

London Hardcourt Bike Polo Association Rules

Last updated: 11th January 2012

1. Teams

- 1.1 – Teams will consist of three players.
- 1.2 – Substitutions.
 - 1.2.1 – A team can substitute a player in response to player injury or unforeseen absence.
 - 1.2.2 – If the player injury occurs more than two weeks prior to the tournament, the substituted player must be chosen and declared before the first day of tournament play.
 - 1.2.3 – If the injury occurs during the tournament a substitute may be chosen to replace the injured player.
 - 1.2.4 – Once the change is made, the team is then set for the duration of the tournament.
 - 1.2.5 – No player can play in two different teams in the same event, unless his/her team has already been eliminated.

2. Equipment

- 2.1 – All equipment must be inspected and deemed safe before a player is allowed to step on to the court.
 - 2.1.1 – Teams must be able to show that their equipment has been inspected before participating in any game.
 - 2.1.1.1 – Failure to have equipment inspected may result in match forfeiture.
- 2.2 – Bike.
 - 2.2.1 – Any common type of bike is allowed.
 - 2.2.1.1 – Trikes and recumbents are not allowed.
 - 2.2.2 – You may not add anything to the bike to help block shots.
 - 2.2.2.1 – Wheel covers are permitted.
 - 2.2.3 – Handlebars must be capped.
 - 2.2.3.1 – Bullhorn handlebars are not allowed.
 - 2.2.3.2 – Drop handlebars are not allowed.
 - 2.2.4 – All axles must be cut and filed to be flush with the nuts.
- 2.3 – Mallet.
 - 2.3.1 – The head of the mallet will resemble a croquet mallet.
 - 2.3.1.1 – The mallet head can be a maximum of 180mm in length and 65mm in diameter.
 - 2.3.2 – The end of the mallet handle must be capped / plugged.
 - 2.3.3 – Mallets must not have any dangerous edges (or protrusions) on any face of the mallet head (for example: sharp edges, bolts, the shaft protruding out the underside).
- 2.4 – Player safety gear.
 - 2.4.1 – Helmets are mandatory.
 - 2.4.2 – Further body protection is recommended.
- 2.5 – Uniforms.
 - 2.5.1 – Teams are required to wear matching colours.

3. Courts

- 3.1 – Ideally, courts should be around 40 x 20m and no smaller than 30 x 15m.
- 3.2 – Ideally, courts will have a boarded surround that is at least 1m in height.
- 3.3 – Ideally, courts will have triangular or rounded corners.
- 3.4 – Courts should be swept clear if any debris builds up during a tournament.

4. Goals

- 4.1 – All goals will ideally have nets.
- 4.2 – Goals should ideally be 180 x 80cm.
- 4.3 – The goal line will be marked.

5. Starting a game

- 5.1 – The ball will be positioned at center court.
- 5.2 – Each team will proceed to their side, facing center court with rear wheels touching the back wall.
- 5.3 – After making sure each team is ready (feet on pedals), the referee will blow the whistle to start the game. (There will be no "3 – 2 – 1 – Polo!")
- 5.4 – Upon hearing the whistle, each team will "joust" for the ball at center court.
 - 5.4.1 – Only one person must joust for each team.
 - 5.4.2 – Both players jousting must be like-handed.
 - 5.4.3 – Players who "false start" will receive a warning and the joust will be repeated.
 - 5.4.3.1 – Players who repeatedly "false start" will be sin binned and the joust will be repeated.

6. After a goal and "resetting" the game

- 6.1 – The referee will stop the time.
- 6.2 – Possession of the ball is given to the correct team.
- 6.3 – Both teams return to their half of the court.

- 6.4 – The attacking team can cross the halfway line once the other team has returned to their half of the court.
 - 6.4.1 – A ball turnover may be awarded if the attacking team cross too soon.
- 6.5 – The defending team must wait for the ball or an offensive player to cross the halfway line.
 - 6.5.1 – The game will "reset" again and a warning will be issued if they cross too soon.
 - 6.5.2 – If the defending team repeatedly "false start" the "reset" then a player may be sin binned by the ref and the game will "reset".
- 6.6 – Play continues and the time restarts once the ball or an offensive player crosses the halfway line.
 - 6.6.1 – You may not score a goal from your half of the court if the game is still stopped (no "cheap shots").
 - 6.6.1.1 – The goal will be disallowed, the defending team will take possession of the ball and the game is "reset".

7. Overtime

- 7.1 – A game will go into overtime if it is a tied match on the elimination rounds.
- 7.2 – When the time runs out, the referee must announce the beginning of overtime by calling "golden goal".
 - 7.2.1 – The game continues into "extra time" without interruption.
- 7.3 – The match will be decided by the first team to score.

8. Goal scoring and "shuffles"

- 8.1 – A goal must originate as a "shot".
 - 8.1.1 – A shot is made by striking the ball with the end of the mallet.
- 8.2 – Wrist shots or scoop shots are not considered a "shot".
 - 8.2.1 – Wrist shots or scoop shots may be used to pass the ball.
 - 8.2.2 – A goal cannot be scored with a wrist shot or scoop shot.
- 8.3 – A "shuffle" is made by striking the ball with the broad side of the mallet or mallet shaft.
 - 8.3.1 – Shuffles cannot be used to score a goal on the opponent.
 - 8.3.2 – The shuffle of the ball by the defending team into their own goal will be considered a goal.
 - 8.3.3 – The defending team will take possession of the ball and the game is "reset".
- 8.4 – Deflections of shuffle shots.
 - 8.4.1 – If an offensive player shuffles the ball and it deflects off a member of the defending team (no real momentum or severe change in direction), it will not count as a goal.
 - 8.4.1.1 – The goal is treated as a "shuffle" by the offensive player, the deflection is meaningless.
 - 8.4.2.1 – The defending team will take possession of the ball and the game is "reset".
 - 8.4.2 – If an offensive player shuffles the ball and it is redirected by the defending team into the goal (real momentum change and brief control of the ball), it will count as a goal.
 - 8.4.2.1 – The goal is an "own goal" by the defending team.
 - 8.4.3 – Any offensive player's shot that deflects off the broad ("shuffle") side their teammate's mallet will be viewed as a shuffle and will not count as a goal.
 - 8.4.3.1 – The defending team will take possession of the ball and the game is "reset".
- 8.5 – Wheel shots will be counted as deflections and as such, the origin of the ball must be a shot (not a shuffle).
 - 8.5.1 – Any wheel shot that originated in a shuffle, will be treated as a shuffle goal and be disallowed.
 - 8.5.1.1 – The defending team will take possession of the ball and the game is "reset".
- 8.6 – Ball-joints and side-joints are made by pinning the ball between an open end of the mallet head and the playing surface and then dragging it.
 - 8.6.1 – A player that ball-joints/side-joints cannot score until after he makes a pass.
- 8.7 – "Buzzer" shots will only count if the ball crosses the goal line before the sounding of the final whistle (or similar).
- 8.8 – If the net is dislodged or moved from its proper position and the ball crosses the line of where the net should have been, a goal will be awarded.
 - 8.8.1 – Goals are not awarded if the ball enters a "dislodged or moved" net and the ball did not cross the line "where the net should have been".
 - 8.8.1.1 – If the goal is disallowed then the defending team get possession of the ball, the goal is repositioned and the game is "reset".
- 8.9 – After a goal is scored, the team that was scored upon retain possession of the ball and the game is "reset"

9. Foot-down or "dab"

- 9.1 – A foot-down or "dab" is defined as any player placing their foot on any horizontal surface (e.g., ground, mallethead, ball, fallen bike, another player, top of the boards).
- 9.2 – When a player "dabs" that player is out of play and may not interfere with the ball or other players until they "tap" one of two designated center court tap out points.
 - 9.2.1 – A "dabbed" player that unable to ride to the tap out spot due to match play must let the play pass.
 - 9.2.1.1 – Interfering with play will result in a penalty.
 - 9.2.2 – If the dabbed player was acting as goalie, that player must immediately exit the area as soon as possible.
 - 9.2.2.1 – If the player stops a shot from going into the net, at the ref's discretion, it may be ruled a goal.
 - 9.2.2.1.1 – A two-minute penalty may be awarded to the offending player.
- 9.3 – The tap out area will be located at both sides of center court.
- 9.4 – Players must tap out by hitting the tap out area with their mallet.
 - 9.4.1 – A player might be asked to tap out again by the ref.
 - 9.4.2 – The ref may ask players to tap out after another player (or wait while another player taps out) at their discretion.

10. Odd events during a game

- 10.1 – If the ball becomes lodged on a player, bicycle or in the spokes of a wheel in such a way that it cannot be played safely, game play will be stopped.
 - 10.1.1 – The team that had the ball become lodged on them retain possession and the game is "reset".
- 10.2 – A player playing the ball with their feet.
 - 10.2.1 – Playing the ball with the feet will be counted as a foot-down or "dab" (see 9.1) and that player will be required to tap-out.
 - 10.2.1.1 – Intentionally playing the ball with your feet may incur a ball turnover, or penalty and the game will "reset".
- 10.3 – If the ball goes out of play. The referee will stop time and ask for the ball to be retrieved.
 - 10.3.1 – When the ball is retrieved, the team that didn't strike the ball out of play (ignoring deflections) will get possession of the ball and the game is "reset".
- 10.4 – If you lose your mallet during a game you must go and collect it immediately.
 - 10.4.1 – You may not "tap in" without a mallet.

11. General Court Behavior and Physical Contact

- 11.1 – Clear intent to injure another player or repeated reckless behavior after receiving two warnings will be met with a two-minute penalty, or ejection from the game.
- 11.2. – Body contact.
 - 11.2.1 – Shoulder-to-shoulder contact and the use of static elbows is allowed (you may "shield" yourself from others to avoid your bikes becoming tangled together, etc).
 - 11.2.2 – Holding (with hands, elbows, or mallets) is not allowed (for example: "chicken winging", grabbing shirts, etc).
 - 11.2.3 – Pushing with the hands is not allowed (for example: hands on a player's back, pushing a player away from you when being screened, etc).
 - 11.2.4 – Mallet-to-body contact is not allowed (for example: hitting a player with your mallet, hooking a player's hand, etc).
 - 11.2.5 – Body-to-bike contact is not allowed (for example: holding part of another player's bike, leaning across a player's cockpit, etc).
 - 11.2.6 – Body pressing is allowed. (for example: pressing and leaning like-for-like between aware players is fine, flying in unawares and taking someone off their bike is not ok).
 - 11.2.7 – Pushing or checking someone from behind is not allowed.
 - 11.2.8 – Physical blows about the neck or head, any punching or kicking are not allowed.
 - 11.2.8.1 – The offending player will be immediately expelled from the game.
- 11.3 – Bike contact.
 - 11.3.1 – Bike-to-bike contact is not allowed (deliberate colliding, contact, cutting up, "T-boning", etc).
 - 11.3.2 – Incidental bike-to-bike contact is allowed (bikes getting caught up in each other, bars touching, pedals touching, wheels touching, etc).
 - 11.3.3 – Riding through another player's bike (regardless of the speed) is not allowed (hopping around and attempting to free yourselves from each other is fine).
 - 11.3.4 – Mallet-to-bike contact is not allowed (for example: hooking a player's bike, allowing your mallet to go under a player's wheel, etc).
 - 11.3.5 – Throwing a rear wheel or skidding into another player's bike is not allowed.
- 11.4 – Mallet contact.
 - 11.4.1 – Mallet-to-mallet contact is allowed (however it is poor etiquette to interact with another player's mallet if he is not playing the ball or in front of the goal).
 - 11.4.2 – Mallet-to-mallet contact must be "hooks" not "hacks" (for example: swinging forcefully at a mallet is a hack. Lifting or pulling another player's mallet is a hook.)
 - 11.4.3 – Incidental mallet-to-mallet contact (for example: two players swinging for the same ball) is not normally called, but can be at the referee's discretion.
- 11.5 – Checking along the boards.
 - 11.5.1 – For boards 1m or higher – checking is allowed.
 - 11.5.2 – For boards lower than 1m – a play for the ball along short boards that results in a player going over the boards will be heavily scrutinized.
 - 11.5.2.1 – If the check against the boards is deemed excessive, or reckless, the referee has the option to issue a warning or a penalty.
 - 11.5.2.2 – If the check is deemed appropriate and the opposing player simply could not maintain their balance, play will continue.
 - 11.5.3 – For "mesh walled" courts (where bars can get inserted/caught) – a play for the ball along mesh courts that results in a player crashing due to catching their bars will be heavily scrutinized.
 - 11.5.3.1 – If the check against the "mesh" is deemed excessive, or reckless, the referee has the option to issue a warning or a penalty.
 - 11.5.3.2 – If the check is deemed appropriate and the opposing player simply failed to control their bike/ use their arms, play will continue.
- 11.6 – Goalie contact.
 - 11.6.1 – A player may use their mallet to hook the mallet of the player in goal in an effort to get them out of position, or prevent them from stopping a shot.
 - 11.6.2 – Body-to-body contact or any incidental bike contact with the goalie is allowed only if the contact is between the player with the ball and the goalie.
- 11.7 – Throwing of mallets is not allowed at any time, in any situation.
 - 11.7.1 – Intentionally throwing a mallet will automatically result in at least a 30-second penalty.
 - 11.7.2 – If a thrown mallet stops a ball from going through the goal the referee may use his discretion to award a goal.

12. Time-outs

- 12.1 – The referee reserves the right to stop the match for any reason.
- 12.2 – Each team gets one time-out per game.
 - 12.2.1 – The referee may award a you a second "mechanical" time-out if the mechanical was caused as a result of a foul by the other team.
- 12.3 – Time-outs are 5 minutes long maximum.
- 12.4 – Time-outs will/can be called:
 - 12.4.1 – After a goal is scored.
 - 12.4.1.1 – Any team may call a time-out after a goal is scored, the ball is retained by the team that were scored on and the game is "reset".
 - 12.4.2 – For mechanical reasons only, a team can call a time-out once they have possession of the ball.
 - 12.4.2.1 – After the mechanical time-out, the team who called the time-out give possession of the ball to the other team and the game is "reset".
- 12.5 – If a player crashes or falls off their bike, play will continue.
- 12.6 – The ref will stop the game for serious injury.

13. Penalties

- 13.1 – The referee has the right to use at his/her discretion any of the available penalties at any time, in any order for the infraction in question.
 - 13.1.1 – Any aggressive or argumentative back-chat towards the referee can result in a penalty.
- 13.2 – Warnings.
 - 13.2.1 – For most infractions the referee will issue a verbal warning. A verbal warning may also be followed by being instructed to tap-out.
 - 13.2.2 – Repeating the same behavior will result in a more severe penalty.
- 13.3 – Tap-out.
 - 13.3.1 – The referee may instruct a player to tap-out at either side of center court.
 - 13.3.2 – Tap-outs will always happen without stoppage.
 - 13.3.3 – Infractions that can result in a tap-out.
 - 13.3.3.1 – A foot down.
 - 13.3.3.2 – Leaning on a goal.
 - 13.3.3.3 – Unintentional sweeping of another player's wheel with the mallet.
- 13.4 – Double Tap-out.
 - 13.4.1 – Depending on the severity or ill will of the infraction, a referee might ask a player to tap-out at both sides of the court.
 - 13.4.2 – Tap-outs will always happen without stoppage.
 - 13.4.3 – Infractions that can result in a double tap-out.
 - 13.4.3.1 – Throwing rear wheel or skidding into another player (1st offense).
 - 13.4.3.2 – Striking an opponent's mallet (1st offense).
 - 13.4.3.3 – Hooking/holding/grabbing and otherwise restraining another player (1st offense).
 - 13.4.3.4 – Any ill-intentioned action.
- 13.5 – Ball turnover.
 - 13.5.1 – The game and time stop, the referee awards the ball to a team and the game is "reset".
 - 13.5.2 – The ball will often be turned over after fouls, balls out of play, after "shuffle" goals, etc.
- 13.6 – Ejections from the court.
 - 13.6.1 – When the referee observes an infraction, they will stop the game/time and call for the offending player to exit the court, the ball may turnover and the game is "reset".
 - 13.6.1.1 – The ejection may be for 30 seconds, or 2 minutes.
 - 13.6.1.2 – The timekeeper will declare when they can re-enter the game.
 - 13.6.1.3 – The penalized player will remain off the court for the time period given, unless the innocent team scores during the power play.
 - 13.6.1.4 – After the innocent team scores during a power play, the penalized player may re-enter the court.
 - 13.6.2 – Infractions that can result in a 30 second penalty.
 - 13.6.2.1 – This penalty will follow verbal warnings or will be used to penalize players for a more serious first-time rule violation.
 - 13.6.2.2 – Intentionally throwing a mallet will automatically result in at least a 30-second penalty.
 - 13.6.2.3 – Strong fouls.
 - 13.6.3 – Infractions that can result in a two minute penalty.
 - 13.6.3.1 – This is reserved for excessive force or reckless behavior that results in injury, or any other dangerous behavior that has been met with two prior warnings.
 - 13.6.4 – Ejection for the remainder of the game.
 - 13.6.4.1 – This penalty is reserved for fighting and willfully dangerous play that either results in or is deemed as having the potential to cause serious physical harm.
 - 13.6.4.1.1 – Ejected players may not re-enter the game after a goal is scored by the opposing team.

14. Playing "advantage"

- 14.1 – The referee may put their hand in the air to signal an "advantage" is being played after a foul has been committed.
 - 14.1.1 – Advantages will be played after a foul has been committed but the innocent team still retain possession of the ball (the "advantage").
- 14.2 – The length of time for an advantage to be played is around 5 seconds (ref's discretion).
 - 14.2.1 – If the referee plays advantage after a strong foul, they may simply wait for possession to be lost before stopping the game and sin binning players.

- 14.2.2 – If possession of the ball changes while the advantage is being played, the referee will stop the game, call the foul, turnover the ball and the game will "reset".
- 14.3 – If referee lowers their hand, the advantage has played out and the game continues as normal.

15. Referees

- 15.1 – There will be one main referee for the game.
- 15.1.1 – Main referees have the final say in all decisions.
- 15.1.1.1 – The main referee has the power to overrule a goal judge.
- 15.2 – A further goal-line referee will be behind (or near) to each goal to confirm goals and aid the main referee.
- 15.2.1 – Goal referees will put a hand into the air to announce a goal, and cross their arms for no-goal.
- 15.2.2 – Goal judges will be responsible for resetting nets that are knocked out of place.
- 15.3 – The timekeeper will stop the time after goals and during time-outs or ball turnovers.
- 15.3.1 – The time is restarted when the team with possession cross the halfway line.
- 15.3.2 – The main referee can act as timekeeper.
- 15.4 – Referee duties and responsibilities.
- 15.4.1 – Inspection of all player equipment.
- 15.4.2 – Keeping time.
- 15.4.3 – Keeping score.
- 15.4.4 – Announcing remaining time at regular intervals.
- 15.5 Referee equipment
- 15.5.1 – Whistle – for stop/start of match play, indicating timeouts, penalties and goals scored.
- 15.5.2 – Stopwatch.
- 15.5.3 – Score sheets.

Referee Guidelines

Attend the referee meeting of the tournament you're attending to ensure you understand the rules and can ask any questions before refing your first game.

Starting out:

1. Source goal refs (make sure they know how to call a goal) and make sure the goals are the correct size.
2. Equipment check of all players (bar ends, mallets plugs, etc), no excuses accepted or exceptions allowed.
3. Give the players a mini summary of your understanding of the rules above.
4. Make an impression, tell the players your style of refing and ask for any questions from them pre-game.
5. Check who's charging (left on right charging is not allowed).
6. Start the game (be ready to call a "false start" if necessary).

Dos and Don'ts:

- Do be impartial and consistent, this ensures a fair game.
- Do be vocal (keep telling the players what you're seeing, issue warning, whatever suits your style).
- Do be attentive (it's crucial you have your full attention on the game at all times).
- Do say what you see (don't be swayed by anyone and don't call something that you didn't see).
- Do give a reason for what you're calling ("illegal bike on bike", "t-bone", "pushing", etc).
- Do give a reason for not calling anything ("that's ok", "incidental contact", "like-for-like", etc).
- Don't stop the game on crashes unless a foul was committed (polo is a contact sport, aggression/crashes is part of the game).
- Don't forget to play "advantage" after fouls if necessary (don't penalise the innocent team if they're on a break).
- Don't engage in conversation with any players, tell them you'll "discuss it afterwards" or similar, (penalise the player if they keep giving you backchat).
- Don't just call foot downs, or crashes (for example: a hand grabbing another player's bar is an instant strong foul regardless of anyone crashing).
- Don't be afraid to use "strong foul" calls (sin bin offenses) and call incidents/fouls first time, don't allow each player one "first offense".
- Don't use your whistle for anything except to stop the game (to issue ball turnovers, sin bin offenses and call time-outs, etc), be vocal and animated instead.

General thoughts:

- Know the rules inside and out, ask questions of others if you think of a situation you wouldn't know how to call (pre-game).
- Try to think of the players as either "playing the ball" (regardless of possession, you're still either involved in a play or not, for example: being ready to intercept a pass/break) or as "playing the player" (for example: not looking at the ball/play and trying to force foot downs), if someone is "playing the ball" then it's likely there will be more incidental incidents, if they're "playing the player" then it's likely there will be more malicious incidents (fouls).
- Make your call and stick to it, don't be swayed.
- Try to think of fouls as either "weak fouls" (no need to stop the game, tap out offenses) and "strong fouls" (play advantage, then stop the game and issue a sin bin or a ball turnover).
- Players with possession should be given the benefit of the doubt if your unsure of the call. A classic example of this is when a defending player brakes and an attacker runs into their back wheel and crashes. Obviously if the attacker is not looking up (knowing where they're going) then they are at fault, otherwise it's likely that the defender is at fault.
- Not all refs will make the same calls, this is fine. Ensure that you make consistent calls and you'll be a good ref.