sports cont.

Water Polo Anyone?

By Joel West

Who invented water polo? How many people in the United States play water polo? How many people pick up your dows playing water polo? These questions will not be answered unless you get a general explanation of the rules and tactics of the game.

At the start of each quarter (6 minutes of "stopped time" under NAIA rules) swimmers, each wearing a numbered cap, line up on opposite ends of the pool. When the referee blows his whistle, the two fastest swimmers on each team race down side, attempting to reach the ball first, which the referee has just kindly dropped between them. The 7 players then assume a 3-3 formation: 3 "defensive" players, 3 "offensive" players, and the goalie.

The closest relative to water polo is soccer. As in soccer, the goalie has special privileges — he is the only one in the pool allowed to hold, catch, or throw the ball with two hands. As a result, beginning players must learn to "pat" the volleyball-sized ball, enabling them to hold the ball with their hand on top of it. Also, as in soccer, the players must learn to dribble the ball, in this case by using the turbulence of their head-up crawl (used 95 percent of the time) to keep the ball directly in front of their chests.

The basis of water polo as it is currently played is the "hole man," or center offense position. As are all offensive players, he is barred from going inside the two-yard line, directly in front of the goal plane. Thus he remains on the two-yard line, directly in front of the goal, with the "hole guard" (center defense) directly between him and the goal. Without the intervention of the nose guard, the hole man is expected to score 80-90 percent of the time he gets the ball. However, there is very little even the best guard can do (Please turn to page 9)