

# OUCKC

## Polo Handbook

A guide for beginner to intermediate  
players to all aspects of the game

Andrew Spurr 2007 ver 1.0

# Contents

1. Defence
  - 1.1. General Defence
  - 1.2. Rear Zone
  - 1.3. Front Pair
    - 1.3.1. Chasing the ball
    - 1.3.2. Front Zone
  
2. Attack
  - 2.1. Breaks
  - 2.2. Working the zone
  
3. Goal Keeping
  
4. General Skills
  - 4.1. Hand tackles (giving)
  - 4.2. Hand tackles (receiving)

This handbook is meant to be used as a reference, not to be read and understood in one sitting. A lot of the content you will have no concept of until you have come across it in either a game or training. It is meant to reinforce what advice people give in training and also means you know will have some idea of what people are trying to get you to do in a match or training.

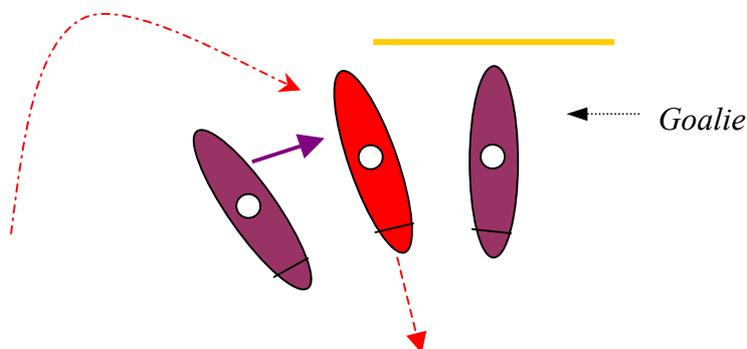
# 1. Defence

## 1.1 General defence

- Stay goal-side of the opposition at all times, always know where they are and where the ball is
- Anticipate the pass to them, giving them less time to think, making them do a bad pass
- When paddling with an attacker, the nose of your boat should be slightly ahead of theirs. This means you can get goal side of them easier and push them away
- Don't stick to the attacker too close; it makes it easier for them to turn away from you.
- Remember – the player down the middle is most dangerous
- Need good communication between front and back players, act as each other's eyes
- e.g. front shouts no of player that they are leaving. Do this EVERY time, it really does work!

## 1.2 Rear Zone

- Rear zone must not let anyone goal side
- If someone does get goal side, make sure they are facing the wrong way and squash them up to the goalie. **DON'T PUSH THEM ONTO THE GOALIE!**



*Draw stoke into them, so they can't turn, the only way they can go is back out. Job done*

- Rear players move attackers out the sides and / or turn them away from goal and then return to original position.
- If you get tied down and can't get goal-side, ask for help. Make the attacker's life as hard as possible though, try and make them into a bad pass option.
- Remember, there is no obstruction rule inside the 6m line, so get in their way!
- Always put your paddles up for a shot. Shout SHOT! So the goalie knows a shot is coming and to put of the shooter, it will make them less inclined to shoot.

- Help out the goalie after a save / goal throw. Make yourself an easy pass. This is very important. If it goes wrong, it can end up either one on one with the goalie or worse.

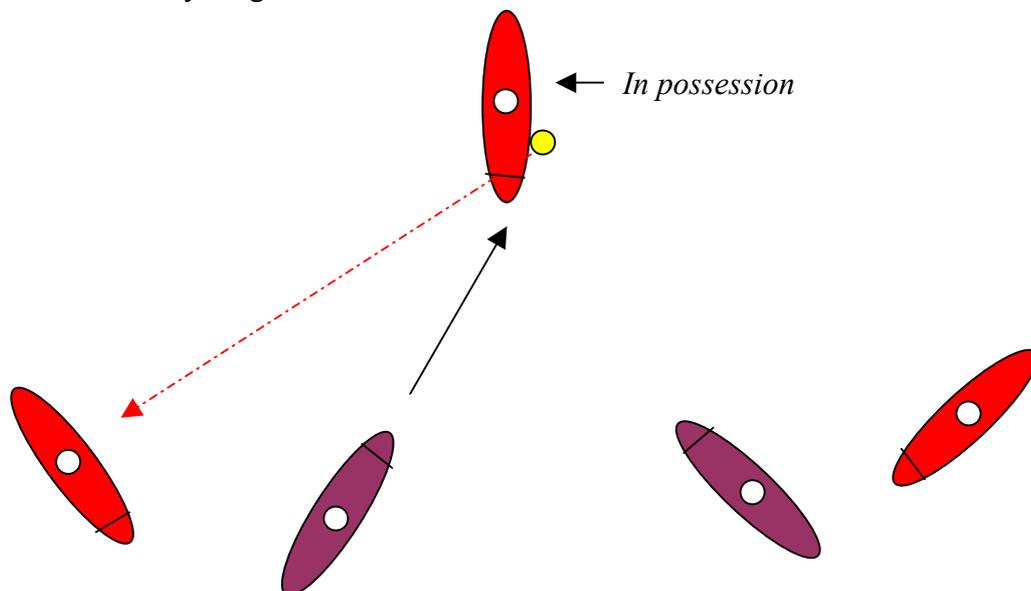
## 1.3 Front Pair

There are two options that we will consider for the front pair; chasing or a front zone.

### 1.3.1 Chasing the ball

This is almost compulsory if you are losing the game, you have to go out there and win the ball back.

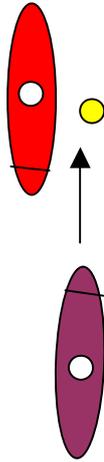
- Try to get to the person as soon as they have the ball; give them as little time as possible. This makes them rush the pass, increasing the chances of a turnover.
- Look aggressive! It scares people and makes them panic and throw the ball away, especially at university level.
- Wait until they don't have control of the ball before chasing them if you can.
- Don't under-commit, this will do nothing apart from tire you out, you may as well not bother.
- Don't over-commit! Don't go chasing too far or when it is obvious you won't achieve anything.



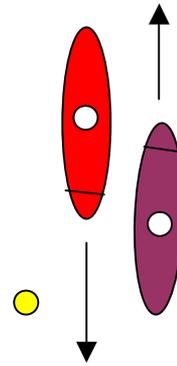
*BAD! As the player with the ball has an easy pass to get a player goal-side of your defence*

- Make them pass backwards, not forwards. Do this by turning them away from goal
- Remember close and central players are the most dangerous.
- Try and rotate the chasing between the pair, one then the other, share the workload.

- Try and predict the pass, get to them as soon as they have it.
- When chasing someone, never approach them parallel, if they are good, they will just paddle past you

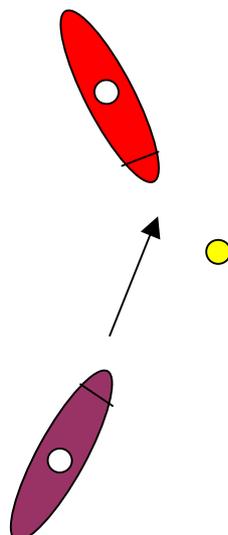


*Sometimes tempting to go for the ball*



*They move the ball to the other side and in front. You can't push and you're facing the wrong way. Remember this for the attacking section*

- Hit the front of their boat with yours; turn them away from his teammates. Paddle in the air blocking while doing this if possible
- You may end up side by side if they hold onto the ball, then PUSH! (See section 4.1).
- You have to decide whether to block or push, you can't do both and indecision gives them more time. I recommend blocking if you are inexperienced, unless the other person looks particularly bad!
- Don't go onto their deck, this is a foul.
- Ball in the water situation, this will happen very often at university level due to a bad pass / catch.
- This is the best time to chase



*Go more towards the player than the ball, but your kayak between them and the ball.*

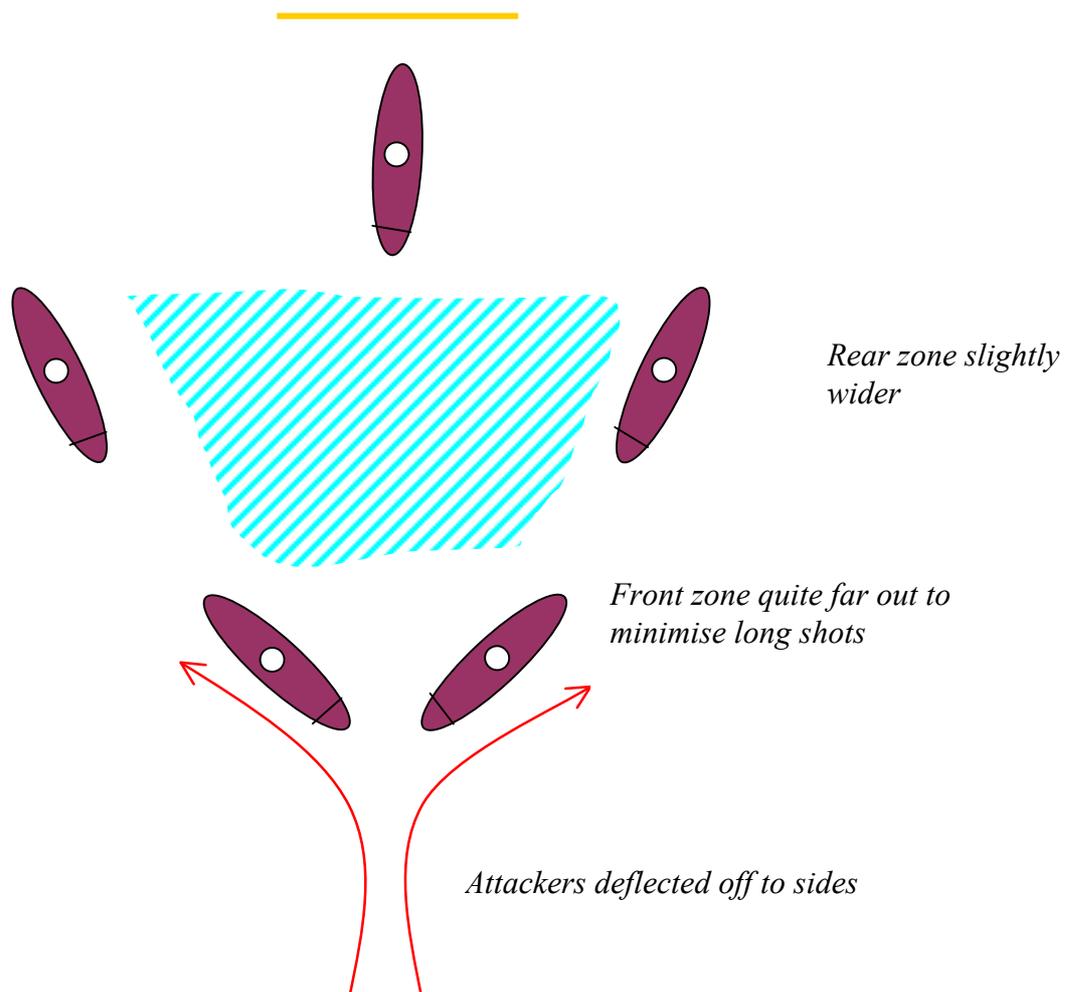
***YOU SHOULD ALWAYS DO THIS, not just in this situation***

- If the opposition gets there before you, normal chasing applies
- If you do get the ball, pass and go.

### 1.3.2 Front Zone

This is quite hard, and can go wrong, but is very energy efficient and leads to quick counter attacks into an open goal.

- Front pair forms a 'V' in front of the rear zone. The idea is to divert attackers to the sides. Make sure no one goes down the middle.
- Pair must act as a pair! Must be at the same distance from the goal line, otherwise attackers can weave in-between and go down the middle.
- When attackers come, they'll come fast, you need to paddle at them so you don't get pushed back.



- This tactic relies on no one ever being in the blue zone, thus forcing the opposition to shoot through paddles from range.
- Remember, you are marking an area, not a specific player!
- It often works well to interchange these two different ways of playing the front pair, it means you can dictate the pace of the game and keep the opposition guessing.

## 2. Attack

Attack does not have such a rigid set of tactics as defence; a lot of it is dependant on the team you're playing, the members of your own team and the state of the game. Nevertheless, there are still several key aspects to attack.

### 2.1 Breaks

- A break is where there is a possession change, and you attack as soon as possible while the opposition's defence is still not set up.
- The most important factor in this is keeping possession; if everyone sprints off and the ball doesn't quite make it, the chances are that a one on one with the goalie will happen.
- The next most important part of the break is to get to the other end of the pitch as quickly as possible.
- The front pair need to be alert to when a turnover happens, then act fast, they need to sprint off down the pitch.
- A danger of this is going out of range of the defence's throw, so normally one of the attackers is slightly behind the other.
- If the goalie has the ball, the two rear players both must become options for passes, so that the goalie can't be pressured.
- The ball then makes its way up the pitch by passes, not dribbling.
- Pass the ball ahead of the person paddling up the pitch. This is so that they can paddle onto it and pick it up at their own pace.
- *The attackers can make diagonal runs to make it harder for the opposition to follow.*
- Ideally, you should end up two on one or two on two, so the ball carrier has to decide whether to shoot themselves or to give it to the other player.
- In this situation, you need to wait until the defender has committed to tackling you and pass the ball.
- There are several ways of doing this pass in order to stop it being intercepted; one is to fake shot to get the defender's paddles out of the way.
- Another way is to fire it to the other player, or in front of them.
- The receiving player must be aware of the pass and make sure they will have enough time to catch and shoot before hitting the goalie.

### 2.2. Working the zone

- This is either where the break didn't work, you pick up the ball when the defence is already set up, or when you want to slow the game down.
- The main idea of this is keeping moving in and out of the zone, messing up their formation.

- Two or more players must be outside the 6m line acting as an easy pass and as a back up if there is a turnover.
- Try to push the defence out of position, it may give an opening for another player.
- Keep your head up, you need to be ready for a pass at any time.
- Hand to hand passing is very important, if it goes in the water, it may be chased down and turned over.
- Think 'If I get the ball now, who am I going to pass to' it minimises thinking time and means you won't get pushed in!
- Basically be creative, try something different to keep the defence guessing.

### 3. Goal Keeping

This is arguably the most important player on the pitch, the goalie can make or break a team. The best thing for goalies to do is practice, there's no other way of getting good at blocking shots! It pays for the whole team to practice this as there is always a situation where someone else gets back beforehand.

- Always keep an eye on the ball, this is where the shot is going to be coming from!
- Make sure you are central in the goal, when there isn't a great threat, look up at make adjustments.
- Keep your paddles up whenever you are under the goal, I've said before, it's a lot easier to shoot into an open goal.
- Make sure you know where the top of the goal is and that you can reach it, different goals vary in height a lot, so do it all the time.
- This also makes people less inclined to shoot.
- Don't overly worry about people hitting you, shout if they do, but don't watch the front of your boat instead of the ball. This is a tactic a lot of teams use to get the goalies attention away from the ball.
- Tell the rear zone to move away if they are getting too close.
- When you do save a shot, get the ball into your hands as soon as possible.
- Tell everyone that you have the ball to initialise the break.
- Don't lean back over the goal line when throwing, refs just love calling that one up, and won't give you the benefit of the doubt.
- One way to do this is to throw it with both hands from your chest.

## 4. General Skills

### 4.1 Hand tackles (giving)

Hand tackles (pushing) can be very effective, but also can be counter-productive in certain circumstances. There are three situations where a push will work well.

1. The player has one hand / no hands on the paddle
  2. The player is picking up the ball
  3. The player is passing / shooting
- If the push is good in any of these situations, and the player isn't really good, they will go in, or at worst get off balance and mess up.
  - If the push is unsuccessful, you will probably just push yourself away from them, making their life a lot easier, so make sure the push will do something.
  - Move closer to them and concentrate on blocking and moving them away from goal.
  - If push is successful, move closer, being very careful not to touch their boat. Then wait for their head and shoulders to come out of the water and push again if they still have the ball.
  - When they come up, this is a good time to hit the ball out of their hands.
  - Normally they will let go and someone else will grab it. Don't paddle over their boat to get it!
  - Put your body weight into the push, get maximum distance in moving your arm i.e. lean over and don't stop pushing until they are under water.
  - Think of it as more of a punch than a push (but not too much obviously!) Start pushing before you are in contact, this gives them a 'jolt' and doesn't warn them of the push before it comes.
  - Remember, at university level, people will be scared of being pushed. Even being next to them being threatening is enough to make them panic!

### 4.2 Hand Tackles (receiving)

There is a technique to resisting getting pushed in, and unfortunately for those of us who train outside, it takes practice!

- First of all, don't panic, you can roll, you're not going to drown.
- Try not to let your body be completely next to theirs at any point, best to keep the front of their boat at your waist, or a bit further up. They can push you in the back, but this won't get you in.
- Turn away from them using backwards strokes on the opposite side to them with your paddle and arms in low brace position, remembering not to leave the ball out of arm's reach. This sounds hard but is easy once you've tried it a few times.
- Lean slightly back and towards the player about to push you. This will make them just push you sideways.