

History of Polo



The exact origin of **polo** is unknown but it was probably first played over two thousand years ago by nomadic warriors, in China and Persia.



The name of the game most likely originates from the word “pholo” meaning 'ball' or 'ballgame' in the Balti language of Tibet.



The first recorded **polo tournament** was in 600BC when the Turkomans beat the Persians. The Persian and Mogul conquerors of **India** spread the game across the eastern world and in the 1850s the world's first **polo club** was founded at Silchar, west of Manipur.



Other **polo clubs** rapidly sprung up and today the oldest in the world is the Calcutta Club, founded in 1862.



The **rules of the game** were founded in India in the 1870s and the first polo club in England was Monmouthshire, founded in 1872. **Handicaps** were introduced by the USA in 1888 and by England and India in 1910.



The first official match in Argentina took place on 3rd September 1875. The game had been taken there by English and Irish engineers. Today, more than 77 countries play polo. It was an Olympic sport from 1900 to 1939 and has now been recognised again by the International Olympic Committee.

A Rough Guide to Playing Polo



Polo is a tactical team sport with normally 4 players a side. If playing Winter arena polo it is 3 players a side. Whilst each player fills a specific role and supports the team effort on both offence and defence, no player is restricted to a designated place and any player may score.

The posts



objective of the game is for a team to score the most goals and this is accomplished by putting the ball across the goal line between two goal posts 24 feet apart. Like other **high contact team sports** such as Rugby or

hockey, defensive plays, such as "riding off" and "hooking" are important defence tactics. They can result in fouls which incur penalties. Normally, polo is played on an outdoor polo field which is 300 yards long and 160 yards across, the area of 10 football fields.



The line of the ball is another crucial rule in the game. This is the imaginary line the ball creates as it travels from point A to point B. This line determines the strict rules about how players can approach and attack the ball and each other. Since, at top speeds players reach up to 35mph, the umpires enforce stringent rules governing the way in which players can approach each other to avoid collisions which could result in serious injury to either horse or rider.



When two players ride to the ball, both hoping to hit it, they must ride on either side of the line so that both will have access to the ball. They must remain on opposite sides of the line, thus minimizing the risk of collision. The line remains set until the ball is struck by a player, changes direction, and a new line is formed. A player may cross the line only when it does not create a hazardous situation such as a collision another rider. This may result in a foul and consequent penalty being awarded.



Team members are numbered 1 to 4, with No 1 being the attacking or offensive player and No 4 who is primarily responsible for defending the team's goal. These assignments are not rigid, and each player must be prepared to make any play that will benefit his team, temporarily changing position as the pattern indicates.

Three umpires, two on horseback and one on the side of the field, oversee the game and enforce the rules. Infractions generally involve hazardous riding and dangerous use of the mallet. Umpires can be recognised by their shirts which have vertical black and white stripes.



The full game is 8 periods, but often in club matches 4 or 6 periods are played. They are 7 minutes each in length, plus a 30-second overtime. Each period is called a chukka. The brief periods are necessary due to the stress placed on polo ponies who will spend a great deal of that time galloping up and down a 300 metre ground. In high goal tournaments (the highest level of polo) each player uses a fresh pony for each chukka because the game is played at a very fast pace, with the horses galloping much of the time.