

# Crossing Enemy Lines

Contributed by Joemylou A. Tattao  
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Threading through the enemy field, you finally come across the final barrier: a thin black line guarded by a lone enemy. You lock eyes with the enemy as you think of your next move and then, after what seems an eternity, a hand taps you on your back and a loud scream of "OUT!" followed next. The world seemed to slow down as you glance at your back to look at your captor.

As you realized that you really had been caught, you stare at the final line that you failed to cross—agonizing silently in your defeat. Welcome to the Filipino tag game—Patintero. Origins

Like many local games, Patintero's origins are not well established. And as such, it may too have not evolved far from its roots. It may have begun in farm games during full moon where kids—and sometimes even adults—play a tag game of sort using a court drawn using water marks as lines. Several regions in the Philippines have varying rules on the game. However, no certain place claims to be the birthplace of the game.

Patintero may have been a kids' simulation of a thief-and-guard story told during community gatherings as the objective of the game is similar to the thief's objective: cross the line so that the guard can not capture him. Rules

Just as most games that originated in the country, there is no definite rules bounding the game. However, the diverse rules still center on the main objective: to obtain points in crossing the lines guarded by the opponent. The game is much like baseball or softball—played in rounds (called "innings" in the ball games) with the two teams alternating in the offense (the "thieves") and the defense (the "guards") in each round. Farm games are played with infinite rounds way until sundown as long as the players are still not tired or not yet called and scolded by their parents.

Local tournaments—sponsored by patriotic Filipinos who want to revive the dying local games—however limit the rounds in threes, fives or sevens depending on the length of time allotted for each game. And timed games also exist wherein a team is given a limited time—mostly from five to fifteen minutes—to score.

The game is played on a medium sized court—roughly the size of a badminton court—by teams of more than two players—mostly three to five. The court is divided into sections by lines which counts are dependent on the number of players for each team. The guards' aim is to tag the other team's players out and prevent them from crossing the lines while the thieves have to cross the lines to earn points.

The scoring can vary depending on the agreement of the teams. So is the tagging out of the teams. Some variations give one point for each member of the team who crosses all the lines that are guarded and go through the "exit". In this case, all the thieves must be tagged out so that the teams switch sides. In another format, a point is given only when all the players of the team cross the last barrier, and as such, a single player tagged out would immediately let the teams switch sides. This format is often times played on a larger court. Guards and Thieves

The guards have specific locations to watch. Like the panikis (or bats) who can travel through the vertical baselines (which should not be traversed by a thief's whole body) and tag anyone who may be in reach. However, they can not enter the court through the inner lines. The Pamuno or leader guards the entrance and declares the "opening" of the field to the thieves by shouting the predetermined yell (mostly "entrance"). The Patoto, Panghuli or last man guards the exit and is burdened on keeping somebody from scoring. The guards may tag anyone who comes within reach as long as they keep both feet on the line they are guarding. Otherwise, the tag is invalidated and a point is added to the other team's score.

The thieves too, have to abide some rules in crossing. One rule says that when crossing, the crosser must not touch the line in which he is crossing. Another is that once he had crossed the line, he can not go back to the previous section he came from. And that the whole body must cross before it will be acknowledged as a legitimate move. Crossing barriers

Patintero, like other native Filipino sports, is losing ground to modern technology and other sports. While the youth nowadays prefer fidgeting with mice and keyboards, the national culture had suffered. The native games had been relegated to children's past time and deemed unsuitable for the "gen-x" anymore. However, thanks to some institutions, the native sports had been reintroduced and re-injected to our culture—providing a time portal between the past and the future generations.

Patintero, like any other Filipino sport, may seem uninteresting. In fact, it has little chance to become the national past time. It may never be seen on national television. However, it is still a sport worth trying. In the first place, it is better to suffer the consequences of crossing the line than forever stare at it.

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