

How to Prepare for a Water Polo Tournament

Preparations for a water polo tournament are in many ways similar to getting ready for any other sporting event, but there are a number of considerations unique to water polo that need to be addressed. To ensure you fully enjoy your time away with your team, this brochure has been created to provide helpful tips from the experts.



General Preparation:

Pack your bags properly. This will certainly have a different meaning for different people. Remember, you're going away on a water polo trip, not a vacation where many different outfits are required. Keep it simple and bring only the minimum amount of clothing needed to get you through the duration of your competition. One bag should be sufficient for a weekend tournament. Other items to pack include:

1. Bathing suits, towels (1-2 medium sized towels max), goggles & mouth guard.
2. A small bottle of shampoo will suffice for your hair. Keep other cosmetics to a minimum.
3. Toiletries and hygiene products as required. It's best to be prepared.
4. Loose pants & top to wear over your bathing suit if waiting around the pool between games.
5. Healthy snacks only. Your team can also arrange to have the chaperone bring snacks and water for everybody to reduce the amount each athlete needs to carry.



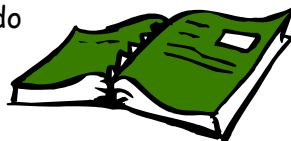
If on a long trip, consider bringing two small bags rather than one oversized/heavy bag; one for your swim stuff for the pool, the other with your clothing for the weekend. Don't overpack!

Money. There are generally two financial considerations when heading off to a water polo tournament:

1. *Travel and accommodation expenses.* This should be clearly stated prior to the tournament.
2. *Food and spending money.* How much will you need to bring with you? This will vary for each person and will depend on the length of your trip and how much you intend to spend while you're away. Talk with your coaches and chaperones for guidance.



Schoolwork. Get your homework done before you go away and let your teachers know 1-2 weeks in advance of your participation in the tournament. Do your best to avoid bringing school work with you and try to arrange with your teachers not to have tests and assignments scheduled for your first day back at school. Experienced coaches and players in every sport know that despite anyone's best intentions, almost no homework ever gets done when you're away on tournaments, or on the night you get home. You will be tired. If you absolutely have to do some work, bring only a minimal amount. You don't want the extra baggage - especially heavy textbooks. Your weekend should be a fun time away with your teammates.



Schedule. Know when you're playing, when you're leaving for the tournament and where your team is meeting. This may sound obvious, but it would be a shame for an athlete to miss their ride. Further, if you are expected to be travelling with the team and you can't go, let your coaches know ASAP.

Note: Most tournament officials now post game statistics on the internet, and often on a daily basis. Ask your coach for the tournament website so that family and friends can follow your team's progress.

Health and Safety:



Nails. One of the first lessons a water polo player learns is that finger and toe nails must be cut short and filed smooth. This is not an option. Referees will check your nails before your first game of the tournament and you will not be allowed to play if they are too long or sharp. You don't want to be searching for the nail clippers immediately before game time, so trim your nails at home, and preferably a day or two before the competition.



Jewellery. On a similar note, it is mandatory that all jewellery, including bracelets, necklaces, rings and piercings be removed. Very serious injury, from deep cuts and scratches to the tearing out of earrings, studs and other piercings, can and must be avoided.

Eye Care. Another area of concern for water polo players is red and sore eyes from swimming without goggles. Please be very careful with the drops and solutions often used to counteract this common type of irritation. Optometrists generally recommend using eye washes (artificial tears) to lubricate the surface of the eyes rather than eyes drops designed to "get the red out" which can be harsh and cause a rebound effect. Speak to your optometrist and read product labels very carefully. Flushing your eyes with fresh water after every game will also help.



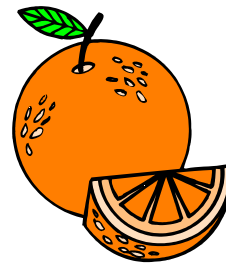
Nutrition. Proper nutrition is essential throughout the entire year, especially for athletes, and even more so in the weeks leading up to a water polo tournament. It is extremely important to put nothing but the best fuel in the engines! Some points to consider:



1. Water, water, water! Just because the game is played in a pool doesn't mean you don't sweat or need to drink water. Water, not pop or juice, is the best fluid for preventing dehydration and muscle cramps. Adequate water intake *before, during and after* practices and games is absolutely critical. Filtered or spring water is ideal.



2. Eat a healthy combination of fruits, vegetables, wholesome carbohydrates, fats and proteins.



3. No junk food please! Pop, chips, sweets and fast foods have in an athlete's diet. Of course this is easier said than done. junk foods to a minimum, and when the coach says to bring a along for the trip, think crackers and cheese rather than chips chocolate. Your stomach will thank you and you'll perform much better in the pool.

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4. Consider taking a high quality vitamin & mineral supplement. There are many instances when the demands of a sport necessitate using nutritional supplements. Don't hesitate to discuss this with your health care professionals. Find out what's best for you.

For further information refer to the Coaching Association of Canada's website (www.coach.ca) or Health Canada's website (www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

Alert: Please let your coaches and chaperones know if you have any specific medical conditions (i.e. asthma or allergies) or will be carrying any prescription medication to the tournament.



Sleep. Get to bed early in the week leading up to the competition. Kids generally require 8-10 hours of sleep at night anyway, and fatigue often doesn't show up until the second day after a poor night's sleep. So if you stay up too late on Thursday, you might make it through the day Friday all right, but you're likely to be extremely tired on Saturday. Get your rest. Water polo is a physically demanding sport.



Expectations for the Tournament:

Always keep in mind that water polo tournaments, especially when you're travelling to another city, are highly structured events. The itinerary for the tournament not only consists of the actual games played, but also requires that meals, travel to/from the pool and rest times are taken into consideration. Water polo is a team game. The expectation is that your team will stay together throughout the duration of the tournament. The coaches and chaperones are in charge. If you are considering planning any extracurricular events, this must be discussed with them.



Like other sports, water polo tournaments can range from recreational events to highly competitive championship matches. As much as athletes, parents and coaches want to do well in each game, the emphasis on winning will vary from game to game. Therefore, depending on the type of tournament, the level of competition and the playing experience of athletes, there may be a distinct difference in the amount of playing time each participant gets. It would be unreasonable for a competitive team to have inexperienced players in the water during the fourth quarter of a tie-game in a gold medal match. It would also be just as unreasonable for veteran players to get all the playing time in a game where the outcome is insignificant within the context of the tournament. Trust that your coaches are doing their best to accommodate both the needs of their players and the team as a whole.



A significant amount of learning and experience can be gained by a newcomer to the sport by being on the bench and watching the game from the sidelines. Opportunities to learn can also come from watching other teams play. If you get the chance to watch other games, look to see how other players play in positions that you may also play. Watch how other coaches give instructions to their players and learn how referees see the game and make their calls.



Playing time for athletes is sometimes a contentious issue, especially if a team has travelled a long distance, parents have come to watch and a child appears to have been relegated to the bench. Please, if there ever exists the need for a parent or athlete to question the coach's decisions, speak to the coach in private. Challenging a coach in front of the team or other parents, especially if tempers are not held in check, will only serve to undermine the coach's authority and may damage their rapport with the team. Conduct yourself with dignity and respect. Expectations for an athlete's playing time can and should be discussed with the coaching staff *prior* to the tournament if concerns exist. Be mindful as well that playing time may also be proportional to each athlete's level of commitment to club activities, including attending practices and team events.



Lastly, when you participate in a water polo tournament, whether at home or away, you not only represent yourself, but also your family, your club and your community. Each sport and each club has a *code of conduct* which must be adhered to at all time. You are expected to treat teammates, coaches, opponents and officials, as well as your hotel, pool and vehicles with respect. Inappropriate language, vandalism, graffiti and theft, as well as drugs, alcohol, adult books/magazines etc. are all absolutely prohibited. Common sense and decency must prevail.

Water polo is a great game. Play hard, play fair and have fun. Enjoy the competition!