

# Danish Longball: A Novel Game to Introduce the Batting / Fielding Games Category

*By Joy Butler, Ed.D., University of British Columbia*

*Shannon Sullivan, Teacher, Panorama Heights E S, Coquitlam, B.C.*

*Stephen McGinley, Teacher, Arch Bishop Carney Regional S S, Coquitlam, B.C.*

*Michael Vranjes, Teacher, Prince George S S, Prince George BC.*



*Joy Butler is a teacher educator, specializing in physical education, and works in the Curriculum Studies Department at University of British Columbia.*

Please contact Joy Butler at, [joy.butler@ubc.ca](mailto:joy.butler@ubc.ca) for questions about the TGfU Conference. May 14–17, 2008 or visit [TGfU.org](http://TGfU.org)

When we compare the number of striking games in the TGfU classification with, say, the number of territorial games, the list seems pretty limited. It includes baseball, kickball, softball, cricket, and rounders, and the last two are Commonwealth Games – regarded as rather strange in other parts of the world (although they did inspire the invention of baseball!).

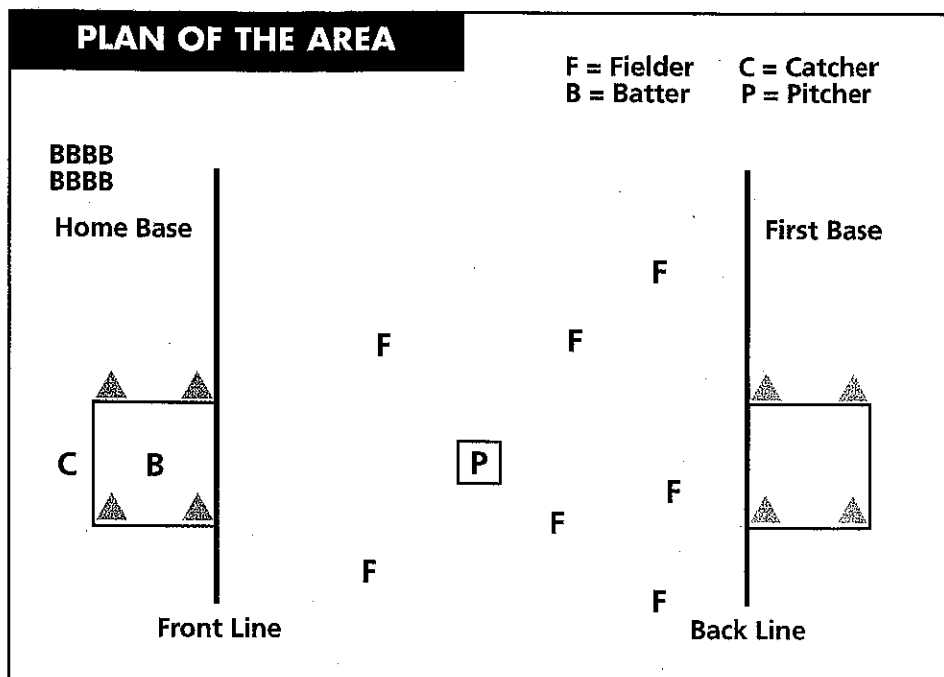
An analysis of all these games played in their recognizable forms and according to their rules/laws reveals a possible reason for this “failure to thrive.” These games have some serious drawbacks when it comes to educational value. Students spend a lot of their time sitting out or barely moving on the field

of play. Teachers spend a lot of time creating modifications to allow greater, and more active, student participation. Though we might sometimes question the value of striking games in the P.E. curriculum, one game that is worthy of revival is Danish Longball (Bailey, 1983).

Danish Longball is a great way to introduce learners to the striking games category. It is packed with action, has little static play and is capable of development. It can be made as simple or as complicated for children or adults as desired. Since it is a novel game, learners start on a relatively even footing. It can be developed both tactically and technically, and can be played equally well both indoors and out.

Danish Longball (DLB) incorporates individual and team responsibilities and involves strategies and concepts that are the same as those involved in the other striking games. The game emphasizes and helps develop the player's ability to strike an object into open space while the defence learns how to field and reduce open space. A number of different types of decision and manipulative skills for both the defensive and offensive player are required (Butler, 2006). One of the attractions for physical education teachers are the facts that DLB involves minimum equipment, and that both the rules and equipment can be manipulated to afford students more success or to make the game more difficult, depending on the participants' skill levels. The intent of this article is to introduce the key concepts, rules, teaching strategies and modifications of Danish Longball, features that can be easily transferred to other striking games.

*A great game to introduce learners to the striking games category is Danish Longball (Bailey, 1983). It is packed with action, with little static play, and is capable of development. It can be made as simple or as complicated for children or adults as desired and since it is a novel game, learners start on a relatively even footing. Capable of development on both tactical and technical fronts, Danish Longball can be played indoors or outdoors equally well and is suitable for mixed groups that can vary in number from 4 to 9 a side, depending on the available playing area. This game is rich with the potential for teaching concepts and connected skills in a developmental frame. This article will give a general overview of the category of striking games; explain the rules and procedures of Danish Longball; provide a framework of concepts and strategies; examine the skills necessary for effective play; and provide examples of activities based on UBC student experiences.*



The rules of Danish Longball are very straightforward and can be modified to match the skill level of the participants. The number of players usually varies between four and nine per team. The pitcher pitches to a batter, and the batter can either attempt to strike the ball into the field or let the ball go by. There is only one pitch, so the batter must run whether the ball is hit or not. (The focus here is to get the player into the game quickly and not be overly concerned about batting skills.)

The batter's goal is to run safely to the base out in the field. Once on base, the batter

may stay safely until s/he determines that it is appropriate to return home to score a run. The ball is considered "dead" when the pitcher has it in hand and is ready to pitch (Bailey, 1983).

### How to Play

1. Divide class into equal numbered teams.
2. Place team of batters to side of batting box.
3. One batter stands behind front line of batter's box.
4. Pitcher/Fielder lobs ball underarm to batter - one pitch only unless it's a "no-ball" (higher than shoulder and lower than knees).

*Un jeu qui vaut la peine d'être redécouvert, c'est la balle longue danoise (Bailey, 1983) – qui constitue une excellente façon d'initier les apprenants à la catégorie des jeux de frappe au bâton. Il s'agit d'un jeu très dynamique, peu statique et qu'on peut développer. De fait, il est possible de le simplifier ou de le compliquer selon les besoins et intérêts des enfants ou adultes qui s'y adonnent et, puisqu'il s'agit d'un nouveau jeu, les apprenants tendent à partir sur un même pied d'égalité. On peut développer les aspects tactiques et techniques du jeu et le pratiquer tout autant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur. La balle longue danoise convient bien aux groupes mixtes qui peuvent comprendre de 4 à 9 joueurs par équipe, selon la superficie de jeu disponible. Ce jeu est aussi utile pour enseigner des concepts et des habiletés reliées dans un cadre de développement. Cet article donne un aperçu général de la catégorie des jeux de frappe au bâton; explique les règles et procédures de la balle longue danoise; fournit un cadre conceptuel et stratégique; examine les habiletés requises pour jouer efficacement; et, finalement, fournit des exemples d'activités, partant des expériences avec des étudiants de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique.*

5. Batter must run, whether ball is struck or not.
  6. Once the batting implement has been swung and dropped inside the batting box, the batter must run to the base, crossing the base's front line.
  7. The batter may stay on base until s/he deems that another hit is suitable to use to return to the batter's box, or if the rule determines that the permissible number of players on first base has been exceeded.
  8. Once a return has been started, the runner is not allowed to return to base. S/he must continue through the field until tagged out or able to cross the batting box front line.
  9. A score is achieved once the batter crosses the batting box front line.
  10. Runners cannot run once the pitcher is in possession of the ball. No runner may start a run once the pitcher is in possession of the ball. However, if the runner is in between first and home base, the runner may continue running to cross the batting line.
  11. Fielders may not run with the ball. One step from the pivot foot is permissible.
3. They are touched below the knee by a thrown ball anywhere on the field of play.
  4. They hit the ball behind the front line.
  5. They throw the batting implement outside the batter's box. Following the swing, the batter must place the batting implement behind the front line of the batter's box. Should s/he throw the bat so that it slides out the back or sides of the box, the batter will be considered out.
  6. The batting team will continue batting until they earn three outs or are tagged out by the changeover rule.

### **Inclusion Strategies**

In order to ensure that children of different athletic abilities are included, teachers may want to modify regulations, operating equipment, space, rules, or numbers.

### **Regulations**

- To simplify/extend a game, reduce/increase size of playing area.
- To simplify/extend level of difficulty and skill, reduce/increase the weight, size, and softness of equipment (bats, balls).
- To allow entry to the game for all batting skill levels, allow students to kick the ball or to hit from a T-stand.
- To compensate for lack of accuracy, use larger striking implements. To develop accuracy, use smaller striking implements.
- To teach children how to catch, use Velcro balls and mitts.

A pickle ball bat and wiffle ball are only two possibilities for equipment which can be used to play the game. Larger hitting implements such as a cricket bat, flat sided baseball bat or tennis rackets can be used to make it easier to contact the ball when hitting. In addition, by varying the size and structure of the ball, teachers can regulate how fast the ball will be pitched, how easy it will be to hit, and how far it will go once it has been contacted. Teachers wanting to remove the difficulty of hitting a pitched ball have the option of setting up batting "tees."

### **Space**

- To simplify/extend a game, decrease/increase the distance between the pitcher & the batter.
- To simplify/extend a game, decrease/increase the distance between the home & first base.

The teaching space will be limited according to whether the game is played indoors or outdoors. Although it is tempting to increase the distance when playing outdoors, teachers need to adjust the space (i.e. distance between bases) to fit the age and skill of their players. If the bases are placed too far apart, students will not have a fair chance of reaching the base before being tagged out. If the bases are too close, not only does the batting team achieve an unfair advantage, but also, the defensive team may be tempted to throw the ball to tag out the runner, since it is quicker to throw the ball than it is to pass it.

### **Rules**

For younger students, simplify game rules by eliminating/modifying some of the rules so that students will have fewer things to keep in mind. Changing some of the rules helps to control behaviour and make the game accessible to children of all ages. For example, requiring the bat to be placed inside the batting box can help prevent students from wildly dispensing with it, while allowing more than one pitch will give the batter a greater opportunity to hit the ball. Deciding on how many players are allowed in the first base box will relieve the pressure to run, thereby encouraging students to make safe rather than pressured, and rushed decisions. Allowing students to run half-way before turning back to first base will allow students to learn, by trial, when it is safe to run. Overall, teachers should feel free to adjust the rules in order to suit the individual needs of their class.

### **Numbers**

For younger students, break the class up into smaller groups for games, and have only two to three students per group during skills practices. If they are

### **Changeover Rule**

When a fielder catches a "pop-fly" the changeover rule comes into effect.

1. Once the ball is caught, the fielder must immediately place the ball down in front of them.
2. All the fielding players must run to cross the front line of the batting box.
3. The batting team, (including those in the box) runs into the field, attempting to pick up the ball.
4. The batting team can stay at bat if they tag out a member of the fielding team, either while in possession of the ball, or by throwing and tagging a fielding team player below the knee who has yet to cross the front line.

### **Batters are OUT if:**

1. They are caught out.
2. They are touched by a fielder who is in possession of the ball anywhere on the field of play bounded by the lines.

teaching outside, or within a gym (which can be divided in two), teachers should have the class play two separate games, rather than one large game. Although the rules encourage maximum student participation, a smaller number of students provide more opportunities to touch the ball on both offence and defence. In addition, smaller student numbers lead to better understanding of such things as knowing how to cover the

field, and how to handle the ball to tag out the runner.

### Teaching Danish Longball and other striking games through the TGfU model.

*It develops tactical awareness. You put the player in real game situations with similar pressures and you require them to choose the right options. It also ensures that they have*

*the skills to make the right tactical decision* (Smith cited in Kidman, 2001). The "it" to which Wayne Smith (All Blacks Rugby coach, New Zealand) refers is an approach in New Zealand called *Games Sense*. In North America and UK the approach is known as Teaching Games for Understanding. (See other articles in this edition for more about the approach and its different names around the globe.)

## OFFENSE

Concept/Strategy	Tactics	Skills Needed	Possible Practices
1 The batter attempts to place the ball into open space in the field by determining where to send the ball and what kind of force is needed to get it there and get onto first base.	Hitting low and hard into open space away from first base (to get onto first base).	Observation of fielders, striking, body positioning, grip etc.	<b>*Target.</b> Create target between 2nd and 3rd in baseball, either side of the bowler in DLB. Give batter 5 points for hitting into zone and for getting on first.
2 To get onto the next base (or home base) by using both temporal awareness and anticipation. ( <i>Do I have enough time to get to the base? Should I go?</i> )	Stealing bases, forcing plays (to get onto bases beyond first base).	Reading the game, decision making, sprinting.	<b>*Short infield.</b> Reduce area of infield to encourage batter to hit beyond infield to move runners.
3 Aiding runners to get from base(s) to home base.	Hitting hard & beyond infield (to aid runners to get to next base).	Striking & placement of shots.	<b>**Zones practice.</b> Score increasing points as batter hits the ball into zones further from the home base.

## DEFENSE

Concept/Strategy	Tactics	Skills Needed	Possible Practices
1 Prevent opponents from scoring	Position fielders in areas batter wants to hit For example with no runners on base(s), the batter in baseball & softball is likely to hit away from first base and between 2nd & 3rd. Fielders will then move toward that space.	Decision-making, ready position, locomotor skills, temporal skills, receiving and sending skills.	<b>**Beat the ball.</b> Fielding have to make 4 passes before the batter can get to first base and back to home base. Batter is out if fielders are successful.
2 Defending the bases	Field & throw to first base Short and long fielders Cut off player organization.	Reading, decision-making, ready position, locomotor skills, temporal skills, receiving and sending skills.	<b>**Up and back.</b> Groups of 5. One batter, other field. Batter hits off tee or tosses the ball to hit and runs to 1 of 3 markers (worth diff. Points) Fielders throw the ball to home base where one fielder must move to receive it. Batter gets minus points if ball is home first.
3 To get base runner out.	Field and throw to nearest base to which the runner is moving towards.	Catching and throwing, short and long, decision-making.	Continuous DLB. 2 markers. Batter must run to marker and back. Bowler may deliver even when batter is not ready. Have runner (s) on first base. Focus on ball going to home base.

\*Singapore Ministry of Education, (2003) \*\*Australian Sports Commission, (1999).

## Defensive Decision making

### Individual Responsibilities

As a fielder should a player:

- Close in to cut off the ball?
- Provide cover for another player?
- Take up a long range position?
- Return the ball to the bowler/pitcher?
- Send the ball to another fielder?
- Try to throw the ball at the running batter?

### Team Responsibilities

Team will need to:

- Recognize its own strengths & weaknesses.
- Anticipate the strength and direction of the strike.
- Locate the difficult areas to cover.
- Determine strategy for containing runs or getting players out based on time left in game.

## Offensive Decision making

### Individual Responsibilities

As a batter:

- Where should I hit the ball?
- How do I help team- player on base get home?
- When should I run back to home base?

### Team Responsibilities

Team will need to decide:

- On a batting order.
- Who should try to run when the base is 'over-loaded'?

## Transposition Decision-making

### Individual Responsibilities

Depending on the transition – fielding to batting, batting to fielding:

- Help alert others on team to get to home base or to get out into the field from batting.
- Be aware of the game state of play to anticipate change-over potential.
- Sprint to home base, or out to retrieve ball or in position to field out incoming fielders.

### Team Responsibilities

Team will need to decide:

- Who is to be bowler/pitcher?
- Do fielders always cover the same area?
- Should the team adopt a strategy for trying to get the opponents out at the change over?

The following sections identify how the game of DLB can be taught using the TGfU instructional model. We start with identifying the essential concepts of offense and defense game play, then identify the strategies and skills necessary for their understanding and implementation, and finally, offer some game practices that can be used in the gym.

### Offensive and Defensive Concepts

Danish Longball has three offensive and three defensive concepts that have inter-task transferability. In other words, once learned in one striking game, these key

concepts can be transferred quickly to other striking games.

### Decision-making

A great emphasis in the TGfU approach is for teachers to help students make effective decisions during game play. A key part of teaching this approach is to generate the focus of the lesson based on tactical awareness and decision making, rather than just on skill acquisition (Butler, 2006). The table above indicates the kinds of decisions a player needs to make during a game, both as an individual player and as a team member. It also shows how these roles are

inextricably linked. These decisions are categorized in terms of the defensive, offensive and transposition phases of the game. The transposition phase (moving from offence to defence and vice-versa) hinges on the change-over rule in DLB and is what keeps DLB quick and active compared with the other striking games!

### Conclusion

Danish Longball is a great game for introducing students to the whole realm of striking/fielding games. Since it is a novel game, it creates almost an equal footing, natural talent aside, for learners. While it promotes the fundamental skills and techniques of catching, throwing, striking, bowling/pitching and running, it also promotes decision making for individual students, both as players and as team members. DLB is also a great game for exploring the TGfU approach. The novelty of the new game masks the newness of the teaching approach.

Give this game a go! What do you have to lose, apart from attempting to teach softball, cricket, or baseball to largely sedentary players? ■

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