



## THINK ONE SPORT IS HECTIC? TRY ONE OF THESE HYBRID SPORTS

Rebecca Burton tempts us to enter the world of hybrid sports — wacky, intense and obscure counterparts to mainstream activities that combine two or more existing sports.

### What Are Hybrid Sports?

From alternating rounds of boxing and chess, to scoring a hockey goal underwater, hybrid sports are activities you've probably never heard of that could be your next offbeat adventure. If you're up for the challenge — and mad enough to try — here are 6 sports that you definitely won't find on primetime but which are played throughout Australia



### Underwater Rugby And Hockey

Why play a sport on grass when you could toss a ball or chase a puck underwater? That's exactly what the **Australian Underwater Federation** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://auf.com.au/>) is all about; two of their key sports are underwater hockey and underwater rugby. Underwater hockey is played six-a-side with the aim of pushing or flicking a weighted puck along the bottom of the pool into the opposition's 3m wide tray (goal) with a wooden 25cm stick. Players are decked out with large fins, a diving mask and snorkel plus a large glove to protect their hand from the bottom of the pool and puck.

At the rougher end of the pool is underwater rugby, which is a full contact hybrid sport. Underwater rugby players wear the same equipment as in underwater hockey but instead of a puck the six players on each team toss a rugby ball filled with salt water between them, with the aim of keeping possession of the ball and scoring. This is done by tapping the ball on the steel goals anchored to the bottom of the pool at either end. Goalies can even protect their net by sitting on it for as long as their breath allows. In an **interview with SMH** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.smh.com.au/sport/what-tries-beneath-official-nod-for-hidden-depths-of-underwater-rugby-20120902-258k1.html>), the president of the underwater rugby team said it best: "It's a bit like wrestling in outer space, in three dimensions."

## Disc Golf Or FootGolf

If you're not ready to commit to a full set of golf clubs but still want to test your patience and coordination around an 18-hole golf course, try throwing a frisbee or kicking a soccer ball. In these two golf spin-offs — **disc golf** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://www.australiandiscgolf.com/>) and **footgolf** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://footgolf.org.au/>) — the aim is still the same: complete each hole with the fewest number of strokes.

Disc golf is played with a frisbee and the holes look somewhat like mini steel basketball nets, while footgolf is played with a soccer ball on a setup almost identical to a golf course – just with a larger hole.

You'll likely even find footgolf courses integrated into existing golf courses (the non-exclusive kind). These approachable, no age limitation games are a good, less intense intro to hybrid sports, just remember to keep yelling "fore!".

## Chess Boxing

It's referred to as the ultimate test of brains versus brawn. Chess boxing, which quite literally consists of alternate rounds of chess and boxing, was spawned from an idea in a graphic novel by Dutch performance artist **Iepe Rubingh**



Participants play 11 alternate 3-minute rounds of chess and boxing. According to the World Chess Boxing Organisation (oh yes, they're on a **mission to spread chess boxing to every continent** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.wcbo.org/>)) fighters can win, "by knockout in the ring, by checkmate in chess, by the judge's decision, or if the opponent exceeds the nine minutes allotted to the chess game."

The league spread down under around 2012, when a **Chess Boxing Australia** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.facebook.com/ChessBoxingAustralia/>) chapter sprouted up in Melbourne, touting their first milestone match the same year. Unfortunately, activity has since ceased and only the humble beginnings of a **Queensland chapter** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.facebook.com/cqchessboxing/>) could be your ticket to testing your right hook and your checkmate.

## Polocrosse

This mash-up of polo and lacrosse was actually invented in Australia way back in the 1930s. The couple had a fondness for horses and were inspired by an indoor exercise they saw in England.

Like polo, it's played outside on horseback but instead of using a stick with a mallet at the end, it features a pocket with loose netting so players can scoop up a ball to be carried, caught, passed or shot. Referred to as **rugby on horseback** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://www.nswpolocrosse.com.au/>) by the Polocrosse Association of NSW, the game was intended to be a simple, inexpensive way to enjoy time with your horse and the first recorded game took place in Ingleburn in 1939.

Now, decades later, there are over **250 clubs around Australia** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.facebook.com/Polocrosse-Australia-PAA-Inc-131665910318741/>) competing nationally and internationally. Think it sounds hectic? Just wait until **Segway Polo** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://segypolo.org/>) makes it to Australia — it's a cross between horse polo and hockey, played on segways.

## Canoe Polo

If you're going to get into canoe polo, you'd better learn to paddle fast and roll efficiently. Take **Jennifer Stevens** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYWcj0a9uTcY>)' word for it. She's a former canoe sprinter who narrowly missed a shot at the 2012 Olympics and has since joined the **Australian Canoe Polo** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://www.facebook.com/auscanoe polo/>) team.



(<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://canoe.org.au/disciplines/canoe-polo/>)

**Photo courtesy of the Australian Canoe Polo Team**

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://canoe.org.au/disciplines/canoe-polo/>)

It's some added buzz for the Australian sport which was part of the inaugural world championship in 1994 and is now played in every capital city as well as the ACT and Northern Territory.

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/>)

**Photo courtesy of the Australian Canoe Polo Team**

The sport is

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/>)

played in teams of five in swimming pools or on flat stretches of water. It combines the technical skills of slalom, the speed of sprint and team skills of basketball and is often referred to as 'water polo in kayaks.'

Canoe Polo is a fast and dynamic hybrid sport and therefore has great spectator appeal. According to Ian Beasley, chair of Australian canoe polo, this is because boats can tackle each other and ride up on one another, players can push each other into the water and the roll is an essential skill that adds to the excitement.

For those needing a high-energy alternative to regular canoeing — this is your calling.

## SUPBall

One of the newest hybrid sports to hit the scene sprouted up in Manly in 2009. It goes by the name of **SUPBall**

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/http://www.supball.com.au/>) and is a combination of netball, water polo, lacrosse and rugby, played on stand-up paddle boards.

Typically played five-a-side, the goal is to score by throwing the ball against an orange buoy tied at either end of the watery pitch. It's less leisurely paddle and more board flying, wave crashing excitement, as players try to tackle one another and attempt to steal the ball or someone else's board.

It's a great example of what a few people mucking around at sunset can develop into a fledgling official sport. And it's certainly generating some hype with a **Sunday Super League and talk of official accreditation** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190407140208/https://weareexplorers.co/hybrid-sports-future-fun/>). Manly Wharf, just watch out.