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By Sophie Braccini



Photo Doug Kohen

environment.

Splashball? It's all about kids, balls and water - how could it not be fun? "Splashball is to water polo what t-ball is to baseball," says Bill Brown, who created Miramonte High School's water polo program over 40 years ago. Brown is working with the Lamorinda Water Polo Club, Moraga Parks and Recreation Department and over 40 boys and girls to splash their way through the basics of water polo.

Boyd Lachance, the founder and executive director of Lamorinda Water Polo Club (LWC), says, "Splashball was born in Australia and New Zealand under the name Flippa Ball." LWP started one of the very first Splashball programs in northern California this past summer and is partnering with the Moraga Parks and Rec this fall to offer the program at Campolindo High School's Soda Aquatic Center for kids ages 5-9.

"Having little kids play Splashball is a wonderful way for them to learn to love the game, while having fun and strengthening their swimming skills," says Brown. "Fifteen or twenty different skills can be taught at this level," he adds, "like handling skills, shooting, catching, and passing." Kim Everist, the Campolindo girls' water polo coach who is working with the program, says that Splashball is also a good way to introduce kids to a team sport in a recreational

"When I grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, we had three sports to choose from, and two of them were football," says Chris Cooper, who now lives in a much closer Lafayette. "Our kids are so lucky to have so much to choose from," he says, adding that his six-year old son, Warren, loves Splashball. "What better thing could you do on a hot Sunday afternoon?" asks Cooper.

Four coaches and eight assistants are in the pool with the children at all times. Recent Cal graduate Heather Stewart is one of the coaches. "It is so much fun to teach the little ones," she says, "the ratio of coaches/assistants to players is over 1 to 4; we want this to be safe." The sport is played in a shallow pool and the children sit on Swim Noodles. Stewart adds that she is amazed at how much enthusiasm the kids have. "They play at 120%," she says.

Cooper believes, "By the time the Splashball players reach the first level in water polo at age ten, they will definitely have an edge."

The Splashball season runs through November 7th and new players are still being accepted. Register at Moraga Parks and Rec, http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_parks_recreation.php. Lachance says LWP plans to offer Splashball again in 2011 with spring, summer and fall seasons. For more information about LWP go to http://www.lamorindawaterpolo.org/.

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