



2024-26 NFHS Water Polo Rules Changes

1-6-1e: Added a continuous red marking to be placed on the goal line, 2 meters from the outside of both goal posts. An imaginary line from the end of each red marking to the 2-meter line creates the "goal area".

Rationale: Clarifies the new goal area.

1-16: Removed the color restriction for the ball requiring yellow or gold. The ball must be of a color that contrasts with the colors of the players' caps and is clearly and safely visible.

Rationale: The change gives a team the ability to choose a ball suitable for its team's conditions, especially under night lighting.

2-1-2: Defined an illegal player as one who enters the game during live play wearing an additional goalkeeper's cap.

Rationale: During live play only one player wearing a goalie cap is allowed in the field of play.

3-17-2a: Added the phrase "or gains possession of" to the rule, which will assist referees and timekeepers in the case where a player wins an uncontested sprint but does not touch the ball.

Rationale: This addition allows referees to consider that possession has been gained and the clock can start.

4-22 NOTE (NEW): Added a NOTE defining a goal can be scored directly on a corner throw after the referee has removed the ball from the water for an administrative issue.

Rationale: The new language will provide administrative flexibility for the officials by allowing a direct shot if the ball is removed for any administrative reason prior to the taking of a corner throw.

5-10-1: If the foul is committed inside the 2-meter area but outside of the goal area, the free throw is taken where the ball is.

Rationale: Clarifies that the attacking player no longer needs to be outside the defending goal area to take the free throw. As long as the player exits the new goal area, the player can take the free throw.

5-11 NOTE (NEW): When there is a counterattack, a player with a position of advantage does not have to give up the advantage to go to the ball and take the free throw. The player on that team who is next closest to the ball must take the free throw as long as there is no undue delay.

Rationale: If there is no advantage on the counterattack, the player most readily available to take the free throw must do so.

6-11-1, 6-11-2: This rule changes the specific area around the goal and allows for an attacking player who is outside the goal area to go inside 2 meters without being penalized.

Rationale: This opens up more angles for the offense and does not unnecessarily punish an attacking player who is not close to the goal but enters the 2-meter area.

6-11-3: This new rule clarifies that a player in the goal area of the attacking team can never be in front of the line of the ball at any time during the game.

Rationale: Because the new goal area is the area closest to the goal, this new rule allows the officials to correctly call “inside the goal area” violations when the receiving player is ahead of the ball.

2024-26 Water Polo Editorial Changes

NOTE, 1-19-3, 2-4 NOTE

2024-26 Water Polo Point of Emphasis

1. Inside the Goal Area Clarification
2. Ball in Hand
3. Advantage