

# Introduction to Polocrosse



## **WHAT IS POLOCROSSE?**

As the name implies, it is a combination of polo and lacrosse. It is played outside on a field, on horseback. Each rider uses a cane stick about 40-45" long to which is attached a racquet head with a loose, thread net, in which the ball is carried, picked up, bounced and thrown. The ball is soft and is made of sponge rubber, approximately 4" across. The objective is to score goals by throwing the ball between your opponent's goal posts.

Polocrosse is messing around by yourself with a stick and ball, playing a little impromptu one on one, or perhaps two on two with some friends, to full scale tournament play. It's played throughout the world by people of all ages and riding skills. It's all polocrosse, and it's all fun!

## WHY POLOCROSSE?

Polocrosse is a great discipline for riding groups to offer for a number of reasons:

- The whole family can have fun participating at the level appropriate for their skill.
- It improves riders' horsemanship; to perform well in the game horse and rider have to communicate effectively to react to the game.
- It raises the horses training level
- It gives you a purpose in your riding, to excel at the game requires practice.
- It is something different for you and your horse to do together.

Polocrosse Canada is very keen to grow the sport in Canada and to increase participation and enjoyment of it. With this in mind we offer clinics and equipment to interested groups at minimal cost.

Over the last year many riding groups have started to offer polocrosse and Polocrosse Canada has worked closely with them to ensure they have the help and support they need to achieve this. If your group is interested in hosting a clinic please contact us. Web: [polocrossecanada.com](http://polocrossecanada.com) E-mail: [info@polocrossecanada.com](mailto:info@polocrossecanada.com)

## WHO CAN PLAY?

Basically anyone can play. Men and women compete together on the same teams or sometimes play men against men & women against women. There are different levels of play according to riding level and game skills. As in any sport there are those players who are competitive and those who aren't. In Australia children as young as 6 compete on their ponies and many players over 65 still play competitively.



Polocrosse is a great family sport since it is possible for riders of all ages to find a level of competition that is right for them.

## WHAT ABOUT MY HORSE?

Players are allowed only one horse per game, except in the case of injury and any horse will do to get you started. There is no restriction on their height, although the ideal is around 15.2 hands. Players compete successfully on horses of many breeds, just bring your favorite! Of course the higher the level in which you participate, the more fit your horse has to be. Once your skill level starts to improve so will your horse's; most polocrosse horses absolutely love playing and they will soon develop some moves you never knew they had!



## WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU NEED?

Requirements for the rider are a helmet, boots and racquet. Horses require a breast collar, a bit with no protrusions, joined reins, leg wraps, bell boots, and a saddle without a horn. (For safety reasons and because it is tough to bend over and pick up the ball with a horn in the way.) Most club members ride in Australian stock saddles for the security.

## THE HISTORY OF POLOCROSSE

The modern game was invented in Australia before the Second World War. In 1938 Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hirst of Sydney read an article in an English Horse Magazine on Polo Crosse. As both were keen on horse breeding and horse sports they decided to find out more about it when they travelled to England. They visited the National School of Equitation at Kingston Vale near London, where instructors had developed an exercise to help young riders improve their balance and their control of their horses. The exercise was played indoors with two riders a side and markers on the wall from which the ball bounced back into play. The goals were elongated basketball nets hung at each end of the arena. The sticks were old polo sticks that had the mallet removed and replaced with a squash racquet head. This had a shallow string net. The idea was to scoop up the ball, which was a little larger than a tennis ball, ride with it to the end of the arena and drop it into the net to score.

Realizing the possibilities of this exercise as an outdoor sport, the couple returned to Australia with sticks, balls and rule books. With Alf Pitty, a well known horseman and polo player's assistance they discussed, practised, and with some revision of the rules, they came up with a new and exciting game. They called the new game Polocrosse

Over fifty years later despite numerous ideas on improvements the same basic philosophy, size of field and team combination is still used in polocrosse today.



## WHO IS POLOCROSSE CANADA?



Polocrosse Canada is the governing body of polocrosse within Canada and it is made up of member amateur clubs. It exists to promote the formation of Polocrosse clubs within Canada who control polocrosse affairs within Canada.

They are involved in every aspect of the sport, from working with coaches and players at grass roots level to selecting teams to represent Canada at the international level. Polocrosse Canada is a member body of the Canadian Equestrian Federation (CEF) and a member body of the International Polocrosse Council.

Every year Polocrosse Canada works with member clubs to arrange a tournament schedule for the season. They also liaise with the other polocrosse playing countries around the world to arrange tours and player and coach exchanges.

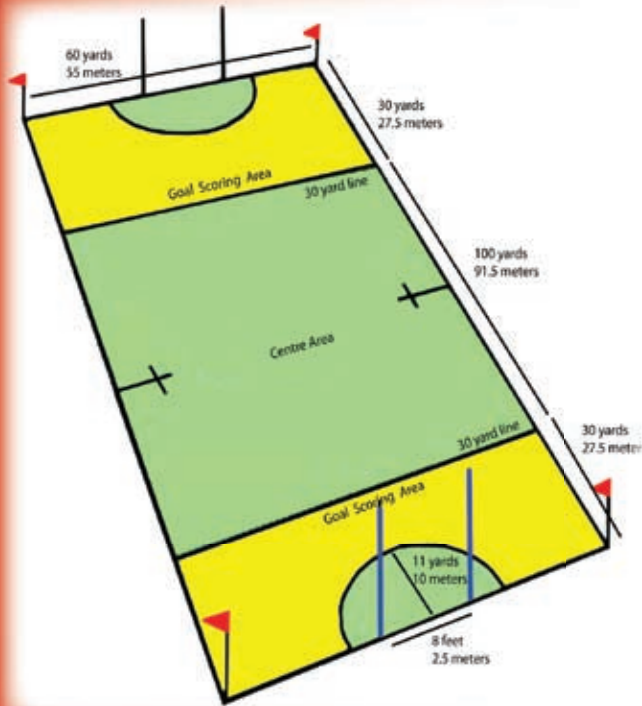
Polocrosse Canada is responsible for accrediting Canadian polocrosse coaches and for training umpires. They also organise the grading of all registered polocrosse players in Canada. They ensure that Canadian tournaments adhere to Polocrosse Canada rules.

As a member of Polocrosse Canada you gain the right to play at all Polocrosse Canada tournaments and training events, third party liability insurance, and receive information on what is going on in the sport. You will also be supporting Polocrosse Canada and helping to grow the sport and maintain tools such as the Polocrosse Canada web site.

With growing the sport being a major goal, Polocrosse Canada plans to make the sport more accessible by working with interested parties. For anyone interested, Polocrosse Canada will send information and arrange to have an introductory clinic. They will also organise squads to perform demonstrations of the sport at large events so people can see it being played.

## HOW IS THE FIELD SET UP?

The field is 60 yards (55m) x 160 yards (146.5m), with three separate areas. There are two goal scoring areas on each end where only the No. 1 of the attacking team and the No. 3 of the defending team can play. The middle area is where everyone plays. Goal posts are 8 feet apart. To score, the ball must be thrown from outside an 11-yard semi-circle in front of the goal.



## HOW IS THE GAME PLAYED?

A team consists of 6 players, divided into two sections of three who play alternate chukkas (periods) of a maximum of 8 minutes each. Four or eight chukkas comprise a full match. The three players in each section play the position of #1 goal scorer, #2 center, or #3 defense. It commences in centre field with the players lining up in front of the umpire, opposite to their goal. The umpire throws the ball over the player's heads with each team trying to gain possession. The #1 is the only player on that team allowed into the opponents scoring area, the #2 is the play maker and can only ride in center field, and finally the #3 is the only player on your team allowed into your goal scoring area to defend.

## HOW DO YOU GET THE BALL FROM ONE END OF THE FIELD TO THE OTHER?

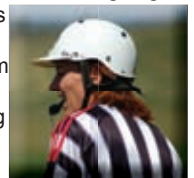
Players can pick up the ball off the ground, or catch it in their racquet, then ride with it, or throw it to other players until the No.1 is in possession of it in the goal scoring area. A player cannot carry the ball over the 30 yard line into the goal scoring area, but must bounce it or pass it to the #1 over the line. When carrying the ball, a player must carry it on the stick side, i.e., right handed players must carry it on the off-side of the horse. They can, however, pick-up or catch the ball on the nonstick side provided they immediately bring it back to their stick side.

## WHAT STRATEGIES CAN YOU USE TO GET THE BALL AWAY FROM A PLAYER?

Like most sports, it's legal to block plays and try to take the ball. Players on the defensive team "cover their man" and look for an opportunity to steal the ball and create an offensive drive of their own. Hitting an opponent's stick to dislodge the ball is allowed. Riding off or pushing another player over the field boundaries is another strategy but referees will be watching closely for dangerous plays like crossing the line of the ball, pushing incorrectly, or elbowing. Strict rules are enforced to keep the game safe.

## WHAT ABOUT UMPIRES?

Polocrosse is an umpired game. There is always at least one, or more often two, umpires on the field, and their job is to maintain control of the game to ensure the safety of both horses and riders. They are responsible for enforcing the rules and awarding penalties. A minor mistake could just result in possession of the ball going to the opposite team. Dangerous or aggressive fouls can result in free points to the other team or even players being kicked out of the game. The following rules will give you an idea of what they are watching for.



# IMPORTANT RULES

## EQUIPMENT:

### Players

- Helmet with chin strap
- Shirt with number
- Riding boots with heels

### Horse

- Breastplate
- Saddle with a surcingle
- Polo wraps or leg protection
- Bell boots
- No split or running reins

### Never

- Gear in poor condition
- Sharp spurs
- Saddle with a horn
- Whips without a flap
- Bits with side bars or protrusions

## HORSES:

### Always

- One horse per player per weekend

### Never

- Play an uncontrollable horse or a stallion.
- Play another horse without getting your first horse vetted out.

## PLAYERS

### Always

- 6 players per team, 3 per side.
- Wear your head gear
- Correctly numbered shirt

### Never

- Use foul language or argue with the referee
- Change position during a game without notifying the time keeper, referee and the opposing captain.



## STOPPING PLAY FOR BROKEN EQUIPMENT:

### Always

- When it is dangerous

### Never

- When you drop your racquet.

## PLAYER POSITIONS:

### Number One

- Goal scorer plays in their end zone and center field

### Number Two

- Play maker, plays in center field

### Number Three

- Defender, plays in center field and your end zone.

## LINE UP:

### Always

- In player number order (1-2-3)
- Have the other team between you and your goal
- Quickly gather in mid field, pair up, and advance toward the ref when they indicate.
- Keep your eye on the ball
- Hunt the ball.

### Never

- Advance ahead of your opponent as you ride into the referee or move over your side of the T line.
- Pressure your horse in the line up

## GOALS:

### Always

- Goals are made by the #1.
- They must shoot from outside 11 yard circle.
- They must be inside the goal scoring area.
- They must be in control of the ball

## MISSED GOAL:

### Always

- Free throw for the other teams' #3.
- Throw is from the 30 yard line at a direct line from where the missed shot went out of bounds.
- They ride to the point indicated by the referee and throw the ball in the air about 8 yards out, let it bounce up and catch it.
- They can not be interfered with until they touch the ball.
- #1 must follow #3 nose to hip.

### Never

- Touch the ball before it goes ten yards.
- Be within ten yards from where the #3 throws the ball (except for the #1 who is following them).

# MORE RULES

## PENALTY (30 YARD) LINE:

### Always

- Bounce or pass the ball over the line.
- Pickup a ball sitting on the 30 yard line only from inside the zone.

### Never

- Carry the ball across the line.

## OUT OF PLAY:

### Always

- If the ball is on the line it is out of play.
- The horse's feet indicate when you are out of bounds.
- Come back onto the field within 10 yards from where you went out.

## CROSSING:

### Always

- Give yourself a least a horse length spacing when crossing another player's line.
- Throwing the ball doesn't give you right of way to the ball.
- 2 players have right of way over 1
- Player riding closest to the line of the ball has right of way
- A player riding the same direction as the line of the ball has right of way
- If the ball has no line of travel then the closest player has right of way.

### Never

- Never ride over the back end of another horse
- Endanger yourself or another player
- Cut someone off.
- Stop on the ball or turn back on the ball.
- Dangerously cross the path of another player.

## SAFE PLAY:

### Always

- Play safely; think safety.
- Like driving a car, look before changing lanes.

### Never

- Bump at dangerous angles or hard enough to dislodge a horse from their line of travel.
- Push another horse behind the saddle or in front of the shoulder.
- Sandwich someone between two other players.
- Jostle or bump during time off.

## CARRYING THE BALL:

### Always

- Carry the ball on your racquet side.
- If you pick up or catch the ball on the off side, bring the ball immediately to your racquet side.
- Swing upwards to hit an opponent's racquet.
- When evading a hit watch not to cross your center line.

### Never

- Reach across someone's horse to hit their racquet.
- Hit someone's racquet if they don't have the ball or they aren't trying to get the ball.

## AGGRESSIVE PLAY:

### Always

- Give wood in the zone, (ie) your horse's shoulder ahead of their hip and no further ahead than your horse's hip to their horse's shoulder.
- Push another player above the elbows while keeping your elbows close to your side.
- Swing your racquet in an upward motion.

### Never

- Hold another player, their stick, or their reins
- Elbow, or hit another player
- Swing your racquet wildly.
- Hit you opponent's racquet downward.
- Let your horse's head hit someone.
- Never let your horse bite or kick.
- Hit any horse with your racquet.
- Hit someone else's horse with your whip or spurs.

## PENALTIES:

### 5 levels of penalty

- A free throw to the non-offending side.
- A free throw, taken within center field.
- A free throw at goal, 10 yds in front of goal.
- The side fouled awarded one goal.
- The horse ordered off the field and disqualified from being played again during the match.

The umpire may exclude a player from the game for part of the match in addition to any other penalty.





## **POLOCROSSE CLINICS**

Polocrosse Canada is very keen to grow the sport in Canada and to increase participation and enjoyment of it. With this in mind we offer clinics and equipment to interested groups at minimal cost.

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### **OUR OBJECTIVES:**

- Have fun
- Introduce you to the game of Polocrosse
- Help you learn some ball skills
- Start you on your Polocrosse mastery journey

### **AGENDA:**

- Introductions.
- Watch a short video.
- White board talk on the objectives, positions, areas of the field, and basic rules of the game.
- Watch a demonstration of the basic Polocrosse ball & racquet skills.
- Learn basic ball skills: catch, throws, pick ups, 10 yard penalty throw, and bounce.
- Play a game on foot on a small field
- Get your horse used to the ball & racquet on the ground
- Practice ball skills on horseback
- Play a slow game on horseback

### **WHAT TO BRING:**

- A calm experienced horse. Most horses will do the job but the young and inexperienced will require more attention on them rather than learning the new Polocrosse skills.
- Saddle without a horn. An English saddle will do, most players use an Australian saddle.
- A breast plate.
- Bit with no protrusions, a snaffle or kimberwick is preferred.
- Bell boots & polo wraps or sports medicine boots.
- Boots with heels and a riding helmet.

### **WHAT YOUR GROUP NEEDS TO SUPPLY:**

A field or arena fairly level and free of holes or other hazards. 4 goal posts, and 8 pylons to mark the lines and corners of the field.

We will supply racquets, balls, videos, rule book, written information & experienced players.

## **POLOCROSSE CANADA**

email - [info@polocrossecanada.com](mailto:info@polocrossecanada.com)

web - <http://polocrossecanada.com>

### **USEFUL WEB SITES**

Here is a selection of useful web sites about Polocrosse and horses in general:

#### ***www.polocrossecanada.com***

The official Polocrosse Canada web site. Here you can find all the Polocrosse Canada information and documents, including jackpot and tournament schedules, registration forms and the rules. There are also links to a number of club web sites plus information on Polocrosse Canada's latest projects and developments.

#### ***www.polocrosse.net***

A polocrosse site covering polocrosse news around the globe

#### ***www.polocrosse-international.org***

The International Polocrosse Council web site; information on the world council of the sport

#### ***www.polocrosse.ca***

Canada based supplier of polocrosse equipment

#### ***www.australianstockhorses.com***

Polocrosse horse training and polocrosse horses for sale

