

## Some Basics

- Games will be 4 quarters. 6 minutes running time each quarter.
- 7 players play at a time. 6 field players and a goalkeeper.
- At the start of each quarter, teams “line-up” on their respective goal lines. On the officials whistle, the two teams sprint for the ball, which is dropped at mid-court.
- After a goal is scored, both teams must move to their respective halves of the pool. The team that was scored against receives the ball and play is started on the officials whistle.
- A goal is scored when the ball passes completely over the goal line between the goal posts and under the cross bar.
- The visiting team will wear white caps and the home team will wear caps of a contrasting color (dark). Caps are number 2-12. Goalkeepers wear red caps with the number 1 or number 13.
- Goalkeepers have special privileges. They may touch the ball with two hands (if they are inside their 5 meter area), they may use a closed fist to play the ball and they may use the bottom of the pool. Goalkeepers may not cross the mid-court line.
- All players must, before the start of the game, trim their finger and toenails, remove any jewelry and wipe off any slippery lotions.
- Teams will switch ends of the pool at halftime. If 2 officials are used, they shall switch sides after the first and third quarters.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, the teams will play sudden death overtime. The first team to score will be declared the winner.
- The team with possession of the ball is on **OFFENSE.**
- The team that does not have possession of the ball is on **DEFENSE.**

## PLAYER BASICS

- Referees use whistles and hand signals to signal the start of a quarter, declare goals, goal throws, corner throws and infringements of the rules. When the whistle blows, look at the official to determine what has happened. On a foul, the official will signal the direction of the attack by raising their arm in the appropriate direction. The team on offense has 3 seconds to put the ball in play once they have gained possession. Putting the ball in play consists of passing, tossing, or dropping the ball. When doing so, air must pass between the ball and the hand, even if dribbling the ball. A free throw **cannot** be shot unless the ball is put in play outside of 5 meters and the shot is taken without hesitation.
- After a foul is called, the defensive player can't interfere with the free throw. Interference would be: pushing the ball away from the offensive player, obstructing the throwing motion of the offensive player or obstructing the offensive player from getting the ball. Interference with a free throw is punished with a 20 second exclusion of the offender.
- About 80% of fouls called are ordinary fouls and are punished by awarding the offended team a free throw. Ordinary fouls are minor in nature and may include: jumping off the bottom of the pool, pushing the ball underwater when tackled, touching the ball with two hands (except for the goalkeeper), to be off-sides, to impede a player who has possession but is not holding the ball or to stall.
- About 20% of fouls are major fouls. These fouls are considered more serious and are punished by either a 20 second exclusion of the offending player, a penalty shot on the goal, an exclusion of the offending player for the remainder of the game with substitution or in the most severe case, an exclusion for the remainder of the game without substitution and an additional game suspension.
  - 20 second exclusion fouls

- Exclusion fouls may include: to interfere with a free throw, to splash in the face of an opponent or to hold, sink or pullback an opponent who is not holding the ball.
- A player may re-enter the game when: the 20 seconds has expired, the defensive team regains control of the ball or a goal is scored.
- Penalty shot
  - A penalty shot is awarded when a foul is committed to prevent the probable scoring of a goal inside of 5 meters.
  - Any field player may take a penalty shot.
  - The player taking the shot gets the ball on the 5-meter line in front of the goal. On the officials whistle, the player must shoot the ball without hesitation.
- Game exclusion
  - Officials may exclude a player for the remainder of the game for infractions that may be dangerous or are not in the best interest of the game. These include: the use of foul language, disrespect to officials or other players or leaving the water without the permission of the official.
  - The offending team is allowed a substitute for the excluded player.
- Brutality
  - A player who attempts to strike or kick an opponent must be charged with brutality. Contact does not have to be made to result in this call.
  - The punishment is:
    - The player is excluded from the remainder of the game.
    - The offending team may not have a substitute. They must play man-down for the remainder of the game.
    - The offending player will also receive a suspension for the team's next game.
- Advantage rule
  - If, in the opinion of the official, the calling of a foul would be to the advantage of the offending team, they may decide to not call the foul.
  - This is probably one of the most important rules in water polo. Its correct implementation allows players to improve their position to either draw a major foul or to score a goal.
  - This is probably the rule that is the most confusing to the novice play or spectator.
- Like basketball, teams may play either zone or man-on-man defenses.
  - A zone means individual players are responsible to cover an area and not an individual. This defense is used against teams with a strong center and weaker perimeter shooters.
  - In man-on-man defenses players are responsible for individual players. It is usually used when the defensive team matches-up evenly with their opponent.

## GLOSSARY OF WATER POLO TERMS

**Advantage rule:** The referee shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such a declaration would be an advantage of the offending player's team.

**Balance:** Having player evenly spaced in the offensive end. Much like basketball.

**Ball under:** A technical foul; to take or hold the entire ball under water when tackled.

**Cage:** Another word for the goal.

**Center:** An offensive player who runs the offensive. Usually big and strong with great leg strength and ball handling abilities. Positioned directly in front of the goal at about 2 meters this player is both a scorer and a passer.

**Corner throw:** A corner throw is awarded when the ball passes over the goal line, outside the goal, after being last touched by a defensive player. A free throw is taken at the 2-meter line at the side of the pool.

**Counter-attack:** Moving the ball from the defensive to the offensive end of the pool through swimming or passing. There are 2 possible situations. Advantage – when the offensive team outnumbers the defensive team. Transition – the movement from defense to offense when no advantage exists.

**Dead time:** The time from when the whistle blows for an infraction of the rules until the time when the ball is put in play. During this time the clock is stopped. Unlike other sports, water polo players use this time to work for position.

**Defender:** Skill player who is responsible for guarding their opponent's center. This player should be very smart, patient, big and fast. They also anchor the counter-attack.

**Drawing a foul:** A hard move used by an offensive player to force a defensive player to foul them. Should be done by moving laterally with a great deal of intensity. The offensive player should keep their head above water and release the ball when contact is made.

**Dribbling:** Swimming with the ball in front of you. The ball is controlled using the wake produced by the arms.

**Drive:** Offensive play in which a perimeter player swims toward the goal attempting to gain an advantage over their defender. They should then receive a pass for a possible shot at the goal.

**Driver:** An offensive player who plays on the perimeter. They are usually small and fast and have the ability to create scoring opportunities.

**Drop:** Similar to zone defense, where the players drop back to protect the middle of the pool and block shots.

**Dry pass:** A pass made in which the ball does not touch the water.

**Eggbeater:** A rotary kick used in water polo to give the athlete a great deal of stability to shoot or pass.

**Flat:** Describes an offensive zone located about 6 meters in front of the goal and outside the goal posts.

**Free throw:** the offensive team takes a free throw after an infraction of the rules, by their opponents. The free throw is taken where ever the ball is at the time of the infraction as long as it is not inside of 2 meters or where otherwise provided by the rules. The player has 3 seconds to put the ball in play once they have gained possession.

**Game clock:** The clock that displays the time remaining in the quarter.

**Goal throw:** A free throw taken by the goalkeeper if the ball goes over the goal line, outside the goal, after being touched last by an opposing player.

**Hole set / Two-meter man:** Another name for the center.

**Hole:** The area in front of the goal occupied by the center, usually located between the goal post and out to 5 meters.

**Impeding:** An infraction of the rules in which the offending player prevents or reduces the free movement of an opponent. This is an ordinary foul.

**Man-down:** A power play when the defensive team has at least one less player than the offense due to an exclusion foul.

**Man-up:** When the defense is man-down, the offense is man-up. At the international and collegiate levels, 70% of the total goals are scored during this time.

**Neutral throw:** When the referee can't determine whose ball it should be or there are simultaneous fouls a neutral throw is taken. The referee will position 2 opposing players equal distance apart. They will then toss the ball in the air above the players who will attempt to gain possession - similar to a jump ball in basketball.

**Penalty shot:** An infraction of the rules in which a defensive player fouls an offensive player inside of 4 meters to prevent the probable scoring of a goal. The offensive player receives a free shot, at the goal, from 4 meters, against the goalkeeper. A penalty shot is also awarded if an excluded player interferes with play.

**Pick:** An offensive strategy in which an offensive player uses their body to impede a defender thereby freeing a teammate for a shot. A player setting the pick must stay in motion and cannot hold the defensive player.

**Point:** The offensive position directly in front of the goal and outside of 5 meters. This player is usually your best driver.

**Press:** A defensive strategy in which each defender closely guards an offensive player; Similar to a man-to-man defense in basketball.

**Red:** When the shot clock is down to 5 seconds. At this time the ball needs to be shot or dumped to a corner and the offense should be shifting to defense. The team on defense should be starting their counter attack.

**Shot clock:** The clock that displays the time remaining before the offensive team must take a shot. The shot clock is reset on a shot attempt, on a turnover and on an exclusion.

**Sprint:** At the beginning of each quarter, the teams line-up on their respective goal lines. On the official's signal, both teams sprint to mid-court where the ball is dropped. The first player there gains possession of the ball for their team.

**Strike zone:** The area of the pool that extends 3 meters outside of the goal posts and from the 2 meter line to the 7 meter line. This is the area that is considered the best place for scoring. Defense must be very tight in the strike zone.

**Wet pass:** A pass that is placed on the water in front of a teammate. Usually done when the person is being closely guarded from behind.

**Wing:** Area of the pool located outside the goalposts and between 2 and 6 meters from the goal line.