

WHAT IS CANOE POLO?

Canoe Polo is the fastest growing competitive canoeing discipline not only in the UK but world-wide. Fabulous to play, and full of spectator interest, polo combines paddling and ball handling skills within an exciting contact team game where tactical and positional play are a fascinating ingredient of this thoroughly entertaining sport.

The game requires excellent teamwork and promotes both general canoeing skills as well as a range of other techniques unique to the sport. Two teams, each with five paddlers on the pitch at any one time, compete to score goals in their opponent's net which is suspended 2 metres above the water. The ball can be thrown by hand, or flicked with the paddle.

Pitches can be set up in swimming pools or any stretch of flat water.

There are internationally agreed rules for the game, and World and European Championships are each held every two years. Great Britain is currently the world's foremost polo nation as our men's team are the current world champions and European silver medallists, and our women's team are European champions and world silver medallists.

There is a full national league structure in this country for open, ladies, and under 18 categories, and many BCU regions organise local polo leagues. Please contact your BCU regional secretary or the Canoe Polo Committee for details. National and local leagues normally run from September to April each season. In addition, the National Canoe Polo Championships, run on a knockout basis, are held outdoors at Hatfield Water Park near Doncaster over the three day late Spring Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May each year.

During the summer months a number of canoe clubs organise very large outdoor tournaments including the Merseyside International held in Liverpool during June, the Hull International Challenge in July, the Welsh Open held in Haverfordwest during August, and the London International which is held in September.

Canoe Polo is an integral part of the BCU Coaching Service, with its own version of the Star Tests which provide a structured programme for those seeking an introduction to the sport and a formal progression route to advance their knowledge and skills. However, many people learn to play in a more informal way and then go on to join a regional league or play in one of the friendly tournaments that are organised locally. In addition to the programme for players, there are polo coaching qualifications which are being made more accessible to encourage even more coaches into the sport.

The Canoe Polo Yearbook contains a wealth of information about the sport and is an excellent source of reference for anyone who would like to learn more about this fabulous game.

Up to the minute information, contacts, etc. can be found on the Canoe Polo website at www.canoepolo.org.uk