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To: Head NCAA Men's and Women's Water Polo Coaches, Commissioners and Referees
From: John Vargas, Chair, Water Polo Rules Subcommittee
Barbara Kalbus, Secretary-Rules Editor, Water Polo Rules Subcommittee
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Subject: 2008-09 NCAA Water Polo Rules Answers to Questions and Interpretations

This list includes answers to questions and situations that have arisen during the fall season.

Rule 3 Balls

Rule 3-5 Counter Ball

Question: The rule provides that if there are not goal judges, that there must be two balls at each bench and one with the referee. May the assistant coach throw in a counter ball in this case? To enable the throw may the assistant coach stand for the throw and then immediately sit down again?

Answer: The assistant coach may throw in a counter ball and the assistant coach may stand to throw in the counter ball as long as the assistant coach then immediately sits down after the throw. The assistant coach may not shout out instructions to the players while standing or comment to the referees. The rule requiring the assistant coach to sit on the bench at all times does not pertain to this type of action.

Rule 4 Caps

Rule 4-2 and Rule 4-3 Color of Ear Guards

Question: May the goalkeeper on the visiting team wear a red and white paneled cap with dark ear guards?

Answer: No. The ear guards on the cap of the visiting goalkeeper must be white with dark cap numbers as an aid to the rapid identification of this player as a member of the visiting team. The ear guards of the goalkeeper of the home team must be dark to match those on the caps of the dark (home) team. They may be red only if the home team caps are red. Rule 4-6 provides that if the caps do not meet specifications, the game may be played if there is mutual agreement of both teams and of the referees that the cap numbers are clearly visible. The referees must notify the conference of the offending team of the nature of the offense with the caps so that it will be corrected after the game.

Rule 4-4 Change of Cap Number

Question: May a player change cap number during a game?

Answer: It is recommended that each team have a replacement set of caps readily available so that a cap with the same number can be used for replacement if a cap is lost or damaged during the game. If a replacement cap is not available, a player may change cap number with the permission of a referee and with notification by the referee to the game secretary and the coach of the opposing team. The player can not use the cap number of a player previously excluded from the game for misconduct or for having any personal fouls as this causes confusion on the exclusion board and on the score sheet (that cap number could end up with four or more fouls charged to the cap number used by two players). The player should also

not use the cap of a player excluded from the game for brutality in the previous game unless no other cap is available.

Rule 5 Teams and Substitutes

Rule 5-2 Position of Head Coach

Question: After a goal, may the head coach walk up to half to make substitutions and to talk with the team?

Answer: Yes. Although the rule states “may freely advance along the pool side”, it is generally understood that this means up to the half-distance mark. (This is the mark specified for the maximum position of the head coach under the description of the 30-second timeout.)

Rule 5-2 Role of Assistant Coach During Play

Question: The rule requires the assistant coach to sit on the bench during play. May the assistant coach call out instructions to players during play?

Answer: There is no rule prohibiting the assistant coach from speaking to players during play, provided that the assistant coach is seated. The assistant coach may not speak to the referee, however, at any time during a game.

Rule 5-4 Finger Splint or Cast

Question: A player is wearing a finger splint and has a release signed by a physician or trainer. Should the referee permit the player to play with the splint?

Answer: No. A finger splint or a cast, even if padded, is regarded as an article likely to cause injury, either to the player wearing the item or to an opponent and both are specifically listed in the rules and on the current (2-25-08) waiver form as not allowed. The waiver (release) is to be used for items such as goggles, a face mask, or a nose guard composed of a plastic or similar material designed not to cause injury upon impact.

Rule 7 Referees

Rule 7-4 Issuance of Red Card

Question: A referee awards a red card to a coach during a game. Must the referee stop play and call the ball out of the pool in order to award the card?

Answer: Yes. The rule requires that when a yellow or red card is awarded, the referee shall whistle to stop play without taking the advantage away from the nonoffending team, call the ball out of the pool and show the appropriate card. The referee must also notify the game secretary as to whom the card was awarded. If a referee on the opposite side of the pool from the scoring table awards the red or yellow card, that referee must notify the referee on the side of the scoring table who must then inform the secretary. The referee shall then put the ball back into play. A goal may not be scored by a direct shot on goal.

Rule 7-10 Record of the Protest

Question: A protest was filed during a game and decided by the referees or by a tournament committee during a tournament. Where should the record of the protest be filed?

Answer: The protest and the decision on the protest must be recorded on the score sheet or attached to the score sheet as part of the official record of the game. This pertains to protests filed during a game or after the game.

Rule 7-10 Filing of a Protest

Question: If one coach realizes that the referees have made a serious error in the application of a rule during a game in a tournament, can that coach file a protest during the game, even if that protest would seem contrary to that team's interests?

Answer: There is nothing in the protest rule that prevents either team from filing a protest during a game. Since it could be advantageous for both teams to only play over part of one period instead of three periods, for example, if the protest were filed by the injured team after the game, either team has the right to file a protest so that the issue is looked at sooner rather than later.

Rule 7-11 Forfeit

Question: Two teams are scheduled to play a tournament game at 5:30 pm, but the start of the game is delayed due to the late completion of a game earlier that day. One coach informed the other coach that his/her team could not change the game time to an earlier start time, could not stay later to play the game, and must leave because of travel arrangements. What is the outcome of the game?

Answer: Unless there is mutual consent of both teams to either reschedule or to cancel the game, the game is recorded as a forfeit in favor of the team which was able and ready to play the game at any time.

Rule 9 Timekeepers

Rule 9-2 and Appendix E, Part 4, #9. Time Displayed on Shot Clock

Question: The game clock – shot clock console is set by the host so that if the shot clock is reset when less than 35 seconds remain in the period, the shot clock assumes the time on the game clock. Is this correct?

Answer: No. Rule 9-2 states that the timekeeper shall turn off (blank) the shot clock when less than 35 seconds remain in the period and a new 35-second period of possession is awarded. Note: by default in some new timing systems, the shot clock is set so that the shot clock assumes the game time when the shot clock is reset when less than 35 seconds remain in the period. This default setting should be changed so that the shot clock blanks when it is reset when there is less than 35 seconds in the period in order to eliminate confusion by the coach and players.

Rule 12 Timeouts

Rule 12-1 Visible Display of Timeouts

Question: Do the rules require the host to have a visible display of timeouts remaining?

Answer: Yes. There may be a visible display of timeouts remaining either at the scoring table or on the exclusion board. Either the exclusion board or a visible flip card system at the scoring table must display initially three regular timeouts and one 30-second timeout. If the game goes into overtime, the display should display initially one regular timeout for each team (unused regular timeouts are removed) and any unused 30-second timeout. Television timeouts are not included in this display.

Rule 12-7 30-Second Timeouts

Question: The team on offense called a 30-second timeout to move the team to the other end of the pool. Both teams are ready to start after 20 seconds. Is the referee allowed to restart the game at this time?

Answer: If both teams are ready to start and the team calling the 30-second timeout indicates that they should start, the referee may start play. However if both teams are not ready, the referee may not start early, even if the team calling the timeout informs the referee that its team is ready to start. The referee usually gives the warning signal for a 30-second timeout at 20 seconds and starts play at 30 seconds, but the start could be earlier in the situation described. This is different from the way a regular timeout may be shortened due to the shortness of the 30-second timeout.

Rule 12-3 Timeout After the Award of a Corner Throw

Question: A corner throw is awarded. The team on offense immediately called a timeout. How is the ball put into play after the timeout and what time should be displayed on the shot clock?

Answer: The shot clock must be reset to 35 seconds when a corner throw is awarded (Rule 9-2-f). When a timeout is requested before the taking of a penalty throw or a corner throw, that throw shall be maintained. Therefore, play is restarted by taking the corner throw, with players taking any position in the field of play with the shot clock reset.

Rule 14 Method of Scoring

Rule 14-1 Authority of Referee

Question: If one referee signals a goal and the other referee signals no goal, which call shall prevail?

Answer: The call by the referee calling the attacking situation shall prevail unless the referees agree that the attacking referee was not in a position to observe the goal line.

Rule 14-3 Direct Shot

Question: A foul is committed behind the 5-meter line. One of the players behind the point of the foul takes an immediate direct shot at the goal and scores. Does the goal count? Must the referee indicate where the ball is to be put in play before the player may shoot in this situation?

Answer: The goal counts. There is nothing in the rules to require that the referee point to the precise spot from which a direct shot may be made or to the exact player who may take this shot. Rule 14-3 specifically states that if after the award of a foul outside 5 meters, the ball is inside 5 meters or closer to the defending team's goal, a goal may be scored under this rule if the ball is returned without delay to either the place where the foul was committed, to any place on the same line as the foul or to any place behind the line of the foul, provided the shot is then immediately made from that position."

Rule 14-6 Direct Shot After Award of a Corner Throw

Question: May a player score a goal by a direct shot after the award of a corner throw?

Answer: No. A direct shot may only be taken outside the 5-meter line and a corner throw is taken from the 2-meter mark.

Rule 20 Ordinary Fouls

Rule 20-5 Using the Bottom

Question: A field player was excluded for pushing off the bottom at approximately seven meters. Is this the correct call?

Answer: No. Using the bottom is an ordinary foul, even if the player uses the bottom to play the ball or to tackle an opponent or during a man-down situation. However, if the player commits this foul within the 5-meter area but for which a goal would probably have resulted, a penalty throw shall be awarded to the opposing team (Rule 22-2).

Rule 20-11 Offensive turnover

Question: Is an offensive turnover the penalty for an offensive dead-time foul?

Answer: Yes. An offensive dead-time foul is an ordinary foul.

Rule 21 Exclusion Fouls

Rule 21-3 Signal for Reentry of Excluded Player

Question: Should the excluded player watch the referee or watch the exclusion secretary in order to reenter the pool at the end of 20 seconds?

Answer: The excluded player should watch the exclusion secretary at the desk in order to know when to reenter at the end of the exclusion period. It is not a duty of the referee to signal the passage of 20 seconds and the excluded player should not have to guess which person to watch for the passage of the exclusion time. Before 20 seconds have elapsed, the excluded player may reenter upon the referee's signal of a change in possession and the exclusion secretary does not raise the flag unless 20 seconds have elapsed.

Rule 21-3 Reentry of an Excluded Player

Question: Usually the exclusion secretary waves in the excluded player or substitute after 20 seconds of actual play have elapsed. When would the exclusion secretary not wave in the excluded player or substitute at this time?

Answer: The exclusion secretary would not raise the flag of the appropriate color if the excluded player has not reached the exclusion area when 20 seconds have elapsed (Rule 21-3); if the head of the excluded player has not risen above the surface of the water in the reentry area before that player or a substitute may enter (Rule 21-2-3); if the excluded player climbed from the side of the pool and did not go to the reentry area (the substitute may not enter until after a timeout, a goal or at the start of the next period) (Rule 21-2); or if the excluded player has three personal fouls and is no longer eligible to play and was not substituted for (Rule 21-3).

Rule 21-3 Reentry of an Excluded Player

Question: The ball is stolen when 10 seconds remain in an exclusion or if possession changes because the referee awards an offensive foul. The referee turns and starts to walk towards the other end of the pool with the hand pointing to that end of the pool. May the excluded player reenter (1) if the referee motions with the other hand for the player to enter? (2) if the referee does not motion with the other hand for the player to enter but is pointing with one arm towards the other end of the pool and walking that way?

Answer: Yes, in both cases. The player may enter as the referee's signal to award the throw or the change in possession qualifies as the reentry signal, provided that the excluded player has reached the reentry area in accordance with the rules.

Rule 21-3: Reentry area

Question: The rule states that the excluded player or a substitute shall be permitted to reenter the field of play when signaled when 20 seconds of actual play have elapsed provided that the player is in the reentry area. If the flag is raised and if the excluded player goes under the end line in the exclusion area but swims underwater a short distance towards the center of the pool before the player's head surfaces, should this be considered an illegal reentry?

Answer: No. There is no requirement that the excluded player must emerge from the exclusion area into an area within the imaginary continuation of the boundary of the reentry area (in other words, there is no requirement that the player may only swim directly straight ahead into the field of play rather than entering on a diagonal from the reentry area).

Rule 21-10 Misconduct or a Minor Act of Misconduct during a Timeout

Question: Either misconduct or a minor act of misconduct is committed during a timeout. Is the shot clock reset before play is resumed?

Answer: Yes. The shot clock is reset after the award of all exclusion fouls. The rules provide that in the case of misconduct during a timeout, the player is excluded for the remainder of the game, and the game starts even up with a free throw by the team in possession of the ball (the team calling the timeout). If a minor act of misconduct is committed during a timeout, that player is excluded for 20 seconds with immediate substitution, and the teams start even up. The excluded player, providing that this foul was not that player's third person foul, can return later to the game as a substitute.

Rule 21-10 Minor Act of Misconduct

Question: A player is excluded for the third time. On the way out from the pool, the player commits a minor act of misconduct. A penalty throw is awarded, with the substitute for that player in the reentry area. The penalty shot rebounded from the goal post to a player on the team shooting the penalty shot. May the excluded player enter?

Answer. No. The player must remain out for 20 seconds or until the ball changes hands.

Rule 21-10 Minor Act of Misconduct and Rule 7-9 Correctable Errors

Question: A player committed his/her third personal foul, an exclusion foul. The exclusion secretary raised the red flag. The player was substituted and play resumed with the substitute in the exclusion area and the scoring of a goal by the team on offense five seconds later. It was then realized that the referee on the opposite side of the pool from the desk had signaled that the player committed a minor act of misconduct during that player's exit from the pool and a penalty shot should have been awarded. The exclusion secretary then blew the whistle as directed in the rules to stop play for the taking of a penalty shot. The referee removed the goal that had just scored and had that team take a penalty shot for a minor act of misconduct committed after a third personal foul which was an exclusion foul. Is this the correct ruling?

Answer: No. The goal should stand. The team should not be penalized because the desk did not see the signal for the minor act of misconduct or because the referee on the desk side did not relay the signal for a minor act of disrespect or because the referee did not remember that

a minor act of misconduct committed after a third personal foul which is an exclusion foul should result in a penalty throw. Applying the principle of correctable errors (which includes the statement that technical errors by desk officials should not affect the outcome of the game), the goal should stand as a team could miss the penalty shot whereas the team had already scored the extraman goal.

Rule 21-15

Question: A player is excluded when 31 seconds remain in the period. The player reentered during the 6 on 5 when 15 seconds remained on the shot clock when instructed by the coach. The exclusion secretary had not waved in the player. What is the penalty for the player entering before the correct time?

Answer: The player shall be excluded for an additional 20 seconds, a penalty throw awarded and the player receives an additional personal foul, marked EP on the score sheet. This situation resulted because the shot clock assumed the game time when the shot clock was reset when less than 35 seconds remained in the period. The coach, not realizing this, instructed the player to enter when the shot clock showed 15 seconds, assuming that 20 seconds would have elapsed on the exclusion. An excluded player should not reenter the pool until signaled by either the exclusion secretary or by the referee if the ball turned over. See also the question about blanking the shot clock in Rule 9-2.

Rule 22 Penalty Fouls

Rule 22-2 Within 5-Meter Area to Prevent Goal

Question: If the goalkeeper leaves the goal and sinks an offensive player to prevent a goal or pulls back an offensive player to prevent a goal, what is the penalty?

Answer: A penalty foul should be awarded against the goalkeeper for committing a foul within the five meter area which prevented a probable goal.

Appendix A Instructions for the Use of Two Referees

#11 Simultaneous Exclusion and Ordinary Fouls

Question: If one referee calls an exclusion foul or penalty foul on the defense and, at the same time, the other referee calls an offensive turnover on the offense, which call prevails?

Answer: The exclusion foul or the penalty foul on the defense.

#18 Simultaneous Signal for Corner Throw and Goal Throw

Question: If one referee signals for a goal throw and the other referee signals for a corner throw, which throw is awarded?

Answer: The corner throw. The referee must remove the ball, clarify the situation, and then throw the ball to the correct corner for the corner throw.

Appendix B Signals to be Used by Officials

Fig H To Signal the Award of a Penalty Throw and Fig. AA To Indicate a Player's Cap Number

Question: A penalty foul was committed. How should the referee signal the scoring table that it was a penalty foul and to whom it should be charged?

Answer: The referee should first hold up five fingers to indicate the penalty foul and then indicate the cap number to whom it should be charged. In this example the referee raised five fingers, lowered that hand and then raised four fingers on that hand. This indicates that the penalty foul is to be charged against the player with cap number four. This should then be orally communicated to the desk.

Appendix E Working the NCAA Water Polo Desk

Appendix E-5

Question: Should the numbers of all players who will play in the game be on the exclusion board at the beginning of the game?

Answer: All the cap numbers must be on the board prior to the beginning of a game. It is preferable if the exclusion board goes up to #25. But if this is not possible, inform the team and referees what number you are using for any player whose cap number is not on the board. If the exclusion board is of the type that the numbers are not painted on the exclusion board, the exclusion board secretary must place all possible numbers, looking at the cap numbers of both teams, in cap number order on the board prior to the start of the game. This is necessary to ensure that the cap numbers are on the board, in order, so that it may be easily determined the number of fouls per player as the numbers are in cap number order. If the team has more players than will fit on any type of board, an accessory board (i.e., a white board) should be used to accommodate the extra numbers.