



Technical Director's Report

Michael Reid, Technical Director, Vortex Water Polo

Vortex Water Polo Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026
Aquatic Hall of Fame, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Introduction

It is my privilege to present the Technical Director's Report for the 2024–2025 season. This past year was marked by meaningful growth, significant challenges, and important opportunities as we continued working to strengthen our programs and support the development of Water Polo in Manitoba.

As a not-for-profit organization, Vortex Water Polo depends heavily on volunteers to operate and thrive. I would like to begin by sincerely thanking both the current and previous Boards of Directors for their dedication and countless volunteer hours. Their commitment has been essential to the continued operation and development of the club.

I would also like to recognize the many other volunteers who support the club in numerous ways like chaperoning trips, planning events, running fundraising initiatives, timekeeping and scorekeeping games, and organizing our awards banquet, which saw a significant upgrade this year. These efforts often happen behind the scenes, but they are absolutely vital to our success.

A critical pillar of our organization is our coaching staff. The vast majority of our coaches generously volunteer their time and expertise to support our athletes, the club, and the sport. They make it possible for us to offer programming ranging from 8U through recreational adult programs. Over the past year, I have worked closely with both the current and previous Boards to further professionalize our coaching structure. While most coaches remain volunteers, the club has increased funding allocated toward coach development by covering memberships, coaching courses, and providing honorariums.

Last season began with significant challenges. Programming was delayed by approximately one month due to board-level issues. Despite the stress this caused for athletes, families, staff, and volunteers, the previous Board worked tirelessly to approve the start of the season and successfully

held a well-attended AGM in November 2024. During this period, contracted employees continued to dedicate themselves to the club despite not receiving remuneration or expense reimbursements totaling tens of thousands of dollars. Notably, not a single volunteer or contractor walked away, a powerful demonstration of resilience, commitment, and belief in the club.

At the November 2024 AGM, the membership elected a brand-new Board of Directors. This group has shown exceptional dedication and has already made meaningful progress in strengthening the club's finances, policies, and overall operations.

The remainder of this report highlights the season's achievements, membership statistics, key challenges, and a look ahead at the future of Water Polo in Manitoba.

Highlights

This past season marked the first year that Vortex Water Polo offered 8U and 10U Learn to Swim and Play programs. These programs were an important step in strengthening early athlete development and introducing young participants to Water Polo in a fun and age-appropriate environment. We ended the season with 56 athletes participating in these programs.



Athletes

Athlete participation remained strong across all age groups. During the season, 55 athletes participated in free trials, with eight of those athletes converting to paid memberships in the 2024–2025 season. A total of 56 athletes were registered in the 8U–10U programs, while 174 athletes participated in programs ranging from 14U through adult divisions. In total, Vortex Water Polo registered 285 athlete members, with 238 athletes enrolled in paid programs.

Gender	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Girls	94	82	123	107
Boys	156	155	173	176
X	1	4	4	2
Total Athletes	251	241	300	285

Free Trials	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total Free Trials	N/A	57	124	55
Free Trials who Joined	N/A	31	49	8

Categories	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total Athletes	251	241	300	285
Coaches	28	20	14	14
Volunteers	20	22	68	39
TOTAL IMPACT	299	283	382	338

Coaches

The club was supported by a dedicated **staff of 14 coaches**, with an average age of 31 years. These coaches played a vital role in delivering programming across all age groups and competitive levels, contributing significantly to athlete development and program quality.

Volunteers

Volunteer support continued to be a cornerstone of the club's operations, with 39 volunteers registered in RAMP (not including our volunteer coaches). In accordance with MWPA policy, all individuals participating in volunteer activities are required to register in RAMP, both to track volunteer bond hours and to ensure compliance with provincial standards. Volunteer registration is free and also plays an important role in demonstrating the sport's community impact to funding partners such as Sport Manitoba.

16U NCL

Vortex Water Polo was well represented in the National Championship League (NCL), with both the 16U Girls and 16U Boys teams competing at the national level. The 16U Girls team earned an impressive fifth-place finish at the Western Championships, highlighted by an outstanding performance from goalie Daria, who led the entire tournament in saves. The 16U Boys team finished eighth overall, with athletes Ethan, Roman, Joah, and Ellis placing within the top five across several key statistical categories.



Vortex 16U Teams

18U NCL and a Gold Medal

At the 18U level, Vortex Water Polo had five girls and six boys participate in the NCL by competing with other clubs, as Vortex did not have sufficient numbers to field full 18U teams that season. Despite this, Vortex athletes continued to excel, with Meagan Bueckert earning a gold medal while competing with Fraser Valley's 18U Women's team.



National Team Programs

Athlete development at the national team level was further demonstrated by Izzie Hyman and Kal Cabernet Fraser, who were selected to attend the 15U National Team Development Camp in the summer of 2025. Amazing achievement for these athletes and a very nice milestone for the club. History in the making too, as Kal and Izzie are the first Vortex athletes involved in a National Team program. You may not realize this but Manitoba has a rich history of athletes playing on National Teams.



Junior Olympics

Additionally, Callie Deimuth, Kensleigh Swanston, Meagan Bueckert, and Stanley Boudreau Strome represented Vortex at USA Water Polo's Junior Olympics, an elite competition comparable to Canada's National Championship League. They played with American clubs as transfer players.



Winter League

The Winter League continued to be an essential component of athlete development, providing consistent and meaningful competition for players across age groups. A total of 61 games were played between January and April at Pan Am Pool, offering athletes valuable game experience during the winter season.

NCAA Water Polo

A significant milestone for the club was achieved when Jayden Del Campo became the first athlete from Vortex Water Polo to be accepted into an NCAA institution. Jayden is attending McKendree University, where he will pursue his studies while competing in collegiate Water Polo.



Out-of-Province Competition

Competitive opportunities outside of Manitoba remained a key focus, with the club completing 11 out-of-province trips during the season. These included two trips each for the 14U Boys, 14U Girls, 16U Boys, 16U Girls, and 18U Boys teams, as well as one trip for the Open Women's program.

- 11 total trips
 - 14U Boys (2), 14U Girls (2)
 - 16U Boys (2), 16U Girls (2)
 - 18U Boys (2)
 - Open Women (1)

Summer Programs

Summer programming continued to expand and diversify, highlighted by an Ottawa exchange trip that included 10 athletes, two chaperones, and one coach. Additional offerings included a 12U Intro to Water Polo program, weekly Open Men's and Women's scrimmages, and summer day camps for 12U and 14U athletes. Athletes also had the opportunity to train with Olympian Shae La Roche and participate in the Hall of Fame Camp led by Michel Roy. These camps were combined and supported through funding from Sport Manitoba.



Ottawa Exchange Trip

On Saturday, July 5, Sport Manitoba hosted a Game Day session at Assiniboine Park (<https://www.sportmanitoba.ca/events/summergameday>) and we were part of it!

Multiple sports set up stations where kids can go around and try them out. We did Water Polo on land. Thank you to all of the volunteers who came out to make this a fantastic event.



Sport Manitoba hosted a Game Day session at Assiniboine Park on July 5, 2025

Junior Coach Program

Finally, the club launched a Junior Coach Program designed to provide youth athletes with valuable coaching experience by assisting certified coaches within club programs. This initiative is currently being formalized to ensure long-term sustainability and to support the development of a clear coaching pathway within Vortex Water Polo.



Challenges

Vortex Water Polo continues to face several ongoing challenges that impact program delivery and athlete development.

While the club benefits from a dedicated and committed coaching staff, the limited number of available coaches makes it difficult to fully support and expand all current and future initiatives.

In addition, access to appropriate pool space is a concern, as much of the available training time does not allow for full-field practice. This limitation particularly affects 14U athletes, who often do not experience full-field play until participating in official competitions.

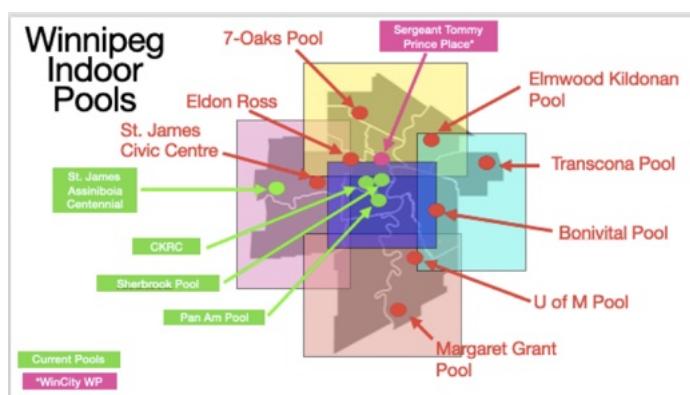
The high cost of out-of-province travel, combined with a limited range of competition levels available outside Manitoba, also presents financial and developmental challenges for athletes and families.

As a result, there is an ongoing need to increase fundraising efforts and secure sponsorships in order to help offset costs and improve affordability, particularly for competitive athletes who travel multiple times each season.

The Future

Looking ahead, Vortex Water Polo is preparing for several important developments that will shape the club's future.

Pan Am Pool is tentatively scheduled to close for maintenance in 2027, which will require the temporary relocation of programs to alternative facilities throughout the city.



In addition, the club anticipates the continued development of a stronger and more robust Winter League, with multiple Manitoba clubs participating to provide increased local competition.

Vortex Water Polo also remains committed to ongoing collaboration with the Manitoba Water Polo Association (MWPA) to expand competitive opportunities and support the overall growth and development of Water Polo across the province.

I've been collaborating with the board and our volunteer base to enhance our marketing efforts, expand youth exposure to Water Polo, and ultimately increase membership.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the entire Vortex Water Polo community, our athletes, families, coaches, volunteers, board members, and supporters. Your dedication, resilience, and belief in this club have allowed us to navigate a challenging year while still achieving remarkable growth and success.

Vortex Water Polo is more than a club; it is a community built on teamwork, passion, and a shared commitment to developing athletes and people through sport. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together and excited about what the future holds. Thank you for your continued trust, support, and involvement as we work together to grow Water Polo in Manitoba.

All the best and GO VORTEX!