

Book of exercises for WSB game play

(WP2_D2.4)

WSB in EU - ToT

ERASMUS+ Sport

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1. Introduction

The WSB-EU-ToT (Water Skyball in Europe – Training of Trainers) project was created in response to the rapidly changing needs and habits of today's society. As lifestyles and physical activity patterns evolve, traditional sports often no longer align with the interests or routines of modern individuals. There is a growing demand for innovative, accessible, and engaging physical activities—and Water Skyball (WSB), a new-generation, inclusive water sport, offers a unique answer to this need.

The core aim of the project is to improve the qualifications of trainers and sports professionals by introducing them to the methodology and philosophy of WSB. Through the development of high-quality educational materials, the project supports the integration of WSB into local sports communities across five partner countries (Hungary, Germany, Greece, Poland, and Romania). It also aims to raise awareness about the value of modern, adaptable training methods that better meet the expectations of the 21st-century population.

This document, the *Book of Exercises for WSB Game Play*, has been designed as a practical guide to support coaches in mastering and teaching the sport. It presents a structured collection of training exercises that focus on the technical and tactical elements of WSB. The material serves as a hands-on toolkit that coaches can directly apply during training sessions, helping players to gradually build up their skills, game awareness, and tactical understanding.

2. Offensive Movements

In Water Skyball, successful offense relies on continuous movement, quick decision-making, and the ability to create space and opportunities for scoring. This chapter introduces exercises designed to develop players' attacking skills, including positioning, ball circulation, and tactical movement patterns. The aim is to help players understand how to maintain dynamic play, support their teammates, and effectively build up scoring opportunities.

2.1. Exercise: Walking from Side to Side with Passing

Description:

Two attacking players start the exercise, one positioned in the *Defender Zone* and the other in the *Midfield Zone*. They begin at opposite sides of the playing field, spreading wide toward the sidelines to maximize space. With the ball in possession, they start moving in opposite directions, continuously passing the ball back and forth while crossing the width of the field.

As they move, the players also simulate attacking threats by turning toward the target goal, performing *throw fakes* (shot feints) to pressure the defending goalkeeper. The key element is to maintain constant movement and ball circulation while maintaining width, ensuring that the defenders are forced to shift, adjust, and remain under pressure.

Purpose / Focus:

This drill develops the basic attacking movement pattern in Water Skyball, emphasizing:

- Continuous motion and positioning to avoid static play.
- Maintaining width to stretch the defensive line.
- Ball circulation under pressure while preparing for effective shooting opportunities.
- Using shot feints to destabilize the defense and create openings.

By practicing this exercise, players learn how to generate scoring opportunities by keeping defenders in constant motion, eventually forcing a defensive error that leaves space in the goal for a clear shot.



2.2. Exercise: Pair Run

Version 1 – Individual Shots after Run

Two attacking players start from their own Defender Zone, positioned approximately in line with the two goalposts. Each player holds a ball and begins advancing toward the opposite goal. On their way forward, they perform shot fakes to simulate attacking pressure. When they reach the edge of the opponent's Defender Zone, they take turns executing a shot at goal, making sure their throwing arm does not cross into the Defender Zone during the motion.

On the opposite side, a goalkeeper is positioned and actively attempts to block the incoming shots. This version therefore also serves as a goalkeeper training drill.

Version 2 – Passing and Final Shot

The two attacking players start again from their own Defender Zone, but this time they have only one ball between them. They advance together toward the opponent's goal, passing the ball back and forth while maintaining movement and coordination. Upon reaching the attacking area, one of the players takes a shot from the Midfield while the other supports by positioning and creating pressure.

Purpose / Focus:

This exercise prepares players for fast attacking situations, simulating a quick break where both attacking players push forward to capitalize on space and create a high-percentage scoring opportunity. The drill develops:

- Speed and coordinated movement during attacking transitions.
- Effective use of feints to destabilize defenders and goalkeepers.
- Passing under pressure while advancing toward goal (Version 2).
- Goalkeeper reflexes and shot-stopping ability.

By practicing both versions, players strengthen their ability to execute quick, decisive attacks that put the opponent under immediate pressure, while also giving goalkeepers realistic repetitions against different types of shots.



2.3. Exercise: Circuit Exercises

Version 1 – Shooting, Sprinting, Defensive Side-Steps

At least four players (but ideally 8–12 or even up to 16) participate, starting in one Defender Zone. The first player begins with a ball, taking a long-distance shot at the opposite goal. If enough participants are available, a goalkeeper can be positioned to practice saving long-range shots.

After shooting, the attacker immediately sprints along the sideline toward the opposite half. Around the Midfield area, the player switches to lateral movement (side-steps) while performing defensive arm work, simulating a defensive block. If there are enough participants, the player can attempt to block the shot of another participant from the opposite Defender Zone, adding further defensive realism.

Once the player reaches the middle of the Midfield, they continue forward, join the end of the opposite line, pick up a ball, and prepare to repeat the drill from that side. The movement therefore forms a continuous circuit: shooting → sprinting → defensive movement → rotation.

Version 2 – Feinting and Shooting with Goalkeeper Rotation

Again, players start with the ball in the Defender Zone. The attacker sprints forward into the Midfield, performing throw fakes along the way to simulate offensive pressure. When they reach the edge of the opposite Defender Zone, they take a shot on goal. A goalkeeper is positioned to defend.

After the shot, the rotation changes: the player who just attacked takes the goalkeeper's place, while the goalkeeper who defended joins the line of players waiting on the right side, ball in hand. This creates a continuous rotation between attacking, shooting, goalkeeping, and resetting in line.

Purpose / Focus:

The circuit format combines multiple aspects of Water Skyball in one continuous drill, developing:

- Shooting from both long and short distances.
- Sprinting with and without the ball.
- Performing shot fakes while advancing.
- Defensive lateral movement and blocking skills.
- Goalkeeping reflexes and transition into play.
- Endurance and ability to switch quickly between roles.

This exercise reflects the natural rhythm of a WSB match, where players constantly transition between attacking and defending roles. It helps players adapt to the game's fast pace, learning to stay engaged in both offensive and defensive tasks in a continuous cycle.



3. Defensive Movements

Strong defense is a key element of Water Skyball, as it prevents the opponent from creating effective attacking opportunities and helps maintain team balance. This chapter presents exercises that focus on defensive positioning, anticipation, and coordinated movement. The goal is to enable players to read the game, react quickly to opponents' actions, and work together to neutralize threats while preparing for a smooth transition into attack.

3.1. Exercise: Depth Defense Movement (*Forward–Backward Defensive Shifting*)

Description:

This exercise focuses on coordinated defensive positioning between the goalkeeper in the Defender Zone and the field defender in the Midfield. The drill begins with the goalkeeper in the Defender Zone and the defending field player in the Midfield, positioned around the center of their respective zones.

The defending field player leads the movement, since the goalkeeper can observe and follow their positioning. When the defender in the Midfield moves forward toward the opponent's Defender Zone — pressing the attacking goalkeeper deeper into their zone — the defending goalkeeper also steps forward. In this situation, opportunities may arise for interceptions:

- The defending goalkeeper may attempt a **Rear Interception** if the attacking field player remains alone with the ball in the Midfield.
- The defending field player may attempt a **Front Interception** by moving forward aggressively.

If, however, the defending field player retreats, leaving more space for the attacking goalkeeper to advance, the defending goalkeeper must also retreat closer to their own goal. In this case, the chance for ball recovery is minimal, so the goalkeeper's primary responsibility becomes protecting the goal.

Purpose / Focus:

This drill develops coordinated depth defense, where goalkeeper and field defender move forward and backward in harmony. It trains:

- Reading the attacker's positioning and adjusting accordingly.
- Dynamic switching between pressing for interceptions and retreating for goal protection.
- Synchronization between goalkeeper and field defender.
- Anticipation and decision-making under changing offensive pressure.

By practicing continuous forward and backward shifting, defenders learn to maintain compactness, adapt to the attackers' movements, and maximize their chances of either intercepting the ball or effectively protecting the goal.



3.2. Exercise: Ball Steal Movement

Description:

Players line up inside the Defender Zone, close to the boundary line, without a ball. The exercise focuses on practicing the fundamental movement patterns required for successful ball steal (interceptions) and the quick return to defensive positioning.

- **Version 1 – One-Leg Step with Closing Movement:**
The player quickly steps forward into the Midfield with one leg, then closes the gap by bringing the other leg forward. Immediately after, they jump or step back with both feet together into the Defender Zone.
- **Version 2 – Two-Leg Step:**
The player moves forward into the Midfield with both feet simultaneously, then returns with both feet together back into the Defender Zone.
- **Version 3 – Long Steps from the Goal Line:**
The player starts deeper, from the goal line, and uses 3–4 strong, fast steps to reach the Midfield before retreating quickly back into the Defender Zone.

Purpose / Focus:

This drill trains players to perform the precise stepping technique necessary for interceptions in Water Skyball. Key aspects include:

- Executing a quick one-leg step into the Midfield to attempt a ball recovery.

- Completing the zone transition (bringing the second leg into the Midfield) before retreating, ensuring the movement is valid within the rules.
- Returning immediately to protect the Defender Zone and the goal if the interception attempt is unsuccessful.
- Building speed, explosiveness, and timing for defensive movements.

By practicing these variations, players develop the agility and awareness required to step out for ball recovery while still maintaining the ability to quickly return to a secure defensive position.

3.3. Exercise: Lateral Defensive Movement

Description:

In this drill, the defending goalkeeper is positioned in the Defender Zone, while the defending field player takes position in the Midfield. Since the WSB goal is 4 meters wide, both defenders must work together to cover it effectively.

The defensive principle is that the goalkeeper is responsible for three-quarters of the goal (the central 2 meters plus one of the outer 1-meter sections), while the field defender is responsible for the remaining one-quarter (one of the outer 1-meter sections). This means the field defender's primary role is to guard either the *near side* (the section closest to the attacking shooter) or the *far side* (the section further away from the shooter), depending on the game situation.

The goalkeeper directs the positioning of the field defender, since they have the best overview of the play from behind. The two defenders must shift laterally in coordination:

- If the field defender moves left to cover the left outer section, the goalkeeper adjusts right to protect the remaining three-quarters of the goal.
- If the field defender moves right, the goalkeeper shifts left accordingly.

To practice this, the defenders perform continuous side-stepping movements to the left and right, ensuring synchronized coverage. For added realism, an attacking player can be introduced with the ball, moving side to side. The defenders then react and adjust their positioning in response, maintaining proper coverage of the goal. The attacker can move either in the water or, for demonstration purposes, along the poolside.

Purpose / Focus:

This exercise trains defenders to:

- Coordinate lateral movement between goalkeeper and field defender.
- Divide responsibility for goal coverage effectively (3/4 for the goalkeeper, 1/4 for the field defender).
- React dynamically to the attacking player's movement and adjust positioning accordingly.
- Build communication between goalkeeper and defender, with the goalkeeper guiding the defender's role.

By practicing the lateral defensive movement, players learn how to cover the full width of the goal through teamwork, improving their ability to adapt to attacking shifts and maintain compact defensive organization.



4. Preparatory Game for Integrated Skills

This final chapter introduces a preparatory game that combines the key elements of Water Skyball gameplay. It is designed to develop water-based movement, ball-handling, speed, positioning, and tactical awareness, while also reinforcing the skills and principles presented in the previous chapters. By practicing this game in its different versions, players can experience how technical, tactical, and physical aspects come together in a dynamic and enjoyable form, preparing them for real match situations.

4.1. Exercise/Game: Monkey in the Middle

Description:

This playful drill is often used at the end of training sessions and can be adapted into multiple variations. It develops a wide range of skills essential to Water Skyball, including reaction speed, agility, ball-handling, spatial awareness, tactical recognition, and efficient movement in the water — all in a fun, game-like format.

The game requires a minimum of 5 players but can be scaled up to 6–16 participants. Players are divided into two groups:

- The *non-cap team* (attackers), who start with the ball(s).
- The *cap team* (defenders), who attempt to intercept or tag.

The cap team is always smaller in number (1–3 players less depending on group size). Whenever a defender successfully touches a player with the ball or the ball itself during a pass, they swap roles with the attacking player: the defender hands over their cap, and the attacker who lost possession becomes a defender.

The game can be played only in the Midfield (with fewer participants) or across the full playing field (with larger groups). It can also be played with multiple balls — usually 1, 2, or even 3 — increasing both difficulty and complexity. With more balls in play, attackers must cooperate more effectively, deciding which ball should be passed to which teammate, while defenders must coordinate to pressure attackers into mistakes and create turnovers.

Purpose / Focus:

Monkey in the Middle develops:

- Quick reactions and agility under pressure.
- Ball-handling and passing accuracy.
- Tactical awareness, cooperation, and teamwork.
- Spatial awareness and reading the movement of both attackers and defenders.
- Efficient and continuous movement in the water.

This game provides a highly engaging way to conclude a training session, reinforcing fundamental Water Skyball skills while keeping players motivated through a fun, competitive challenge.



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