

# WATER POLO

PACKET # 25

## INSTRUCTIONS

This Learning Packet has two parts: (1) text to read and (2) questions to answer.

The text describes a particular sport or physical activity and relates to its history, rules, playing techniques, scoring, notes and news.

The Response Forms (questions and puzzles) check your understanding and appreciation of the sport or physical activity.

## INTRODUCTION

Water polo is a rapidly growing sport in the United States and internationally as well. For anyone involved in playing or even being a spectator, it is important to understand the rules of the game.

Teams are composed of about 12 players, depending on league rules. Seven players are in the pool at a time, which includes one goalie and six field players. Each field player plays both offense and defense, and the goalie is not allowed on the other half of the pool. There are many different arrangements of players in front of the goal (which may be attached to the pool deck or free floating on lane lines). The location of the players depends on the play that is being run, similar to basketball or hockey.



## HISTORY OF THE GAME

Invented in the late nineteenth century in Great Britain and played in many countries around the world, notably including Hungary, the game involves teams of seven players

(plus up to five substitutes), with a ball similar in size to a soccer ball but constructed out of waterproof nylon. The object of the game is to throw the ball into the team's goal net at the end of the pool, and prevent the opposition from doing so at the other end of the pool.

Men's water polo was the first Olympic team sport in the 1900 games. Women's water polo was only introduced in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games after political protests from the Australian women's team. Such protests were rewarded when Australia won the gold medal match against the United States with a "buzzer-beater" last-minute goal.



The annual Varsity Match between Oxford and Cambridge Universities is the longest running water polo competition in the world, having run since 1891.

The most famous water polo match in history is probably the 1956 Summer Olympics semi-final match between Hungary and the Soviet Union. As the athletes left for the games, the 1956 Hungarian revolution happened, and a 200,000 strong Soviet army crushed a small uprising of Hungarian insurgents. Many of the Hungarian athletes vowed never to return home, and felt their only means of fighting back was by victory in the pool. The confrontation was the most bloody and violent water polo game in history, in which the pool reputedly turned red from blood. The Hungarians defeated the Soviets 4-0 before the game was called off in the final minute to prevent angry Hungarians in the crowd reacting to Valentin Prokopov punching Ervin Zador's eye open. The Hungarians continued to win the championship by defeating Yugoslavia 2-1 in the final. Half of the Hungarian Olympic delegation defected after the games.



Water polo world championships are held every year together with the world swimming championship, under the auspices of FINA "Water Polo World League."

Today water polo is gaining popularity in the United States. Though the majority of domestic club teams are based in California it has become more widespread among New England preparatory high schools and Ivy League universities.

## HOW WATER POLO IS PLAYED

One important rule is that the ball can only be handled by one hand at a time. If a player holds the ball (which is the size of a volleyball, yellow and with rubber grip) with both hands, the referee calls a turnover and the possession of the ball goes to the opposing team. Also, there are important lines on the pool deck which delineate specific regions in which the rules of play are special. There is a mark two meters out from the goalposts on both sides of the pool called the “Two Meter Line.” Players on offense *without* possession of the ball are not allowed in the opposing team’s two meter line, or a turnover is called. Only a player with the ball is permitted within the two meter line. There is also a “Four Meter Line,” which is the location from which penalty shots are taken on the goal.

A penalty shot is given to a player who is fouled within the four meter line while actively attempting to score. A foul constitutes a hit from the defensive player, swimming over the offensive player’s back, or other such shot interference.

Clean defense involves positioning the defender’s body between the offensive player and the goal and focusing on the ball rather than the individual player. A foul called anywhere in the pool outside the four meter line results in the referee blowing a whistle, and a stoppage of the clock while allowing the offensive player a free pass. Five seconds are given in which to complete this pass, and if the defensive player interferes with this, he/she will be ejected from the game for the standard period of two minutes. A designated corner of the pool is selected as the “ejection box” and a player may only re-enter the game upon the signaling by the referee that time is up, or else by a goal scored, whichever comes first.

One player on each team is designated the goalkeeper, and his primary job is to guard the goal by deflecting or catching any shots at goal. The goalkeeper is the only player who can touch the ball with both hands at the same time, and the only player allowed to stand on the bottom (if the pool is shallow enough to allow this).



The clock depends on the rules of play and the level of competition. Usually, men play four 7-minute quarters while women play four 6-minute quarters. There is a running shot clock of 35 seconds for each team which resets only if a shot is taken or there is a change in possession. Teams are usually allowed two time outs per game, although this may vary.

In scoring, one point is given for each time the ball is thrown into the goal, and in some

leagues there is a two-point line several meters out of the goal. Each quarter begins with a sprint in which the fastest members of each team race toward the ball, which is placed at the halfway point on the water by the referee.

## SKILLS & TECHNIQUES

*Treading water:* The most common form of water treading is referred to in the United States as the “egg-beater,” named because the movement of the legs resembles the motion of an egg beater or mixer. The advantage of the egg-beater is that it allows the player to maintain a constant horizontal position in the pool (as opposed to the scissor kick, which results in the player bobbing up and down.) Also, by kicking faster for a brief period the player can get high out of the water (as high as their waistline) for a block or catch.



*Swimming:* As water polo is a team water sport, swimming is most commonly a skill which is acquired before playing this sport. It is a key element as it is needed to swim back and forth across the court often.

*Ball handling skills:* As all out-field players are only allowed to touch the ball with one hand at a time, they must develop good ball control.

## EQUIPMENT, FACILITY & CLOTHING

Uniforms consist of swimsuits for both men and women, as well as a cap on the head with plastic ear protectors and the player’s number on both sides. Away teams wear lighter color caps, while home wears the darker color.

Dimensions of the water polo pool are not fixed and can vary between 20 x 10 and 30 x 20 meters, and are filled with water to a minimum depth of at least 1.8 meters. The goals are three meters wide and one meter high.

The ball used is a water polo ball.

## WATER POLO NEWS & NOTES

Sophomore driver Courtney Mathewson hit a 6-on-5 goal with one second remaining on

the game clock to lift third-seeded UCLA to a 9-8 win over top-seeded Southern California in the title game of the 2006 National Collegiate Women's Water Polo Championships. This is the Bruins' fourth water polo title overall

There were few secrets left between the USC and Stanford men's water polo teams in their 2005 NCAA Championship match. The game marked the fourth time the pair had squared off in an NCAA final. This time, the secret seemed to be in both teams' defense, and the low-scoring affair tilted in USC's favor with a 3-2 Trojan victory that capped off USC's season with their third NCAA title and the lowest scoring championship game in NCAA history.

Hungary won an eighth Olympic water polo gold medal, scoring three unanswered goals in the last quarter to edge Serbia-Montenegro 8-7 in the 2004 final.

Melania Grego scored twice in overtime as Italy edged Greece 10-9 for the Olympic women's water polo gold medal. The championship match was locked 7-7 at the end of regulation, after Martina Miceli scored with 4:14 remaining to pull the Italians even.

Stay current with information about the sport by visiting these websites:

<http://www.waterpolo.ca/>

<http://www.h2opolo.com/>

<http://www.usawaterpolo.com/>

<http://www.ncaasports.com/waterpolo>



# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET #25

## WATER POLO

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### WHAT TO DO

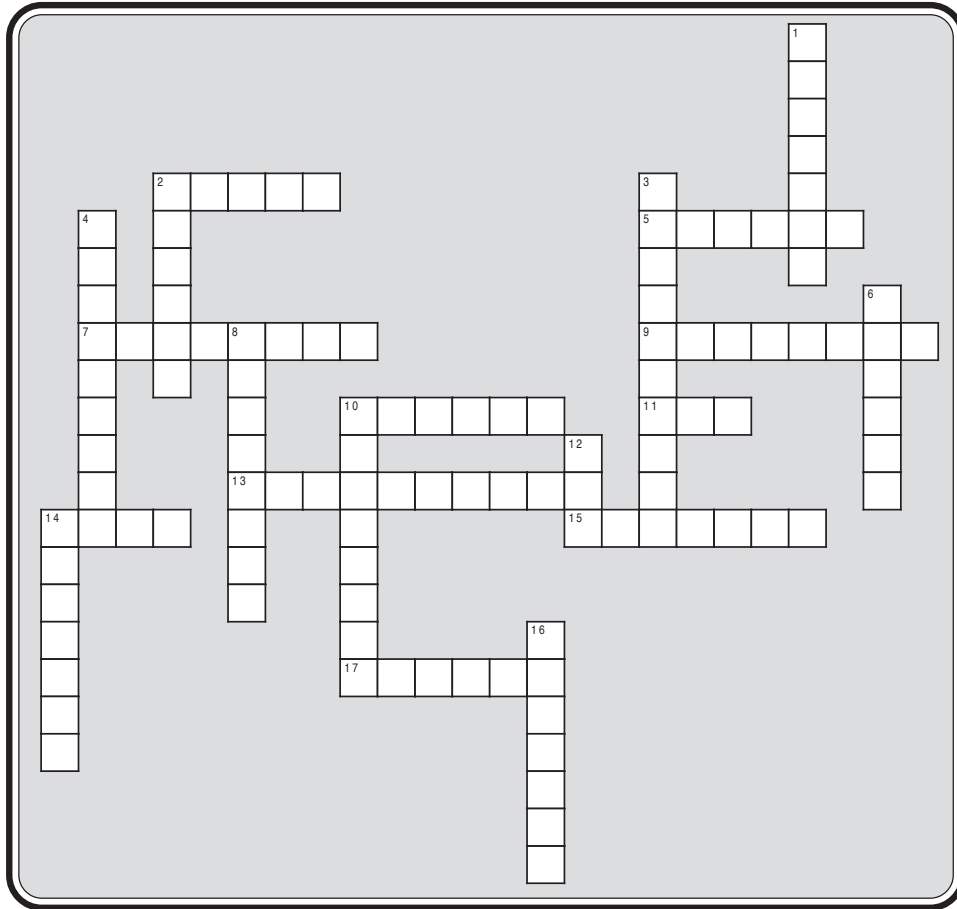
The following questions will help you to have a greater appreciation and understanding of water polo. Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, and write in complete sentences.

1. Describe the typical composition of a water polo team.
2. Where was water polo invented? When was it first played in the Olympics?
3. What is the longest running water polo match in the world?
4. Describe the most famous water polo match in history.
5. Describe three important water polo skills.

6. Describe where the various water polo position players may move in the water.
7. What happened with most of the Hungarian Olympic delegation after the 1956 Olympics? Why?
8. Name one important rule in water polo.
9. What player is permitted inside the “two meter line?”
10. In some games, one can get two points for a goal. How does this happen?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Education 25 Crossword



**Across**

- 2 The number of players in the water for one team
- 5 This university is involved in the longest running water polo competition
- 7 The “egg beater” is called \_\_\_\_\_ water
- 9 The \_\_\_\_\_ box is in one corner of the pool
- 10 The water polo ball is about the same size as the ball used in this sport
- 11 Women play four \_\_\_\_\_ minute quarters
- 13 The state in the US with most of the water polo club teams
- 14 The ball can be handled by only one at a time
- 15 These shots are taken from the four meter line
- 17 This player is not allowed to roam around the whole pool

**Down**

- 1 If you use this type of kick you will bob up and down
- 2 Women’s water polo was introduced in the Olympics held here
- 3 You must have \_\_\_\_\_ of the ball to cross the two meter line
- 4 The women’s team from this country won Gold in 2000
- 6 The goal keeper is the only player permitted to stand on it
- 8 Half of the Hungarian Olympic delegation did this after the 1956 games
- 10 Ability to do this well is important in water polo
- 12 You can tell what team a person is on by the color of this
- 14 This country was involved in the most famous water polo match
- 16 One of them watches for fouls



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Education 25 Word Search



Circle the words in the above puzzle.

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. AUSTRALIA  | 11. POSSESSION |
| 2. BOTTOM     | 12. QUARTERS   |
| 3. CALIFORNIA | 13. REFEREE    |
| 4. DEFECTED   | 14. SISSORS    |
| 5. EJECTION   | 15. SOCCER     |
| 6. GOALIE     | 16. SWIMMING   |
| 7. HAND       | 17. SYDNEY     |
| 8. HUNGARY    | 18. TREADING   |
| 9. OXFORD     | 19. WATER      |
| 10. PENALTY   | 20. WOMEN      |