

The Line Up

Volume 1, Issue 2

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This is the second issue of The Line Up, which is a newsletter designed to help develop new players and clubs.

Please use this information as a guide, and double check with your coach or clinician about these techniques when you get the opportunity.

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For more information about polocrosse go to www.americanpolocrosse.org

Basic Ball Handling

The Pick Up

One of the most challenging skills in polocrosse is the pick up. It requires the

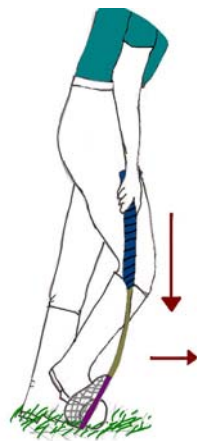


Figure 1

player to be fit enough to bend down to get the ball, good communication between rider and horse for proper approach, and skill with the racquet to pick up the ball off the ground. Fortunately, this is a skill that can be practiced at home at a walk at first. Start practicing on foot. Begin picking up the ball on the racquet side of your

body with a forehand stroke (figure 1). Then try it on your horse. When you get proficient at the walk, then try at the trot, etc. It's very important to be patient with your horse and especially with yourself when you are learning a new skill like this. Take your time, practice often, and have fun learning the various ways to get the ball up off the ground.

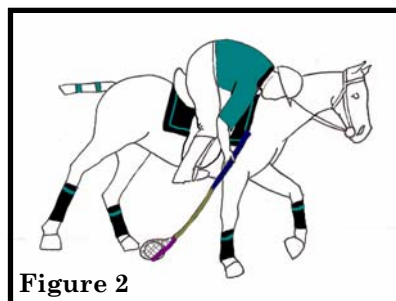


Figure 2



Basic Pick Up Positions

The Racquet-side forehand pick up

The basic pick up is on your racquet side. It is a forehand stroke (see Figure 2). This basic pick up is used on the stationary ball or the moving ball. It is the easiest stroke to learn and most of your pick ups in the game can be the racquet side forehand stroke. When there is a choice between the forehand pick up and the backhand pick up, most players will choose the forehand. If you lose control of the ball during the pick up, it will pitch forward giving you another opportunity at the ball.

One common mistake is the rider pulling the reins sideways while leaning to get the ball. Be careful to keep your reins in the center of your horse's neck. Rely on your seat and legs for balance as you lean, being careful not to pull on your horse's mouth. It seems to help if you pick the ball up just a bit behind your stirrup, dragging your racquet to encourage the ball into the net. Don't be shy about digging into the ground with your racquet. The horse's forward momentum also makes the pick up a bit easier. So, if you cannot get it picked up standing still on your horse, try moving forward. Don't forget to cradle the ball as soon as you get it picked up.

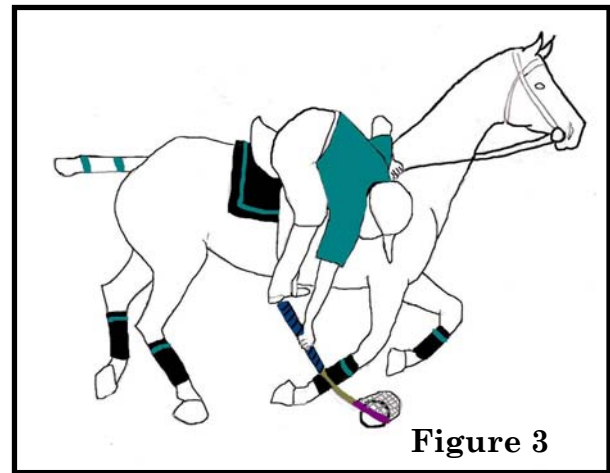


Figure 3

The Racquet-side backhand Pick up

This backhand pick up can be used for getting the ball off the ground, but it can be risky. If you miss this, the ball can pitch out the back allowing your competition a chance for gaining possession of the ball. In the back hand stroke, the racquet is positioned in front of the ball, rather than behind it (see Figure 3). Some players prefer this pick up if the ball is moving forward or if it is very close to a line on the field. With this pick up your wrist is turned towards the back of the horse. You then place the racquet face over the ball. You must drag and turn your wrist in towards your horse to pick it up. This pick up requires a bit more practice than the forehand.



The off racquet side forehand pick up

This forehand pick up is used when the ball is on the other side of your horse. There are many times on the field when you cannot position your horse to pick the ball up on the racquet side. Sometimes you would have to cross in front of another player, or maybe even waste too much time moving over to get the ball picked up on your racquet side. This is a very important pick up to master. It is more difficult than the racquet side pick ups. To do this pick up you move the racquet over the horse's neck (usually with a long grip on the racquet) and place the racquet behind the ball (see Figure 4). You really have to turn your body and really lean over to make this happen. Again, you can dig your racquet into the ground and drag it forward to get the ball into the net. You then must quickly move the ball back over the horse to your racquet side. You can cradle it as it passes over the top of your horse.

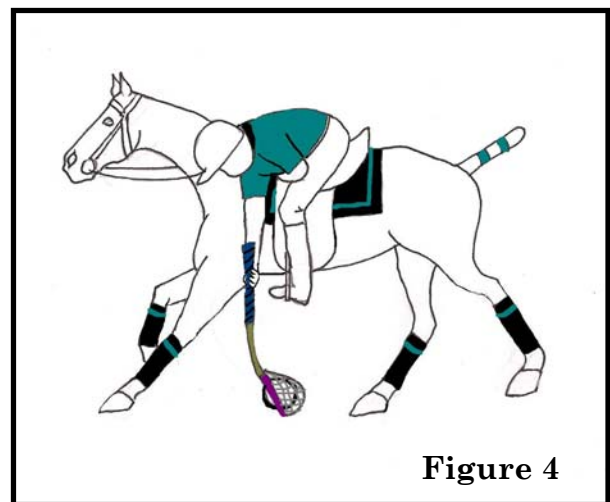


Figure 4

The Off Racquet side Backhand pick up

Here the racquet is brought over the horse's head to the off racquet side, but the racquet is placed in front of the ball and dragged towards the back of the horse (see figure 5). This is usually done with a long grip. These backhand pick ups are done in one smooth motion. You must return the racquet immediately to the other side of the horse.

Keep in mind that there are variations of all these pick ups. It depends on the position of the horse and the ball. Some players get pretty creative and develop real finesse with this skill. Practice often!

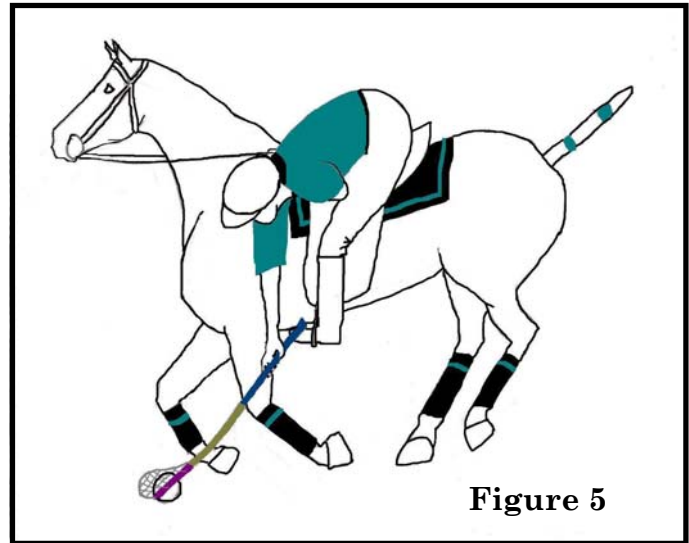


Figure 5

Planning a Demonstration Game or Chukka

In an effort to build a bigger club and show more people the sport of polocrosse, we have done several demonstration chukkas or games. I would speculate and say that the more established polocrosse clubs in the APA have done this many times. This can be done at the same event as your exhibition booth. There are all sorts of events that are appropriate for this type of demo. We have “performed” at Horse Park Openings, Breed Shows, Clinics, etc. You will need to seek out these venues, and contact the organizers to ask if your club can do a demonstration. We have had very positive responses with this approach.

Here are a few tips to help your demonstration be successful:

- Plan well in advance. If the event is right around the corner it is difficult for your participants to plan to attend
- Find out how much time you have to perform. If you have 15 minutes, you have time for one chukka. See if you can get another 15 minutes later in the day for another chukka. If you have an hour, you can plan a

whole game and include some demonstrations of skills.

- Find out what type of field, stadium, or arena you will be using. Don't be afraid to use an arena! Sometimes the bigger audience is inside the indoor arena. We all know how to play in the dirt! It is great if you can set up your field in advance, but

Treat your demonstration like a dress rehearsal for a big tournament. Look sharp, play well, but most of all have fun!

it can be done in less than 5 minutes (while the horses are warming up to play, and while the MC is introducing the sport to the audience). We have used those little wire flags for the 30 yard lines, and cones for goal posts. You can also put some PVC pipe down through the top of the cones to make the goal posts look more official. If the field or arena is short, we try to shorten up the midfield and make the end zones 20 or 25

yards, instead of 30.

- Know your audience. Find out the type of spectators that will be watching. Are they experienced horsemen? Are they young or older? Try to offer up the particular polocrosse quality that you think will appeal to them. As you know, there is something for everyone to enjoy in this sport.
- Involve your whole club, especially the kids. People want to see the lower levels play, too. Watching the beginners enforces the belief that anyone can play this game. Everyone enjoys watching the kids play. If you have time to put the more advanced players out there too, then all the better.
- Try to provide your own MC, and write a brief script for them to use to describe the game while you are warming up your horses or getting ready to play. Have them announce during the chukkas, just as they would during a tournament. Try to have them briefly explain any umpire's calls.

- Clean horses and tack. Wear clean white pants and team shirts. Make it a dress rehearsal for a big tournament. This is exciting for the participants, especially if they are new to competition.
- Have umpires. Dress them up just like the tournament. They will need to umpire, but should try to keep the game flowing as much as possible. All the players should be instructed ahead of time to play super safe!
- Get help from people that are not riding. You will need goal judges and help with the horses. We have used a timekeeper/scorekeeper for the game. You will need help in transporting the equipment to the event.
- Involve the crowd in the game. Try to get them to cheer for one side or the other.
- Always display exemplary sportsmanship!!!!
- Have hand out information available for the interested onlookers. Make sure they know how to contact you for more information
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from other polocrosse clubs or players. I know our club would help any way that we could.
- **MOST OF ALL HAVE FUN!!!** Good Luck.



Charlie Horse Polox riding in a demo at the Florida Horse Park

