

# The Rules of Polo

## Main changes – by Tim Keyte

### *Overview of changes from old 2004 v4.0 APC rules to January 2010 v5.1 APC rules*

*Note: Jan 2010v5.1 APC rules are 2009 HPA field rules*

**Old APC Rule 4:** Ponies, Pony equipment and Pony Welfare.

**January 2010 Rule 4c:** Welfare Officer. Every club must appoint a Welfare Officer to be responsible for all aspects of pony welfare particularly in the pony lines. The umpires have the main responsibility for pony welfare on the field of play.

**Old APC Rule 16:** End of Time

**January 2010 rule 16b, c, d:** If teams are tied on the first bell at the end of the last chukka, play continues if the ball hits the boards or goes over back line and penalties are played out. Last chukka 5 second rule applies to last 5 sec of chukka only.

**Old APC Rule 19,** Wrong line up.

**January 2010 rule 19b** have added Offside rule. A player is offside if he enters on the side of the opposing team at a throw in, hit in or penalty, ie. behind the ball. He may not make a play until he is behind a player of his own team. Should he do so a penalty 5a is to be awarded.

**Old APC Rule 26:** Play stopped / not stopped

**January 2010 Rule 26a:** Advantage Rule. The umpires may choose to allow play to continue if a player is fouled but it would disadvantage him or his team were play stopped. However, if during the subsequent phase of play the player fouled is unable to maintain the advantage then play should be stopped and the penalty awarded. The advantage rule should not be invoked for a dangerous foul.

**Old APC Rule 33:** Precedence of Players.

**January 2010 Rule 33p:** Stopping or slowing down on the ball – one tap rule. The player with the ball who chooses to stop or slow down to walking speed when he is being challenged but is neither being obstructed nor ridden off may then tap the ball only once in any direction , after which he must immediately leave it , accelerate with it or hit it away. Should he leave it for another member of his team to take that player whether challenged or not, must immediately run with it or hit it away without the option of a tap. The opponent is considered to be challenging if he is within one horses length on either the off side or the nearside of the player with the ball. The penalty for a breach of this rule shall normally be penalty 7 (Throw in) .

**Old APC Rule 35 j** The J Rule!!!

**January 2010 Rule 35g** A player may not..... Use his pony to spoil the stroke by riding over the ball and into an opponent who is already started the downward swing of a full forehand or backhand stroke.

Note: this does not prevent a player from riding over the ball on a legitimate ride off when an opponent is tapping the ball or has not started the downward swing.

**Old APC Rule 39:** Taking of Penalties.

**January 2010 Rule 40** Penalties - Specific. **a. Penalty 1 - Penalty Goal**

If, in the opinion of the umpire, a player commits a dangerous or deliberate foul in the vicinity of goal in order to save a goal, the team fouled shall be awarded one goal. The game shall be restarted by the umpire throwing in from the spot ten yards from the centre of the goal of the team that fouled towards the boards, with his right side nearest to the backline. Ends shall not be changed.

**b. Penalty 2 - Hit from the Spot or 30 Yard Hit**

As a first step on awarding the penalty, the umpires will give a choice to the captain of the team fouled of:

- Either: 'Spot', a free hit or hits from the spot where the foul occurred.
- Or: '30', one hit only from the 30 yard line, opposite the centre of the goal.

**(i) Hit from the Spot – Spot Hit - Defended.**

- The striker may hit or tap the ball more than once (but see Rule 33p). The remainder of his team must be behind the ball when it is hit or hit at.
- The team facing the hit must be behind their back line and at least 30 yards from the ball until it is hit or hit at. They may not stand between the goal posts nor behind the goal, and they may not enter the playing area through the goal when the ball is brought into play nor subsequently during this phase of play.

**(ii) 30 Yard Hit - undefended.**

- The striker may hit or hit at the ball only once. The rest of his team must be behind the ball when it is hit or hit at and have no play.
- The team facing the hit have no play. They must be behind their back line, may not stand between the goal posts nor behind the goal, and must allow the ball to come to a rest.
- Should the ball on the one hit fail to cross the goal or back line then the team facing the hit will be awarded a hit from where the ball came to rest, as for a Penalty 5a. The ball may be moved outwards towards the boards or sideline should a goal post interfere with the player taking the hit.

If any member of the team facing the hit is seen to be fouling during the taking of the hit the umpire should wait to see if a goal is scored and, if so, a goal shall be awarded, the goal judge should wave his flag and play restarted as normal with a throw in from the centre or as allowed for in Rule 20c(ii). If a goal was not scored then the penalty should be retaken.

**c. Penalty 3 - 40 Yard Hit - Defended**

The ball is placed on a cross 40 yards out from the centre of the goal. The option of a hit from the spot is not offered.

**(i)** The striker must have the intent to score with one hit. The rest of his team must be behind the ball when it is hit or hit at.

**(ii)** The team facing the hit must be behind their back line until the ball is hit or hit at following which point they may make a play. They may not stand between the goal posts nor behind the goal, and they may not enter the playing area through the goal when the ball is brought into play nor subsequently during this phase of play. If any member of the team facing the hit is seen to be fouling during the taking of the hit, the umpire will raise an arm and wait to see if a goal is scored.

- If the one hit has or would have gone through the goal if it had not been stopped or deflected by a stick or a pony, a goal shall be awarded, the goal judge should wave his flag, and play restarted as normal with a throw in from the centre or as allowed for in Rule 20c(ii).

- If the penalty shot has missed or would have missed the goal or was stopped legitimately by a player but another player on his team fouled, the whistle shall be blown and the penalty retaken.

**d. Penalty 4 - 60 Yard Hit - Defended**

The ball is placed on a spot on the 60 yard line opposite the centre of the goal.

(i) The striker must have the intent to score with one hit. The team taking the hit may place themselves where they choose.

(ii) The team facing the hit must be behind the 30 yard line and may only make a play once the ball has been hit or hit at.

**e. Penalty 5(a) - Hit from the Spot**

A free hit at the ball from the spot where the foul took place, but at least four yards from the boards or side lines. A Penalty 5a will not be awarded against a defending team within their own 60 yard line but rather a Penalty 2, 3 or 4 as appropriate.

(i) The team taking the penalty may place themselves where they choose.

(ii) The defending team must be at least 30 yards from the ball, and not behind it.

**f. Penalty 5(b) - Hit from the Centre**

A free hit at the ball from the centre of the ground.

(i) The team taking the penalty may place themselves where they choose.

(ii) The defending team must be at least 30 yards from the ball, and not behind it.

**g. Penalty 6 - Safety 60 - Defended**

Awarded when a player hits the ball over his own back line (See Rule 25a), or for unnecessary delay by a team hitting in (Rule 24e). The ball is placed on the 60 yard line opposite where the ball crossed the back line but no more than 40 yards out from the centre of the goal.

(i) The striker must have the intent to score with one hit. The team taking the hit may place themselves where they choose.

(ii) The team facing the hit must be behind the 30 yard line and may only make a play once the ball has been hit or hit at.

**h. Penalty 7 - Throw In**

A throw in, in accordance with Rule 21 from the spot where the foul occurred.

**j. Penalty 10 - Player Sent Off**

(i) Penalty 10(a)

A player sent off for a full chukka or the rest of the chukka in progress in addition to any other penalty.

(ii) Penalty 10(b)

A player sent off for the rest of the match, in addition to any other penalty. (See also Regulation 4.3a(i))

The umpires must agree that a player should be sent off. If not in agreement, the referee must be asked to decide. The side to which the sent off player belonged shall continue with three players only and any player sent off must return to the pony lines. Umpires should make it clear to the player(s) penalised and to the captains of the teams which penalty has been given.

Note: In all cases in which a Penalty 10a or b is awarded a Report Form must be completed by the umpires.