

AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL - A QUICK GUIDE

THE GAME:

Australian Football is a vigorous, agile, high scoring sport. 18 players per team roam a huge oval playing field the size of three to four American football fields, and cover the large distances with fluid teamwork, fast running, enormous kicks, spectacular catches and whopping tackles. The players in this contact sport wear no pads or protective equipment; the uniforms more resemble those of basketball than American football. The game is divided into four quarters of 20 minutes each, with a short break for goal changes between each quarter, and a longer break at halftime.

Players catch long kicks in graceful leaps, or by an athletic endeavor of springing off of the back of opponents or teammates to gain height, or by physical contact against one or more opponents to take possession. Scoring is high, with teams routinely scoring 100 points. The game is affectionately known as "Aussie Rules" or just plain "footy" in its homeland.

There is no "offside" rule, and there is no goalie in Aussie Rules. Play is continuous; the only breaks being if the player with the ball is tackled, the ball goes out of bounds, the ball is tied up and there is a question as to which team possesses it, or after either team scores.

THE BALL:

The ball is oval -- similar to an American football, except with a smooth surface and slightly more rounded.

MOVING THE BALL:

There are no overhand passes in Australian Football. Once a player is in possession of the ball, he can run no more than about 15 meters (approximately 16 yards) with the football without bouncing it or touching it to the ground. The ball can also be hand-passed (similar to a volleyball serve), or kicked similarly to a drop kick or an American football punt.

Kicking is the primary means to move the ball forward. If a player catches a kicked ball that has traveled longer than 15 meters in the air, the catch is called a "mark." A mark entitles the player to a free kick, although sometimes players choose to "play on" -- resuming the play without interruption to the flow of the game. Marks are truly spectacular and distinctive to Aussie Rules, as players can run at full-speed to leap into the air onto opponents' backs in order to catch the football.

For more detailed information about this exciting sport, such as rules, TV schedules in North America, and match results, please visit the Australian Football Association of North America at

www.afana.com

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SCORING:

At each end of the field, or ground, are four posts, consisting of two tall inner posts and two short outer posts. If a ball is kicked by the offensive team's player without being touched by another player and goes cleanly through the two inner posts, even on the ground, it is a "goal" worth 6 points. If the ball passes between the tall posts by any other means (such as run-through by either team), or if it passes between a tall post and a short post, or touches an inner post, then the score is a "behind" and worth 1 point.

Scores are given in three numbers, for example: 8.9.57. In this example, the team would have scored 8 goals (at 6 points each), 9 behinds (at 1 point each), for a total of 57 points.

TACKLING:

Players can be tackled anywhere above the knee or below the neck, or "bumped" from the ball by a defender using a hip and shoulder. Defenders cannot push a player who has possession of the ball in the back, nor can they tackle players not in possession of the ball. If tackled, the player in possession must make a reasonable attempt to release the ball. If he continues to hold the ball through the tackle, the opposing team takes possession at the point of the tackle.



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