



Spectators Guide to Water Polo

FIELD OF PLAY

In a 25 meter, six- (or eight-) lane pool, the entire pool constitutes the field of play. In larger pools, the perimeter of the field of play may be indicated by lane lines. The maximum size of the field of play is 25 meters long by 20 meters wide.

The pool (field of play) is divided into areas by coloured cones (or markers) along the side of the pool. The coloured cones are placed as follows:

- Goal line – white cone. A goal counts only when the ball goes completely across the goal line and into the goal (close does not count); the ball is out of bounds if it goes completely across the goal line and not into the goal. It is only a corner if the goalkeeper touches the ball on its way out.
- 2-meter line – red cone. No attacking player is allowed to receive the ball inside of the 2-meter line unless the ball goes backwards.
- 5-meter line – yellow cone. If a defensive player commits a foul inside of the 5-meter line which prevents a “probable goal,” the defensive player is charged with a penalty (personal) foul and the opposing team is awarded a penalty throw (a “5-meter”).
- Half-way – white cone. After each goal is scored, play is re-started at half-way; the goalkeepers are not permitted to go across the half-way line.

DURATION

- A typical match is played over 4 quarters of 7 minutes actual playing time.
- The playing clock stops when play stops.

PLAYERS

- Each team must have seven players (six field players and one goalkeeper) in the water when the game starts.
- The home team’s field players wear white (or light coloured) caps, the visiting team’s field players wear blue (or dark coloured) caps. The goalkeepers wear red or “quartered” (red plus another colour) caps.
- Either team may substitute players freely after a goal is scored, during a time-out, or between periods.
- During actual play, substitutions must occur through the team’s re-entry area (the corner of the pool in front of the team’s bench).
- If an illegal player (i.e. an 8th player or a player who has fouled-out of the game) enters the field of play, that player is excluded from the remainder of the game and the opposing team is awarded a penalty throw.

FOULS

Ordinary foul

- Examples include
 - Touching the ball with two hands (does not apply to goalkeeper inside of the 5-meter zone).
 - Walking on or pushing off the bottom of the pool (does not apply to the goalkeeper inside of the 5-meter zone).

- Impeding a player who is not holding the ball.
- Throwing the ball out of the field of play.
- Failing to take a shot within 30 seconds (letting the shot clock expire).
- The referee blows the whistle once and points in the direction of the attack (i.e. the direction that the attacking team is moving).
- The player who was fouled (or a team mate) puts the ball into play by taking a free throw.
- If a defender interferes with the taking of the free throw, the defender is excluded (see below).
- A player taking a free throw cannot take a shot at the opponent's goal unless he is outside of the 5-meter zone and takes the shot immediately.
- There is no limit to the number of ordinary fouls that a player can commit during a game.

Exclusion foul

- Examples include:
 - Holding, sinking, or pulling back a player who is not holding the ball.
 - Interfering with the taking of a free throw.
 - Splashing water in an opponent player's face.
 - To commit an act of misconduct (e.g. obscene or abusive language) or disrespect.
 - If a player exits the pool from anywhere other than the re-entry area during actual play (i.e. climbs out of the water along the edge of the pool), it is considered disrespect.
 - Brutality (a player who commits an act of brutality is excluded from the remainder of the game without substitution).
- The referee blows the whistle several times, points in the direction of the attack with one arm, and with a sweeping motion of the other arm signals the player to the team's re-entry area (the corner of the field of play immediately in front of the team's bench).
- The player who was fouled (or a team mate) puts the ball into play with a free throw. As above ("ordinary foul"), play does not stop during "dead time."
- The excluded player must swim to the team's re-entry area without interfering with play. If an excluded player interferes with play, that player is charged with a penalty foul and the offended team is awarded a penalty throw.
- An excluded player may re-enter the game when:
 - There is a change in possession.
 - A goal is scored.
 - 20-seconds of playing time elapses.
- When re-entering the game from the re-entry area, a player may not push off the side or bottom of the pool.
- An exclusion foul is a "personal foul".
- If a player receives three "personal fouls" (exclusion + penalty fouls), he/she is excluded from the remainder of the game with substitution.

Penalty Foul: Any offence within the 5-meter zone that prevents a team from scoring a "probable goal."

- The referee blows the whistle twice and then raises his/her hand above the head with five fingers extended. When a penalty foul is called, the offending player is charged with a penalty foul and the opposing team is awarded a penalty throw at the 5-meter line.
- If a team is awarded a penalty throw, any player on that team, except the goalkeeper, may take the penalty throw.
- The player taking the penalty throw must take the throw from the 5-meter line in a continuous motion.
- With floating goals, the defending goalkeeper must be entirely inside of goal (i.e., inside of the goal and behind the goal line). With wall-mounted goals, the goalkeeper's hips must be on the goal line.
- A penalty foul is a "personal foul".