

HAVE YOU HEARD OF UNDERWATER RUGBY?

Here's what you need to know about the latest water sport that's making waves. By ARETHA LOH



No, it's not quite like rugby.

It's more like a cross between rugby and basketball. The game takes place in a swimming pool that is 3.5m to 5m deep, and players (each team comprises two forwards, two defenders and two goalies) tackle one another for a saltwater-filled ball and score goals by dunking it into the opponent's basket – each team's basket is located at the bottom of the pool, at opposite ends. Each game lasts 30 minutes, with a break at the 15-minute mark.

You can tackle one another, but not tug at one another's swimsuits.

You'll commit a foul or penalty if you do so. In the case of a foul, the opposing team gets to start the game with the ball. If it's a penalty, the opposing attacker gets a one-to-one shoot-out with your goalie. It is also an offence to tackle a player who doesn't have possession of the ball or to lift the ball out of the water during the game. Three referees officiate – two stay underwater throughout the game with oxygen tanks, while the other stays above water to look out for fouls that happen at the surface.

Mixed teams are allowed!

Although there are women-only and men-only competitions, it's not unusual to have mixed teams as there are times when there aren't enough female players to form a full team. According to Michelle Ooi, captain of the Singapore women's team, female players train with the male players so they are able to play at a high intensity and pace during competitions.

Full snorkelling gear is required.

Due to the depth of the pool, players need to be decked out in full snorkelling gear. It's a bonus if you can hold your breath underwater for a long time, but the key to playing a good game is the ability to position yourself in the right place at the right time.



You can catch all the action without getting wet...

...thanks to underwater video cameras that stream the game live. Head to Queenstown Swimming Complex on Saturdays, 9am to 11am, to watch the First Asian Team Underwater Rugby team train. *HW*

First Asian Team Underwater Rugby (FATUWR)

FATUWR, comprising 31 men and 13 women, is the first underwater rugby team in Singapore and Asia. The women's team is led by captain Michelle Ooi, 26, a veterinarian, and vice-captain Sheena Soh, 23, an actuarial executive. Interested in joining FATUWR? Drop the team an e-mail at fatuwr@gmail.com; then pop by Queenstown Swimming Complex during their training hours.



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