

2009-10 NFHS Instructions to Referees and Points of Emphasis for Coaches and Referee

7-01-09

These instructions to referees and points of emphasis for coaches and referees are guidelines in order to bring about consistency in the interpretation and application of the rules of the game. It is important that referees call the National Federation High School Water Polo Rules as written and as interpreted in the rules book or as distributed as interpretations during the year.

1. **Risk Management Warnings** - Referees and coaches should note the risk management warnings prior to Rule 1.
 - a. Players shall enter the water feet first at all times. The referee must point out the rule to a representative of the host institution whose players are not in compliance. If the situation persists, the referee must notify the appropriate authority as determined by the state association or section (each state association or section must draw up guidelines for the reporting of non-compliant coaches/schools). No game penalties may be instituted nor do the game officials contact the school directly subsequent to the game.
 - b. Before the start of the game, the referees shall meet with facility personnel for the purpose of knowing how to summon emergency assistance should it be required. This includes agreement on appropriate signals (whistles) to summon aid as well as awareness of facility personnel who will summon first responders.
2. **Wasting Time** - The foul of wasting time has been eliminated from the rules. The elimination of this rule means that a team no longer must advance the ball towards the offensive end of the pool. If a player throws the ball into a vacant area of the pool shortly before the expiration of the 30-second possession time, the referee shall not blow the whistle until the shot clock buzzer sounds.
3. **Elimination of the Concept of Dead Time** - The distinction between the penalty for a foul committed during dead time (the time before the ball is put into play) and that for a foul committed during live time (the time after the ball is put into play) has been eliminated. The term "in play" encompasses both periods of time. In addition, the penalty for an ordinary foul is the same if committed by the defense or by the offense or if committed before the ball is put into play or after the ball is put into play.
4. **Simultaneous Exclusion Fouls** - The referees must be certain that both players have fouled each other before calling a double exclusion. It is preferable if the referee can determine which player fouled first, as it is better to call either a defensive exclusion if it was the defense or (usually) an offensive turnover if it was the offense. However, for example, if the center forward and the set defender are both being overly physical, it is correct for the referees to exclude both players and award the ball back to the offense with a new 30-second shot clock. The new rules provide that when the referee has determined that players of both teams committed an exclusion foul simultaneously during play, both offending players shall be excluded. The referee shall call the ball from the water and make sure both teams and the secretaries know who is excluded. The shot clock is reset and play is restarted with a free throw awarded to the team which had possession of the ball at the time the foul was called at the point of the foul or behind. If neither team had possession of the ball when the simultaneous exclusion fouls were called, play shall be restarted with a neutral throw.
5. **Promoting Offensive Action** - Referees should promote offensive action. The referees shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such declaration would be an advantage to the offending player's team. It is always permissible for the referees to delay their whistle briefly to make sure that any offensive advantage is not taken away. When in doubt, the referees should make their call in favor of the offensive team. The referees should avoid calling ordinary defensive fouls (notably at set) away from the ball as this takes away the advantage and flow from the team on offense. If the referees have decided not to call a series of minor fouls committed by the defense, then they should not call an equally minor offensive foul a moment later at that same spot. Likewise, referees should call ball under only when the ball is clearly under water for more than a fraction of a second.

6. **Calling Offensive Fouls** - Referees should avoid calling minor offensive fouls away from the ball if they do not affect the game. Sometimes it is correct to delay making a call for a split-second to see if the offensive foul will affect the game. Obvious fouls (for example, holding above the water) by the offensive player at the set position should be called immediately. In most cases referees should call fouls on the offensive team as ordinary offensive fouls (ball turnover, with no exclusion). At the center forward position, the referee should call an offensive exclusion foul only in the most severe cases (an offensive turnover usually being the more appropriate call). However, if the offense commits a gross or overly physical foul, such as kicking or elbowing, it should be called immediately as an offensive exclusion foul or even an offensive misconduct foul.
7. **Competing for Position at Set** - When the ball is not at set, referees should allow competing for position between the center forward and the set defender. However, neither player can commit an exclusion foul to gain a better position or to keep an existing position. Excessive force, overly physical play, arms out of the water and around an opponent, and suit grabbing to change or hold position should be called as an offensive turnover or a defensive exclusion foul or even as misconduct, depending upon the nature of the foul. If the referee sees this type of foul, the referee should call it. If both the center forward and the set defender are facing each other and holding, the offensive player must let go and face the ball before the pass is thrown to set, or an offensive foul should be called.
8. **Calling the Set Position** - Among the most important aspects of the game for referees to call consistently is the play at set. Referees should consider the negative consequences of blowing a quick whistle. When the ball comes into set, the referees need to be patient in allowing the center forward the opportunity to play the ball. A quick whistle at set may take away an offensive advantage and eliminate, however unintentionally, the scoring threat of the center forward. If the set defender holds, sinks or pulls back the offensive player or is overly aggressive, an exclusion should be called unless calling a foul takes away a scoring advantage. If the set defender has established an appropriate defensive position and the foul is not overly aggressive, and there is no scoring advantage, an ordinary foul should be called to maintain offensive possession. If an overly aggressive foul does take away the offensive advantage, then an exclusion foul should be called.
9. **Calling Set When a Slough is Coming** - When the ball is at set and a slough is coming, referees may call either an ordinary foul or an exclusion foul against the set defender. If the center forward has an advantage and wants to try to shoot, the referees should wait momentarily and then call an exclusion foul if the defender commits an exclusion foul to prevent a shot attempt. If the center forward has no advantage and is fouled while trying to pass to an open teammate, it is correct for the referees to call a quick ordinary foul so that the offensive team maintains possession. However, if a bad entry pass is made that is closer to the defense, then the referee may refrain from calling a foul. If there is no slough coming, the referees should let the center forward work with the ball to try to create an advantage.
10. **Calling Inside the 5-Meter Area** - To determine whether there should be an exclusion foul or a penalty foul called, the referees must concentrate on determining the defender's position in relation to the offensive player. The offensive player having an advantageous position and a probable goal are the crucial factors in determining whether a penalty foul is the appropriate call.
11. **Calling the Transition Out of the 2-Meter Area** - Referees should allow the former center forward and set defender to separate after a possession change. The referee transitioning from front court to back court must be aware of the effort to separate at the set position and should call the appropriate offensive or defensive foul as determined by who either holds to prevent separation or who initiates the additional contact after separation. Do not call a foul too quickly, but if either player aggressively sinks, pulls back, or kicks off to gain initial separation a foul should be called. Once these players have separated, a foul can be called on either or both of these players for a kick off or for a hold, sink or pull back. This concept refers to the former center forward and set defender and not to other players in the water.

12. **Control of the Game** - It is important for the referees to keep control of the game. A player who commits an overaggressive, dangerous or violent foul should be called for either misconduct or flagrant misconduct and removed for the remainder of the game, rather than just excluded for 20 seconds. Players in the water who show disrespect toward the referees should be removed promptly for the remainder of the game for misconduct or for 20 seconds for a minor act of misconduct.
13. **Control of the Benches** - Referees should be certain to keep control of the benches. However, they should not listen for and be overly sensitive to comments by coaches and players on the bench, and they should not try to “catch” a coach saying something. If the coaches or players on the bench start questioning calls, the referees should issue a stern warning. If the head coach, assistant coach or players continue to question the referees’ calls, a yellow card shall be issued to the head coach, assistant coach or bench as appropriate, to be followed by a red card to the head coach, assistant coach or to an individual player on the bench, if necessary. (The assistant coach assumes the rights and privileges of the head coach when the head coach receives a red card during a game.) The head coach and captain may address the referee at the intervals between periods, during time-outs or with permission of the referee. In addition, the head coach may speak to the referee when filing a protest. The rule relating to who may address the referee (Rule 7-4) and at what times shall be enforced consistently and according to the rules. The referees must apply the rules equally and fairly, regardless of gender, experience, responsibilities or intonation of voice of the coach.
14. **Consistency of Calls** - Referees should call fouls consistently throughout each possession, period and game. Referees should call an exclusion or ordinary foul even if only a few seconds remain in that possession, in the period or in the game. Perimeter fouls (ordinary and exclusion) must be called consistently throughout the game, including the last minute when the team with the lead has the ball.
15. **Putting the Ball into Play** - Referees should ensure that players who are awarded a free throw put the ball into play properly and within a reasonable length of time (Rule 19-4). Referees should also make sure that defensive players do not interfere with the free throw (Rule 21-5).
16. **Direct Shots on Goal** - The referees shall not use any signal, such as raising an arm or showing five fingers, to indicate that a player is eligible to shoot a direct shot on goal after that player’s team has been awarded a free throw for a foul committed outside 5 meters. The shot must be taken without delay, but referees should allow a player who is fouled at or outside 5 meters the opportunity to retrieve the ball, to get in a normal shooting position and to look at the goal before taking a direct shot. The player taking the direct shot on goal may take a lob shot as long as it is without delay and without faking. There is no set distance a defensive player with the hand up behind the head or with the hand straight up has to be away from the offensive player, but if that defensive player is so close that the offensive player cannot make a throwing motion without hitting the defensive player, the defensive player has to back away or be called for interfering with the free throw. However, the offensive player may not unnecessarily lean or make some extraordinary arm motion into the defender to create this contact; that is, the free throw should be in a normal throwing motion.
17. **Two-Hands Rule** - Referees must be certain to immediately call an exclusion foul if a defender puts two hands up in an attempt to block a pass or a shot while outside the 5-meter line. The referees must award a penalty foul if the defender puts two hands up to block a shot while inside the 5-meter line. The defensive player does not have to touch the ball nor does a shot need to be taken, because the defensive player is being punished for intent. The referee must also award a penalty foul if the defensive player inside the 5-meter line puts two hands up in an attempt to block a pass that would have resulted in a probable goal.
18. **Fouling During a 6 on 5** - Referees must carefully watch defenders during a 6 on 5 to be sure they are not sinking offensive players or grabbing their arms, especially on the posts. If they do, an exclusion foul (or a penalty foul if a goal was likely to occur) should be called.
19. **Drive/Perimeter Defense** - If the offensive player swims over a defensive player who has established a positional advantage, an offensive foul should be called and the ball turned over. A defender cannot hand-check, impede, hold or grab the suit of an attacker who is trying to move. Additionally, referees

should exclude a defender who initiates contact by moving laterally to prevent an attacker from driving. If a defender grabs the arm or hand or sinks a perimeter player before a pass has arrived, the defender should be excluded. Referees must be aware of the situation where an offensive and defensive player “lock-up” (face each other and hold each other to prevent the free movement of either player). The referee must attempt to punish the player (either offense or defense) who initiates the contact in this situation. If both players are holding, then the offensive player must release the defensive player before initiating a drive or receiving a pass, or be called for an offensive foul (Rule 20-9 and Rule 20-10). If the defensive player does not release the offensive player, the defender should be excluded for holding (Rule 21-8).

20. **Ducking Under** - If the offensive player gains advantage by ducking under (impeding) the defender, this should be called as an offensive foul and the ball turned over. The referee should not call an exclusion foul on the defense if the referee does not see the offensive player duck under but then does see, immediately after that action, the defender put both arms in the air to show there is no foul. The defender does not need to get off the offensive player, as it was the offensive player who went under water to put the players into that position. However, the defender may not use one or both hands to hold down the offensive player.
21. **Inside the 2-Meter Line** - Referees should not penalize an attacking player who momentarily enters the 2-meter area without interfering with the play. If the player continues to stay there, the player is affecting play by his/her very presence, as that player is forcing a change in how or where the defense plays and the foul should be called (Rule 20-11).
22. **Shallow-bottom pool** – The goal of this instruction is to increase the consistency of the punishment for inappropriate use of the bottom by either the offense or defense in a pool involving a shallow bottom (less than two meters deep) and to decrease the number of times a player chooses to use the bottom during a game because of the deterrent effect of a severe punishment (exclusion or contra foul) for doing so. In pools over two meters (6.5 feet) deep, the rules are very clear and should be applied as written. For pools with shallow ends less than two meters deep, referees are instructed to apply the following rules or points of emphasis.

- (1) **Rules 20-5 and 7-3:** Referees should continue to apply this rule in all games. Under Ordinary Fouls Rule 20-5 states, *“To take any active part in the game when standing on the floor of the pool, to walk when play is in progress or to jump from the floor of the pool to play the ball or tackle an opponent. This rule shall not apply to the goalkeeper while within the goalkeeper’s 5-meter area”*. In addition, referees are expected to apply Rule 7-3, Advantage Rule, which states, *“The referees shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such declaration would be an advantage to the offending player’s team. The referee shall not declare an ordinary foul when there is still a possibility to play the ball.”*

These are the same guidelines that have been used previously. That is, if either the offense or the defense gains an advantage by standing or pushing off the bottom, the ordinary foul described in Rule 20-5 should be called. This will result in a free throw to the offense if committed by the defense and a turnover if committed by the offense. Referees must be especially aware of an offensive player using the bottom to gain an advantage in transition after a turnover in the shallow end. Referees must also apply the advantage rule (Rule 7-3) and refrain from calling the ordinary foul against the defense if that would take away an offensive advantage.

- (2) **Rules 20-9 and 21-8:** A new instruction to referees is included in the special case of a shallow bottom pool.

Under Ordinary Fouls, Rule 20-9 states, *“To impede or otherwise prevent the free movement of an opponent who is not holding the ball, including swimming on the opponent’s shoulders, back or legs. ‘Holding’ is lifting, carrying or touching the ball, but does not include dribbling the ball.”*

Under Exclusion Fouls, Rule 21-8 states, “*To hold, sink or pull back an opponent who is not holding the ball. ‘Holding’ is lifting, carrying or touching the ball but does not include dribbling the ball.*”

In the special case of games played in shallow bottom pools referees are instructed as follows: A defensive player who uses the bottom to otherwise impede or hold an offensive player and to prevent him/her from moving will be excluded for 20 seconds for holding under Rule 21-8. Even if this foul might otherwise have been viewed as impeding under Rule 20-9, in this special situation using the shallow bottom will be considered an exclusion foul. This rule is to be applied whether the offensive player is holding the ball or not.

This rule also applies to the situation where a defensive player uses the bottom to improve his/her defensive position and to take away an advantage created by the offense. For example, if the ball is passed into the 2m player and a defender guarding another player launches him/herself off the bottom in order to slough or crash on the 2m player, this will be deemed a violation of this rule as the defender has now been able to impede the offense by use of the bottom. This would also apply to a defender on the perimeter who uses the bottom to take away an advantage gained by an offensive player on a drive.

- (3) **Rule 22-2:** Referees must also be aware of Rule 22-2, which states that it is a penalty foul “*For a defending player to commit any foul within the 5-meter area but for which a goal probably would have resulted.*” This includes jumping off the bottom by any player other than the goalkeeper to prevent a probable goal.

Note: If a coach wishes to have the same referee call the shallow bottom throughout the entire game, the coach may request that the teams change ends and benches after each period (and overtime period). In this instance the referees do not change sides throughout the game (Rule 5-2).

23. **Referee Instructions for Penalty Shot** - All players must leave the 5-meter area and be at least 2 meters from the shooter. A player of the defensive team shall have the first right to take the position on each side of the shooter. The referee controlling the penalty throw shall signal for the throw to be taken by whistle and by simultaneously lowering the arm. The lack of specificity in designating the position of the referee when the whistle is blown allows the referee controlling the taking of the shot to determine the most advantageous position for that referee to watch the shooter, the defensive players and the goalkeeper. The other referee shall watch the back court for interference. The shooter may not move forward until the ball leaves his/her hand. The defensive players may not interfere with the taking of the penalty throw (for example, shout, whistle, splash, hit the shooter’s arm, etc.). When the whistle is blown, the defensive players on each side of the shooter may only move at an angle forward toward the goal, not towards the shooter. After the ball is released, the defensive players may move towards the shooter.
24. **The Start** - If there are not competent goal judges, the two referees shall take up a position opposite one another on the half-distance line. The starting referee shall wait with one arm raised in a vertical position for the signal from the second referee that both teams are correctly positioned on the goal line. This signal shall be made by the second referee raising one arm above the head when both teams are positioned correctly. The starting referee shall then signal immediately for the start by blowing the whistle and lowering the arm to a horizontal position.
25. **Simultaneous Ordinary Fouls** - When simultaneous awards are made for ordinary fouls but for opposing teams, the award shall be a neutral throw. A referee shall only change his/her decision under these circumstances if the referee realizes a mistake has occurred.
26. **Recognition of and Correction of Errors** - The referees must be aware of and, if possible, correct certain errors as described in Rule 7-9 in the interest of fairness. No team shall gain an advantage over an opponent because of this type of error (technical errors by desk officials, equipment malfunction, difference in hand signals of the referees, and misapplication of rules). Note that this list does not include errors made by the players. For example, if a substitute player enters early during an extraman

situation without being signaled from the desk, a penalty shot must be awarded for a violation of Rule 21-13.

27. **Non-Conforming Pool Markings and Equipment** - Before the game, the referees shall ensure that the field of play, game equipment, suits and caps comply with the rules, make any corrections possible at that time, and report any issues with the field of play, non-conforming caps or suits, abandonment of game, forfeiture of game, etc., committed by a competing school to the state association or section office, school athletic director, and the assigning authority, in order that these may be corrected. (Note: each state association shall establish its requirements for reporting.)
28. **Tournament Variations** - Referees should note that the tournament host may include a 30-second time-out as an additional tournament variation. The 30-second time-out is to be used strategically for substitutions and/or to improve the location of the players in the pool. The coach calling the 30-second time-out may move along the sideline to the half-distance line during the 30-second time-out and the players may swim to the side of the pool to receive instructions from the coach. This and any other variations (such as length of periods, length and number of time-outs, time between periods, type of overtime, etc.) must be communicated to the teams and referees in advance of the tournament.