

Varsity team captain Jimmy Snell prepares to pass the ball to his teammate, assisting a goal. "It's weird to think that [high school water polo] is coming to an end. It's still fun because I have a lot of seniors with me for Senior Night, so it's going to be a blast," Snell said.

*Photo by Terri Kang*

Jay Paek (12) scours the pool for someone to pass the ball to. Paek was new to water polo, but as a swimmer, water sports were not a foreign activity.

"Swimming is very passive, it's mainly racing. But with water polo, there's a lot of wrestling. Overall, there's a greater sense of satisfaction than finishing a race—scoring a goal feels a lot better," Paek said.

*Photo by Terri Kang*



Bryan Liu (10) prepares to make a goal. Liu was brought up to the varsity team during the season. "I've always known the team captains very well. The only difference now is that I get to practice with them and know everyone on [the varsity] team better," Liu said. *Photo by Terri Kang*



Varsity team captain Alec Song (12) maneuvers the ball away from his opponent. "[Water polo] is a difficult sport—it requires a lot of stamina and physical exertion," Song said, "it's a sport that requires keeping a level head and trying to learn new things while being exhausted at the same time. So, encouragement is key to persevere through that exhaustion." *Photo by Terri Kang*

# A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

**Refusing to be discouraged by the teams' numbers, boys water polo finds that less is more.**

In the wake of COVID-19, boys water polo experienced a decrease in players. While this may seem like an inconvenient disadvantage, the team viewed their roster in a positive light.

Varsity player Jay Paek (12), a new addition to the water polo team, believed that the smaller team increased players' sense of accountability and commitment to the sport.

"I could definitely feel there are no slackers, so seeing all these hard workers on the team is a source of encouragement; I definitely saw growth within the team," Paek said.

Varsity co-captains Alec Song (12) and James (Jimmy) Snell (12) shared a cohesive goal of emptying the bench during games as a way to promote

a comfortable and inclusive dynamic amongst the team.

"A decision I had to make was getting the bench players extra playing time. It's mostly persuading the coach to let them play, even if we may get scored on—everyone should get a chance," Song said.

Both JV and varsity have used their small teams to their advantage.

"Being with my teammates, or my friends pushed me to [stay on the team] even though I knew the team would be on the smaller side," JV player Blake Tarkington (10) said. "The team is a good environment to be a part of and even during COVID, water polo was a lot of fun."

*Story by Terri Kang*



Brian Ling (9) warms up by blocking his teammate's shots against the goal. Ling is one of two goalies on the JV team, and despite being positioned across the pool from his teammates, the distance did not take away from the overall thrill of the sport. "Playing on the school water polo team [has been] a fun experience; game days, specifically, are always pretty exciting," Ling said.

*Photo by Terri Kang*



JV player Kyle Jackson (10) blocks his opponent during the team's game against Mountain View High School. The team dynamic of the sport prompted Jackson to take up water polo. "I started water polo mainly because I wanted to do a sport. I wanted to have bonding experience with the team, and I think I made a good decision—I'm having a lot of fun," Jackson said.

*Photo by Terri Kang*

## (BELLY) FLOP FRIDAY *Athletes uphold team traditions.*



The boys water polo team maintained a long-time tradition of belly flopping into the pool every Friday. JV and varsity titles are disregarded as the players collectively celebrate the end of the weekend jumping splayed out into the pool. JV player Pelleg Shani (10, left) and Ethan Ling (12, right) were no strangers to the weekly tradition. "[The teams] go to the deck and we belly flop into the pool. It's a fun thing the team does—it's funny seeing everyone do flops. It's a fun twist to our Fridays," Shani said.

*Photos by Terri Kang*