

Playing Time Framework and Approach

Water Polo Is a Physical, Strategic Sport — and Players Learn by Playing

- Water polo is a **demanding contact sport** that requires endurance, strength, awareness, and teamwork.
- It is also a **fast-paced, strategic game** where players develop skills and understanding through real game situations.
- Because **players learn by playing**, we work to provide opportunities for athletes to get in the water and apply what they practice in real competition. Practice attendance improves play and may be factored into playing time.

Playing Time Is Dynamic

- Playing time during games is **fluid and situational**.
- Coaches adjust lineups and substitutions based on the **flow of the game** and the **team we are playing**.
- Different opponents bring different levels of **speed, strength, conditioning, experience, and style of play**.

Safety and Appropriate Matchups

- Because water polo is a **physical contact sport**, player **safety is always a priority**.
- Coaches aim to place players in situations that are **challenging but appropriate for their current level**.
- The goal is to create matchups that are **instructional rather than frustrating or overwhelming**.

Balancing Development and Competition

- Coaching playing time is a **balancing act** that considers:
 - Player development
 - Team competitiveness
 - Game safety
 - The flow of the game
- Decisions may look **different from game to game** depending on these factors.

Team First

- Water polo is a **team sport**, and every player contributes to the group's success.
- Our focus is on creating an environment where players **work hard, support one another, and grow together** while keeping the experience **fun, competitive, and rewarding**.