

FOULS

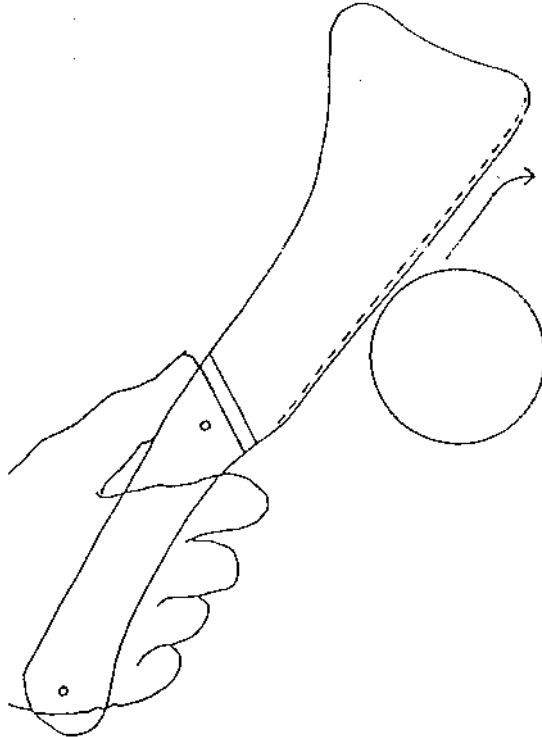
Octopush is a non-contact sport but fouls do occur. Examples include: using your hand to push the puck (even by accident), obstructing a player of the opposing team from getting to the puck when you are not in possession, an incorrect start, deliberately holding another player back, having more than six players in the water and standing on the bottom.

As a result of a foul the opposing team can get a 'free puck' based on the same principles as a free kick. The opposing team has to be 3m away.

If the referee cannot decide who fouled first then an 'equal puck' is awarded. This means that both teams go for the puck at the same time once the whistle is blown.

For really serious fouls near the goal, a player can be sent out and the opposing team can be given a penalty. In this situation there are two attackers versus one defender, which should result in a goal. Further details can be found in the Rule Book.

AN EXAMPLE OF A FAVOURED STICK SHAPE



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE TO: BOA DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, THE BOA, PO BOX 32536, London, W3 0UJ or visit the BOA Website at www.britishoctopush.org

The Authors: Marion Wheeler is an ex-international player and Head Coach of the Great Britain Women's Team who won the bronze medal at the 1994 World Championships. Clare Straiton has played at three World Championships, has been the BOA's Development Officer and set up Farnham and Guildford Underwater Hockey Club.

SHEET 1: THE BASICS OF OCTOPUSH

- UNDERWATER HOCKEY -

INTRODUCTION

You don't have to be super fit but a basic level of fitness helps as with any sport. This exciting and skilful team game is played on the bottom of a 'swimming pool'. The players of each team flick or push a 'squid' (or puck) along the pool bottom using short wooden sticks, their aim being to flick the puck into the goal. The sport began in Southsea in 1952 as a form of activity for divers to keep fit during the winter, consequently the season runs from September-April. All the original terms are related to the sea such as 'Octo'push, the puck is officially called a 'squid' the goals are 'gulleys' into which a 'gull' can be scored. However, the game is known around the rest of the world as underwater hockey. The governing body for the sport in the UK is the British Octopush Association (BOA), which is affiliated through BSAC to the international underwater governing body, CMAS. Other countries that play include New Zealand, Australia, USA, Canada, South Africa, France, Holland, Belgium and Colombia.

The following gives you detailed information on equipment required and the game. If you want to know more, Sheet 2 provides information on warming-up and some

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Mask - preferably a low volume mask, which must have tempered or toughened safety glass; made of soft, comfortable rubber or silicone with a double seal and a wide split strap at the back.

Snorkel - soft, comfortable mouth-piece made of malleable material with a smooth and flexible 'U' shaped tube, often with a valve.

Fins - boot type fins without buckles for safety reasons, longer and more flexible than normal scuba-diving fins.

Sticks - generally home made out of wood (pine or hardwood) that conform to official dimensions and specifications. This allows the player to produce personal variations to suit. Each player owns one white and one black stick. (See the copy of the dimensions and an outline of a favoured shape). The stick is held in one hand only with the fingers coiled around the handle below the demarcation line.

Gloves - it is advisable to wear a glove with protection over the fingers as pool floors can be rough and it is easy to hit the puck with your knuckles instead of a stick. Nylon or cotton gloves are easily coated in silicone sealant or rubber gloves lined with finger width strips of neoprene.

Water-polo hats - worn to protect your ears and to identify team members. One white and one black (which in reality is blue because they do not make them in black).

Team Colours - to identify a team all either use white or black sticks with matching white or black (dark) hats. For competitions, matching costumes and trunks are also worn.



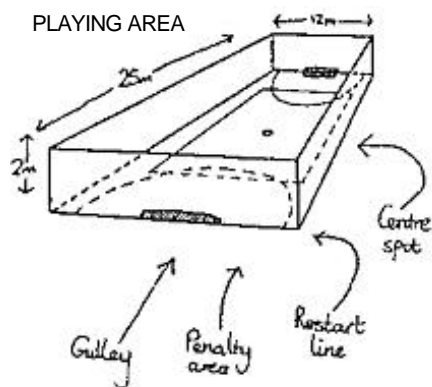
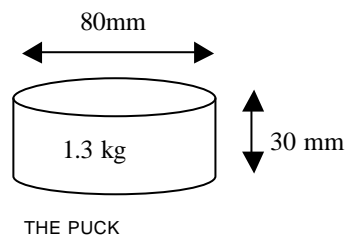
POOL EQUIPMENT

The Goals - are 3m wide metal gulleys, usually made out of aluminium

The Puck - is a lead disk coated with plastic or rubber.

The Playing Area - is ideally 25m long, 12m wide and 2m deep. In larger pools the playing area can be reduced to the correct dimensions cutting out the dramatic slope or a very shallow end (1m deep or less). Many pools have a slope but, by changing ends at half time, both teams have the same advantage.

The Gong - metal tubing that hangs into the water, which is hit by the chief referee for game start, infringements and goals.

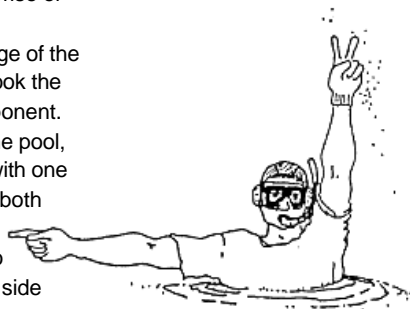


THE GAME

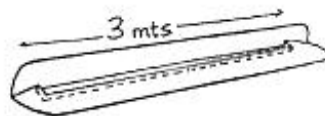
The Format - a full game is 30 minutes long with a two minute break at half time when the teams change ends. The idea is to flick or push the puck along the bottom of the pool whilst holding your breath, to a team member moving towards the other team's goal. Once out of breath you surface to recover. The teams comprise of six in the water at any one time with up to four substitutes on the side. You use the straight edge of the stick to flick the puck and the curved edge to hook the puck and to help with turning in front of your opponent.

The Start - the puck is placed in the centre of the pool, each team member must be touching the end with one hand and when the whistle or a buzzer sounds both teams race to the middle.

The Referees - in an official game there are two referees in the water and a chief referee on the side who responds to the water referees' hand signals. They wear a yellow shirt in the water and a red hat, which makes them easy to identify.



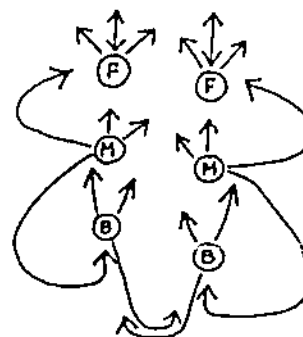
REFEREE



TEAM FORMATION The six team-mates in the water can use any combination of forward, mid-field and defensive players depending on the strengths of the people playing. Within this six you can decide on the formation of your team. A simple option is two at the front, two in the middle and two at the back; however, this can leave a vulnerable hole down the centre. Another popular formation is to have a central pivotal player, two at the front, two to the sides and one full back. See illustrations below. There are endless options!

POPULAR TEAM FORMATIONS

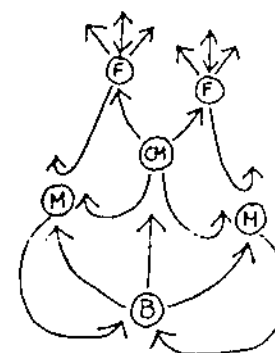
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KEY

(F) - Forward
(M) - Midfield
(CM) - Centre Midfield
(B) - Back

2:1:2:1 WITH CENTRAL PIVOTAL PLAYER



Possible player movements

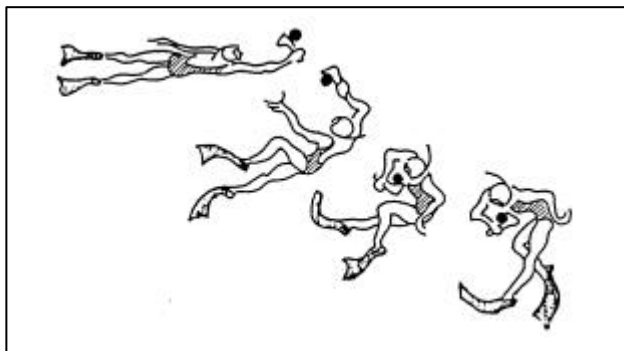
SUBSTITUTES



Subbing - of up to four players on the poolside can occur at any time during the game, not just when a goal is scored. Subbing during play is known as subbing 'on the fly'. The person entering the water must not do so until the person getting out has both fins clear of the water.

TURNING

This is best practiced initially without the puck. Go down to the bottom and swim for a short distance with arms outstretched. The 'stick arm' should be slightly bent and, when turning, the body follows this arm in a semi-circle with the relevant hip and under-arm to the ground. Kick your legs to propel yourself further round. When ready to swim off, your body changes back to face forwards. To move the puck when turning, the stick moves over the puck, so the puck is now on the inside 'hooked' edge and your body is protecting it.



TURNING
WITH THE
PUCK

PRACTICING WITH THE PUCK

1. Swim the width underwater pushing the puck concentrating on looking ahead, arm slightly bent at the elbow.
2. Swim the width and practice flicking from one line to the other.
3. On the pool bottom, remain stationary, move the puck along all the edges of the stick. Do not lose contact with the stick. This involves concentration and is called 'sticky bat'.
4. Swim across the width in pairs passing the puck diagonally forward between each other. Stay in your positions on the way back so that you pass on your stick and non-stick side. Don't forget to look where you are going:
5. Swim, then turn with the puck and flick it onto the next person. This combines the turn with a pass and after a couple sessions should be done at speed.

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References: The Muscle Fitness Book. F St George (1990) Crowood Press, Swindon.
Introductory Manual to Underwater Hockey, J Ford. Now Zealand Underwater
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SHEET 2: PLAYING OCTOPUSH - UNDERWATER HOCKEY

Warming-up, basic playing skills and a number of exercises with the puck that will help you to play underwater hockey.

WARM-UP

Warming-up is an essential part of undertaking exercise. It is not only a matter of stretching muscles but also of raising your heart rate to an appropriate level. Exercise puts extra stress on your body and it is safer to introduce your body to exercise rather than shocking it into action. The first part of warming-up ideally involves warming up the muscles and raising the heart rate by either swimming, running, cycling or walking for 5 minutes. This is followed by stretching, swimming without fins and then with. If you are unable to manage all these stages it is essential that you do some form of stretching before you put your fins on. After the session don't forget to swim down without your fins on and then stretch again as it reduces all the aches expected the next day.

STRETCHING

A stretch should never be painful and posture is very important. Reasons for stretching include increasing flexibility, economy of effort in the water and injury prevention. Below are some examples of stretches relevant to the game and should be undertaken for 10 - 15 minutes before playing. Each stretch should be held for 5 seconds and repeated 3 times. Do not bounce as your muscles will seize up but gradually push further each time. All stretches should be repeated for the opposite side, leg, arm etc

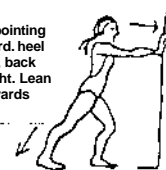
SHOULDER STRETCH (1)
Reach down the middle of your back with your right hand. With your left arm reach over your head and pull your elbow gently to the left



SHOULDER STRETCH (2)
Grasp your arms above your elbows. Pull to the left, turning your head to the right.



CALF
Feet pointing forward, heel down, back straight. Lean in towards wall



WRIST AND FINGER STRETCH
With arms outstretched pull the fingers back towards the forearm Repeat by stretching the fingers in the opposite direction onto the back of the wrist. Vary the angle of your hand so that you are stretching more effectively



HAMSTRINGS
Standing, let the knees bend as you touch your toes. Now, straighten one, then the other. Do NOT bounce.

FRONT OF GROIN
Keep back straight. Push hip forward.



SIDE STRETCH Step behind with leg to be stretched. this knee straight. Bend away from side to be stretched.



INNER GROIN
Keep back straight. trunk facing forward, front leg at a right-angle to rear leg



QUADRICEPS
Opposite arm supported against wall, heel pulled back towards buttocks and hips pushed forward.

IN THE POOL

The swimming warm-up should be a minimum of 10 minutes. The first exercise should be done first without fins on and then with. The idea is to gradually increase the effort rather than overload the body. Suggestions are listed below.

1. 6-8 widths or lengths front crawl on the surface gradually increasing your speed. *You can then use all or a combination of the following. Do the amount you feel comfortable with as long as you swim for 10 minutes*
2. Working across the width, go up and down touching every or alternate lines.
3. Come back along the surface front crawl or just arms or just legs.

The following can be done either across the width or along the length.

4. Half a width on top, half a width under, sprint - (4 widths) - full stroke or kick only.
5. One width under, one width on top, sprint - (4 widths) - full stroke or kick only.
6. Relays can also be fun, especially if you include getting out on the side - good subbing practice

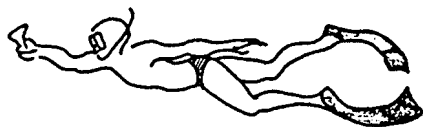
WARMING DOWN

To help your body recover, swim 6 widths without fins on followed by stretching as before except only do the stretch once and hold it for 15 seconds. This stops your muscles tightening up and aching the next day.

INDIVIDUAL PLAYING SKILLS

SWIMMING UNDERWATER AND BODY POSITION

It is important to keep as flat as possible on the bottom as you will then be able to flick the puck more effectively and stop the opposition swimming underneath. Aim to keep your hips and stomach on the floor and, to compensate for restricted vision from the mask, look up to see where you are going! There are two types of kick that can be used, front crawl (Scissor kick) or the dolphin kick. Practice both to see which one you find most comfortable.



FRONT CRAWL
KICK



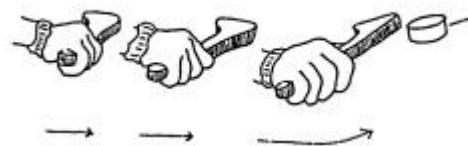
DOLPHIN
KICK

THE STICK GRIP

The stick is held in one hand. The thumb extends along the inside edge of the stick with the fingers coiled around the handle below the demarcation line. The puck is moved around with the upper end of the stick so that hand and puck do not meet!

THE FLICK AND PASSING

The flick centres on the wrist action. When swimming, the arm is slightly bent at the elbow. The wrist flicks away from the player in a sideways action. The stick is lifted slightly at the end of the pass. The curved edge is used to hook the puck and aid turning in front of an opponent. Passing on your 'stick side' i.e. if you are right handed and passing to the right, involves a similar movement to the flick forwards except that the arm moves out sideways. When passing on your 'non-stick side', the arm action is diagonally across your body with the rest of your body facing forwards.



THE FLICK

SPIKING

When you find yourself in a tight situation with neither the space nor the time to use the outside straight edge you can jab with the top end of your stick. Repeated movements must be quick and short.



THE
JAB/SPIKE