takes place in one breath, the raider audibly chants the word *kabaddi* continuously.

- For a raid to be valid, the raider must cross the baulk line. Crossing a line is defined as having either both feet completely across the line or one foot across and the other in the air.
- No player may step outside the defending zone. Antis often hold hands in pairs to keep each other in bounds.
- After the raider touches an anti, the **struggle** begins. The antis tackle the raider to prevent him from touching the ground in his own zone.
- During the struggle, the playing area expands to the defense's **lobby**, a marked area around the court. A player must have both feet outside the lobby to be considered out of bounds.

Assessing the raid

- If the raider is stopped, then the raider is **out**: The antis score a point and may **revive** one player.
- If the raider escapes, then each anti touched by the raider (or who touched the raider) is **out**: The raiders score one **touch point** for each and may **revive** the same number of players.
- If a raider facing six or more antis crosses the **bonus line** before touching any antis, and then escapes, then an additional **bonus point** is scored.
- A player who is out leaves the field of play until revived. Players are revived in the same order they were put out.

Notes

- If a team is put completely out (**all out**), then the opponents score two additional points, and the entire team is revived.
- If a raider escapes without a struggle, the former defending team may begin their next raid immediately. If the former raider is inattentive and lingers near the mid line, the new raider can sneakily touch the former raider and return, for a quick one-point raid (**pursuit**).
- Penalties for infractions typically consist of awards of points or declaring players out. Penalty outs do not grant revival privileges.
- The game is divided into two timed halves or four timed quarters.
- Substitutions of players who are not out are permitted between periods and during time-outs. A player who has been replaced by a substitute may return to the game.

Optional rules: Professional leagues have additional rules to make the game more exciting.

- An **empty raid** is one which results in no points for either team. There may be a maximum number of consecutive empty raids by a team (usually one or two), after which the next raid is a **do-or-die raid**: If the raider fails to score a touch or bonus point, he is out.

- A successful tackle by a team with three or fewer antis remaining is a **super-tackle** and earns a bonus point.
- A team with two or fewer antis remaining may concede their outs (and points) and revive to full strength immediately.
- A raid must be complete within 30 seconds. There is a 10-second warning buzzer.
- If the game ends in a tie, a mini-game is played. If the mini-game also ends in a tie, then a sudden-death raid (**golden raid**) is played: Teams are restored to full strength, and the bonus line moves up to the baulk line. A coin toss determines which team raids. If the raid is empty, then the other team attempts a golden raid. If both raids are empty, the winner is determined by coin toss.

I find it clever how the game uses the raider's breath as a low-tech timer. This allows casual games to be played with basically no equipment.

The United States participated in the Kabaddi World Cup for the first time in 2016. Not only did they lose every match, but they had the worst score differential of all the entrants. To be fair, they learned the rules of the game just six weeks earlier.

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