HaBaWaBa SCHOOL



HaBaWaBa School V.08

BASIC PLAYING ELEMENTS

KIDS 10 to 12 YEARS OLD

7th WEBINAR

14-10-2026

Co-funded by the European Union



WATERPOLO DEVELOPMENT

AQUATICO ASD CLUB PESCARA SINCE 2007

ANEMOS

ΠΟΛΥΤΕΧΝΕΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

Question: *How do children develop between the ages of 7 and 12, and what should coaches focus on at each stage*?

1. The ages of 7–12 represent a critical period for long-term athletic development and skill acquisition.
2. Children aged 7–9 learn best through play, exploration, repetition, and diverse movement experiences.
3. Between 10 and 12 years, technical skills become more refined and children begin to develop tactical understanding and decision-making abilities.
4. Water polo training should progress from fundamental movement and water confidence toward sport-specific skills and game awareness.
5. Coaches should prioritize skill development, coordination, creativity, and enjoyment before competitive performance.
6. Training programs must respect biological age, individual differences, and each child's rate of development.
7. Early specialization and excessive training loads should be avoided to support healthy growth and long-term participation.
8. The ultimate goal is to **first build the athlete, then build the player**, and finally develop the competitor.

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT 7–12 YEARS

FIRST BUILD THE ATHLETE, THEN BUILD THE PLAYER

Building a strong foundation for lifelong success in water polo

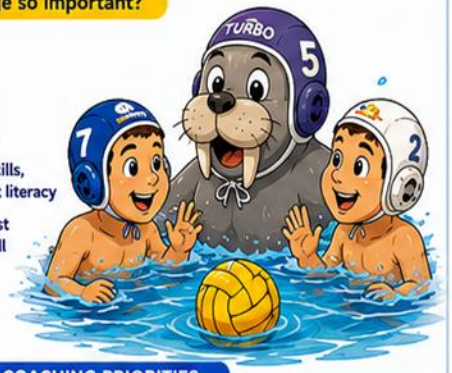


AGES 7–9

FOUNDATION STAGE

Why is this age so important?

- Rapid development of coordination, balance, rhythm and agility
- Learning through play, exploration and repetition
- Emphasis on swimming skills, ball control and movement literacy
- High neural plasticity – best period for learning and skill development
- Fun and motivation are essential
- Attention span: 10–20 minutes



COACHING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Fundamental movement skills
- ✓ Swimming and water confidence
- ✓ Ball control and coordination
- ✓ Small-sided games and play
- ✓ Fun, creativity and enjoyment

WHAT CHANGES?

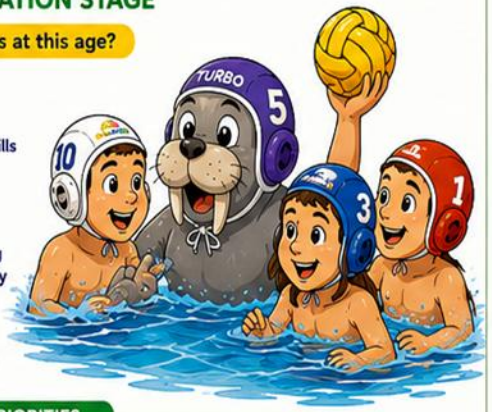
- Better concentration and learning capacity
- Technical skills become more stable
- Introduction to tactical understanding and decision making
- Increase in training structure and responsibility
- Growing competitive motivation
- Individual differences become more evident

AGES 10–12

CONSOLIDATION STAGE

What changes at this age?

- ✓ Improved concentration and learning capacity
- ✓ Refinement of technical skills
- ✓ Introduction to tactical understanding and decision making
- ✓ Gradual increase in training structure and responsibility
- ✓ Sensitive period for speed and aerobic development
- ✓ More stable emotions and better decision making



COACHING PRIORITIES

- ✓ Technical refinement
- ✓ Eggbeater mastery
- ✓ Passing and shooting skills
- ✓ Tactical understanding
- ✓ Progressive responsibility
- ✓ 1v1 situations and decisions

APPLICATION IN WATER POLO – THE HaBaWaBa PATHWAY

U9 (7–9 YEARS)



- Water confidence
- Swimming fundamentals
- Ball familiarity
- Coordination and balance
- Small-sided games
- Fun and creativity

U11 (10–11 YEARS)



- Eggbeater mastery
- Passing & receiving
- Shooting fundamentals
- Decision making
- 1v1 situations
- Small-sided game understanding

U13 (12–13 YEARS)



- Tactical understanding
- Positional play
- Game reading
- Advanced technical execution
- Progressive conditioning
- Preparation for competition

COACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on long-term development
- Respect biological age and individual differences
- Avoid adult-style training and excessive loads
- Use competition as a learning opportunity
- Prioritize skill acquisition over short-term results



KEY COACHING PRINCIPLES

- Train according to biological age, not just chronological age
- Respect individual differences. Every child develops at a different pace.
- Avoid excessive training loads and early specialization
- Competition is educational, not only results
- Build the athlete first, then build the player

REFERENCES & INSPIRATION

- Long-Term Athlete Development (Balyi & Hamilton)
- Periodization: Theory and Methodology of Training (Bompa & Buzzichelli)
- World Aquatics – Youth Development Guidelines
- International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) – Athlete Development Framework
- Historical inspiration: Aza Nikolić – Youth Basketball Development



EDUCATIONAL VALUES

Respect · Commitment · Fair Play · Fun · Team Spirit

PLAY – LEARN – RESPECT – HAVE FUN – GROW TOGETHER

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Kids 10 to 12 yrs old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Introduction

- The goalkeeper is the last defender of the team. Their main qualities are buoyancy, explosiveness, quick reflexes, and a clear vision of the game.
- Goalkeeper training differs from that of field players because it aims to develop these specific skills. The most useful swims are butterfly and breaststroke, but above all the pressure eggbeater for floating and maintaining vertical position.
- To build these abilities, a series of specific exercises has been designed, following a progression from technical → coordinative → perceptual development.

All videos were prepared with the participation of Giacomo SPINA, an 11-year-old athlete from Club Aquatico Pescara (Italy).

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Choosing A Goalkeeper

- Goalkeepers are usually selected between the ages of 10 and 12 after introductory water polo training.
- Initial evaluation focuses on general motor abilities such as coordination, mobility, flexibility, reaction speed, explosiveness, and teamwork skills.
- Particular attention is given to the breaststroke kick and aquatic coordination, which later develop into the goalkeeper's pressure eggbeater technique.
- Coaches also assess anticipation, game intuition, concentration, and the ability to coordinate movements within team-play situations.
- Height and predicted physical development are considered important indicators of future goalkeeper potential.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Choosing A Goalkeeper – suggestions

- **Avoid Early Specialization:** Rotate players through field positions. This builds horizontal swimming endurance, ball-handling, and tactical awareness of how shooters think. (*Kačić & Vranješ*)
- **Focus on Coordination, Not Power:** Since 10–12-year-olds are pre-growth-spurt, prioritize motor skills, hand-eye drills, and fluid eggbeater mechanics over explosive height or heavy conditioning. (*Kačić*)
- **Don't Scout Solely by Current Size:** The tallest kids are often just early maturers near their growth ceiling. Shorter peers with elite reflexes might be late maturers who will catch up. (*Mirwald et al.)*
- **Track Predicted Adult Height (PAH):** Use non-invasive anthropometric growth modeling rather than visual scouting. This ensures your club retains and nurtures high-potential, late-maturing prospects. (*Mirwald et al.*)

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Choosing A Goalkeeper

Predicted Adult Height (PAH) Formula

$$\text{End height} = \frac{\text{Current height} \times 100}{\text{Age coeficient *}}$$

Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
*Coef.	78.0	81.1	84.2	87.3	91.5	96.1	98.3	99.3	99.8

- If for example we are making selection among boys aged 10 and we wish they reach 190 cm as adults, we have to select only those who are at least 148cm tall.
- To allow greater confidence we can increase the limit by 1 or 2cm.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Main Goals

- ❑ At this age, goalkeeper training should focus on coordination, water confidence, rhythm, and reaction speed, not just strength.
- ❑ Focus on:
  - ✓ Balance and buoyancy (economy of motion; stability without bouncing).
  - ✓ Correct coordination of legs and arms (smooth eggbeater; short, controlled sculling).
  - ✓ Confidence in high and low saves (use of near hand; forearms for low blocks).
  - ✓ Understanding of play and communication (simple, quick calls).
- ❑ Positional principle by distance:
  - ✓ The closer the shooter, the taller/more vertical the stance.
  - ✓ The farther the shooter, the lower/more horizontal the posture.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 31 – Goalkeeper's Basic Position

Objective:

- Establish a vertical, high, central body position with arms in the water, hands at the surface, performing small, controlled sculling at shoulder width, without resting on the arms. Eyes must stay fixed on the ball.

Description:

- The goalkeeper aligns on the ball-goal center line with a vertical body position and hips close to the surface.
- The legs perform a continuous eggbeater, with knees relatively close and feet wide to catch more water and maintain height without bouncing.
- Arms remain in the water with the hands at the surface, positioned in front of the shoulders and shoulder-width apart. Sculling movements are small and horizontal (approximately 10–15 cm) with soft palms, avoiding wide arm actions.
- Vertical lift must come mainly from the legs, not from pressing with the arms.
- The head stays steady, chest and shoulders square to the ball, and the eyes remain focused on the ball without reacting to the attacker's eyes or fakes.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 31 – Goalkeeper's Basic Position

Drills:

1. **Vertical Hold with Sculling:** Maintain the basic goalkeeper position for 20–30 seconds while the coach checks hand position, width, and body alignment.
2. **Moving Vertical Hold Drill:** The goalkeeper maintains the basic position with continuous sculling while moving forward, right, and left for 5 meters. Focus on body height, hand position, stable eggbeater, and balance. Repeat 3 times.
3. **Ball Tracking Rotation Drill:** Two players 5 meters apart exchange passes. The goalkeeper stays in the basic position while following the ball, rotating about 30° left or right according to the ball's position, maintaining stable eggbeater support and body alignment.
4. **Eggbeater Resistance Drill:** A player applies light pressure on the goalkeeper's shoulders from behind while the goalkeeper maintains body height using a strong eggbeater and controlled sculling at the surface.
5. **Blocking and Return Technique Drill:** Starting in the ready position with the arms in the water, the goalkeeper reacts to light shots from 6 meters away by deflecting the ball with both hands without catching it. The ball drops in front of the chest and is immediately returned to the shooter in one fluid movement without lifting it out of the water. Repeat 10 times.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 32 – Basic Position with Arms Out of the Water

Objective:

- Maintain a correct ready position with the arms out of the water, elbows slightly bent, and palms positioned in front of and slightly above head level, while keeping balance and visual focus on the ball rather than on the attacker's eyes or body fakes.

Description:

- As the attacker approaches the goal, the goalkeeper maintains a high vertical posture with continuous eggbeater support (knees relatively close, feet wide to catch more water).
- The arms remain out of the water with relaxed elbows and open palms facing forward, positioned approximately 20–30 cm in front of the face and slightly above head level. The hands stay relaxed but ready to react quickly, while the head remains steady and the eyes stay focused on the ball.
- This ready position allows quick reactions to both high and low shots without sinking, excessive movement, or splashing.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 32 – Basic Position with Arms Out of the Water

Drills:

1. **High Hand Hold:** Maintain the ready position for 15 seconds with 15 seconds rest, keeping the palms forward slightly above eye level. Focus on hand height, distance, and stable eggbeater support. Repeat 4 times.
2. **Moving Ready Position Drill:** Move forward in the ready position for 15 seconds with 15 seconds rest, keeping the palms forward slightly above eye level. Focus on hand position, body height, and stable eggbeater support. Repeat 4 times.
3. **Target Tap:** The coach holds a pool foam tube above the goalkeeper's head and changes the height. The goalkeeper reaches and taps the tube without sinking or losing balance.
4. **Alternate Basic Position Drill:** On the coach's command, the goalkeeper alternates between the basic position with arms sculling in the water and arms out of the water.
5. **Blocking and Return Technique Drill:** Starting in the ready position with the arms out, the goalkeeper reacts to light shots from 3 meters away by deflecting the ball with both hands without catching it. The ball drops in front of the chest and is immediately returned in one fluid movement without lifting it out of the water. Repeat 10 times.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 33 – Lateral Movement and Angle Control

Objective:

- Maintain a correct ready position with the arms out of the water, elbows slightly bent, and palms positioned in front of and slightly above head level, while keeping balance and visual focus on the ball rather than on the attacker's eyes or body fakes.

Description:

- As the attacker approaches the goal, the goalkeeper maintains a high vertical posture with continuous eggbeater support (knees relatively close, feet wide to catch more water).
- The arms remain out of the water with relaxed elbows and open palms facing forward, positioned approximately 20–30 cm in front of the face and slightly above head level. The hands stay relaxed but ready to react quickly, while the head remains steady and the eyes stay focused on the ball.
- This ready position allows quick reactions to both high and low shots without sinking, excessive movement, or splashing.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 33 – Lateral Movement and Angle Control

Drills:

1. **Post-to-Post Movement:** Move explosively from center to the right post and back, then to the left post and back. Maintain height and balance. Repeat 3–4 times.
2. **Ball-Following Lateral Movement:** With three players (A, B, C) around the perimeter, move right, center, and left to block and return light shots. Focus on height and recovery. Repeat several times.
3. **Ball-Overhead Movement:** Hold the ball overhead with slightly bent arms for 3 seconds. Move sideways with three breaststroke kicks, then recover without lowering the ball into the water. Repeat both sides.
4. **Corner Movement, Hands Out:** From center with hands in the water, move to a corner and raise both hands. Hold for 3 seconds, then return to center with hands in the water. Perform three repetitions per side, maintaining height and balance.
5. **Lateral Movement and Save:** With players A and B three meters apart, receive and return A's light shot. Glide to B using three breaststroke kicks and repeat. The players exchange three passes before each shot. Focus on movement and recovery.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 34 – Jumping to Side (High or Low / Left or Right)

Objective:

- ❑ Develop explosive lateral jumping ability to reach high and low shots to both sides of the goal while maintaining balance, correct body alignment, and rapid recovery to the basic position.

Description:

- ❑ Starting from the center of the goal, the goalkeeper explodes toward the high or low right and left corners using a powerful eggbeater and lateral push.
- ❑ The eyes remain focused on the reaching hand as if tracking the ball.
- ❑ The blocking hand reaches aggressively toward the ball with a slight inward angle to direct rebounds close to the goalkeeper rather than into the attackers' area.
- ❑ At the end of the jump, the opposite arm performs a strong pulling action to help recover the legs underneath the hips and quickly return the body to a vertical position.
- ❑ After each save, the goalkeeper immediately recovers to the center of the goal in a balanced ready position, prepared for the next action..

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 34 – Jumping to Side (High or Low / Left or Right)

Drills:

1. **High Corner Jump and Recovery:** From center, jump explosively to the indicated high corner. Use the opposite arm to bring the legs under the hips; angle the blocking hand inward to control the rebound. Return immediately to the basic position. Repeat on the coach's signal.

2. **Low Corner Jump and Recovery:** Jump from center to the indicated low corner, then return immediately to the basic position. Repeat 8–10 times.

3. **Alternate High–Low Jump:** Jump to a high corner, recover to center, then jump to the low corner on the same side. Repeat both sides.

4. **Corner Jump and Vertical Recovery:** Jump from center to one corner, bring the legs quickly under the hips, then jump vertically with both arms out of the water. Return to center and repeat toward the opposite corner. Perform 4–6 repetitions, emphasizing height, balance, and speed.

5. **Arms-Out Corner Jump:** With both arms out of the water, jump to the indicated high or low corner and recover without lowering them. Alternate sides while maintaining height and balance.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 35 – Defending the Lob Shot with Opposite Arm

Objective:

- Defend a lob shot by using the opposite arm technique while maintaining balance, height, and correct timing.

Description:

- A lob shot is a high-arching shot intended to pass over the goalkeeper and drop under the crossbar.
- Using the opposite-arm technique, the goalkeeper leans backward from the basic position, supports the body with controlled sculling, and extends the opposite arm toward the descending ball. For example, a lob to the right side is defended with the left arm.
- The goalkeeper should not jump as the ball leaves the shooter's hand but wait until it begins to descend.
- Throughout the action, the goalkeeper remains high in the water and performs a final powerful breaststroke kick just before reaching the ball to maximize height and reach.

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Kids 10 to 12 yrs. old - Goalkeeper's Basic Techniques

Skill 35 – Defending the Lob Shot with Opposite Arm

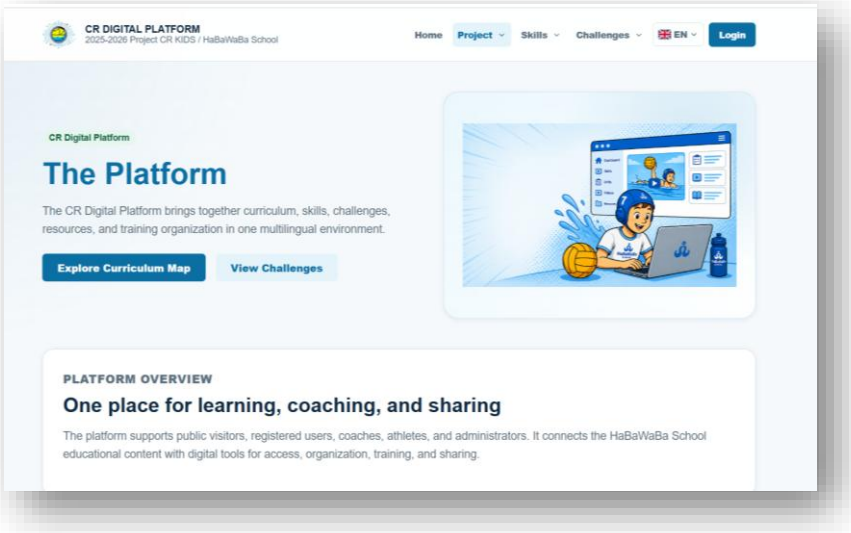
Drills:

1. **Lob Save Technique:** Without a ball, move backward to one side, support with that side's arm, and reach for an imaginary lob with the opposite arm. Maintain height with eggbeater kicks, then kick upward and backward to finish. Repeat both sides.
2. **Moving Foam-Tube Reach:** Follow the tip of a foam tube as the coach moves it left or right, reaching with the opposite arm while maintaining balance. When the tube rises, use a strong breaststroke kick to reach it. Complete three reaches per side.
3. **Cross-Corner Lob Save:** From 5–6 meters near one side, a player lobs toward the opposite corner. Move across the goal and intercept or deflect the ball with the opposite arm. Alternate sides.
4. **Central Lob Reaction:** From 5–6 meters in front of goal, a player sends controlled lobs unpredictably to either corner. Read the flight, react, and save with the appropriate opposite arm.
5. **Shot Save and Opposite-Side Lob:** With a shooter on each side at 5–6 meters, move right and save a controlled shot with both hands. Recover as the left shooter lobs toward the opposite corner; move across and save with the opposite arm. Reverse the sequence.

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https://www.youtube.com/@HaBaWaBaSchool-ProjectCRKIDS

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