

WATER POLO

COUNTERATTACK

What is the counterattack?

The counterattack is akin to the fast break in basketball. When a team gets possession of the ball through a turnover of any type, they become the attacking team. The counterattack starts with the recovery of the ball. Both teams sprint to the other end of the pool. A good counterattack ends with a high percentage shot, an ejection or an organized transition into regular front court offense.

What is the objective of the counterattack?

The objective of the counterattack is to create an advantage for your team in order to create a high probability shot opportunity. Once a player has recognized that the defense has covered all the attackers in the front court and there is no open man and no high probability shot, the objective becomes to organize the game into a transition into regular front court offense.

What are the keys to a quick recovery of the ball?

A defender that is near the loose ball must recover it or seek or maintain position to prevent the opposing team from recovering it. Coaches differ on this, but recovered balls within five meters of the goal should be returned to the goalie for the first pass. The goalie can see the counterattack developing and can make the critical first pass. All players should try to anticipate the turnover and react accordingly. Even the slowest player can be a threat on counter by anticipating well. Under no condition shall any player hang out in the back court with the ball. That player is effectively interfering with his own team's attack because his defender will be menacing other players and clogging up the attack.

How are good shot opportunities created on counterattack?

The ball usually is passed to a man at mid-field who has opened himself for the ball by breaking to the sides (winging out). Often he is the first man to get to mid-field. As he is receiving the ball, his teammates are swimming past him and he may relay it down pool to his teammates. Teams are looking for a man advantage situation such as one person alone shooting on the goal, or two attackers with one defender, or three attackers with two defenders. If a man advantage situation has developed, the players must spread out and commit their defenders. With two on one (two attackers/one defender), the attackers are usually at least as far apart at the posts. Any three man attack formation is usually a triangle with two wings about 2 meters from the goal and the center man about four meters from the goal. The triangle formation allows greater passing opportunities than a line and it also spreads the defense.

What is the outcome of poor decision making on counterattack?

The first responsibility of the offense is to protect the possession. Failure to do that will result in turnovers. This is particularly undesirable during the counterattack because there is already an element of confusion as both teams have not yet organized. A turnover at anytime is to be avoided but turnovers during the counterattack require players who have swum hard to create offensive opportunities to immediately turn around and swim hard to stop the attack on their goal.

Often the counterattack fails to create the shot opportunity. What then?

Players quickly swim into their regular positions to open their center and start their front court offense.

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