

Water Polo Rules Changes - 2020-22

By NFHS on December 04, 2020 [water polo](#)

1-6-1, 1-6-2, 4-21-1, 4-21-2, 4-21-3, 4-21-4 - The 5-meter line has been moved to a 6-meter line in these referenced rules. Note: The 5-meter reference still applies to penalty throws.

Rationale: Introducing a 6-meter line increases the front court which allows offensive players more room to work. It also provides the center forward more room to receive the ball.

1-21, 1-26: Players are now permitted to wear a soft padded cap but it must meet the requirements of rules 1-20 through 1-24, and 2-4.

Rationale: Headgear is required by NFHS rules in some sports and is permissive in others. Coaches, athletes and parents/guardians should review the manufacturers' warnings about proper usage and performance limits of such products.

3-18-2, 3-18-3g, 5-13: The manner in the way free throws must be taken has been more clearly defined.

Rationale: With players now able to put the ball into play and shoot, it becomes vital for the defender to know when they are able to attack. By mandating that the ball is clearly and visibly put into play, it is clear to everyone, including the timekeeper, when the ball is in play.

3-20-2a: The scorekeeper shall be provided with the players and officials full names at least 15 minutes before the start of the contest.

Rationale: This change clarifies that full names written on the scoresheet are required prior to the start of the game.

4-14, 7-10-2, 7-11-4, 7-12-4 - Any time the ball is removed from the water by the referee is now considered interval time.

Rationale: When the referee removes the ball from the water the game stops, which is an interval moment.

4-20: The goalkeeper may now move beyond the half distance line, shoot from anywhere and may take a penalty shot or participate in a shootout as the goalkeeper and/or shooter.

Rationale: This change provides more scoring options for teams.

4-21-1: Clarifies that at least two players must intentionally touch the ball after a free throw or restart of play inside 6 meters.

Rationale: If the foul is inside of 6 meters, the player must pass the ball to another player before a goal can be scored. Also, by allowing a direct shot on goal from a corner throw the player becomes an immediate threat that the defender must account for. This opens up the center forward position which was usually double teamed since the player taking the corner throw wasn't able to shoot and makes the 2-meter area more accessible.

4-21-2: If both the foul and the ball is outside of 6 meters a player may put the ball into play and then shoot. The change also allows players to put the ball into play and score from a corner throw.

Rationale: This creates a faster and simpler game as well as encourages more action and scoring.

4-21-3: The signal for awarding a free throw outside but within one meter of the 6-meter line has been altered.

Rationale: By changing the signal to a raise hand, the award of a free throw becomes clear to everyone on the pool deck.

4-21-4: If, at the award of a foul outside 6 meters, the ball is inside of 6 meters, a goal may not be scored directly or after the ball is put into play. In this case, at least two players (of either team, excluding the defending goalkeeper) must intentionally play or touch the ball before a goal can be scored.

Rationale: Both the foul and the ball must be outside the 6-meter line to shoot and score. If the ball is inside 6 meters, a free throw must be taken at the location of the ball.

4-21-5, 4-24e, 5-4: The corner throw was removed from a list of situations in which a direct goal cannot be scored after a restart.

Rationale: A player taking a corner throw may now shoot directly once the ball is put into play. Allowing a direct shot on goal from a corner throw makes the player an immediate threat that the defender must account for.

5-10-1: A free throw shall be taken at the spot of the ball versus where the foul occurred. This does not apply if the ball is inside the 2-meter mark.

Rationale: This speeds up the game by playing the ball where it lies. However, if there is a foul within the 2-meter, the ball is always moved outside of the 2-meter area.

7-3-6: A backup goalkeeper may now be substituted for an excluded goalkeeper.

Rationale: Previously, if a goalkeeper was excluded, a back-up goalkeeper was not allowed to be substituted into the game during the man advantage. With this rule change, a back-up goalkeeper can enter the game during the man advantage by substituting for a field player. In other words, it is the player, not the position, that is excluded.

7-1, 7-3-12 - A player may leave the field of play at any time under the sideline.

Rationale: A violation occurs when the player re-enters illegally. Verbiage awarding an exclusion foul for the player to leave the field of play without the permission of the referee has been deleted.

7-20: A player that has earned a foul outside of 6 meters is not be able to shoot if a defender tactically knocks the ball into the 6-meter area.

Rationale: This will discourage a defender from fouling with a few seconds left in the game and then throwing the ball to the other side of the pool. This rule allows referees to restore the advantage that was taken away from the offense.

8-9: It shall be a penalty foul for a defending player to foul or impede an attacking player from behind within the 6-meter area in a probable goal situation.

Rationale: This change follows current national trends of the sport. It simplifies the game for all stakeholders and makes it easier for spectators to understand while promoting more scoring.

2020-22 WATER POLO EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-19-2, Appendix B, Appendix D, Official Signal Chart

2020-22 WATER POLO POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. New Methods of Scoring
2. Player Advantage Inside of 6 Meters
3. Leaving the Field of Play
4. Putting the Ball in Play
5. Goalkeeper Privileges