



New FINA Rules and Interpretations

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The following new rules and interpretations will be in effect on March 1, 2019 for all USA Water Polo events.

1. Rule WP19 - Location of Free Throw: A free throw shall be taken at the spot of the ball, except (a) if the foul is committed by a defending player within the defender's 2-meter area, the free throw shall be taken on or outside the 2-meter line and, (b) where otherwise provided for in the rules.

Additional Comments:

- Referees will no longer move the ball back to the spot of the foul for any reason. The game continues at the spot of the ball after a foul is awarded unless the ball is within the defenders 2-meter area.
- Goal throws must still be taken within the 2-meter area.

Situation: A player on offense attempts to turn inside water at the point position at 9 meters. The defender knocks the ball away to 7 meters just before the referee whistles an ordinary foul. The player on offense swims, gets the ball at 7 meters, shoots immediately and scores.

Ruling: Goal. Since the play continues at the spot of the ball, the player does not need to go back to 9 meters to shoot directly. As long as the foul and the ball are outside 5m, they can shoot directly. (6m on January 1, 2020)

2. Rule WP5 - Additional Substitution Area: An additional substitution re-entry area will be at any place in between the goal line and center pool line on the team's half of the field of play (for flying substitutions). Substitute must always enter the water via behind the goal line, in the corner, nearest the team bench.

Additional Comments:

- This rule only applies to pools with sidelines of at least a half meter from the wall. If sidelines are less than a half meter or if there are no sidelines, flying substitutions are not allowed.
- Half meter will be at the discretion of the referee.
- This rule does not affect live-time substitutions through the re-entry area (exclusion box) which are always allowed regardless of pool and sideline configurations.

- There is no restriction on the number of substitutes a team may have at the side of the pool, and there is no limit for number of players to be substituted at one time.
- This area cannot be used as “warming-up” area.
- Players must visibly touch hands above the water once both, the player who is leaving and the substitute, are outside of the field of play and both heads are above water.
- The player who is leaving must swim along the side of the pool until behind the goal line.
- Substitution can occur anywhere between the team’s goal line and the center line, and it can occur anytime during the game, except after a penalty throw is awarded.
- Any of the referees or the designated official at the table can signal a violation of this rule, and the sanction for improper entry has to be applied.
- Players can stay in substitution area for reasonable amount of time. This is similar approach as for the players staying in exclusion box (re-entry area).
- Player subbing in cannot push off the wall. If committed while team is in possession of the ball, player is excluded for 20 seconds and free throw awarded to the opposing team. If not in possession of the ball, player is excluded for 20 seconds and a penalty throw is awarded to the opposing team.

Situation #1: The player subbing out has left the field of play but touches their teammates hand while their head was still underwater. The substitute enters the field of play.

Ruling: If committed while team is in possession of the ball, player is excluded for 20 seconds and free throw awarded to the opposing team. If not in possession of the ball, player is excluded for 20 seconds and a penalty throw is awarded to the opposing team.

Situation #2: The player subbing out is still in the field of play when he touches his teammates hand over the lane line. Before the player leaves, the substitute enters the field of play thus being the 8th player for that team.

Ruling: The substitute is excluded for the remainder of the game with a substitute in the re-entry area and a live-time penalty throw is awarded to the opposing team. This is the penalty regardless if the team is in possession of the ball or not.

3. Rule WP11 - Interval at Half-time: The interval at half-time shall be no more than 3 minutes.

4. Rule WP14 - Goalkeeper Privileges: The goalkeeper is allowed to move beyond and touch the ball past the half distance line. They are allowed to shoot from anywhere and can participate as a shooter in a penalty shot or shootout. **They are allowed to be both, a shooter and the defending goalkeeper, during a shootout.**

Additional Comments:

- 12/10U goalkeepers may NOT move past half during the game or shoot a penalty throw. However, they are allowed to participate as a shooter during a shootout. It is an offensive foul (turnover) if they go beyond their defensive side of the half.

- The goalkeeper loses his/her privileges outside the 5m line. (6m line on January 1, 2020)

- The goalkeeper and back-up goalkeeper can be changed to defend in the cage during a shootout. However, if a goalkeeper is listed as one of the 5 shooters, that player or their order in the shootout cannot be changed.
- It is possible for a goalkeeper to commit an ordinary foul if it does not take away a probable goal. i.e. goalkeeper joins team in attacking half and plays offense. As the ball turns over, they commit a normal possessional foul just as any other field player. This should just be an ordinary foul.
- Teams cannot substitute goalkeeper for 7th field player.

5. Rule WP12 - Time-outs: A team is entitled to no more than 2 time-outs per game. Time-outs can be called at any time by the coach of the team in possession of the ball, except after awarding a penalty throw.

6. New Rule - Direct Shot Signal by the Referees: If a free throw is awarded for a foul outside, but within one meter of the 5m line, the referee administering the free throw will point downward to the 5m line to indicate that the player is eligible to shoot a direct shot on goal. **Starting January 1, 2020, the referee shall raise their hand up to indicate a player is eligible to shoot after a free throw is awarded for a foul outside of 6 meters.**

Additional New Interpretations:

1. Leaving the Field of Play – If a player exits the field of play during live play under the sideline or goal line, other than from the re-entry area, there is no penalty against that player. They would still have to swim to the re-entry area to come back into the field of play or for the substitute to be allowed to enter. If the player re-enters back into the field of play, other than from the re-entry area, the player is excluded for 20 seconds and free throw awarded to the opposing team. If not in possession of the ball, player is excluded for 20 seconds and a penalty throw is awarded to the opposing team. If the player exiting the field of play does not go to the re-entry area, the substitute will not be allowed to enter unless there's a time-out, a goal has scored, or a quarter break.
2. Referees will no longer stop play to exclude the center defender away from the ball. However, the ball cannot be passed into the center for a quick goal until the referee signals the excluded players cap number. If the ball is passed into the center before the referee signals the excluded players cap number, the referee will blow the whistle and signal a free pass to be taken at the location of the ball (provided it is outside of 2m). The intent is for the delay to be brief therefore the referees are instructed to quickly gesture the sweeping motion of an exclusion first and then display the excluded players number. If the excluded player does not have a cap, it will be the discretion of the referee whether or not the pause in play was sufficient before the pass was made into the center.
3. Time allowed on free throw – The player taking a free throw shall put the ball in play without undue delay. This is a change from “immediate” to “without undue delay”.

Additional Comments:

- It shall be at the discretion of the referees. It shall be reasonable but no more than 3 seconds.

- The following is considered putting the ball into play:

1. Dropping the ball from a raised hand into the water
2. Throwing the ball in the air
3. Passing the ball to another player
4. Transferring the ball from one hand to the other above the water

4. Goalkeeper Exclusion – If a goalkeeper is excluded during live play, they are allowed to move a field player into the re-entry and use a back-up goalkeeper during the extra man situation. The position is NOT excluded, just that player.

5. Interval Time – Interval time has expanded to 5 instances.

1. During a quarter break
2. During a time-out
3. After a goal is scored
4. After awarding a penalty throw
5. Any time the referee removes the ball from the water for administrative purposes.

6. The penalty for calling a time-out without having possession of the ball is a penalty throw and a loss of a time-out.

7. “Tactical Foul” (Direct shot) – If a player on defense commits an ordinary foul outside of 5 meters (6m on Jan. 1, 2020) and does one of the following (but not limited to) as a “tactical foul” to prevent the player from shooting a direct shot:

- A. Knocks the ball inside 5 meters (6m on Jan. 1, 2020)
- B. Knocks the ball further away from the goal
- C. Throws the ball away

The defensive player shall be excluded for 20 seconds. If the tactical foul is committed in the final minute of the game to prevent a goal, it is a penalty foul.

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