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Story on page 19

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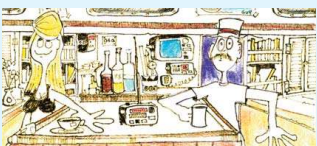
The Caribbean's Monthly Look at Sea & Shore

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"No ERNEST, MARLIN! With an A."

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Tel: (784) 457-3409. Fax: (784) 457-3410. compass@caribbeancompass.com. www.caribbeancompass.com

Publisher.....Tom Hopman
tom@caribbeancompass.com
Editor.....Sally Erdle
sally@caribbeancompass.com
Assistant Editor.....Elaine Olivierre
jsprat@vincysurf.com

Art, Design & Production.....Wilfred Dederer
wilfred@caribbeancompass.com
Administration.....Shellese Craig
shellese@caribbeancompass.com
Advertising.....
compass@caribbeancompass.com

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On the cover: The crew of the Moody Carbineer 44 Mood Magic crosses the St. Lucia finish line of the 32nd annual Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, sailing in the ARC+ fleet.
Photographer Tom Wright captured the Magic moment. See ARC 2017 story on page 19



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Playing Around in the Caribbean: DOMINOES AND CARDS

by Alex J. Coyne

When the editor and I got together to speak about the most popular pastimes of the Caribbean, my mind drifted first to sailing, swimming and snorkeling; then to Calypso music; then to the traditional dishes of the Caribbean (I had recently joined a cooking group and daily images of the most gorgeous and colorful dishes were getting too much for my mind to handle); and then finally to playing cards and other social games.

"The most common game that cruisers get together to play," Sally promptly informed me, "is something called Mexican Train Dominoes. And you'll find local people playing the popular Caribbean card games Pedro and All-Fours." My usual games are bridge, poker and blackjack, for which I always keep a deck of cards around. Dominoes, on the other hand, I had last played online — and badly.

I fired up the trusty desktop, dragged the decks closer and started playing. Here's more about these games you might encounter around the Caribbean and just how they're played:



Above: On the village roadsides and city plazas, in the rum shops and beach bars, dominoes are a popular Caribbean pastime for locals and visitors alike

Right: If you want to gain a truly Caribbean recreational skill, learn the card game All-Fours!

Mexican Train Dominoes

THE HISTORY

As it turns out, the history of Mexican Train Dominoes has absolutely nothing to do with Mexico — or trains. According to website Ourpastimes.com, the rules of the game were officially copyrighted by two Californians (Roy and Katie Parsons) in 1994 and later bought over and put into mainstream production by the Puremco Company. The game seems to have its true origins rooted in Chinese domino games, of which Pai Gow is one.

THE RULES

The game can be played with as few as two and as many as eight players. Normally, a set of double-twelve dominoes are used, though variations exist, such as using double-six for two players or double-nine for two to four. (For clarity, we're assuming two to four players for the rest of this article.)

Markers for players — coins, chips, trains borrowed from a Monopoly set — are also used.

Traditionally, the oldest player goes first and play continues counterclockwise. Players receive ten dominoes each, and the remaining dominoes go to the side, forming what's called the "boneyard". The double-twelve is placed on the table to mark the "station" by the player who has it in their hand — if not, players draw from the

face-down boneyard until it is found. This is where play begins.

The object of Mexican Train Dominoes is to end up with the lowest score in your hand. Dominoes are played with the ends matching.

"Trains" — or domino chains — are normally private. This means players can only play on their own trains. That is, at least, until they cannot place a domino and have to skip their turn — then, their train becomes "public" instead, and other players can get rid of their hands at their expense.

The Mexican Train part of this game involves a "Mexican train" of dominoes, which remains public for all the players in the game. Now, the "Mexican train" has to be started with a tile that has the same left-sided value as the center tile — in this case, 12.

Players who play a double get another turn.

The winner, of course, is the player who ends up with the least number of tiles, or lowest score by the end of the round.

All-Fours

THE HISTORY

According to *The Compleat Gamester* published back in 1674, the game of All-Fours has its origin in Kent, England, where it's often played as a pastime in pubs. It happens to be one of the oldest card games to come from England, and soon spread across the world from there.

All-Fours also happens to be the official national card game of Trinidad & Tobago, which makes it uniquely Caribbean. The card game Pedro also appears as one variation of All-Fours — the card called "Pedro" is here the five of trumps, worth five points.

THE RULES

Usually, All-Fours is played by two players, but it is not unusual to see tables with more.

Players first decide on a score between seven and 13 to win the game. Each player gets six cards, and the card drawn thereafter signifies the trump suit. (The player who plays a Jack gets an extra point — called, of course, the Jack Point.) As with most trick-taking games, the highest card is the winner. Each trick's winner leads the next trick.

The first player to reach the score decided upon in the beginning of the game is the winner.

There are some local spins on the game when it's played in the Caribbean: The



"Jack Point" is scored instead with an Ace, while the Jack now counts three points. Additionally, finding the six seems to count for an extra two points.

And before you embarrass yourself...

Are you a keen player or looking to pick up the game anew? Always practice your game online — and in complete, serene silence — before you take your game to the streets or the beach bar.

You can play online versions of Mexican Train Dominoes at AOL Games (www.aol.com/games/play/masque-publishing/dominoes-mexican-train) and FreeArcade (www.freearcade.com/MexicanTrainDominoes.flash/MexicanTrainDominoes.html).

Caribbean All-Fours can be played at GamePyong, which features many players from the Caribbean.

You can visit the official Facebook page of the Trinidad & Tobago All Fours Federation (www.facebook.com/ttffgrandslam). You can also visit the Facebook page of the Trinidad & Tobago Card Game Association (www.facebook.com/TTCGA).



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