

HANDICAP POLICY

2026 v2.3

As adopted by



AUSTRALIAN POLO FEDERATION LTD
PO BOX 44, Teesdale, VIC, 3328
T 0419 224286
Email apf@australianpolo.com.au
Website www.australianpolo.com.au

Effective 25th August 2026

Revision Information

Document Number	Policies	Revision Date	Version	Approved
APFHP2010/1.2		2012	1.2	24.2.2012
APFHP2010/1.3	Amendments to: article 5 – mid season review, article 6 end of season review, article 9 foreign players	November 2012	1.3	10.12.2012
APFHP2010/1.3	Amendment to articles 4.2.b – regional balance, 4.5.b	December 2012	1.3	10.12.2012
APFHP2010/1.4	Addition of articles	May 2014	1.4	14.5.2014
APFHP2010/1.5	Change to dates art. 2.6,3.13,4.8.d	November 2014	1.5	10.11.2014
APFHP2010/1.6	Addition to article 1.3	November 2016	1.6	28.11.2016
APFHP2010/1.7	Addition to article 4.9	May 2017	1.7	08.05.2017
APFHP2010/1.8	Changes to 4.5 & 7.2, addition 7.1c	December 2017	1.8	12.02.2018
APFHP2010/1.9	Remove Rule 10., addition of rule 7.3	February 2018	1.9	26.02.2018
APFHP2010/2.0	Changes to 4.2 b & c, 7.2	February 2020	2.0	12.02.2020
APFHP2010/2.1	2.6 Clubs submit changes by 15 May (change from 15 April); 3.13 State Handicap Committees submit list by 25 May (change from 30 April); 4.8d Benchmark Committee meet approx 1 June (change from 10 May); APF list ratified by approx 7 June (change from 15 May).	May 2022	2.1	11.05.2022
APFHP2010/2.2	Remove section 5 Mid Season Review. 2.2 Edit to Handicap Review. 2.6 Remove Mid season reference and Remove rule 2.7. 3.13 Remove Mid season reference and Remove rule 3.14. Edit rule 4.5 (b). Edit rule 5.1.	June 2024	2.2	9.10.2024
APFHP2016/2.3	Add 5.7 Handicap List Removal	August 2026	2.3	25.08.2026

AUSTRALIAN POLO FEDERATION LTD

HANDICAP POLICY 2010 v2.0

1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. This Policy is intended to ensure all polo players playing in Australia carry a handicap which is a fair assessment, taking into account:
 - a. The players' ball skills, riding skills, game sense and knowledge of the rules; and
 - b. International standards.
- 1.2. All players are assessed against criteria as advised by the Australian Polo Federation from time to time. No particular group of players is to be assessed in a biased or concessional manner, for example, handicaps of young promising players are not to be held artificially low and planned employment arrangements of professional players are not to be taken into account.
- 1.3. Handicaps are to be current at all times. Clubs and Handicap Committees must work together to ensure that as players improve or deteriorate their handicaps are reviewed and amended as necessary. As a guideline, any player recommended to go up should be judged to be competitive with those players who are in the middle of the next level. A decision to change a player's handicap should not be delayed because it may result in a player losing place in a team or planned employment.
- 1.4. The procedures for determining handicaps must always be:
 - a. Fair; and
 - b. Transparent.

2. CLUBS

- 2.1. Primary responsibility for providing for appropriate handicapping of players rests with the Clubs. Clubs must ensure that they regularly review the playing performance of their members and report to State Handicap Committees all cases where a player's performance is persistently inconsistent with the player's handicap.
- 2.2. Clubs are required to provide the base data required for the Handicap Review referred to at 5 below. They are also required to respond to regular requests for information from the State Handicap Committee Chairman.
- 2.3. Clubs are accountable for the integrity of information they supply about their members. This includes relevant information about players before becoming members, including highest overseas handicap and prior handicap.
- 2.4. In all matters regarding handicaps, Clubs are required to exercise the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. This will require Clubs to maintain appropriate controls over conflicts of interest, which at a minimum, would include officials standing aside from decisions in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees.
- 2.5. Where a Club has insufficient independent officials to meet the requirements of 2.4, it must request the Chairman of the State Handicap Committee to appoint officials from nearby clubs or members of a State or Benchmark Handicap Committee to provide the handicap recommendations for the Club. The Club remains responsible for providing the base data for the Reviews.
- 2.6. Prior to 15 May and 31 October each year NSWPA, QPA VPA, SAPA & WAPA Clubs shall submit their handicap review list.

3. STATE HANDICAP COMMITTEES

- 3.1.** Each year each State Association shall appoint a Handicap Committee which shall be responsible for determining the handicaps of any player who plays polo in the particular state.
- 3.2.** Each year each State Handicap Committee shall elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman immediately following its appointment. The Chairman shall not remain in that role for longer than 3 years. The Chairman shall convene meetings and conference calls as appropriate to manage the business of the Committee. The Deputy Chairman shall act as Chairman in the Chairman's absence. The Secretary of the State Association shall act as Secretary of the Committee. The President of the State Association shall be entitled to be present at any meeting or conference call of the Committee, but shall not be entitled to vote.
- 3.3.** Meetings or conference calls shall require a quorum of three voting members.
- 3.4.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee may, at his discretion, co-opt members of the APF Benchmark Committee to participate in meetings and conference calls and vote on handicap decisions.
- 3.5.** The decision of a State Handicap Committee shall be final except in the case where the player is listed on another State's Handicap list with a different handicap, in which case the decision shall be referred to the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 3.6.** A State Handicap Committee may review a player's handicap and assign a different handicap at any time.
- 3.7.** Handicap changes for T rated players take immediate effect. Handicap changes for all other players take effect from the conclusion of any tournament they are participating in at the time of the decision.
- 3.8.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committees is responsible for the timely execution of the Reviews referred to at 5 below.
- 3.9.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee may undertake interim general reviews of handicaps at any time.
- 3.10.** The Chairman of a State Handicap Committee is responsible for ensuring that members of the committee are available to assess T Handicapped players as soon as possible after they commence playing in the State.
- 3.11.** State Handicap Committees shall maintain the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. Appropriate controls over conflicts of interest must be enforced, which at a minimum, would include members standing aside from decisions, and not lobbying or attempting to influence other members of the Committee in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees.
- 3.12.** While Committee members may debate matters during Committee meetings, once a vote has been taken and a decision made, the Committee would be expected to "speak with one voice" and Committee members should not distance themselves from decisions taken by the Committee.
- 3.13.** Prior to 25 May and 15 November each year NSWPA, QPA, VPA, SAPA & WAPA State Handicap Committee shall submit their handicap review list, to the Benchmark Committee.

4. APF BENCHMARK COMMITTEE

- 4.1.** The Benchmark Committee is appointed by the APF. Its purpose is to make recommendations to the APF, so that the APF may acquit its obligations in relation to handicaps under its Constitution.
- 4.2.** The members of the Benchmark Committee shall be determined as follows:
 - a.** One representative of each State Association. This would usually be the Chairman of the State Handicap Committee.
 - b.** Two members appointed by the APF to provide balance to the committee, taking into account the need for:

- International perspective

- Regional balance
 - Amateur / professional balance
- c. A director of the APF shall be Chairman but shall not be entitled to vote.
- 4.3.** Benchmark Players may be members of the Benchmark Committee.
- 4.4.** A quorum shall be four members, not counting the President.
- 4.5.** Voting:
 - a) State Handicap Committee recommendations (handicap assigned) is the vote of the state handicap committee representative on the Benchmark Committee.
 - b) A member of the Benchmark Committee can vote on a player who has played in their State in the preceding 12 months to each meeting date.
 - c) In the event that there is not a clear majority vote in relation to a Handicap, the handicap being proposed by the State Association where the player has played the most, number of tournaments during the 12-month period preceding the meeting, shall prevail.
- 4.6.** The Benchmark Committee has the following functions:
 - a. To advise the APF on handicap issues and to make recommendations in relation to handicap policy;
 - b. To advise State Associations in relation to handicaps;
 - c. To provide a list of Benchmark Players who are to be taken as a guide by the States in assessing handicaps. A Benchmark Player is regarded as being representative of the middle of the handicap band; and
 - d. To resolve any differences in handicaps set by States.
- 4.7.** The Benchmark Committee does not have the authority to:
 - a. Change a handicap given for a player unless two or more states have given that player different handicaps; or
 - b. Require a State to give a player a certain handicap. A State may if it chooses, assign a handicap to a Benchmark Player which differs from the Benchmark. The handicap would only be determined by the Benchmark Committee if another state assigned a different handicap to the player, in which case a decision would be made under 4.6 d) above.
- 4.8.** The Benchmark Committee shall meet in person or by conference call as follows:
 - a. To assign Benchmarks to assist State Handicap Committees conduct Reviews;
 - b. Provide advice to State Handicap Committees, generally, and to bring to the attention of State Handicap Committees apparent anomalies; and
 - c. To determine handicaps for players with different handicaps assigned by States.
 - d. Two handicap review meetings will be held each year: prior to 1 June (handicaps effective immediately) and prior to 1 December (handicaps effective 1 January the following year). The APF Board will adopt and distribute the Handicap list by 7 June and 15 December respectively.
- 4.9.** Where a State assigns a handicap to a player during the year, and that handicap differs from the APF endorsed handicap, the matter shall be referred to the Benchmark Committee for decision. The President of the APF, as Chairman of the Benchmark Committee shall convene a conference call of the Benchmark Committee to determine the matter. Until such time as the matter is resolved, the player will continue to play on the APF endorsed handicap. State Handicap Committees cannot review a player whose handicap was decided at the previous mid or end of season review by the Benchmark Committee until the next scheduled review, unless they believe there has been an error in process in which case an appeal may be lodged under the appeals process.
- 4.10.** In the absence of manifest error, the APF will resolve to adopt the handicap recommendations of the State Handicap Committees as amended by the Benchmark Committee under 4.8 c. above.
- 4.11.** The Benchmark Committee shall maintain the highest standards of impartiality, objectivity and probity. Appropriate controls over conflicts of interest must be enforced, which at a minimum, would include members standing aside from decisions, and not lobbying or attempting to influence other members of the Committee in relation to themselves, family members, employers or employees. While Committee

members may debate matters during Committee meetings, once a vote has been taken and a decision made, the Committee would be expected to “speak with one voice” and Committee members should not distance themselves from decisions taken by the Committee.

5. HANDICAP REVIEW

- 5.1.** During each handicap review, the APF Benchmark Committee shall prepare and distribute to State Associations a list of Benchmark Players to assist State Handicap Committees in their handicap determinations.
- 5.2.** State Associations shall require affiliated clubs to submit recommended handicap lists, showing for each player who was a playing member of the club during the year:
 - the player’s current handicap;
 - the club’s recommended handicap for the following year; and
 - comments which may assist the State Handicap Committee (eg win/loss record).
- 5.3.** At the Handicap review, State Handicap Committees shall review the recommended handicap lists and assign provisional handicaps to each player, taking into account the list of Benchmark Players provided by the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 5.4.** State Associations shall submit a Provisional Handicap List to the APF Benchmark Committee.
- 5.5.** The APF Benchmark Committee shall submit to the APF a Final Handicap List which shall have been determined in accordance with the APF Benchmark Committee Guidelines attached at Schedule 1.
- 5.6.** Within two weeks the APF shall adopt and distribute to the State Associations the Final Handicap List.
- 5.7.** A player who ceases to hold active membership with the Australian Polo Federation shall remain on the Australian Polo Federation Handicap List for a period of 12 months from the date their active membership ceases. The player shall be removed from the Handicap List at the next scheduled handicap review following the expiry of that 12-month period.

A player whose handicap has been removed following the expiry of the 12-month period will, upon renewal of active membership with the Australian Polo Federation, be reinstated at their highest current overseas handicap, with a “T” rating applied.

6. TRATINGS

- 6.1.** Any player who was not subject to a Review within the previous year shall be assigned a T Handicap Rating until assessed by a State Handicap Committee, as follows:
 - a.** In the case of players who have played polo previously, they shall be assigned a T Handicap of their last rating: and
 - b.** In the case of ‘S’ or Starter players meeting the requirements for being handicapped (see 8.0 below), they shall be assigned a fair and accurate T Handicap by their Club and must play two tournaments of less than 6 goals during which time they must be assessed by a State Handicap committee.
 - c.** Polocrosse & Pato Players. Polocrosse or Pato players who take up polo will be given a handicap within the following ranges:

<i>Polocrosse Division</i>	<i>Pato Handicap</i>	<i>APF Handicap</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>6 – 10</i>	<i>0T</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>4 – 5</i>	<i>0T</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>2 – 3</i>	<i>-1T</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>0 – 1</i>	<i>S or -2T</i>

6.2. Players who are not listed on the current APF Handicap list but hold an overseas handicap shall play on their highest international handicap with a T Handicap Rating. A player's highest international handicap shall include any handicap which has been decided, regardless of date from which the handicap officially applies in the relevant country.

7.3 In the event a player listed on the current APF Handicap list is changed in handicap overseas, their Australian handicap will automatically have a T-rating applied.

7. NEW PLAYERS

8.1 New players who have not played polo, shall be assigned an 'S' handicap and may only play practice chukkas at clubs of which they are a member, they may not play in tournaments. To be upgraded to a -2 handicap a player must take and pass the Rules Test, the club assigns a fair and accurate T handicap when they consider that he is sufficiently experienced as a player, and meets the handicap evaluation guidelines as shown in Annex A. Clubs must inform the State Handicap Committee of any T handicaps assigned.

8. APPEALS

8.1. Appeals should be made direct to the President of the Australian Polo Federation, who will not consider appeals on a subjective view of handicap levels, but only to the extent that there has been a substantially incorrect procedure or substantially incorrect information has been provided. In resolving an appeal the President may institute such procedures as he deems appropriate in the circumstances that achieve the objectives at paragraph 1

8.2. The appeal is to be accompanied by a payment of \$500 to cover administrative costs in conducting the review, which shall be refunded only if the APF upholds the appeal.

9. SPARE

10. OFFENCES

10.1. It shall be an offence of misconduct for any club or player to knowingly mislead a State Handicap Committee Chairman or Committee or the APF President or APF Benchmark Committee in relation to a player's previous handicap, experience or handicap applying elsewhere in the world. Any offence under this provision shall be dealt with under the APF Discipline Policy and Procedures.

Annex A - Handicap Evaluation Guidelines

HANDICAP 'S' or STARTER

A person who has little or no experience in polo, it may range from a person who has had no previous riding to someone who is an expert rider but has yet to gain an understanding of the game. A 'starter' or 'S' handicap may only play in practice chukkas at clubs of which they are a member, they may not play in tournaments.

HANDICAP '-2'

- **Rules.** Will need help to prevent him fouling but a sufficient understanding of the Line of the Ball and the Right of Way so that he is not endangering himself or other players on the field.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to stop and turn, hook another player and maintain control when ridden off by an experienced player.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit adequate offside shots most of the time, and to achieve some success with nearside shots.
- **Set Plays.** May require some assistance but reasonable knowledge of the standard positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties'.
- **Tactics.** Likely to need assistance but has an understanding of the roles and positioning of the different team members, and the importance of counting heads, taking a man, and turning up; what he meant to be trying to do as part of the team.

HANDICAP '-1'

- **Rules.**
 - Should not foul but likely to need help against being sucked into fouls by more experienced players.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to ride at speed and ride off safely.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit offside shots of a reasonable length and accuracy, and adequate nearside shots most of the time. Need not be a consistently good striker of the ball.
- **Set Plays.** Should not require assistance on the standard positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties'.
- **Tactics.** Still likely to need assistance but his understanding should enable him to act independently and create a limited number of plays for teammates.

HANDICAP '0'

- **Rules.**
 - Should have a good understanding of the rules and should rarely foul.
 - Should have passed the C Grade Umpire Accreditation/umpire rules test.
- **Horsemanship.** The ability to ride at full speed, stop and turn, ride off safely and maintain control when ridden off and bumped at speed by the most experienced players.
- **Hitting.** The ability to hit offside and nearside shots of a reasonable length and accuracy, including tailed backhanders and under the neck. Should be a consistent and reliable striker of the ball on the offside and able to hit the ball more than twice at a fast gallop down the field under pressure. May still be limited on a nearside. Able to turn and/or dribble the ball.
- **Set Plays.** Should be completely familiar with positioning for set plays; 'throw-ins', 'hit-ins', and 'penalties', and also be able to help other less experienced players.
- **Tactics.** Should be able to anticipate the play so that he is not just chasing the ball, and make the right decision on taking the man or the ball. Able to turn the play from defense to offense without fouling.