

Warrington Swimming & Water Polo Club

Introduction to Water Polo & Basic Rules

Updated to outline new rules and revised session timings 2023

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About Warrington Swimming and Water Polo Club

The club which was established in 1879 and is a Swim Mark accredited club which caters for competitive swimming and water polo.

The club has **swimming sessions** as follows:

Tuesday 7:00pm-8:00pm Great Sankey leisure Centre

Wednesday 7:00pm- 8:30pm Orford Jubilee Hub

Friday 7pm to 8pm Woolston Leisure Centre

Sunday 8:00am to 9:00am Orford Jubilee Hub

The club has **water polo sessions** as follows:

At Orford Jubilee Hub

Saturday 4:00pm to 5:00pm for Mini Polo (9years to under 13 years and beginners)

Saturday 4:30pm to 6:00pm for Academy and Youth age groups (under 15 and under 17)

Wednesday 7:00pm to 8:00pm for Mini Polo (9years to under 13 years and beginners)

Wednesday 8:00pm to 9:30pm (under 15 and under 17) when there is no game scheduled

At Lymm High School

Monday 6.45pm – 8.30pm for Academy and Youth age groups (under 15 and under 17)

What will it cost?

If you wish to play water polo only you can pay £20 per month by DD to attend one session per week. If you wish to progress you can pay £35 per month which includes club membership and access club sessions both swimming and water polo (subject to capacity and trials))

Entry Requirements

Mini Water Polo

Usually to be 9 – 11 years of age although children younger than 9 years would be considered if sufficiently confident in the pool.

To have achieved Level 7 NPTS alternatively to be able to swim 100m of freestyle, breaststroke and backstroke.

Academy age group (Under 15) & Youth age group (Under 17)

Age 12 – 16 years

To have achieved Level 10 NPTS alternatively,

Be able to swim 50 free in 34 secs or 74 secs for 100 free.

Seniors

Age 16 +

Must be a strong swimmer we welcome both male and female players.

Teams

We currently have a U13, U15, and U17 teams made up of boys and girls who can play together until they are 17. We also have a Women's team and Men's teams. The club have strong links with Satellite Training Centres (Formerly RTCs) in Manchester and Liverpool, with a number of our players combining club sessions with this training. All our teams including the men's senior team play in local leagues.

Water Polo SWIM ENGLAND Categories

To be a member of a club everybody must be a registered member of Swim England who is the governing body for the sport in England. The annual Swim England Category of Membership and hence the registration fees paid by an individual depends on the level of competition the person can enter.

Swim England Category 1 TRAIN players in any local water polo competition provided all the players are NOT in a region or National event.

Swim England Category 2 COMPETE players in all events for region or national competitions

Swim England Category 3 SUPPORT parent, coaches and officials

Introduction to Water Polo

Water polo was the first team sport in the Olympic Games. The Olympic water polo tournament was held for the first time on the 1900 Olympics in Paris. Great Britain won the final against the Belgian team. The game is played throughout the world with strong teams coming from Eastern Europe (Hungary), and more recently Australia and North America.

Warrington SWPC has a proud history of producing international players. Courtney Dean has played for GB juniors and for GB in the World Student games and Hazel Musgrove a member of the GB ladies senior team took part in the London Olympics. Both started playing water polo at Warrington, Hazel's father and brother still play for the Warrington Senior Team.

In addition, many other boys and girls are recommended to join the England talent programme every year with sessions held locally, with the opportunity to go on to represent the country.

Water Polo can be a technical game at the higher level, but at youth level a basic knowledge of the rules is sufficient to enjoy and understand the game. Our main priority is for children to have fun learning the basic skills and tactics of water polo. A good player will be able to swim fast have good ball handling skills and be a quick thinker.

Mini Polo

Mini Polo is a smaller, more basic game than water polo itself and has been introduced to teach young players of any age up to approximately 12 years of age the FUNDamentals of the full game.

It has wide adaptability and can be played in any size pool, whether deep or shallow, with any number of players, boys and girls, of different age, ability and size. It is played with a smaller ball and uses a reduced set of rules compared with the full game.

Quick guide to the rules of water polo

Number of players per team:

7 in the water at any time (1 goal keeper and 6 field players); with a maximum of 6 substitutes total 13 players in a team. For U13 this 6 in the water and 10 in a team

For matches at youth level and below (Under 17) the teams can be mixed boys and girls.

The minimum for a person to play a match is 10 years.

Officials

Games are usually refereed by two referees although on some occasions one referee will take control at lower levels.

Table officials keep a record of the score, the number of major fouls for each player and act as time keepers.

Length of game

A game takes about 60 minutes, for U13 it will be about 35minutes

The game is played in 4 x 8-minute quarters of actual play. 4x 6 minutes often running clock for U13

The clock stops when a foul is committed with 30 seconds possession for each side to give actual play or is kept running if time limited or U13

(Quarters usually last about 12 -15 minutes if a stop-clock is used)

2 minutes interval between quarters

Scoring

One goal is scored each time the ball goes in the net. Scores are in the range of 6-15 goals per game per team.

A good goalie keeps shooting percentages in the 30% range so there are usually lots of shots and blocks to keep things exciting.

A good goalie is the most important part of the team and is the only player allowed to touch the ball with two hands. Field players can only use one hand to touch the ball.

Field of Play

30 meter x 20m all deep pool (FINA rules). 25m x 20m all deep for club games. Many local clubs play in pools with a shallow end this is not ideal particularly for elite or senior players.

25 metre half-deep pools are commonly used, however players are supposed to avoid standing or walking on the bottom to gain an advantage. Shoulders need to be kept down in the water in the shallow end. Deep end goal size: 3m x 0.9m. Shallow end (less than 1.5m depth). 3m x 2.4m from pool floor

For U13 we play on a smaller pitch across the width 17m and smaller goals 2.0m x 0.9m

Starting and Restarting a Game

In a match the home team wears white caps the visiting team blue caps. The goal keeper wears a red cap. The end at which each team starts is decided by the toss of a coin between the two club captains.

At the start of each quarter or period of play the teams line up on their own goal line and the game is started by the referee blowing the whistle and dropping the ball in the water at the half way line. The players swim to the ball to gain possession.

At the restart after a goal has been scored each team must line up in its own half of the pool and the game is restarted from the half way line when the referee blows the whistle and the ball is passed by the player in possession. At the start the ball can be passed sideways or backwards but not forwards.

Basic Strategy of the Game

Water polo is a team sport that mixes the best aspects of football, basketball, and hockey. Like football, goal keepers defend a large netted goal. Water polo players are allowed to use only one hand at a time to pass or shoot a football sized ball. Like basketball, there are fast breaks and a set offence that uses a centre-like “hole man” or “2-metre player” that can either make powerful offensive shots or dish passes off to players driving towards the goal.

Driving, setting picks, and working to get inside water is very reminiscent of basketball. A “Hole player” tends to be big because they need to plant themselves in front of the goal without being pushed out. Guard-like “drivers” tend to be smaller, quicker, and good ball handlers, and outside shooters (like 3-point shooters in basketball) have good arms to hit the high corners of the goal with accuracy whenever a defender drops off to cover a driver breaking towards the goal.

Like hockey, water polo is a physical game and players can be temporarily ejected for short periods of time (20 seconds) if a major foul is committed. Occasionally, if possession is contested there can be a “neutral ball” between two players to decide who regains possession of the ball.

Ordinary Fouls

Water polo fouls are far more common than in any other sport and are part of the tactics of the game. Ordinary fouls are frequently committed and the referee will blow the whistle and award the ball to the opposing team. After a foul is whistled, the team awarded the foul is allowed a ‘free throw’. The free throw is taken by the nearest player to the ball after the foul occurred. The player must put the ball in play without due delay.

After a foul, the ball can’t be shot at the goal until it has been passed to another player inside six metres. If a foul is committed outside the 6-metre line (yellow cone), or you are taking a corner then a quick shot is allowed, or you can put the ball in play and then dribble and shoot (new rule). Good referees call fouls immediately whenever there is unreasonable contact of any kind and are usually so eager to keep the game “clean” that a whistle is blown almost every 15 seconds. Refs do their best to keep the game flowing and will often choose to ignore fouls committed away from the action so as not to disadvantage the attacking team and preventing scoring opportunities.

Ordinary fouls include:

- Preventing the free movement of a player who is not holding the ball. Holding is lifting, carrying or touching the ball with the palm of the hand. **If the attacking player plays the ball i.e. lifts the ball or has a hand on top of the ball, then you must aim to tackle the ball (not the player)**
- Holding, sinking or reaching over the shoulder or upper body of a player that is not holding the ball
- Pushing or pushing off from a player (with hands or feet) who is not holding the ball.
- Standing, walking, jumping or pushing off from the bottom, the sides or the ends of the pool to play the ball.
- Touching the ball with two hands (except goalie),

- Ball pushed under water when under attack (pick up ball underneath to avoid!)
- Going into 2 metres area in front of the ball (same as off side in football)
- The team in possession of the ball not having a shot at goal within 30 seconds of gaining possession.

Major or Exclusion Fouls

Major or exclusion fouls result in a temporary exclusion from the game for either 20 seconds actual play or until a goal is scored or to the next change of possession, whichever occurs first. The excluded player leaves the pool without interfering with play and exits at their end of the pool on the opposite side to the table where the officials sit. If a player gets three major fouls in the same game, they are excluded from the remainder of the game, but can be substituted.

Major fouls include

- Kicking, striking or violent play.
- To interfere with the taking of a free throw, goal throw or corner throw.
- Intentionally to throw away or fail to release a ball to prevent the normal progress of the game.
- To hold, sink or pull back an opponent who is not holding the ball. Holding is lifting, carrying or touching the ball, but does not include dribbling or swimming the ball.
- To splash in the face of an opponent intentionally.
- Field player blocking with two hands (ejection if outside 6m, penalty shot inside 6m).
- Illegal substitution (player must fully exit field of play before new player can get in).
- Disrespect to the referee including foul language, contesting a call, or even scowling (this is at the referee's discretion and most are extremely strict!).

Penalty Shots

Penalty shots are taken from 5 metres directly in front of the goal. The referee will award a penalty if a major foul is committed when someone is in strong, imminent, scoring position in front of the goal (for example: if the hole man or a driver has the ball and also controls "inside water" within 6 metres of the goal, and the defender comes over their back). Also, if a goalkeeper sinks the ball while under attack, or a field player blocks with two hands a penalty shot will be awarded.

Man Up

When a player is excluded from play following a major foul (20second exclusion) it leaves the opposing team man up also known as a power play, they will form in either a 4 – 2 formation or 3 – 3 between the oppositions 2m and 5m lines. Passing the ball around this formation quickly until a player is free and close to goal to shoot taking advantage of the one man up. In a normal game a team might expect this to occur on 5 or 6 occasions hence the importance of practising this aspect of the game.

Is this game too rough for kids?

Water polo is a physical contact sport on par with basketball with a dose of wrestling thrown in. Like basketball, contact is most intense in the centre (or “pit”) where strong leaning, pushing and holding is used to stay in position. Only one person at a time is in the centre, so it’s easy for kids to avoid heavy contact if they don’t like it.

Most shots are scored from outside the centre where contact drops off dramatically. All games are refereed and excessive grabbing, pushing, or hitting of any kind is considered a foul. Like basketball or football, accidental hand or elbow contact can happen, but water is much more forgiving than a hardwood floor or a dirt field and the potential for injury in a spirited football game is much greater than in water polo. You should feel as comfortable with your kids playing water polo as you would if they played football or basketball.

Is water polo OK for girls?

If your daughter swims, then why not try water polo? Girls and women’s water polo is rapidly gaining popularity at all levels including club, regional and international competitions. The GB ladies team are ranked higher than the men and currently compete in the European Championships. In junior water polo the girls tend to start with some good ball skills already usually picked up from netball. Physically the girls are more than a match for the boys until around 15/16 years, when the boys start to get stronger. The girls are still technically and tactically very strong.

Equipment

Two pairs of swimming trunks or water polo costume and a cap with ear protectors are the only requirements. Some senior players also wear a protective “box” and a gum shield in case of “accidental contact.”

A team needs two sets of caps, one blue and one white set. There should be 13 caps in each set with one cap being a red No. 1 for the goal keeper.

The ball is made of a plastic material with a “roughened” surface to make it easier to grip when wet, it is normally yellow. There are three sizes used normally size 3 for mini polo, size 4 for juniors and size 5 for senior men. There is a ladies ball which is similar in size to a size 4.

Goggles are not allowed but special glasses or contact lenses may be worn. Players must keep their finger and toe nails cut short to prevent “scratching” injuries. No rings or other jewellery may be worn.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to speak with David Smithson or myself.

Neil Musgrove