

A quick guide to Polo

We recommend you print this document and take it with you to one of our matches.

The Basics:

- A Polo ground is 300 yards long by 200 yards wide, roughly the equivalent of 9 Football pitches.
- There are 4 players in each team.
- There are two umpires mounted on horseback and a referee on the side-line.
- A match is broken down into periods of play called chukkas. Each chukka is 7 ½ minutes long (a bell is rung at 7 minutes and again at 7 ½ minutes).
- A match is normally 4 chukkas and lasts about an hour.
- Each player has a handicap rating. The rating starts at minus 2 (a beginner) and goes up to 10 (the best players - there are very few players in the world that hold this rating).
- Before the match starts the player handicaps of each team are added up. If there is a weaker team, they are awarded goals at the start. The number of goals they get is calculated using a mathematical equation. The equation can sometimes give half goals so a weaker team can sometimes start with a half goal.
- The match starts with the two teams facing each other in the centre of the ground. One of the mounted umpires then initiates a 'throw in' by throwing the ball along the ground between the teams to start the chukka.
- Players use a Polo Stick to hit the ball. The stick has a bamboo shaft usually 51 or 52 inches in length with a cigar shaped wooden head (mallet) at the hitting end. The ball is struck on the side of the mallet.
- The ball is made from hard plastic and measures 3 ¼ inches in diameter.
- A player is allowed to 'ride off' another player to get priority over the ball. This is when two players ride alongside each other and try to barge each other to one side.
- A player is allowed to hook another player's stick to stop them hitting the ball.
- The object of the game is to score goals, the team with the most goals at the end wins.
- After every goal the teams swap ends.
- After every goal the players meet back at the centre of the ground for a throw in.
- A player will change their Horse after each chukka; a player will therefore ride 4 or more Horses in a match.

The Rules:

The rules are designed around safety. Here is a basic breakdown of the rules of Polo:

- When a player hits the ball, the direction the ball travels in creates an imaginary line (referred to as 'The Line').
- The Line is like the central reservation of a motorway. To avoid a collision this line cannot be crossed (Fig.1).



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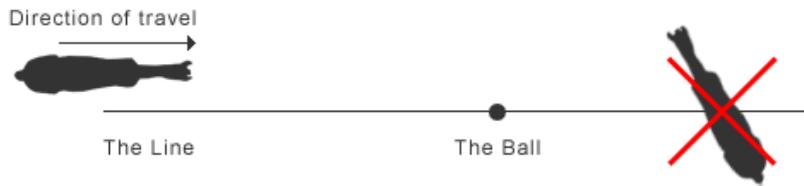


Fig.1: A player crossing The Line.

- Players must travel in one direction on either side of The Line (Fig.2 and Fig.3).



Fig.2: Players riding together down The Line

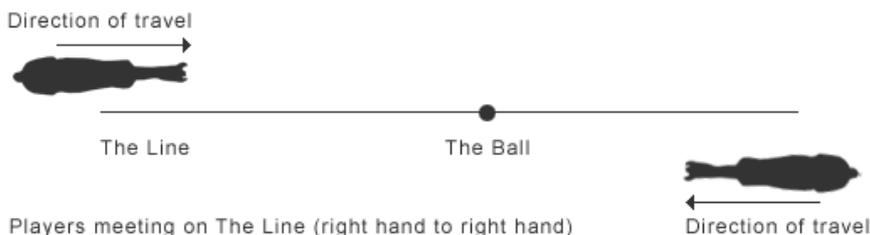


Fig.3: Players meeting on The Line (right hand to right hand)

- A player hitting the ball on the right hand side of his Horse has priority over a player hitting on the left. So if two players are meeting they must meet right hand to right (Fig.3). This avoids any collisions (Fig.4)



Fig.4: Players meeting on The Line (right hand to left hand - Collision course)

- If a player crosses The Line or meets a player on a collision course or commits any other foul a penalty is awarded. An umpire will indicate a penalty by blowing their whistle.
- There are 7 types of penalty:
 - Penalty Goal – a dangerous foul is committed near the goal mouth and so a goal is automatically awarded.
 - 30 Yard Penalty – a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team 30 yards from the goal. It is undefended. The attacking team must score the goal with one shot.



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- 40 Yard Penalty - a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team 40 yards from the goal. The defending team must stay behind the back line. The attacking team must score the goal with one shot. The penalty can be defended by a player riding across the goal and trying to block the ball.
- 60 Yard Penalty - a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team 60 yards from the goal. The defending team must be 30 yards from the ball.
- Half Way Penalty - a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team on the half way line. The defending team must be 30 yards from the ball.
- Spot Penalty - a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team at the point where the foul occurred. The defending team must be 30 yards from the ball.
- Penalty 60 – When the defending team hit the ball over their own back line a spot penalty is awarded to the attacking team 60 yards from the goal. The defending team must be 30 yards from the ball.

Tips for watching a Polo Match

- **Safety** - If you are watching from the side of the ground be sure to keep a safe distance from the side line. Pay attention at all times, the game moves very quickly and sometimes a Polo ball will be hit accidentally in the direction of spectators.
- **The best place to watch** - Watching the match at ground level makes the game look 2 dimensional. If you can find a raised vantage point this will give you a much better view of the game.
- **Get involved** - At half time you may be asked to tread in. This involves walking onto the Polo ground and replacing grass divots that have been ripped from the ground by the horse hooves. A bell will sound when the second half is about to start, this is the signal to start walking off the ground.

Do's and Don'ts

- **Do** keep your dog on a lead at all times.
- **Do** ask the owner before you go and pet their horses – most owners don't mind, horses are unpredictable animals and the owner will know if a horse is safe to pet.
- **Don't** let children go near the horses or venture too close to the ground. Keep an eye on them at all times.
- **Do** come up and say hello to the players before or after the match.
- **Do** come up and say hello to club members – you will almost certainly be offered a glass of wine!