

Quickness counts in water polo

By JEFF PETERSEN
Of the Emerald

Water polo is the in-water version of a Watts gang rumble.

Players are big and physical. Coach Jerry Newman said team members, besides being big, are very quick.

Like a quarterback facing a blitz, the water polo players must also pass the ball quickly.

"I've found the best water polo players to be basketball players or baseball players who can swim," says Newman. "When I was a high school coach my two best throwers were also baseball pitchers."

Newman says the club has several players who can "zing the ball 70 to 80 miles per hour." But a quick release on passes and shots is more important than the ball's speed, he says.

According to Newman, several shots are used in the game: the straight-on shot, pop shot and one-handed push shot. The pop shot requires the player to drive the ball with his nose and, with a

Contact resembles brawl

deceptively quick throw, pops the ball at the harried goalie. In the one-handed push shot, the driver tries to push a shot around the goalie's outstretched hands.

"They seldom have the opportunity to wind up and blast the ball," says Newman. "They have to take the ball quickly and release it quickly."

When watching this quick, rough sport, hockey comes to mind. Underwater body contact often goes undetected by the poolside referee. In a good game, foul calls and aggressive play are the norm, not the exception.

Besides body contact, water polo resembles hockey in its terminology and strategy. Clearing passes, centering the ball in front of the cage and working the ball down the wings — the outside edges of the pool — are familiar to both sports.

Newman says the game is like basketball in its offensive and defensive strategy. Such plays as

the pick and roll, the backdoor cherry picker and the fast break are common. Players sacrifice their bodies setting screens to free a driver. Defensively a combination of man-to-man and zone is the most effective, according to Newman.

Dave Heard, the team's starting goalie, says the game calls for heads-up swimming. "If you put your head down one second you lose contact with the game," he says. "You have to have stop-and-go quickness; the ability to change directions suddenly can spring you open for a shot."

Treading water in the goal, Heard also directs traffic. He tells defenders where their men are; with water splashing in their faces, it is easy for the defender to get disoriented.

Heard protects a deep-end goal that is 10 feet wide and three feet high. The shallow-end goal is also 10 feet wide, with the cross-bar five feet above the surface of the water. Only the shallow-end goalie can stand on the bottom of the pool while all other players must swim the entire game. Conditioning is a must.

Shouts of "damn it," "I had it," "get in there," "he's pulling my suit," and "get off of me" ring across the pool. Players shout for a pass and Newman plays cheerleader and critiques from the deck.

Despite his behavior Newman claims to "not yell much at my players."

"They're playing water polo because they want to play it," he says. "But I do try to teach them to win because winning is more fun."

So far this season the club has won three and lost three matches.

"Right now our main competition is from small colleges that are as good or better than us," he says.

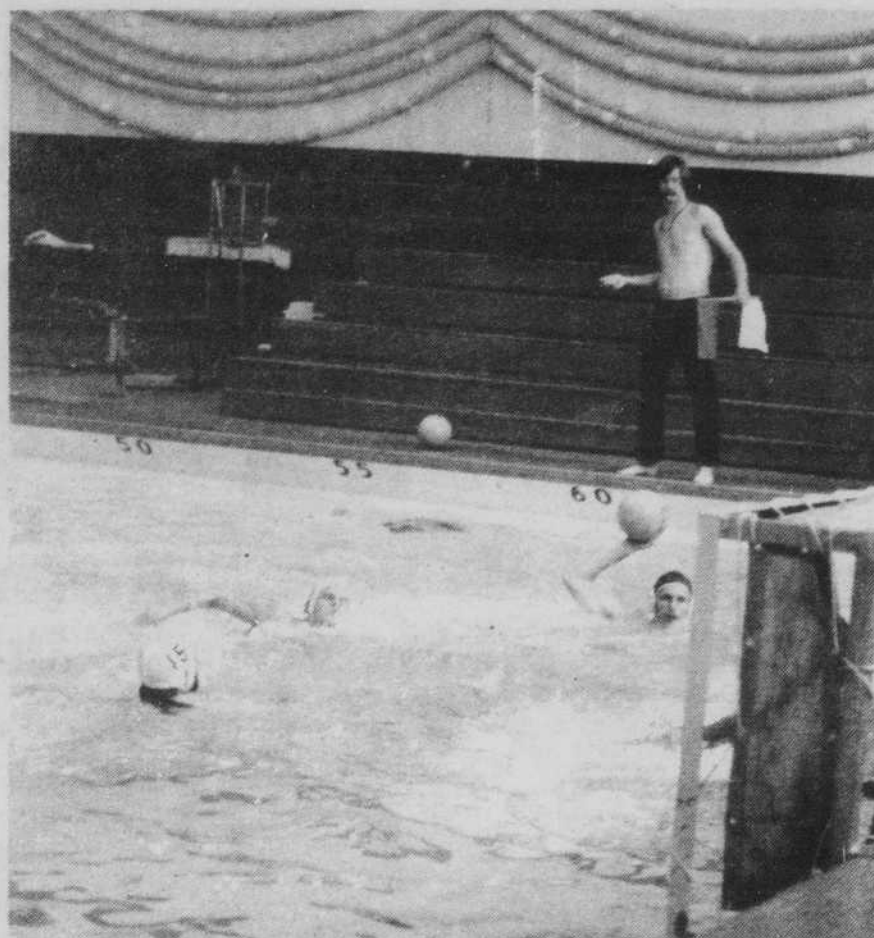


Photo by Mike Baer

Water polo coach Jerry Newman exhorts his poloists in a recent match at Leighton Pool. Players need to be quick and strong for this version of a gang rumble. Aggressive play is the norm for water polo.

As an example Newman cited Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, whose team is loaded with veterans. While Oregon was having difficulty getting enough players together for a team the past three years, SOSOC was playing together and winning.

Newman contributes the organization of this year's squad — which includes 16 "hard cores" who practice each weekday — to the backing of swim coach Rich Schleicher. Schleicher's goal is to have programs in diving and water polo as well as swimming.

One factor that has hurt past Oregon clubs is the relative mediocrity of Oregon high school water polo programs. California, "the hotbed of water polo," has provided seven of Oregon's 16

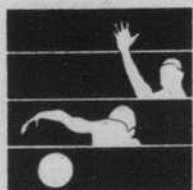
players and five of their seven starters.

But even the California players' quickness can't match the strength or endurance of the Europeans who dominate international competition, according to Newman. European teams are older, bigger and better than the American water polo team, he says.

Made up of 35-year-old players standing about six feet five inches and weighing 230 to 240 pounds, the European team's ball sense, conditioning, muscle and speed make them superior.

American water polo in general — and Oregon water polo in particular — has some catching up to do if it doesn't want to get mugged in the water.

Club Sports round-up



Water Polo

Oregon State University and Mercer Island clubs will participate with the Oregon water polo club in a tournament Saturday at OSU. The matches start at 7 p.m.

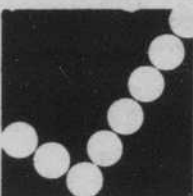
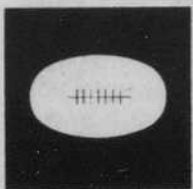


Table Tennis

Portland State University comes to town Saturday for a match against the table tennis club.

The match, to be held in room 352 of Gerlinger Annex, starts at 10 a.m.



Rugby

Saturday the rugby club travels to Portland's Delta Park to challenge the Portland Pigs.

Andy Thompson, club president, says the team is looking for players. Interested persons should go to practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. on the field east of Mac Court, or contact Thompson at 484-1587.



Ultimate Frisbee

The Curved Air Frisbee Club will play Washington State University at Howe Field Saturday at 10 a.m. It will be the first "official" match for the new Ultimate Frisbee club.

Later the two teams will play an exhibition match at Autzen Stadium before the UO-WSU football game. The 15 minute exhibition will begin at 12:15 p.m.



Skiing

This weekend members of the ski club will go to Mt. Hood to practice on the snowfield beside the new Palmer Chairlift.

Last Saturday Alpine Coach Randy Rogers went to Portland to help form a committee to boost Northwest Collegiate ski racing programs.

There is a mandatory meeting today at 5 p.m. in Room 101 of the EMU.



Handball

The handball club is looking for new members. For more information contact club president Bob Scheyer at 344-3809.



Bowling

Val Malchenko bowled a 529 series to lead the University of Oregon women's club to a 4-0 victory over Linn-Benton Community College Thursday.

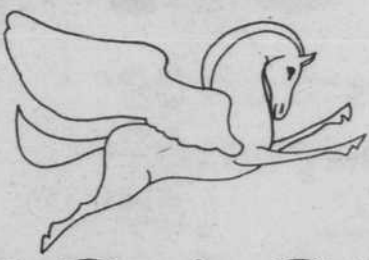
In the men's match Trent Zabelle rolled a 646 series, including a high game of 266, to help the men tie the Roadrunners 2-2.



Sailing

The sailing team will hold a meeting Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in the Erb Memorial Union. Room number will be posted.

Club president James Taylor is seeking help in running the team. Times will also be scheduled so team members can learn to use the recently purchased new boats.



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