

## Meagan Werth Ranson

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**From:** Mark St. John  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 17, 2021 12:01 AM  
**To:**  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Equality in Youth Sports-Reclassification of Water Polo  
**Attachments:** Supporting Document\_Water Polo.pdf; Protocols\_Request for Approval\_Water Polo Events.pdf; Reclassification of Water Polo.pdf

Dear Governor, NV Task Force, and Business and Industry Director,

This email is to implore you to reconsider your stance on reclassifying water polo in order to allow Nevada athletes to pursue the sport they love, safely. You and taskforce leaders have been shown our argument and supporting data for a safe return to play.

We cannot help but feel that we are not prioritized when it comes to youth sports. Is it because we aren't a casino? Maybe we don't know the right "people" or political figure? Perhaps we don't have a strong lobby or money to get noticed. We are, after all, just a non-profit sports team. However, we are water polo players with passion and love for this sport. We pride ourselves in coaching and teaching all levels of play from beginners in splash ball to sending our high school players to division one collegiate teams.

Sadly, your denial in today's meeting with the Coronavirus Response Director gave us no path to return to play. No proof to refute that our sport is unsafe has been provided and you are allowing other sports, in the same classification as water polo, the ability to play games and host tournaments. We are asking for the same consideration and consistency in the decision making process.

Fact - Hockey is having games weekly and it even says on [their website](#) (scroll down to 2021 Schedule). I have seen these games and can send you videos to support my claim. Look at the first sentence on that page. It says MORE GAMES!

Fact - Department of Business and Industry has approved an application to [host a hockey tournament March 19-22](#). **How is a sport that is classified as prohibited under [current guidelines](#) able to acquire such an approval? [They are even noted here as being classified as high contact sport \(second paragraph\)](#).** Dept of B&I claims the tournament will not allow "checking" and that is how they were approved. Is that the only contact in hockey? What about faceoffs? Defense on the puck? Fighting for the puck on the boards? Can they guarantee all that will not happen at this

tournament? And if it does happen, will the event be canceled. Doesn't sound like hockey if they can't do those things. Rest assured they will.

Fact - You mentioned you can't make an exception for a single sport. This statement is false. You just reclassified Lacrosse and you are allowing hockey games events without reclassification.

Fact - While I am happy for Lacrosse and Hockey, I have the same passion for my sport as they do. I hope to join them in their path to return to play.

Please explain to me why you can't approve our request to be able to have contact in our practices and the ability to have games while others in the Battle Born State of Nevada are?. We are soccer, basketball, football, lacrosse, and hockey (all approved) DIPPED IN CHLORINE! Chlorine is a disinfectant that kills the virus! Please see our attached supporting documents.

Attached:

- Supporting Letter to Reclassify Water Polo
- Protocols for our Event - Testing no more than 6 days before the event and Rapid Test On-Site before the teams first game.
- Reclassification Request

Governor and Task Force, your agenda has made time to allow water parks to open and resort pools. You have made the effort to increase F&B occupancies. Our city is increasing hotel occupancy and allowing Spring Breakers to flood our city. This is all great news...PLEASE FIND THE TIME FOR US TOO! Our athletes see their city returning to normal and see their peers are able to find options to play their sport. Please consider water polo too.

I know you will do the right thing as you are for all Nevadans but especially for our kids that are battling so many other things such as depression and need this to properly classify our sport.

Thank You,

Mark St. John  
Team Vegas Water Polo

## **COVID PROTOCOLS**

### **PRE TRAVEL**

All athletes and coaches will be required to have a negative result COVID test in their hometown/state no more than 6 days prior to the event. They will need to show proof of this before the on-site Rapid Test is performed. A negative result for the initial test is mandatory. It is highly recommended those traveling as chaperones are also tested. All information will be kept confidential.

We are asking that after the initial COVID test, each athlete will try to isolate themselves in their own "tournament bubble." Taking all precautions to avoid any exposure to the virus prior to and during travel.

Once your entry is in, you will reserve a time to have the Rapid Test performed either prior to your 1st game, or at the Host Hotel. A positive result at tournament check in will disqualify the individual athlete/coach from tournament participation. You can choose to perform another Rapid Test, or a PCR test at a local lab the next day.

Also, athletes and coaches must sign the USA Water Polo COVID-19 Return to Play Release and Waiver through their USAWP Membership portal.

While at the tournament site, masks are to be worn at all times unless you are in the water. Coaches and Admins, we are asking you to take care of this in regards to your own team and families. We are not the mask police. If you or your team (which includes parents/family) have an issue with the masks, a Covid Officer on site will either warn you or ask you to leave. I am hoping everyone is compliant in this regard, as we hope to have a fun weekend of water polo. The facility has strict rules, and if we can't follow them, it jeopardizes our ability to host.

Spectators will be limited to 2 per athlete, and 30 total per team

### **Forms and Documents for Testing**

- COVID-19 Parental Consent Form and Waiver(any athletes 18+ can sign for themselves)
- AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OR DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION -
- Proof of Negative Test dated no earlier than 6 days before event start date. Electronic or Hard Copy

**Consider the above 3 documents your "Playing Passport." These documents must be presented when testing. PLEASE PLEASE have these with you. I do not want to be the bad guy here. Testing company will not test anyone who doesn't have the above documents. I want everyone to be able to participate. Please don't let a sheet of paper with signatures be the thing that holds you back from that.**

### **Additional Tests (Optional)**

- If you believe your test results in a false positive, you can have the choice to take another test. \$49
- If you would like to take a PCR test(most accurate), the medical staff running the test can administer them for \$110 each. Samples will be collected on site Friday and Saturday morning for anyone choosing to take that option. Tests will be taken to a local lab Saturday at 10am that will have the results expedited within 4-6 hours. (you may miss a game(s) waiting for the results)

### **Reminder**

- No athlete or coach can participate unless they show a negative result on their pre-travel test and tournament on-site test.

The medical staff running the tests wants to remind all participants to be patient during your testing time. They are familiar with sporting event testing and will get through each team efficiently as possible. Also reminding you to take all steps necessary to put yourself in a position to participate in this event. Be diligent with your personal protection, cleanliness, and social distancing at and leading up to the weekend.

### **Player and Parent Entrances**

Players and Coaches will have a separate entrance from Parents/Spectators. See the attached photo for your designated entrance. Parents/Spectators are not permitted on deck. Parents/Spectators are to maintain social distancing and to have a mask on at all times in the facility. Please also see the pool deck map(attached) for your reference. Team areas are the yellow boxes.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank You,

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Mark St. John

At the moment my application can not be approved because of the current classification of water polo in the current guidelines. Even with all the testing protocols we will have in place, it can not be considered. After speaking with Terry today, he mentioned I would need to get on the agenda of the NV COVID Task Force to potentially plead my case to allow these events to take place.

My colleagues and I at USA Water Polo and would like to share some findings with you.

Our view, based on scientific data, is that water polo has been inaccurately classified as a “high risk of transmission” sport. In fact, since water polo is played in a highly chlorinated environment (which kills the COVID-19 virus), when combined with proper on-deck protocols, water polo is safe and represents an extremely low risk of transmission.

When playing water polo, faces and bodies are frequently submerged, immediately killing the virus. The positive effects of chlorine are not just limited to the water. Chlorine gas hovers above the water’s surface acting as an additional disinfectant. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has reported that there is NO evidence of COVID-19 transmission through swimming pools, while the World Health Organization (WHO) has also identified only a limited risk of contamination and illness at well-managed facilities.

I and the water polo community are open and willing to adhere to restrictions like other sports, and be given the opportunity to participate in full contact practice and competition, similar to that of our neighboring states and other local high school sports.

Currently we are stuck with no options for participation opportunities for these athletes. These athletes are students of our district, but don't have their sport available through their school. These athletes are still Student Athletes, and have chosen a sport that is outside of their schools Varsity programs.

I am available and willing to work with you on finding a way to bring this sport back. Our neighboring states(including California, Utah, and Arizona) are already allowing full contact water polo.

I respectfully ask that you reconsider the sport's classification.

I understand water polo's current classification. With your guidance, I am hoping to better understand what it would take to either; 1. Move water polo into a different classification. (I can provide studies and cases on how chlorinated water and the chlorine gases that float above the water affect the virus) or 2. Keep water polo in its current classification, but allow these events to proceed with the testing and protocols I have in place.

As a quick note, I have hosted 5 weekends of water polo events in January and February of 2021 in St. George, UT. Those weekends hosted over 1,600 athletes and 110 teams in a safe and responsible manner. We had each athlete and coach test no more than 6 days before each weekend, and they had to produce a negative COVID test result. When arriving at the event, they all also had to take an onsite rapid test with a negative result before being permitted to compete. That is 2 tests within 6 days of the event.

I am hoping to bring these safe and responsible events to my hometown.

I can share my application and all the protocols we have in place if you wish.

If this matter needs to be directed to someone else, please let me know. I am just trying to find a way. This will be the most responsible run youth sports event. This sport is my passion, and I am willing to put in as much effort as is needed to find a way to make it work.

I appreciate your time.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank You,

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Mark St. John

Dear Nevada Task Force Members:

We are writing to formally request that the State of Nevada reclassify current COVID-19 restrictions regarding participation in water polo. Based on scientific data, we believe that water polo has been inaccurately classified as a “high risk of transmission” sport. In fact, since water polo is played in a highly chlorinated environment (which kills the COVID-19 virus), and when combined with proper on-deck protocols, water polo is safe and represents an extremely low risk of transmission. During water polo, faces and bodies are frequently submerged, immediately killing the virus. The positive effects of chlorine are not just limited to the water. Chlorine gas hovers above the water’s surface acting as an additional disinfectant. The [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) has reported that there is NO evidence of COVID-19 transmission through swimming pools, while the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has also identified only a limited risk of contamination and illness at well-managed facilities.

Neighboring states, such as California and Arizona, have already acknowledged that water polo can resume safely. NCAA Pac-12 Conference resumed training and competition – with participants including UCLA, USC, California, Stanford, and Arizona State University, all of which are playing without evidence of their actions leading to higher infection rates. Last week, the California Department of Public Health announced additional guidance allowing the state to resume participation opportunities for “**all organized** youth sports and recreation— including school- and community-sponsored programs, and privately-organized clubs and leagues.” This guideline was not restricted to scholastic competition.

Water polo is now taking place across the United States while Nevada delays implementation because the sport is not recognized through the NIAA high school system. In Nevada, swimming is allowed to go forward and we can simply apply the same on deck protocols for water polo to ensure an equally safe environment. Last month, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) elected to remove colored tiers in evaluating the risk of COVID-19 transmission in high school sports and encouraged other sports authorities to do the same.

On the international front, Italy was hardest hit by COVID-19’s initial impact. Its oldest technical university, Polytechnic Institute of Turin, issued a 400-page study of 387 sports. The study named water polo as the safest team sport. Similarly, the Spanish Swimming Federation issued a technical paper arguing that “a well-maintained swimming pool is sanitary safe” from COVID-19. The Dutch University Medical center of Utrecht provided further evidence that chlorine inactivated COVID-19.

Safety protocols are now in place to train and compete safely in the USA. Science clearly identifies a much lower risk to playing water polo than many other basic activities that are currently allowed. We can assure you that we are ready to resume participation safely. The governing body for water polo in America, USA Water Polo, has issued protocols for a safe return to play based on science and the experiences noted above. In the case of water polo, one size does NOT fit all when applying general public health guidelines to a sport played in an environment hostile to the COVID-19 virus is counterproductive at best. This was evident when the NIAA allowed high risk sports to resume competition with additional measures. Unfortunately water polo was not included as it is not a recognized sport through the NIAA, so those students are still restricted from participating in their sport of choice. However, just recently, Lacrosse was reclassified by the state as an “intermediate risk of transmission” when it was previously classified as high risk.

We are asking for your help to allow water polo to fully open under strict safety rules. Please be our advocate with our government and public health officials to follow the science and let our young people back in the chlorinated water to pursue their dreams. You can make a difference in the lives of water polo athletes, and Team Vegas Water Polo needs your help and support.

Sincerely,

Mark St. John - Head Coach Team Vegas Water Polo