

HANDICAP POLICY

2010 v1.4

As adopted by



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1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. This Policy is intended to ensure all polo players playing in Australia carry a handicap which is a fair assessment, taking into account:
 - a. The players' ball skills, riding skills, game sense and knowledge of the rules; and
 - b. International standards.
- 1.2. All players are assessed against criteria as advised by the Australian Polo Federation from time to time. No particular group of players is to be assessed in a biased or concessional manner, for example, handicaps of young promising players are not to be held artificially low and planned employment arrangements of professional players are not to be taken into account.
- 1.3. Handicaps are to be current at all times. Clubs and Handicap Committees must work together to ensure that as players improve or deteriorate their handicaps are reviewed and amended as necessary. A decision to change a player's handicap should not be delayed because it may result in a player losing place in a team or planned employment.
- 1.4. The procedures for determining handicaps must always be:
 - a. Fair; and
 - b. Transparent.

2. CLUBS

- 2.1. Primary responsibility for providing for appropriate handicapping of players rests with the Clubs. Clubs must ensure that they regularly review the playing performance of their members and report to State Handicap Committees all cases where a player's performance is persistently inconsistent with the player's handicap.
- 2.2. Clubs are required to provide the base data required for the Mid-Season Review referred to at 5 below and the End of Season Review referred to at 6 below. They are also required to respond to regular requests for information from the State Handicap Committee Chairman.
- 2.3. Clubs are accountable for the integrity of information they supply about their members. This includes relevant information about players before becoming members, including highest overseas handicap and prior handicap.
- 2.4. In all matters regarding handicaps, Clubs are required to exercise the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. This will require Clubs to maintain appropriate controls over conflicts of interest, which at a minimum, would include officials standing aside from decisions in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees.
- 2.5. Where a Club has insufficient independent officials to meet the requirements of 2.4, it must request the Chairman of the State Handicap Committee to appoint officials from nearby clubs or members of a State or Benchmark Handicap Committee to provide the handicap recommendations for the Club. The Club remains responsible for providing the base data for the Reviews.
- 2.6. Prior to 15 June each year VPA, SAPA & WAPA Clubs shall submit their end of season handicap review list, and NSWPA & QPA Clubs shall submit their mid-season handicap review list, to their relevant State Handicap Committee.
- 2.7. Prior to 31 October each year NSWPA & QPA Clubs shall submit their end of season handicap review list, and VPA, SAPA & WAPA Clubs shall submit their mid-season handicap review list, to their relevant State Handicap Committees.

3. STATE HANDICAP COMMITTEES

- 3.1.** Each year each State Association shall appoint a Handicap Committee which shall be responsible for determining the handicaps of any player who plays polo in the particular state.
- 3.2.** Each year each State Handicap Committee shall elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman immediately following its appointment. The Chairman shall not remain in that role for longer than 3 years. The Chairman shall convene meetings and conference calls as appropriate to manage the business of the Committee. The Deputy Chairman shall act as Chairman in the Chairman's absence. The Secretary of the State Association shall act as Secretary of the Committee. The President of the State Association shall be entitled to be present at any meeting or conference call of the Committee, but shall not be entitled to vote.
- 3.3.** Meetings or conference calls shall require a quorum of three voting members.
- 3.4.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee may, at his discretion, co-opt members of the APF Benchmark Committee to participate in meetings and conference calls and vote on handicap decisions.
- 3.5.** The decision of a State Handicap Committee shall be final except in the case where the player is listed on another State's Handicap list with a different handicap, in which case the decision shall be referred to the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 3.6.** A State Handicap Committee may review a player's handicap and assign a different handicap at any time.
- 3.7.** Handicap changes for T rated players take immediate effect. Handicap changes for all other players take effect from the conclusion of any tournament they are participating in at the time of the decision.
- 3.8.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committees is responsible for the timely execution of the Reviews referred to at 5 and 6 below.
- 3.9.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee may undertake interim general reviews of handicaps at any time.
- 3.10.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee is responsible for ensuring that members of the committee are available to assess T Handicapped players as soon as possible after they commence playing in the State.
- 3.11.** State Handicap Committees shall maintain the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. Appropriate controls over conflicts of interest must be enforced, which at a minimum, would include members standing aside from decisions, and not lobbying or attempting to influence other members of the Committee in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees.
- 3.12.** While Committee members may debate matters during Committee meetings, once a vote has been taken and a decision made, the Committee would be expected to "speak with one voice" and Committee members should not distance themselves from decisions taken by the Committee.
- 3.13.** Prior to 30 June each year VPA, SAPA & WAPA State Handicap Committee shall submit their end of season handicap review list, and NSWPA & QPA State Handicap Committee shall submit their mid-season handicap review list, to the Benchmark Committee.
- 3.14.** Prior to 15 November each year NSWPA & QPA State Handicap Committee shall submit their end of season handicap review list, and VPA, SAPA & WAPA State Handicap Committee shall submit their mid-season handicap review list, to the Benchmark Committee.

4. APF BENCHMARK COMMITTEE

- 4.1.** The Benchmark Committee is appointed by the APF. Its purpose is to make recommendations to the APF, so that the APF may acquit its obligations in relation to handicaps under its Constitution.
- 4.2.** The members of the Benchmark Committee shall be determined as follows:
 - a.** One representative of each State Association. This would usually be the Chairman of the State Handicap Committee.

b. Two members appointed by the APF to provide balance to the committee, taking into account the need for:

- International perspective
- Regional balance - in any event no more than two representatives (State or APF) from any one State on the Benchmark Committee
- Amateur / professional balance

c. The President of the APF shall be Chairman but shall not be entitled to vote.

4.3. Benchmark Players may be members of the Benchmark Committee.

4.4. A quorum shall be four members, not counting the President.

4.5. Voting:

a) In the event that there is not a clear majority vote in relation to a Handicap, the Handicap recommended by the player's home State Association shall prevail.

b) All present have one vote regardless of whether or not they have seen the player play. They are there to make a judgment on the various recommendations and information provided by those present. They may take into account their knowledge of the individual player if they are in a position to do so.

4.6. The Benchmark Committee has the following functions:

- a.** To advise the APF on handicap issues and to make recommendations in relation to handicap policy;
- b.** To advise State Associations in relation to handicaps;
- c.** To provide a list of Benchmark Players who are to be taken as a guide by the States in assessing handicaps. A Benchmark Player is regarded as being representative of the middle of the handicap band; and
- d.** To resolve any differences in handicaps set by States.

4.7. The Benchmark Committee does not have the authority to:

- a.** Change a handicap given for a player unless two or more states have given that player different handicaps; or
- b.** Require a State to give a player a certain handicap. A State may if it chooses, assign a handicap to a Benchmark Player which differs from the Benchmark. The handicap would only be determined by the Benchmark Committee if another state assigned a different handicap to the player, in which case a decision would be made under 4.6 d) above.

4.8. The Benchmark Committee shall meet in person or by conference call as follows:

- a.** To assign Benchmarks to assist State Handicap Committees conduct Reviews;
- b.** Provide advice to State Handicap Committees, generally, and to bring to the attention of State Handicap Committees apparent anomalies; and
- c.** To determine handicaps for players with different handicaps assigned by States.
- d.** Two handicap review meetings will be held each year: prior to 30 June (handicaps effective immediately) and prior to 30 November (handicaps effective 1 January the following year). The APF Board will adopt and distribute the Handicap list by 15th July and 15th December respectively.

4.9. Where a State assigns a handicap to an interstate player during the year, and that handicap differs from the APF endorsed handicap, the matter shall be referred to the Benchmark Committee for decision. The President of the APF, as Chairman of the Benchmark Committee shall convene a conference call of the Benchmark Committee to determine the matter. Until such time as the matter is resolved, the player will continue to play on the APF endorsed handicap.

4.10. In the absence of manifest error, the APF will resolve to adopt the handicap recommendations of the State Handicap Committees as amended by the Benchmark Committee under 4.8 c. above.

4.11. The Benchmark Committee shall maintain the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. Appropriate controls over conflicts of interest must be enforced, which at a minimum, would include members standing aside from decisions, and not lobbying or attempting to influence other members of the Committee in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees. While Committee members may debate matters during Committee meetings, once a vote has been taken and a decision

made, the Committee would be expected to “speak with one voice” and Committee members should not distance themselves from decisions taken by the Committee.

5. MID SEASON REVIEW

- 5.1. State Associations shall require clubs to submit a list of any players who were playing members of the club during the year to date, identifying unrated players, T-handicap players and any players that in the opinion of the club:
- the player has played significantly below handicap; or
 - the player has played significantly above handicap.
- 5.2. State Handicap Committees shall meet and discuss the lists provided by the clubs referred to at 5.1 above and shall assign revised handicaps for unrated players, T-handicap players and where in the opinion of the State Handicap Committee, a player’s existing handicap is clearly not reflective of the player’s performance, relative to other players of the same handicap. Other players will not normally be re-handicapped at the mid-season review unless they are considered to be out of line by more than one goal.

6. END OF SEASON REVIEW

- 6.1. Prior to 31 August each year, the APF Benchmark Committee shall prepare and distribute to State Associations a list of Benchmark Players to assist State Handicap Committees in their handicap determinations.
- 6.2. State Associations shall require affiliated clubs to submit recommended handicap lists, showing for each player who was a playing member of the club during the year:
- the player’s current handicap;
 - the club’s recommended handicap for the following year; and
 - comments which may assist the State Handicap Committee (eg win/loss record).
- 6.3. At the end of season review, State Handicap Committees shall review the recommended handicap lists and assign provisional handicaps to each player, taking into account the list of Benchmark Players provided by the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 6.4. State Associations shall submit a Provisional Handicap List to the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 6.5. The APF Benchmark Committee shall submit to the APF a Final Handicap List which shall have been determined in accordance with the APF Benchmark Committee Guidelines attached at Schedule 1.
- 6.6. Within two weeks the APF shall adopt and distribute to the State Associations the Final Handicap List.

7. RATINGS

- 7.1. Any player who was not subject to an Review within the previous year shall be assigned a T Handicap Rating until assessed by a State Handicap Committee, as follows:
- a. In the case of players who have played polo previously, they shall be assigned the a T Handicap of their last rating; and
 - b. In the case of ‘S’ or Starter players meeting the requirements for being handicapped (see 8.0 below), they shall be assigned a fair and accurate T Handicap by their Club and must play two tournaments of less than 6 goals during which time they must be assessed by a State Handicap committee.
- 7.2. Foreign players, being players who are not citizens of Australia, shall play on their highest international

handicap with a T Handicap Rating, regardless of a Handicap assigned at a Review. A player's highest international handicap shall include any handicap which has been decided, and officially applies in the relevant country.

Foreign players returning to Australia who have been subject to a Review which set a handicap different from the player's highest international handicap, may apply to the relevant state handicap committee to have a pre-determination of handicap and removal of the T Rating, where in the opinion of the State Handicap Committee the adoption of the highest international handicap would be unfair.

8. NEW PLAYERS

- 8.1** New players who have not played polo, shall be assigned an 'S' handicap and may only play practice chukkas at clubs of which they are a member, they may not play in tournaments. To be upgraded to a -2 handicap a player must take and pass the Rules Test, the club assigns a fair and accurate T handicap when they consider that he is sufficiently experienced as a player, and meets the handicap evaluation guidelines as shown in Annex A. Clubs must inform the State Handicap Committee of any T handicaps assigned.

9. APPEALS

- 9.1.** Appeals should be made direct to the President of the Australian Polo Federation, who will not consider appeals on a subjective view of handicap levels, but only to the extent that there has been a substantially incorrect procedure or substantially incorrect information has been provided. In resolving an appeal the President may institute such procedures as he deems appropriate in the circumstances that achieve the objectives at paragraph 1
- 9.2.** The appeal is to be accompanied by a payment of \$500 to cover administrative costs in conducting the review, which shall be refunded only if the APF upholds the appeal.

10. FOREIGN PLAYERS

- 10.1.** Clubs must not accept nominations from foreign players (being players who are not citizens of Australia) on 2 goals or less to play in any tournament grade where teams of 12 goals and above are playing; the aim being to assist in the development of young Australian players. The APF Board may grant an exemption to this rule following receipt of a written request from the Club, where they are satisfied that either there is no Australian player is available or the foreign player is a visiting patron and no Australian players will be disadvantaged by the exemption, or the foreign player has been a handicapped APF member for two years with a current APF handicap.

11. OFFENCES

- 11.1.** It shall be an offence of misconduct for any club or player to knowingly mislead a State Handicap Committee Chairman or Committee or the APF President or APF Benchmark Committee in relation to a player's previous handicap, experience or handicap applying elsewhere in the world. Any offence under this provision shall be dealt with under the APF Discipline Policy and Procedures.

Annex A - Handicap Evaluation Guidelines

HANDICAP 'S' or STARTER

A person who has little or no experience in polo, it may range from a person who has had no previous riding to someone who is an expert rider but has yet to gain an understanding of the game. A 'starter' or 'S' handicap may only play in practice chukkas at clubs of which they are a member, they may not play in tournaments.

HANDICAP '-2'

- **Rules.** Will need help to prevent him fouling but a sufficient understanding of the Line of the Ball and the Right of Way so that he is not endangering himself or other players on the field.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to stop and turn, hook another player and maintain control when ridden off by an experienced player.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit adequate offside shots most of the time, and to achieve some success with nearside shots.
- **Set Plays.** May require some assistance but reasonable knowledge of the standard positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties'.
- **Tactics.** Likely to need assistance but has an understanding of the roles and positioning of the different team members, and the importance of counting heads, taking a man, and turning up; what he meant to be trying to do as part of the team.

HANDICAP '-1'

- **Rules.**
 - Should not foul but likely to need help against being sucked into fouls by more experienced players.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to ride at speed and ride off safely.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit offside shots of a reasonable length and accuracy, and adequate nearside shots most of the time. Need not be a consistently good striker of the ball.
- **Set Plays.** Should not require assistance on the standard positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties'.
- **Tactics.** Still likely to need assistance but his understanding should enable him to act independently and create a limited number of plays for teammates.

HANDICAP '0'

- **Rules.**
 - Should have a good understanding of the rules and should rarely foul.
 - Should have passed the C Grade Umpire Accreditation/umpire rules test.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to ride at full speed, stop and turn, ride off safely and maintain control when ridden off and bumped at speed by the most experienced players.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit offside and nearside shots of a reasonable length and accuracy, including tailed backhanders and under the neck. Should be a consistent and reliable striker of the ball on the offside and able to hit the ball more than twice at a fast gallop down the field under pressure. May still be limited on a nearside. Able to turn and/or dribble the ball.
- **Set Plays.** Should be completely familiar with positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties', and also be able to help other less experienced players.
- **Tactics.** Should be able to anticipate the play so that he is not just chasing the ball, and make the right decision on taking the man or the ball. Able to turn the play from defense to offense without fouling.