

Polocrosse Junior Policy

Date Adopted by The Polocrosse Association of Australia Board - 22 November 2007



Introduction

The introduction of the PAA Junior Polocrosse Policy is designed to offer advice and guidelines to help administrators, coaches and volunteers provide a fun, safe and nurturing environment for junior polocrosse players.

The PAA believes that the Junior Development Policy will offer clubs, associations, parents/carers, pony clubs and other providers a quick reference to key issues and strategies to encourage juniors to enjoy polocrosse.

The aims of this policy are to provide parameters for junior Polocrosse and to validate processes and procedures that are already within unofficial Junior Polocrosse programs.

This policy applies to junior polocrosse programs covering participants from 5-16 years of age.

A **Funsquad** polocrosse player is a player who is under 12 on the 1st January of the playing year and a **Junior Squad polocrosse** player is a player who is under the age of 16 on the 1st January of the playing year.

The Polocrosse Association of Australia believes that Polocrosse participation has many health benefits. It fosters responsibility and discipline and teaches juniors how to work with others in a team environment and how cope with success and failure. Polocrosse develops a sense of community and loyalty.

The Junior Polocrosse Policy has been developed in collaboration with the eight States, coaches, parents/carers and polocrosse administrators.

The PAA has appointed a National Junior Development Officer who will liaise with State Junior Development Officers and pony clubs to enhance the mutual benefits when clubs and pony clubs work together.

The PAA has identified 7 areas that are important in providing quality experiences for juniors.

- Attracting young people to polocrosse and keeping them involved.
- Physical growth and maturation.
- Sport Pathways
- Forming Links
- People making it happen
- Quality Coaching
- Safety considerations and Legal management

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Australian Sports Commission for its directions and encouragement in preparing this policy. We also acknowledge the many hundreds of volunteers who will enact this policy through their role as supporters of junior polocrosse, and we thank you for your commitment and dedication. .

Attracting young people to Polocrosse and keeping them involved

The PAA has undertaken programs and pathways to promote active participation in Polocrosse. It is within the well run and enthusiastic club that juniors can be encouraged and fostered.

Junior Polocrosse should be planned around the needs of young players to make it a positive and quality experience for them.

Young people want:

- To keep good friends and make new ones
- Enjoyment and recreation with pleasurable social involvement
- Fulfilling individual potential in Polocrosse
- To use and improve their skills and to be healthy



Polocrosse offers juniors social and appropriate playing opportunities. Refer to The Junior Pathway Table on page 7. Polocrosse will encourage young people to take on roles in administration and umpiring as an alternative to playing Polocrosse. Polocrosse encourages the use of the Pony Club rules or modified versions of Polocrosse when appropriate, to allow young people to develop skills in a rewarding and enjoyable environment.

It is beneficial to accommodate individual differences by offering a broad range of options and the ability to play in adult grades, whenever there is no alternative.

It is also recommended that sections or individual juniors from various clubs can combine to make up a team and participate in pony club, Funsquad, junior Squad and adult competitions at club level.

Polocrosse encourages Pony Club competition between Pony Club teams as a starting point in developing their own inter-club competition at their own venues. See Junior Pathway Table page 6.

Polocrosse should be at times and for durations to suit young people and their parents/carers. e.g. night competitions, one day competitions Clubs and associations should endeavour to work with schools to provide Polocrosse as a choice of sport when appropriate. See Forming Links page 8.

Polocrosse through using their “Keep costs low” handout and the subsidised and grant handout encourages Clubs to keeping the cost of playing polocrosse to a minimum.

The use of a buddy system, and holding junior friendly social events will provide juniors with a feeling of belonging.

Physical Growth and Maturation

Polocrosse recognises the diversity that comes with physical growth and maturation, and understands that young people grow and mature at different rates.

Riders are given every opportunity to advance their skill and ability levels suited to their personal goals, physical and ability development level. Junior players should not be pushed to take part in polocrosse grades beyond their confidence or ability levels nor are they unreasonably held back when their skill and physical development level are sufficient for them to graduate to and take part in higher grades.

Determining when juniors are ready for more intense competition will ensure that polocrosse is more rewarding and safe for young players. Chronological age is of limited value in determining levels of maturity for juniors.

Polocrosse should be organised so junior players have a positive experience regardless of their developmental status and the focus should be on personal improvement, as opposed to comparison with others of the same age.

The PAA supports the aim that all clubs have at least one coach. Club coaches are expected to focus on personal improvement not comparison against others, by supplying and encouraging the use of PAA supplied Diary of Personal Achievement.

A club coach will focus on juniors having fun so that their interest is maintained until they are at an age and stage to specialise.

It is recommended that talent identification and development is left as late as possible. Refer to PAA guidelines. Expose young people to as many different Polocrosse experiences as possible (e.g. rotate positions and to travel to competitions at different venues).

Polocrosse juniors are encouraged to travel and attend various venues, competitions and clinics eg Club Championships, State Championships, Inter State competitions, Zone/State run coaching clinics and to travel overseas if they wish.

Polocrosse Pathways

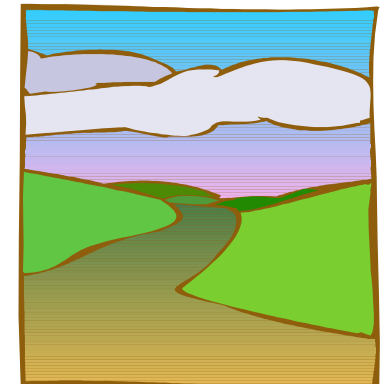
Development pathways are designed for junior players to move progressively through polocrosse and to provide opportunities to

- Develop in line with their level of maturation
- Move easily from one stage to another
- Have positive experiences while developing their polocrosse skills
- Inspire them to stay involved long term

The years 5 to 16 are times of tremendous development for juniors on all levels. -Physically psychologically, emotionally and socially.

Planning for the progressive development of polocrosse skills in junior players requires consideration of

- Identifiable stages of development
- Different levels of ability
- Different rates of gaining polocrosse skills
- Different interests of young players in polocrosse



In Polocrosse, the progression moves through the following stages:

- Broad experience when junior players experience fundamental polocrosse skills with fun being the focus (Funsquad)
- Progression when junior players are introduced to basic skill development but fun and enjoyment are still important
- Advanced progression when a greater focus is placed on skill and riding development.
- Specialisation when junior some players become more serious about polocrosse and are keen to refine their skills

Some juniors may not be interested in specialisation and so recreational participation is always an option and should be encouraged.

Broad Experience

Very young players need to develop basic riding and racquet skills and be introduced to the rules and fair play Therefore it is important to introduce polocrosse where participation, skill development and fun is highlighted. **Fun,squad** is the new name for play-based program where the emphasis is on basic riding and racquet skills in a fun environment of games and activities.

Progression

As junior squad players advance in polocrosse the fundamental skills in the previous stage are honed and the junior is able to increase time they spend in practice. Scores are kept and the juniors are participating in competitions. They are building on their technical and tactical skills.

An emphasis is placed on the improvement of a wide range of skills.

Inter club and Club championship competitions should act as a stepping-stone to representation. Zone teams and Zone competitions should be offered.

Specialisation

This is the time when junior players decide to train and polocrosse becomes a significant part of their lives.

By this stage juniors have developed their physical, cognitive, social, emotional and riding skills to a level needed for highly specialised training in polocrosse.

Zone and State coaching clinics play a major role at this level by assisting juniors to develop their riding skills and to practice riding various mounts.

Recreational Participation

Junior polocrosse may choose not to enter specialisation phase and prefer to play recreational polocrosse.

Recreational participation may be an option during or after the specialisation phase.

The main aim is to have fun through playing polocrosse and spending time with family and friends.

An important role of the PAA is to assist all Polocrosse clubs and association to move juniors through specially designed pathways according to their talent and interest.

Early positive experiences within junior Polocrosse are vital for continued participation.

Table 1 summarises general skills and game progressions within the Polocrosse pathway

Progression for Junior Polocrosse

	Broad Experience	Progression	Specialization	Recreational Participation
Ability	Funsquad Pony Clubbers	Beginner Junior Pony Clubbers	Elite Junior	Any Level
Age	12 & under	12-14 years	12-16years	Under 12 –16 years.
Focus	Fun, Learning, general game development & acquisition of basic riding and racquet skills	Fun, improving wide range of skills	Enjoyment and improving skill, riding and game performance	Enjoyment, social and personal satisfaction
Consideration	Modifications to game and field (if required)	Riding and racquet skills for life-long participation	Fitness, technical and tactical training, goal setting, managing aspirations	Social aspects, and events Encourage involvement in other roles such as coaches and officials
Session duration	4x12 mins per tournament 30 minutes practice	Up to 6x12 min per tournament 60 minutes practice	Up to 6x12 mins per tournament 120 minutes practice	Up to 6x 12mintes per tournament 90 minutes practice
Session frequency	A minimum of One practice and tournament /wk	Up to 3-5 times/wk	Up 7times/wk	Up to 3 times/wk
Session contents	Play, simple games, modified rules Racquet skills, riding practice	Skill development through understanding training and games Riding & racquet Practice	Training and competition with the aims of skill development, game sense and performance Riding & racquet Practice	Training and competition with options at various levels
Fitness level	Minor aspect, not a focus	Careful introduction and progression to suit individual development	Evaluate individual to determine focus and gradually progress	Train to avoid injuries
Competition	Modified activities with the objective of individual improvement Scoring tallies optional Representative teams at Zone and Nationals (11- 12 yr olds)	Competition with emphasis on all round development and rotation of 1,2,3 positions Emphasis fair play Rep teams at Zone level.	Interstate/International Series Inter Zone Competitions Emphasis on individual and all round development Experience umpiring	Level of competition intensity appropriate to individual motivation
Recognition	Recognize effort and participation	Recognize effort, improvement, application and participation and performance	Recognize effort, improvement and performance	Recognize effort, participation and contribution to Polocrosse

PLAYER PATHWAY

International World Cup

International Tours (juniors/intermediate/adult)

State Junior Exchange Programs (NZ, USA, Canada, SA)

AIS Camps

Australian National Championships

State Camps

State Regional Competitions (eg Shell Cup, TriState)

State Zone & Club Championships

Zone Camps

Inter Regional Competitions (Regional Shows)

Inter school competitions

School programs

Local tournaments

Club Camps

Forming Polocrosse Links

Consultation and co-operation are essential for effective and efficient junior polocrosse participation.

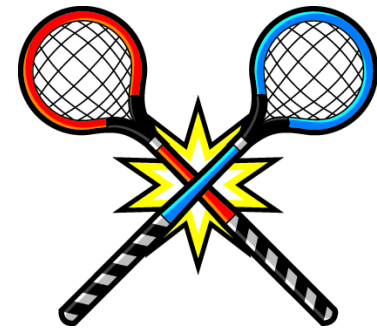
Clubs are encouraged to form positive ties with their Local Government, State Sport and Recreation Departments, their local service groups such as Apex, Lions, Rotary, Lodge of Truth; religious church groups, local schools, Parents and Citizens, Parents and Friends groups, local Return Soldiers Associations, Tourism Bodies and other sporting groups.

Strong ties with local Veterinary surgeries, RSPCA, Ambulance services, First Aid suppliers, local farriers, horse dentists, chiropractors, horse feed suppliers, riding schools, saddlers and providers of horse transport, feed and supplies are all important links for Polocrosse people to foster.

Clubs are encouraged to form links with their local pony Club and Pony Club Zone. Links to other equestrian associations such as EFA, Campdraft, Jumping Clubs, Trial Riding associations, Riding for the Disabled, Sporting Associations, Western Riding Association and Cutting Associations should be encouraged.

Clubs and Pony Clubs are important providers of the building blocks of Polocrosse as well as delivering program and competition pathways. The mutual benefits when Polocrosse clubs and pony clubs work together include:

- The promotion of polocrosse programs within pony clubs
- Increase the number of young people being able to participate
- Sharing resources (human, equipment etc)
- Access of club services to the pony club
- Pony club involving the club in program delivery



People Making it Happen

The most valuable resource that Polocrosse has is the people who run Polocrosse. They provide the infrastructure, the transport of horses, the organization of the tournaments and set the social atmosphere that is so important to Polocrosse. They include, a diverse range of people including:

- Young people
- Parents and carers
- Coaches
- Officials (umpires, referees etc)
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Volunteers.

The importance of their contribution cannot be underestimated because of the close relationship between the quality of leadership found in Polocrosse and the quality of the Polocrosse experience for juniors.

Clubs provide the PEOPLE to make things happen.

Clubs must encourage and help their movers and shakers.

To enjoy their sport junior players should be able to:

- Experience skilled and sensitive leadership through their coaches, officials and administrators;
- Have input into how sport is provided for them;
- Participate in an inclusive, positive and caring environment where they are not exposed to physical or verbal abuse from other people, their parent/carers or sport providers.

The polocrosse Codes of Behaviour include a selection of key principles which coaches, umpires, administrators, parents, spectators and players should base their polocrosse involvement.

The Codes ensure that juniors develop good sporting behaviours and enjoy a positive polocrosse experience.

The Codes of Behaviour is documented in the PAA Member Protection Policy which is located on the website at [www. polocrosse.org.au](http://www.polocrosse.org.au)

Quality coaching

Coaching is a fundamental building block for junior development. Quality coaching is an essential element in creating a positive experience for juniors in polocrosse. When coaches plan and provide sessions based on a good understanding of how juniors learn and how skills are best developed then juniors will enjoy their game, become competent in skills and strategies and build a good knowledge of rules, etiquette and the traditions of polocrosse.

Coaches are the catalyst to ensure polocrosse games are played in a fun, safe and learning environment.



How can coaches, clubs and Zones be assisted in coaching juniors?

With the valued support of the Coaching and Officiating Unit within the Sports Commission., the Polocrosse Coaching Scheme has a set of strategies to deliver high quality and consistent coaching throughout the States. Refer to Coaching Manual level 1 and Delivery of Services and skills fact sheet

Making Polocrosse Safe and the Law.

Polocrosse inherently has some dangers and as a consequence the PAA considers that safety is an integral part of their vision and core values. The safety of our juniors, administrators, coaches, officials and volunteers are paramount.

The PAA believe that it is essential that we have a consistent member protection policy in order that our members and volunteers can enjoy polocrosse and that Polocrosse can provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment.

Polocrosse Clubs and participants have a legal duty of care to not expose juniors to risk in any aspect of their sports experience. Areas of concern for which advice, training and procedures should be in place include

- Facilities and equipment
- The environment
- Training and competition
- Infectious diseases
- Medical conditions
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Dealing with emergencies

Prevention is better than a cure.

(See Event and Activity Guide, fact sheets)

Facilities and equipment

The implementation of a risk management plan that is compliant with Polocrosse laws and policies is recommended

The completion of tournament checklist and regular facility checks is recommended. For more information visit www.polocrosse.org.au

The Environment

In managing risks consideration must be given to environmental factors and their and their impact on the players.

Ground and weather conditions

Ground and weather conditions can have a significant impact on the safety and enjoyment of junior polocrosse.

Umpires coaches and organisers should exercise a conservative approach to continuing play where lightening is present or where the field conditions have reached a point where they pose danger to participants and horses

Facilities and equipment

The development of quality polocrosse fields and facilities is an important part in the overall enjoyment of the game for participants and spectators

Guidelines for heat, hydration and sun protection

To help create a safe playing environment for junior polocrosse players it is important to take into consideration matters such as heat, hydration and sun protection.



Heat

Climatic conditions vary throughout Australia and individuals' tolerance of heat and humidity varies. Consequently, the PAA recommends that clubs and associations apply commonsense guidelines to climatic conditions that exist within their respective regions.

Action should be taken promptly by umpires and officials to cease play under any conditions that may be dangerous to the players and officials.

In adverse weather conditions specific fluid practices according to Sports Medicine Australia's most current guidelines should be followed. Refer to the Sports Medicine Australia website at www.sma.org.au for further information.

Sun Protection

Appropriate clothing is recommended for all polocrosse players. Sunscreen with an SPF of 30+ should be made available to juniors and reapplied as appropriate throughout clinics and tournaments. See PAA Weather Policy



Medical Conditions

The PAA recognises that some juniors will have chronic medical conditions, which affect their participation in polocrosse. Care should be taken in conditions such as:

Asthma and other respiratory conditions

Diabetes

Epilepsy

Heart and lung disease

Hepatitis

HIV

Parents /carers are asked to complete a pre-involvement questionnaire about their disabilities, medical conditions and specific needs, and to circulate to those working with the juniors. See Event and Activity Guide and Medical condition forms.

At junior clinics is recommended that at least one person will have current first aid qualifications.

The PAA encourages Club members, coaches, umpires and administrators to plan for young people with special needs.

Drugs and Alcohol in Sport

The PAA condemns the use of prohibited substances and methods in sport. The use of prohibited substances and methods is contrary to the ethics of sport and potentially harmful to the health of juniors.

The PAA has developed a comprehensive Anti Doping Policy, which is strictly applied to all levels of the sport.

This policy can be viewed on the Polocrosse website www.polocrosse.org.au.



Dealing with Emergencies

The PAA has developed a comprehensive Risk Management Manual that will aid clubs, associations in dealing with emergencies and accidents.

Law and Sport

To protect the welfare of juniors in Polocrosse, we must be aware of the relevant legal issues and put safeguards in place. By doing this we will be protecting both our junior members and the organisation.

The legislation relevant to the safety and welfare of participants in Polocrosse covers

- Discrimination
- Child protection
- Drugs
- Health and safety
- Privacy

Refer to the PAA Member Protection Policy



Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (D&SH)

Discrimination means treating or proposing to treat a person less favourably than someone else in certain areas of public life on the basis of an attribute or personal characteristics they have. The relevant attributes or characteristics are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Marital status;
- Parental/carer status;
- Physical features;
- Political belief/activity;
- Pregnancy;
- Race;
- Religious belief/activity;
- Sex or gender;
- Sexual orientation;
- Trade union membership/activity;
- Transgender orientation.

Discrimination is not permitted in the areas of employment (including volunteer and unpaid employment); the provision of goods and services; the selection or otherwise of any person for competition or a team (domestic or international); the entry or otherwise of any player or other person to any competition; obtaining or retaining membership of an organization (including the rights and privileges of membership).

Child Protection

Child protection is about keeping young people safe from abuse and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children. Under current child Protection legislation, a child is considered to be a person less than 18 years of age.

Sexual harassment means unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature, which makes a person, feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Sexual harassment can take many different forms and may include unwanted physical contact, verbal comments, jokes, propositions, display of pornographic material or other behaviour that creates sexually hostile environment. Sexual harassment is not behaviour based on mutual attraction, friendship and respect. If the interaction is between consenting adults, it is not sexual harassment.

Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia are three states that have introduced mandatory screening for all persons working (paid or volunteer) with children. New South Wales screening is known as the “Working with

Children Check” and “Prohibited Employment Declaration”. Queensland screening is also known as “Working with Children Check” and appropriate applicants are supplied with a ‘Blue Card’. Western Australia also requires mandatory screening of people engaged in child related work (refer to the Working with Children. Child protection legislation makes it mandatory for sporting organisations and individuals involved in sport as paid employees or volunteers to meet certain requirements. These requirements also apply to individuals and organisations originating outside of the states with child protection legislation in place.

It is important to note that while Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia are the only states with mandatory screening legislation, any teams originating from outside of these states, and who travel to Queensland, New South Wales or Western Australia for camps, competitions or activities, must comply with the) relevant legislation. For example, coaches, managers, support staff etc must undergo the appropriate screening for the state they are travelling to. In addition to various screening legislation throughout the country, state legislation also differs in the area of mandatory reporting. Mandatory reporting is where upon reasonable grounds, a person suspects that a child has been or is being abused, must report it as soon as practical to the particular government departments.

Mandatory reporting applies to all teachers within NSW, VIC, SA, TAS, NT and ACT. Mandatory reporting does not apply to coaches except for within the Northern Territory

To prevent exposure of young people to criminal acts, in delivering sport polocrosse providers must ensure all appropriate policies and procedures are followed. Please contact the local State/Territory Polocrosse Association for information relating to screening procedures and Member Protection Regulations.

Use of Images

The PAA is aware of the potential risks linked to the use of photographs/videos of young people in sport. Appropriate steps must be taken to ensure the acquisition or display of images containing young people are not misused or accessed by unauthorised personnel.

Permission must be obtained from the young person’s parent/guardian prior to taking the image. Any information regarding the display of images must not be published unless prior consent has been granted by the parent/guardian. All personnel taking such images must be approved by the Organisation and registered under the appropriate procedure. see Parent Permission For World Wide Web and Newsletter Publishing.

Privacy

The Commonwealth Privacy Act and State and Territory privacy legislation governs the collection and use of personal information and provides strict guidelines about the disclosure of such information. See Parent Permission For World Wide Web and Newsletter Publishing.

