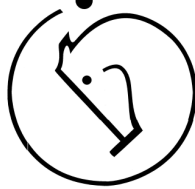


# The Hurlingham Polo Association

Tel: 01367 242 828  
Fax: 01367 242 829  
E-mail: enquiries@hpa-polo.co.uk  
Website: www.hpa-polo.co.uk



**Chief Executive: David Woodd**  
Manor Farm, Little Coxwell,  
Faringdon, Oxfordshire,  
SN7 7LW, England

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I thought that it might be useful to circulate an end of season letter. In trying to keep it as short as possible, inevitably I may have missed out some issues or points which should perhaps get mentioned.

- 1. Turning.** During the last two seasons precedence has been given to the player who is following on the Right of Way and removed from the player in possession who elects to slow down and turn across the player following and in so turning impedes the forward progress of the following player. Some players, particularly at the lower levels, have said that they benefited more when the better players in the team could slow the game down and turn the ball at will, thus giving everybody more time to get into position; and others were concerned that the backhanders hit either ponies or players. However, we have no evidence to suggest that injuries have increased as a result of the change and although some of the umpiring has been somewhat varied, there has been overwhelming support to continue as we are for 2012.
- 2. Home Grown Players.** This has been a much discussed topic all summer reaching a high point during the Gold Cup. The HPA is trying to find a solution that will help our Home Grown Players without restricting unduly those who fund the game. At the May Council meeting, there was a unanimous vote that there should be a Home Grown Player rule but there is an element of 'not in my backyard' as it appears that very few clubs apply any sort of Home Grown Player rule in their own tournaments; and indeed it was the clubs who pushed to have the old OSP rule removed for the domestic tournaments. It has been agreed that for the 2012 season a Home Grown Player rule should be introduced for the Victor Ludorum tournaments. The current conditions for tournaments will apply, as below.

#### **Official Tournament Conditions (no change to 2011)**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Max no of Chukkas</b>	<b>Min H'cap</b>	<b>Max H'cap</b>	<b>Max no of OSP*</b>	<b>Min H'cap of OSP*</b>
High Goal (22, 20 & 18)	6	0	10	2	4
Medium Goal (15)	5	0	10	1	3
Intermediate Goal (12)	4	-1	7	1	3
Low Goal (8)	4	-1	6	1	2

The HGP rule will mean that:

- 8 goal - any player 1 or below will have to be a HGP or patron
- 12, 15 and 18 Goal - any player of 2 or below will have to be a HGP or a patron

The proposed Status Guidelines for a Home Grown Player are as follows:

"A Home Grown Player is a player who, irrespective of his nationality or current age, was an Associate or Junior Associate Member of the HPA for a period, continuous or not, of three entire seasons during his "Development Period". "Development Period" means a player's first

five years playing polo. This will generally be taken to start with the season in which a player is awarded his first handicap as a polo player, either by the HPA or by an equivalent overseas polo authority, and to include the four seasons immediately following. For the avoidance of doubt, a player who first registers with the HPA will usually be an 'S' or -2, and a player with a handicap of 0 or higher from an equivalent overseas polo authority will generally be considered to have already completed at least three years of his five year "Development Period" and will therefore be precluded from qualifying as a Home Grown Player. "

- 3. Work Permits.** The Border Agency has laid down that only a person who holds a handicap of 2 and above may be granted a work permit as a player. Those below 2 can only come here in another capacity and as such are not allowed to earn money by playing polo. It means that they are only allowed to play in chukkas. It is understood that some employers/sponsors want their grooms to play their horses in matches, either with themselves or in their place if they are unable to play. For 2012 it has been recommended that the following regulation will apply :

"Anyone must have a registered handicap of at least 2 goals to have a work permit as a player. Anyone who is here on a work permit other than as a player may only play at a club where both they and their employer/sponsor are members and they shall not earn money as a player, either for themselves or their employer/sponsor. They must pass the rules test before they can be awarded a handicap which shall not be less than 0 and which will be shown on the website with 'R' after their name to indicate that they may only play at a club where they and their employer are a member. What polo they are allowed to play in is a matter for the club concerned but they may not play in any High Goal or Victor Ludorum tournament."

NB. This will mean that anyone who is here on a work permit will have to play off a minimum handicap of 0 in 2012 even if they were given a lower handicap at the end of 2011.

- 4. Victor Ludorum.** It has been suggested that teams might be more attracted to trying to win the Victor Ludorum if the VL tournaments at each level were fewer, perhaps 4, with a reduced entry fee for teams that entered all four. It has also been suggested that there could be a VL for the 6 and 4 goal, again limited to 4 tournaments, or that a 4 goal Victor Ludorum could be run on a regional basis. We would welcome your comments.
- 5. Umpiring.** The PA group this year was run by Roddy Matthews. There is an increasing demand from clubs for professional umpires who are independent of the teams and clubs. All too often those umpiring have an 'interest' in the game in some way and this adds complications to a game which is already incredibly difficult to umpire. There is no easy solution, and the pro umpires have bad days as well, but we will keep trying to improve the umpiring and hope to increase the number of visits to clubs next year in order to help.
- 6. Rule Changes.** The only 'major' rule change recommended for 2012 is that the ball should be placed by an umpire for Penalties 5a and 5b. This is to speed up the play and reduce the opportunity for players to waste time whilst a team mate changes a pony; and invariably a Penalty 5a or 5b is tapped anyway. The time for a player to place the ball for other penalties will be extended to 15 seconds but more rigidly enforced.
- 7. Under the Neck Shots.** The rules state that a player may not take a full swing under a pony's neck in such a way as to endanger other players or ponies. Umpires will be expected to take a stronger line on penalising such players next season.
- 8. Farriers.** We had an allegation that an Argentine had set himself up as a farrier in East Anglia. An investigation was launched by the HPA to establish which farriers were being used by which members and it is understood that the Argentine farrier left the country shortly afterwards to work in France. The Farriers Registration Council also informed us that they had seen a groom at Cowdray shoeing a horse

illegally and they are seeking legal advice as to whether they should prosecute. However, they have said that a farrier who is either qualified or has worked overseas for a sufficient length of time should be able to obtain temporary registration. The HPA is investigating this to see what can be achieved.

**9. Injured Players Fund.** Members seem to be more aware of this fund and the following payments have been made from the HPA (not the Polo Charity) in 2011:

Naomi Sharp	£2,000	Teeth
Steve Jones	£632.35	Teeth
Sarah Hughes	£2,000	Teeth
Harry White	£1,200	Teeth
Bradley Mallett	£2,000	Teeth
Lucas Simcox	£425	Teeth
James Rome	£1,525	Teeth
Anthony Camplin	£2,000	Teeth
Martin ffrench-Blake	£tbc	Teeth

Before any payment is made, the HPA establishes that the injury occurred as a result of polo, that the bill is genuine and any insurance cover in place. However, any personal insurance cover does not lead to a reduced payment.

It has been suggested that an insurance policy would be better. This is for members to decide but the premium quoted is roughly a mandatory £80 per head or £250,000 per annum. To date this has not been supported at Stewards or Council and it would seem that we have reached a reasonable arrangement which is of value to members and perhaps worth a small increase in subs if necessary.

**10. FIP.** Richard Britten-Long very generously sponsored the 14 Goal FIP team which qualified via Italy for the World Championships in Argentina. Next year, the European 8 Goal Championship is due to take place in September (date tbc) at the Zurich Polo Club. We would be interested to know if there would be interest from anyone in being involved with the team in any way. One possibility is that teams could play off to go, another is that they could be part funded in some way. It is hard for the HPA to justify funding the team in entirety and given that it has worked so well in the 14 goal, there seems to be no reason why it should not be tried in the 8 goal.

Any comments on any of the above will be welcome.

Yours sincerely

**David Woodd,  
Chief Executive**