



Underwater Hockey

Mention the word “hockey” and chances are you can envision the Hockeyroos taking to the pitch in the green and gold armed with hockey sticks. Underwater Hockey on the other hand might not be the first thing that comes to mind - however it has quite a long history in Australia and is rapidly growing in popularity.

Underwater hockey is played on the bottom of a swimming pool (typically 1.8-2m deep). The lead puck is approximately 1.5 kgs and is coated in plastic. Players, equipped with masks, snorkel caps and fins play as a team and push the puck around the bottom of the pool with a relatively short stick (approximately 250mm long). Players play as a team passing the puck around to advance down the court and place the puck into the goals which are at each end of the court on the bottom of the pool.

Club President of the Cairns Underwater Association Warren Hughes said players start at each end of the court and on “go” swim across the surface of the water towards the middle of the court before duck diving down to get to the puck first.

“The game is very three dimensional as players need to get their breath on the surface while also ensuring their team players have people to pass to before they run out of breath.

“In Cairns we play a very social level of hockey where kids as young as eight years old play in the same court as adults. We alternate who is

on strike - that is, the lead player who goes after the puck at the start of each game so that the games are equal and everyone gets a turn at being on strike - young kids, older kids, women, men and beginners.”

Underwater hockey was originally developed in Europe as a fun way to train navy divers to keep fit. It grew from there and is now played all over the world.

“Australia is relatively strong and often wins gold in one or more categories at the world championships but as it’s not a great spectator sport, underwater hockey doesn’t really receive the publicity it should.”

In Queensland Underwater Hockey is played in Cairns, Townsville and the greater Brisbane area and has to date been taught in schools throughout Tasmania. Queensland is just starting to get involved at a school level and is currently being introduced to schools in Toowoomba. Warren is hopeful schools in FNQ will also get in on the action soon.

“Underwater hockey is an inclusive sport where age, sex and body shape do not particularly

offer an advantage. It’s a fun, interesting team sport. It also offers the opportunity for people who want to improve to participate in State and Australian titles – however we tend to find most players want to play on a social level.

Underwater hockey is low impact and is one of the few sports that does not have many injuries, compared with football and soccer for example. There is also no minimum age to get involved in underwater hockey, players only need to be competent swimmers or snorkelers and be able to swim to the bottom of the pool.

“Some of our players began playing at the age of 7 and 8 years old and it is a fantastic team sport to get young children involved with, as it is non-contact and fosters strong swimming skills and experience in the water.”

To get involved in Underwater Hockey or find out more, contact **Warren Hughes** on **4222 6016** (During office hours).