



WATER POLO ATHLETES AND PARENTS LAUNCH *LET THEM PLAY* MOVEMENT

9 February, 2021—Inspired by California’s *Let Them Play* youth sports movement, a group of athletes and parents has formed an advocacy group to ensure water polo is specifically considered while reinforcing the broader effort. **Tony Azevedo, a 5-time Olympian considered the best water polo player in United States history, is Senior Advisor to *Let Them Play Water Polo*.**

The group was urgently formed because California’s ban on water polo has unique national impact. California has more water polo athletes than the other 49 states combined, is home to the world’s largest Junior tournament and traditionally the NCAA championships, and is home to our national teams from age groupers to Olympians (the men have decamped to Eastern Europe). Governor Newsom regards *Let Them Play* as football-centric—football has been most organized and provided specific data—saying, “I’ll be honest with you, a lot of this is driven by football with folks wanting to get a football season in.”

The mission of *Let Them Play Water Polo* is to ensure water polo is scientifically considered and permitted in its home state, while reinforcing the drive to correct all California youth sports policy.

California’s ban on water polo has dangerous consequences on many levels, including the mental and physical well-being of our athletes and the destruction of the state’s entire aquatic ecosystem. After a year of COVID, there is now overwhelming evidence that clearly indicates the low risk of infection in water polo. It’s time to follow the evidence. Let Them Play Water Polo. –Tony Azevedo

The team has established a website (www.LetThemPlayWaterPolo.com) as an advocacy platform. The website outlines the problem statement and the solution, which must be both **scientific and political**.

Water polo youth athletes have petitioned First Partner Jennifer Newsom (<http://chng.it/SCJZLZLMFG>)—herself a former elite youth athlete—in hopes she is given a seat at the negotiating table.

***Let Them Play Advisors* are** sending a [letter](#) to Governor Newsom laying out the scientific and evidentiary case to safely return water polo to pools in its home state.

Water Polo has lacked advocacy on COVID safety for almost a year. **That changes today.** Youth Athlete Advisors and Senior Advisor Azevedo are available for interviews.

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www.LetThemPlayWaterPolo.com