

## **The Fundamentals of the Game by Terry Schroeder, Head Coach, Men's National Team**

**As a player and a coach, I strongly believe that the fundamentals of the game are critical for success.** In order for us to be competitive next year in Beijing, we will need to improve our fundamentals. Therefore, we will be spending a good deal of time on fundamentals in practice. I have been amazed at how weak most of our athletes (even at the national team level) are with their fundamentals.

I believe that there are two main reasons for this weakness:

1. We as coaches have not done a very good job of teaching and developing the fundamentals with our athletes.
2. Over the past 15 – 20 years the style of the game has changed. There is much more grabbing and wrestling allowed and the players never really learn to use good fundamentals. Think about this one for a minute. Many of our best athletes (our current national team players) were the biggest and strongest players in high school and college. They were very successful in high school and college by learning all they had to do was to grab, hold and control their opponents using primarily upper body strength. In other words they did not have to use their legs or proper body positioning to be successful. As coaches, we did not have to worry about teaching them these skills because they were having great success without them.

In my opinion, this is one of the big reasons why we are battling for 9th place at the World Championships rather than being a top three team. Our athletes (team) do great against players that we can generally out muscle. Once again, using our upper body strength to succeed but then when we get up against an opponent that is equally strong and more fundamentally strong we struggle.

**USA Water Polo needs your help.** If we all commit to helping our athletes learn better fundamentals (from the young kids all the way to the top), I strongly believe that we can and will become a world power in water polo once again.