

# LAMORINDA WATER POLO, INC.

## CONCUSSION POLICY

*Adopted April 2015*

### INTRODUCTION

Lamorinda Water Polo is adopting this Concussion Policy as part of its obligation to provide a safe playing environment for its athletes. Awareness of concussion and effects of concussion on players, especially youth players, has increased over the past decade. Medically, a concussion is a form of traumatic brain injury. Because it is a brain injury, a concussion is not a visible injury, such as a broken arm. It requires time to heal properly, involving both physical and mental rest. Consequences may include loss of coordination or memory, vision problems, learning issues and changes in emotions and behavior. A concussion may result from a direct blow to the head or from an indirect blow to the body that causes various forces to affect the brain within the skull. Signs and symptoms may appear immediately or may be noticed hours or days (or longer) later. There are a wide variety of symptoms which are possible. Loss of consciousness is not required to be diagnosed with a concussion. Adolescents require more time to recover from concussions than adults.

The intent of this Concussion Policy is to highlight the importance of the issue to the Club's Coaches, parents, and athletes, and establish appropriate training and response protocols. The Club expects its Coaches, parents, and athletes to use their judgment in all cases, with the health and safety of the athletes always the primary consideration.

### PRE-SEASON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### Coaches

All Coaches (head, assistant, and junior) must be knowledgeable regarding the **signs/symptoms of a concussion**, appropriate strategies to reduce the risk of concussions, and how to seek proper medical treatment for an athlete suspected of having a concussion.

Accordingly, all Coaches (head and assistant) shall complete The Center for Disease Control's *Heads Up-Concussion in Youth Sports* video training course, which is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>, on an annual basis. All Coaches should complete their initial training within 30 days of adoption of this Concussion Policy. *Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports* is a free, online course available to coaches, parents, and others helping to keep athletes safe from concussion. It features interviews with leading experts, dynamic graphics and interactive exercises, and compelling storytelling to help one recognize a concussion and know how to respond if an athlete is believed to have suffered a concussion.

Upon completion of this online training session, all Coaches shall print out the completion certificate, and provide the certificate to the applicable Technical Director. The Technical Directors will be responsible for ensuring completion of the online training by all Coaches.

Finally, all Coaches (head, assistant, and junior) shall be required to acknowledge their review and understanding of this Concussion Policy annually, at the beginning of the summer season or promptly upon commencement of their employment by the Club.

### Parents

All parents of the Club's athletes should review the Parent Fact Sheet attached to this Concussion Policy as Exhibit A on a regular basis. The Club will circulate a copy of the Parent Fact Sheet annually, at the beginning of the summer season. Parents are encouraged to review the *Heads Up-Concussion in Youth Sports* video referenced above.

All parents of athletes participating in the Club's activities shall be required to acknowledge their review and understanding of this Concussion Policy as part of the registration process each season. The parent acknowledgement form will state specifically that if the parent's child is diagnosed with a concussion at any time and for any reason during the applicable season, the parent will inform the applicable Head Coach via email (in order to establish a formal record of notification), and will obtain a qualified health professional's approval before the athlete returns to practice and competition.

### Athletes

All of the Club's athletes should review the Player Fact Sheet attached to this Concussion Policy as Exhibit B on a regular basis. The Club will circulate a copy of the Player Fact Sheet annually, at the beginning of the summer season.

In addition, all athletes ages 12 and older will be asked to watch the CDC educational video mentioned above at least once every two years.

## **IN-SEASON RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Coaches

All Head Coaches shall be required to discuss this Concussion Policy with the parents at the introductory meeting that occurs at the beginning of each season. In addition, all Head Coaches shall be required to discuss this Concussion Policy with athletes at the first practice each season.

All Coaches shall monitor athletes for signs of concussion at practices and games.

## Parents

All Parents should monitor athletes for signs of concussion at and after practices and games.

## Athletes

All athletes should monitor their teammates for signs of concussion at and after practices and games.

## **POST-INCIDENT PROTOCOL**

Any parent or athlete observing signs of concussion in an athlete should bring that to the attention of the appropriate Coach promptly. Parents should pursue appropriate medical attention as necessary.

No Coach, parent, or athlete will be expected to “diagnose” a concussion, as that is the job of an appropriate licensed health care professional. Coaches shall use their best judgment in observing the signs/symptoms of a concussion, and in taking the action mandated by this Concussion Policy in the event that an athlete experiences or exhibits any of the signs/symptoms of a concussion following an injury, contact event, or blow to the head, face, neck or body.

Coaches are expected to comply with the following mandated course of action:

1. If an athlete experiences or exhibits any of the signs/symptoms of a concussion following an injury, contact event, or blow to the head, face, neck or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head, he or she shall be immediately removed from the practice or game and shall not return to play until he or she is cleared to participate by an appropriate licensed health care professional. (WHEN IN DOUBT, KEEP THEM OUT!)
2. The athlete’s parent shall be notified immediately that:
  - (a) He or she experienced an injury, contact event, or blow to the head, face, neck or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head, and/or that he or she exhibited one or more signs/symptoms of a concussion;
  - (b) That he or she was immediately removed from the practice or game; and
  - (c) That he or she may not return to play until he or she is cleared to participate by an appropriate licensed health care professional.
3. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate licensed health care professional within 24 hours of the injury, contact event, or blow to the head, face, neck or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head.

4. No athlete shall be permitted to return to practice or play until he or she has been free of concussion symptoms for at least 48 hours, and is medically cleared to participate by an appropriate licensed health care professional. The Coach must receive written permission from the health care professional before the athlete will be allowed to return to play.

## **Parent Fact Sheet**

### **WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?**

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can’t see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

### **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?**

#### **Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians**

*If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:*

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can’t recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can’t recall events after hit or fall

#### **Symptoms Reported by Athlete**

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

## HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport. This may include obvious measures such as avoiding rough-housing on the deck and not throwing balls at heads, as well as more generally following rules regarding fair and safe play.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

**1. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.

**2. Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.

**3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

## Athlete Fact Sheet

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump or blow to the head
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport
- Can happen even if you haven't been knocked out
- Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged"

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light
- Bothered by noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- **Tell your coaches and your parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion
- **Get a medical check up.** A doctor or health care professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when you are OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to get better.** If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a second concussion. Second or later concussions can cause damage to your brain. It is important to rest until you get approval from a doctor or health care professional to return to play.

### HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment. In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:
  - The right equipment for the game, position, or activity.
  - Worn correctly and fit well.
  - Used every time you play