

## **4-H Polocrosse Project**

### **What is Polocrosse?**

As the name implies, Polocrosse is a combination of polo and lacrosse. It is played outside, on a field, on horseback. Each rider uses a cane stick to which is attached a racquet head with a loose thread net in which the ball is caught and carried. The ball is made of sponge rubber approximately 4" across. The objective is to score goals by throwing the ball between your opponent's goal posts.

Polocrosse is a fun game and has been described as being a bit like hockey on horseback. The game provides good, healthy, outdoor competition where teamwork and cooperation are highlighted. The game emphasizes horsemanship, ball skills and strategy.

At the elite level, it is a fast-paced, skilful, exciting game. It presents an incomparable athletic challenge involving speed and stamina, demanding lightning quick reflexes of both horse and rider.

### **History of Polocrosse**

Polocrosse was first developed in England in the 1930's as an exercise to teach and improve riding skills. Reaching Australia in the early 1940's, polocrosse soon evolved into a highly competitive outdoor sport. Polocrosse is now played in 13 countries world-wide. There are numerous opportunities to travel the world with teams or player exchanges, even a chance to represent Canada on the next World Cup team.

### **What does Polocrosse have to offer?**

- It takes the basic western riding maneuvers such as stops, turns and roll-backs, and incorporates them into a team sport.
- It improves the riders' horsemanship. To perform well in the game, horse and rider have to work together as one.
- It raises the horse's training level and the player's riding ability; you have to practise to be good.
- It gives you purpose in your riding; the competition of the game adds a new kind of fun to riding.
- It is a team sport; you, your horse and your friends all work together.
- Polocrosse is a game that is simple to learn, but takes a lifetime to master.
- It is inexpensive compared to other horse sports; you are only allowed one horse for a weekend of competition. There are no judges, no cattle and no arena to pay for and there is no standing around waiting for your run.
- It affords opportunity for international competition and exchanges.

### **Rider Equipment**

- **Helmet** –an approved ASTM/SEI or BSI equestrian helmet.

- **Footwear** – boots with a heel. If spurs are worn, they cannot have sharp rowels.
- **Racquet** - there are a number of different style racquets available. The racquet is basically a cane stick handle with a loose thread net racquet head for catching, carrying and throwing the ball. The racquet can be any length but is usually 3 or 4 feet long.
- **Numbers** - players must be correctly numbered with numbers clearly visible and displayed on their backs.

### **Horse Equipment**

- **Saddle** – the most suitable type of saddle is an Australian Stock Saddle, but you can use any saddle as long as it doesn't have a horn. New players with western saddles will be allowed to participate in the walk-trot level, but are encouraged to use a saddle with no horn. For safety reasons, all saddles must be equipped with a breast plate, girth and over girth.
- **Bridle** – any bridle can be used, but no bits with protrusions are permitted (ie. Curbs and snaffles with half or full check pieces are not allowed) and reins must be joined
- **Protective Boots/Bandages and Bell boots** – must be on all 4 legs of the horse.

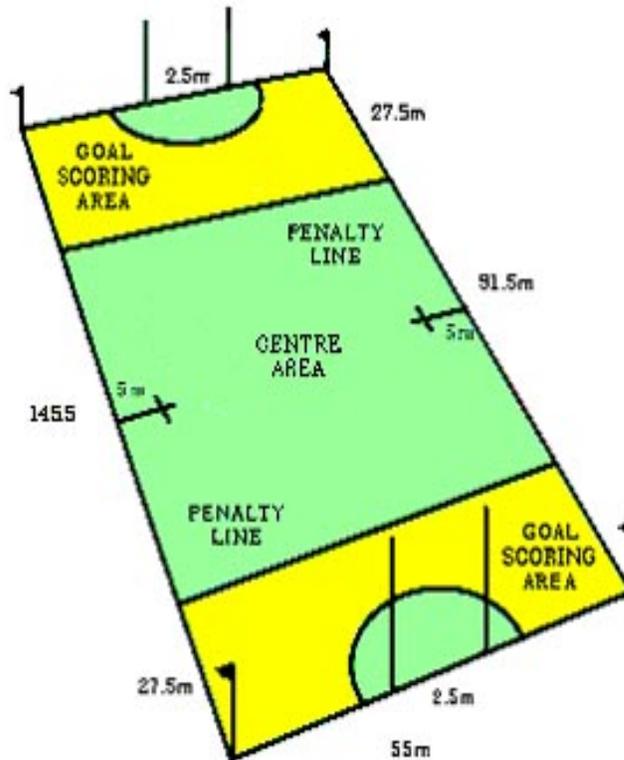
### **What sort of horse do I need?**

You can play polocrosse on any sort of horse (so long as it is not blind in either eye, is not a stallion, is fit, is under proper control and is not unsafe to players or other horses), but you will find some more suitable than others, even though they come in a great variety of shapes and sizes. There is no restriction on their height, although the ideal is around 15.2 hands. Horses that have cattle penned, or pony club or 4-H experience generally make good polocrosse horses. Many top polocrosse horses are Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse crosses which have great athletic ability, agility, stamina and courage. Of course, it is easier to learn on an experienced horse but there is no reason why you can't both learn together. Many of our elite players have commenced their sporting careers on older experienced horses that are accustomed to play as they will tend to follow the ball. Players are allowed only one horse per game, except in the case of injury.

### **How is the Field Set Up?**

Polocrosse is played on a field that is 60 yards (55 m) x 160 yards (146.5 m) with three separate areas; two goal scoring areas (one on each end) and the middle area. These areas are separated by a line that extends the width of the field, 30 yards (27.5 m) in from each goal that is called the "penalty line". This line encloses what is termed as the "goal scoring area". Directly in front of the goal is a semi-circle with a radius of 11 yards (10 m). The area between the two penalty lines is the center field. Goal posts are 8 feet (2.5 m) apart. To score, the ball

must be thrown from outside the semi-circle in front of the goal, but from within the goal scoring area.



### How is the Game Played?

A team consists of six players, divided into two sections of three each that play alternating time periods or chukkas of 6-8 minutes with intervals of 2 minutes after each chukka. A maximum of eight chukkas usually comprises a full match. Each section of a team will play in the opposite direction in successive chukkas. The total number of goals scored by the two sections determines the winning score.

The three players in a section consist of a No. 1 or "Attack", a No. 2 or "Center", and a No. 3 or "Defense". Only the No.1 of the attacking team and the No. 3 of the defending team are allowed inside the goal scoring area. The No. 1 is the only player who can score a goal for the team and he can only do so while in the goal scoring area. To score a goal, the ball must be thrown between the goal posts at any height. The No. 2 can only play in the center of the field. The No. 3 is the only player who can defend the goal for his team. This team structure was designed to encourage players to pass the ball about amongst themselves, making it a more highly skilled, faster sport.

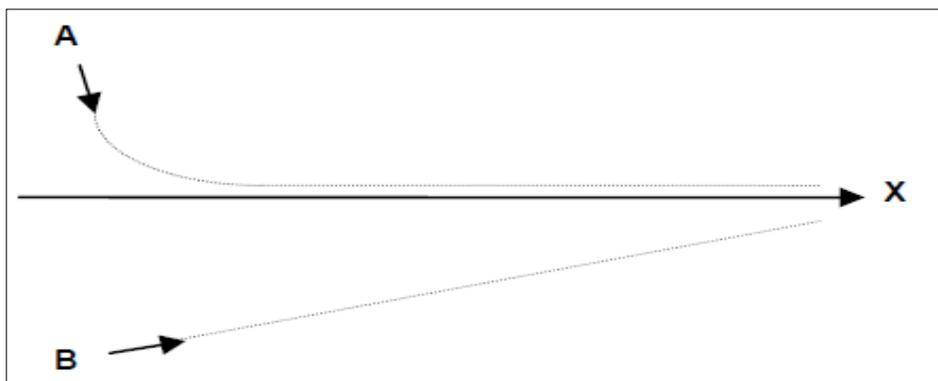
The game starts in the centre field with the players lining up at the 'T', one team beside the other on the side furthest away from their objective goal, with the No. 1's in front, the No 2's behind them and the No. 3's in the back, all facing the umpire. The mounted umpire throws the ball high and above the player's heads between the opposing ranks of players and within reach of the player's racquets. The game recommences similarly after each goal has been scored. Whenever an attempt at goal fails, the No. 3, or defense player, throws the ball back into play from just behind the penalty line, at a point directly in front of where the ball crossed the back line. The throw must cover ten yards in a forward direction, and all other players must not obstruct the line of travel. No player other than the opposing No. 1 is to be within 10 yards of the spot from where the throw is to be taken. The number 1 of the opposing team follows the number 3 out of the goal scoring area on the number 3's racquet side at a distance so as not to obstruct the number 3's throw.

Players can pick up the ball from the ground or catch it in their racquet, and then ride with it or throw it from player to player until the No. 1 is in possession of it in the goal scoring area. A player cannot carry the ball over the penalty line, but must bounce it or throw it to the No. 1 player over the line., If the No. 1 player is in possession of the ball, they must bounce it over the line and attempt to catch it once they are across the line. When carrying the ball, a player must carry it on the racquet side ie. Right handed players must carry it on the off-side of the horse. They can, however, pick-up or catch the ball on the non-racquet side provided they immediately bring it back to their racquet side.

## Rules

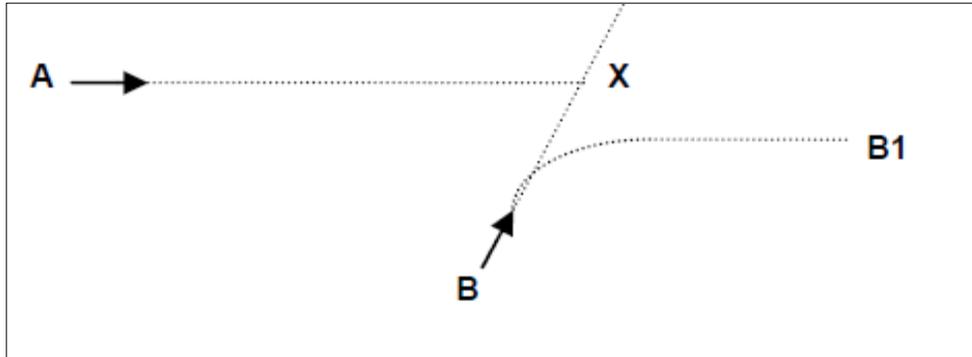
### o Line of the ball

- The line of the ball is the imaginary line along which the ball is traveling.
- The player who is riding in the direction in which the ball was traveling, or at the least angle to it, is in possession of the line of the ball.



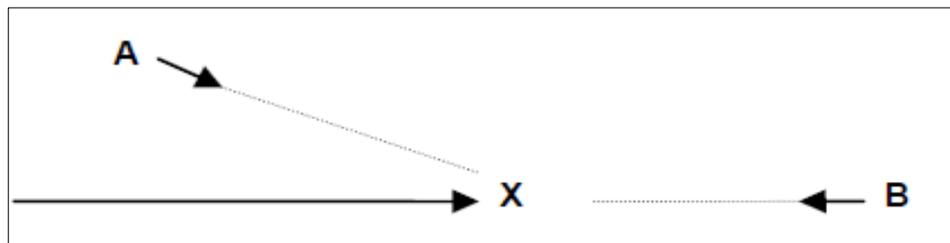
*The ball has been thrown to X. Neither A nor B have thrown it there. A & B start riding towards the ball and a collision seems probable. B shall give way to A because A has followed more closely the line the ball has travelled.*

- A player riding in the direction in which the ball is traveling at the least angle to its line has possession (of the line) rather than a player riding to meet the ball which may be closer.
- No player may cross in front of or behind another player except at such a distance as does not involve the possibility of collision or danger to either player (safe distance being at least one horse length between the horse's nose and the horse's tail.)



*A* throws the ball to **X**. If **B** can unquestionably reach the ball at **X** without causing **A** to check to avoid collision, then **B** is entitled to possession and can pick up the ball. If there is a reasonable doubt, then it is the duty of **B** to swerve towards **B1**, the line of the ball, and attempt a near side pick up, but if in doing so, their horse crosses the line of the ball in the slightest degree, then a cross has occurred.

- Two players following close to the line of the ball attempting to ride one another off have the right of way over a single player coming from any direction.



*The ball has been thrown to X. While B is travelling at less of an angle to the line of the ball, A has the line since A is travelling in the same direction as the ball.*

- If a player following the line of the ball must check up their horse, there most likely is a penalty to the first horse.
- No player shall enter the line of the ball in front of a player in possession of the line. You may take up the player and push them off the line.
- If a player enters safely on the line of the ball, another player may not ride into them from behind.
- No player shall be deemed in possession of the line of the ball by reason of his being the last thrower if they deviate from pursuing the exact

course of the ball. Unless they had a penalty throw an simply overshot it. They still most likely have the line of the ball.

- No player may cross the line of the ball if, by so doing, they endanger themselves or a player following the line of the ball.
  - If the ball is stationary, the player closest to the ball has possession of the line when a collision becomes possible.
  - No player may stop or stand stationary on the line of the ball.
- **Crossing another horse**
    - Crossing over a horse's neck or hind end is not permitted.
    - You allow approx 1 horse length between the front of your horse and theirs.
  - **Giving wood**
    - Players can get the ball from the opposition by hitting at an opponent's stick (in an upwards direction only), either to dislodge the ball or to prevent them from gaining possession of it; this is called "giving wood".
    - A player may not reach across or under an opponent's horse's neck or body in order to dislodge the ball from the opponent's racquet or prevent the opponent from gaining possession of the ball.
  - **Pushing another horse**
    - Riding off or pushing an opponent over the field boundaries is another strategy, but referees will be watching closely for dangerous plays like crossing the line of the ball, pushing incorrectly or elbowing. Strict rules are enforced to keep the game safe.
    - No player may seize another player with the hand, or push with the head, or elbow; a player may push with their arm above the elbow, provided that the elbow is kept to their side.
  - **Line up and turn out**
    - the players line up near the boundary at the exact center of the field, one team beside the other on the side furthest away from their objective goal, with the No. 1's in front, the No 2's behind them and the No. 3's in the back, all facing the umpire.
    - Once the umpire has thrown the ball into play, players turn out of the lineup in such a manner as to not cross any other player.
  - **30 yard line (penalty line)**
    - A player cannot carry the ball over the penalty line – it must be passed or bounced to the player inside the goal scoring area.
    - A ball resting on the penalty line is deemed to be in center field and may be picked up by players in center field only.
    - A player who is not allowed in the scoring area may override the penalty line, provided that the player pulls out of the way immediately so as not

to hinder or intimidate in any way the players that are permitted in the area, and provided the player leaves the area immediately.

○ **Side lines**

- If the ball is over the side or end line, the ball is deemed to be out of play. The umpire will then whistle a stoppage of play and award the ball to the team that did not cause the ball to go out or line both sections up.
- If the ball is in a player's possession and is carried over the line, a 10 yard free throw is awarded to the other team.
- The last person to touch the ball before it goes out of bounds loses possession of the ball and the opposing team is awarded a 10 yard free throw.
- If a player runs their horse over the ball to intentionally cause it to go out of bounds, a 10 yard free throw is awarded to the other team.
- Any player deliberately riding outside the boundary of the field, or any player being ridden off and forced outside of the boundary of the field, must be allowed by their opponents to re-enter the field within 10 yards of the point they went out. The player must re-enter the field in the area from which they went out.

○ **The various levels of penalties**

- The most common award given in the case of a penalty is a 10-yard throw.
- Particularly dangerous fouls (such as hitting another player in the head or helmet with the racquet) result in free goals being given to the fouled team.
- Additionally if a player continues to commit penalties and behave dangerously they can be dismissed from the team by the umpire.
- In the case of a horse that kicks others the rider will be asked to get another horse.
  - If the penalty off a horse is in the end zone the 1 & 3 will line up with the 3 closest to the goal and the ball is thrown between the two players.
  - If the penalty off a horse or kicked out occurs in the midfield the game is restarted with a six man line up in mid-field.

○ **The 10 yard penalty procedures**

- Where the foul occurred determines the position on the field at which the throw is taken.
- If the throw is awarded in mid-field, any member of the team can take it.
- If a penalty occurs in the end zone only the player allowed to play in that area may take the throw.
- Depending on the nature of the penalty, the 10-yard throw may be taken at the spot where the penalty occurred or it may be moved down the field to give advantage to the fouled team, at the umpire's discretion.

- All free throws (penalty throws) must travel at least 10 yards in any direction.
  - No player shall approach closer than 10 yards to the spot from where the throw is to be taken.
  - If not accepted as a pass, a free throw must hit the ground before the thrower may touch the ball.
  - No player shall attempt to touch the ball until the ball has traveled 10 yards. Always bearing in mind the line of the ball.
  - The player having taken a free throw has first call on the ball at 10 yards and shall not be interfered with until they have had an opportunity to gain possession of the ball, or until the ball has traveled 15 yards.
  - If the throw does not travel 10 yards in any direction, the umpire shall throw the ball into play from the nearest boundary line.
  - The player may throw from a stationary position or moving provided that the throw is executed from the spot indicated by the umpire.
- **Center line rule**
- Any player carrying the ball must carry it on their racquet side and not cross the center line of their horse.

### **Fouls or Penalties**

- Crossing over the penalty line if not No. 1
- Carrying the ball over the penalty line
- Hitting downwards on a opponent's racquet to gain possession of the ball
- Crossing the line of the ball
- Stopping over the ball
- Sandwiching a player between two opponents
- Elbowing
- Forcing a player of the opposing team to cross the line of the ball in a dangerous manner,
- Bumping in a manner dangerous to horse or player.
- Allowing their horse's head to contact another player if, in doing so, it is likely to cause injury or interference to another player.
- Jostling or bumping during time off
- Riding through the goal posts.
- Hitting or intimidating another horse or player with racquet, whip or spurs.
- Switching carrying sides during the middle of the chukka.
- Two-handed throws
- Throwing or passing the racquet with the ball in it to another player.
- Throwing the racquet at an opponent's racquet or the ball.
- Catching or hitting the ball with anything other than the racquet.
- Carrying the ball other than in the racquet.
- Holding the ball in the racquet by use of the body or that of the horse.