

# **WORLD AQUATIC WATER POLO MANUAL**

**INSTRUCTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS FOR REFEREES, COACHES & NATIONAL  
FEDERATIONS**

*Auckland Water Polo Edition  
Source material via World Aquatics by John Waldow, edited by Fabian  
Wanrooij on behalf of Auckland Water Polo*



# **WATER POLO**

## Contents

AUCKLAND WATER POLO INTRODUCTION.....	1
VI.1, THE FIELD OF PLAY & EQUIPMENT .....	1
VI.2, TEAMS & PLAYERS .....	2
Coaches.....	2
Players .....	2
Substitutions.....	2
Substitute players .....	2
Non-permitted substitutions .....	2
Flying Substitutions.....	3
Player leaving the field on their own initiative.....	3
Substitutions during interval times and play.....	4
Substitution of an excluded goalkeeper .....	4
VI 3 - REFEREES AND TECHNICAL OFFICIALS .....	4
Control of the game .....	4
Cooperation and Communication .....	5
Advantage Rule.....	5
Technical Mistakes .....	5
VI.4 - DURATION OF THE GAME .....	6
VI 5 – TIMEOUTS .....	6
Restarting after a timeout .....	7
Incorrect or Illegal Timeout .....	7
VI.6 START AND RESTART OF PLAY.....	7
VI.7 METHOD OF SCORING.....	8
Restart of play after interval time .....	9
VI.8 ORDINARY FOULS.....	9
Ordinary Foul and Advantage Rule.....	9
Offensive fouls.....	9
Ball under .....	9
Pushing .....	10
Goal Area Foul .....	11
Direct shot taking a free throw inside 6m area .....	12
20 or 30 seconds.....	12
To waste time .....	12
To simulate being fouled.....	13
Hiding under water and stealing the ball from under water .....	13
VI.9 EXCLUSION FOULS .....	13

Procedure in case of exclusion without the ball .....	13
VI. 9.3 Signalisation of re-entry by the referees .....	14
VI.9.5 Interference with the taking of a free throw, goal throw or corner throw .....	15
VI.9.6 Two hands foul.....	15
VI. 9.7 Splashing .....	15
VI. 9.8 Impeding .....	16
VI.9.9 Hold, sink and pull back .....	18
VI.9.11 Tactical Foul.....	19
VI.9.12 Kick or strike.....	19
VI.9.13 Aggressive Play .....	20
VI.9.14 Act of Violence .....	20
Comparison of VI.9.12, VI.9.13 and VI.9.14.....	21
VI.9.15 Simultaneous exclusions .....	21
VI.10.3 Interference after an exclusion foul.....	22
VI.9.16 Improper re-entry.....	22
VI.9.17 Interference with a penalty throw.....	22
VI.9.18 Position of the players on Penalty Throw.....	23
Centre forward position.....	23
Some general observations.....	23
VI.10 PENALTY FOULS .....	24
VI.10.2 Definition of 'probable goal' .....	24
Delay of the call.....	25
Penalty Foul by Goalkeeper .....	25
VI.10.10 Penalty for action committed with intent to prevent a probable goal or to delay the game .....	25
VI.11 FREE THROWS .....	26
VI.12 GOAL THROWS.....	28
VI.13 CORNER THROWS .....	28
VI.14 NEUTRAL THROWS .....	28
VI.15 PENALTY THROWS.....	29
Penalty awarded in the last minute of the game .....	30
VI.16 PERSONAL FOULS, YELLOW AND RED CARDS .....	30
VI.17 ACCIDENT, INJURY AND ILLNESS.....	30
APPENDIX A, REFEREE SIGNALS .....	31

## AUCKLAND WATER POLO INTRODUCTION

This Manual is intended to clarify the water polo rules as set out by the World Aquatics Organization. Please note that this manual is based on the World Aquatics water polo rules which took effect on 1 January 2023. It should be used as an additional tool alongside the current World Aquatic water polo rules when used as a learning resource.

Auckland Water Polo-run competitions are largely governed by World Aquatics rules, however there are exceptions which vary depending on the grade of competition. These exceptions will be specifically highlighted within the rules of the specific competition.

The intended purpose of this manual is to assist with the interpretation of the rules for referees first and foremost, however should also give insight to coaches, players and spectators on the manner in which Auckland Water Polo wishes its referees to interpret the rules during competition.

Within Auckland Water Polo, this manual will also be used as the backbone to its referee workshops for all grades, in varying degrees. For further information regarding Auckland Water Polo Referee Development, please visit the Auckland Water Polo website.

This manual was put together with the input from John Waldow as leading senior referee in New Zealand, and in his capacity as chairman of the Education subcommittee of the WWR (World Water Polo Referees Association). John has been instrumental in referee development for over 20 years in New Zealand, and Auckland in particular, where he is based. Auckland Water Polo wishes to acknowledge and thank John for all his past, but also his ongoing work and support in the referee development space and the creation of this manual.

For further information on the interpretations below, please contact Auckland Water Polo via the contacts provided on the AWP website.

### VI.1, THE FIELD OF PLAY & EQUIPMENT

The features of the field of play, goals, balls and other equipment are regulated as per

In case there is not enough space along the side line to create a lateral substitution area (“flying substitution area”), 0.5 metres may be deducted from the width of the field of play to create this lateral substitution area.

Before the game, the referees shall ensure that the field of play and any audible equipment comply with the rules. They should also satisfy themselves regarding the signals made by any electronic equipment.

Referees must ensure that the caps of each team comply with the rules and that each team has a replacement set of caps. Referees should not tolerate the situation when the players of one team repeatedly lose their caps or have untied caps. When a cap is lost or untied, the referee shall call for the ball at the first appropriate stoppage when that team has possession of the ball.

## VI.2, TEAMS & PLAYERS

### Coaches

The Team Coach shall be allowed to stand and to move and, when his/her team is in attack, to advance to their team's 6 metre mark. When their team is defending, the coach must return to the bench, remaining behind the goal line. The Team Coach is also not allowed to stand in front of the possession clock and/or VAR Camera system (if applicable).

In addition to the captain's responsibilities, the coaches shall also be responsible for the good conduct and discipline of their teams and all persons on the bench. Smoking shall not be permitted.

### Players

Grease, oil or any substance on the body

According to Rule VI.2.5, players shall not have grease, oil or any substance on the body. This rule must be applied for any foreign (including anti-slip) substance upon the body or the hands.

Position of the players in the field of play

The position of the player must be determined by the head, which is the most visible part of the body. For example, at the beginning of the period before the swim-off, the head of the player between goal posts must be under the crossbar. A direct shot from a free throw outside 6m is allowed when the attacking player's head is outside the 6 metre area.

The position of the head is also important for the application of a Goal Area Foul (VI.8.10), and to determine if a player has improperly or illegally entered the field of play.

Exclusions for the remainder of the game

All players, coaches and team officials excluded for the remainder of the game for Aggressive Play, Misconduct or Disrespect, Act of Violence and/or in receipt of a Red Card must immediately leave the competition area. On their way to the dressing room the excluded person must refrain from any interference during the game, i.e. coaching, signaling, communicating, etc.

When a team official or a player who received a red card refuses to leave the competition area or interferes with the game, the referee should stop the game until he/she obeys the rules. An additional sanction may be applied. In this situation, the delegate should support the referee to the restart of the game quickly.

### Substitutions

#### Substitute players

At the beginning of each period, all substitute players must sit on the bench until the signal (whistle) for the start of the play is given. Prior to the signal, substitute players are only permitted to enter the Re-Entry Area but not the Flying Substitution Area.

During the game, Flying Substitution from the designated lateral substitution area is allowed only when the substitute enters the water from behind the extended goal line.

#### Non-permitted substitutions

A player cannot be substituted after the awarding of a penalty throw unless in case of bleeding or third personal foul, if provided by the Rules.

When allowed, in the previous situation substitutions must be done through the Re-entry Area.

## Flying Substitutions

Regarding the Flying Substitution procedure:

There is no restriction on the number of substitutes a team may have at the side of the pool, and there is no limit for the number of players to be substituted at one time. This area cannot be used as a “warming-up” area.

In order to move along the side of the pool, a substitute must enter beside the re-entry area without diving – in the same manner as if entering the water for the re-entry area.

Players must visibly touch hands above the water once both the player who is leaving the water and the substitute, are outside of the field of play. The player must leave the field of play and rise with his head above the surface of the water before the substitute may enter.

The player who is leaving must swim along the side of the pool until behind the goal line. Substitution can occur anywhere between the teams' goal line and the centre line, and it can occur anytime during the game.

Players can stay in the substitution area for a reasonable amount of time.

In general, when a player does not comply with the correct procedure concerning entering or leaving the field of play through the flying substitution area, the sanction for improper entry has to be applied (VI.9.16), including if the players do not high-five or high-five when the exiting player is still inside the field of play, etc.

Only when the substitute does not enter the area from behind the extended goal line, if by this behavior the substitute:

- interferes with the action in progress (for example, making a fast substitution with the opposing team in possession of the ball), the sanction for improper entry has to be applied (VI.9.16);
- does not interfere with the action in progress (for example, because the action is in the opposite half field and no substitution is done until the next change of possession), a warning (or yellow card, if repeated) to the coach shall be used at the appropriate moment.

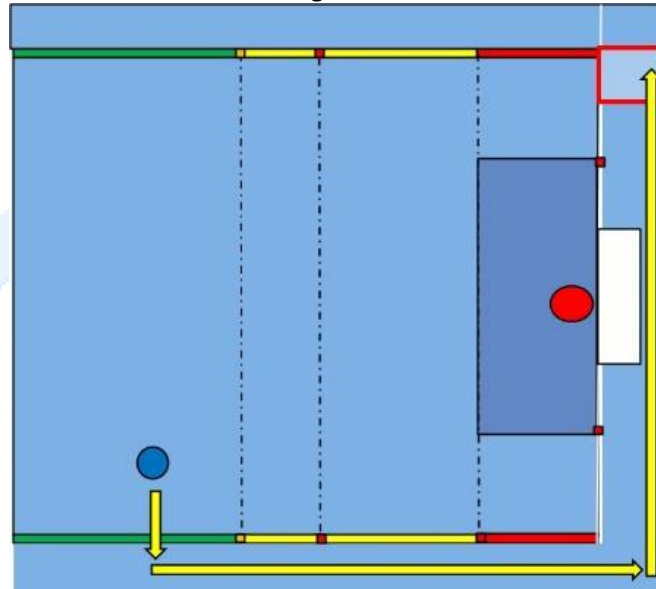
When an illegal player participates in the play by a Flying Substitution, the sanction provided by Rule VI.10.8 must be applied.

Only when the substitute player is punished for improper or illegal player, as previously mentioned, the designated officials at the table or delegate can assist the referees signalling a violation of this rule.

## Player leaving the field on their own initiative

As provided by Rule VI.2.10, in the case that a player, on their own initiative, leaves the field of play in a place other than the re-entry / substitution area as mentioned in the rules, this player will not be punished for leaving the field of play. However, this player or a substitute, can only (re-)enter the field of play after a goal, after a time out, at the start of the next period or with permission of the referee (see figure 1).

Figure 1



The same regulation is applied when a field player enters the Flying Substitution Area without finding a substitute teammate. In this situation, the player who wants to play again is not allowed to move back to the field of play directly from the Flying Substitution Area and must swim to the re-entry area, entering the field after a goal, a timeout, the start of a period or with the permission of the referee.

### Substitutions during interval times and play

After any interval time, it is a duty of the referees to not start or restart the play until all (if allowed) substitutions have been completed and no illegal players are in the field of play. In case of a start or restart of play with illegal player(s), the game must recommence from the end of the interval time, removing all illegal players from the field of play.

For substitutions during play, the referees should take care not to miss fouls and other incidents while observing that the substitution is made correctly. The secretary and the delegate are also responsible to ensure that substitutions during play are made correctly.

### Substitution of an excluded goalkeeper

The substitution of an excluded goalkeeper with a substitute goalkeeper is allowed whenever it is in accordance with the rules. For example, in a case where the goalkeeper is excluded, during a time out or during play through the Re-Entry Area or Flying Substitution Area, the coach can replace a field player with the substitute goalkeeper.

## VI 3 - REFEREES AND TECHNICAL OFFICIALS

### Control of the game

The referees shall be in absolute control of the game and:

- their authority over the players shall be effective during the whole time that they and the players are within the precincts of the pool;
- all decisions of the referees on questions of fact shall be final and their interpretation of the Rules shall be obeyed throughout the game;
- may alter a decision provided it is done before the ball is put back into play;
- must use the signals provided in Appendix 5.8.

All participants in any game are bound by the rules to obey all decisions/interpretations made by the referees of any game.

## Cooperation and Communication

During the match, both referees shall have an audio headset for communication between themselves. The delegate will also have a headset only to receive information for the official table and to ensure clarity.

Referees, if appropriate, can speak with coaches and captains prior to the match and draw their attention to some important aspects relating to the Rules, particularly concerning correctness and how it relates to participants and how this will be applied throughout the match.

## Advantage Rule

According to the Advantage Rule (VI.3.3.i), the referees shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such a declaration would be an advantage to the offending player's team.

The referees shall fully apply this principle, refraining from stopping the flow of the game if an ordinary foul or exclusion foul (and in certain situations a penalty foul) has been committed, but the attacking player is able to continue the action to shoot or move to the goal.

Do not call fouls which do not affect the game; these calls are unnecessary, and they affect the positive flow of the game.

The referees shall not declare an ordinary foul when there is still a possibility to play the ball.

This rule is a very clear instruction to referees to always play advantage. A referee must not call any ordinary or exclusion foul if it clearly disadvantages the attacking team. The objective of the referee is to give the attacking team the opportunity to finish the attacking action.

Only call the foul when the attacking player is no longer able to continue the action. The opportunity to finish the action will improve our game and is therefore an objective of the referee.

The referee must take in consideration that in the process of competing for the ball or position between centre forward and centre back, an ordinary foul can also be called. In case the centre forward does not have a clear advantage, (because they are too far from the goal, between two or more defenders, etc.) the referee can also award an ordinary foul in favour of the team of centre forward.

The referees shall conduct the game in such a way as to assist the teams to develop the play in accordance with the spirit of the rules.

## Technical Mistakes

In the case of technical errors by either referees or desk officials, there should be no impact on the game. For example, if no signal is given for the re-entry of an excluded player and a goal is scored, the game shall be stopped, the time re-set to the re-entry time, the goal shall not be counted and play shall re-commence from the re-entry time. The referees must decide whether a technical error has occurred.



## VI.4 - DURATION OF THE GAME

The following situations shall be determined as interval time:

- interval between periods.
- during a time out.
- after a goal has been scored until the restart of play.
- Injury time (three minutes);
- any other stoppage when the referee has removed the ball from the water for any reason, including an injury, bleeding, the replacement of a player's cap, VAR review etc.
- 

The interval between periods is two minutes between the first and second periods, the third and fourth periods, and three minutes between the second and third periods. At the conclusion of the interval, both teams must be lined up on their respective goal lines and ready for the start of play. The referee must signal to the teams when there are 30 seconds remaining in the interval that they are to complete substitutions and move to the goal line for the start of play.

Referees must prevent any delay in the restart of the game after interval times.

The coach is responsible for ensuring the players are lined up and ready for the start of play. If the coach is late in lining up the team after the conclusion of the interval, then the coach may be sanctioned with a warning or a yellow card, if repeated.

## VI 5 – TIMEOUTS

Each team may request two timeouts per game, including within the same period and even directly after each other. The duration of the time out shall be one minute. A time out may be requested at any time, including after a goal, by the coach of the team in possession of the ball calling "timeout!" and signaling to the secretary or referee with the hands forming a T-shape.

A team has possession of the ball when one of its players is holding or swimming with the ball.

A timeout cannot be called in the interval between the awarding of a penalty and the taking of the penalty throw. In this case any timeout called will be nullified.

The timeout request can also be made by any device authorized for use in the game and, in this case: The use of a timeout button will be the sole responsibility of the team, i.e., one of the (three) team officials occupying the team bench.

Any pressing of the timeout button, even by accident, shall be a timeout request, and all consequences, dependent upon possession and the number of available timeouts, shall apply.

If a time out is requested, the secretary or referee shall immediately stop the game by whistle and the players shall immediately return to their respective halves of the field of play.

The possession time does not reset because of the timeout and continues from the restart of play after the timeout.

As in almost all cases whenever the time out is called, play is developing on the other side of the field of play. The referees, delegate and persons on the official table are looking at the side of play and not in the direction where the coach of the attacking team is located. It is recommended, when there is no timeout device integrated into the timing system that, on the official table, one person should take care of the time outs and pay attention only to the bench of the attacking team to see when the coach calls for a time out.

At a time out, the defensive referee should take the ball. Other balls may not be used by the players during a timeout.

### Restarting after a timeout

The defensive referee with the ball takes position at the half distance line of play. The timekeeper should make a "WARNING" signal by whistle 15 seconds before the end of the time out. Both teams must stay in their respective half-fields of play; teams may take up their position anywhere in the field of play to restart following a time out on the "WARNING" signal from the timekeeper (following the expiration of 45 seconds).

The time out must be the full 60 seconds. Immediately when the time out ends, the defensive referee will throw the ball at the centre, on or behind the half distance line of the field of play and whistle for the restart of the game. The team in possession of the ball shall put the ball into play on or behind the half distance line (all players may take any position in the field of play which they deem to be most advantageous).

Play shall be restarted on the whistle of the referee by the team in possession of the ball putting the ball into play on or behind the half distance line, except that if the time out is requested before the taking of a corner throw, that throw shall be maintained.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a free throw by which the game is restarted after a time out, including the restart after a time out with a corner throw. However, if the player puts the ball into play, a goal can be scored, also after faking (simulating a shot) or swimming with the ball.

### Incorrect or Illegal Timeout

If the coach of the team in possession of the ball requests an additional time out to which the team is not entitled (Incorrect Timeout), the game shall be stopped, and play shall then be restarted by a player of the opposing team putting the ball into play on or behind the half distance line.

If the coach of the team not in possession of the ball requests a time out (Illegal Timeout), the game shall be stopped, and a penalty throw shall be awarded to the opposing team.

After requesting this illegal time-out, the coach has lost the right to request a legal time-out (if the team should still have one).

## VI.6 START AND RESTART OF PLAY

In case of 'false start' at the beginning of a period, including when illegal players are in the field of play, the start shall be retaken.

At the start of the game and at the restart of each period the referees will position themselves on the respective five (5) metre line. The starting referee shall wait with a raised arm in the vertical position for the signal of the other referee that both teams are correctly positioned on the goal line. This signal shall be made by raising one hand (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. This procedure should reduce the possibility of a false start.

The referees shall ensure that the correct number of players are in the water before starting play. Should play be started with additional players not entitled to be in the water, play shall be started again, and the time shall be reset.

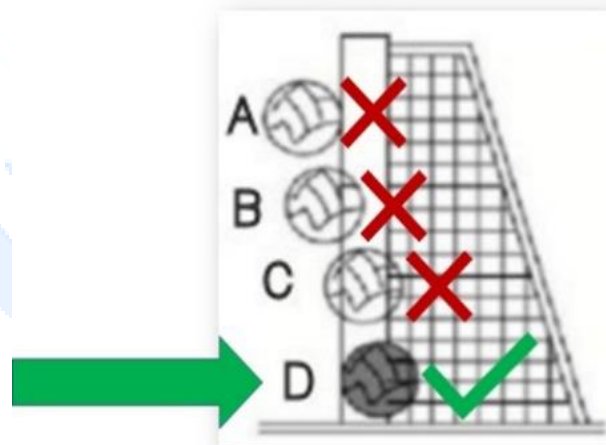
After a goal is scored, both referees take up a position on the half-distance line. When both referees are satisfied that any substitutions have been completed, the referee who is controlling the attacking play shall raise his/her hand and advance along the pool side to the right, and the other referee shall restart the play. The referees shall ensure that each team has completed any substitutions and that the correct numbers of players is in the field of play before restarting play.

Should play be started after a goal with illegal player(s) in the field of play, play shall be started again, and the time shall be reset to the time of the goal.

## VI.7 METHOD OF SCORING

It has been clarified that the goal line is an imaginary laser line which runs on the front side from one goal post to the other post. A goal is scored when the ball fully passes the goal line as in position D in Figure 2.

Figure 2



A goal may be scored by a player shooting from outside 6 metres after that player's team has been awarded a free throw for a foul committed outside 6 meters and the free throw is taken outside the 6 meter area.

In all situations provided by Rule VI.7.2, a goal may only be scored by a player who visibly puts the ball into play, when starting or restarting play, is outside 6m. This player can fake and shoot or swim with the ball and shoot.

The defensive referee can assist by taking a position near the 6 metre line whenever possible to confirm whether the shot was taken inside or outside the 6 metre area by using the additional signalization shown in Appendix 5-V.

It is important to note that:

- If the ball and the free throw are both outside 6m, the player can choose to shoot immediately or visibly put the ball into play;
- After the player visibly puts the ball into play, the player can fake and shoot or swim and shoot;
- Once the player visibly puts the ball into play, it is the sign that the time keeper must (re)start the clock and that the defender can attack the player with the ball;

- Visibly putting the ball into play means that the ball must leave the hand of the player with the ball;
- Visibly passing the ball from one hand to the other is considered to put the ball into play;
- When a corner throw or goal throw is awarded and the player puts the ball into play, a goal can be scored after faking (simulating a shot) or swimming with the ball.

When a defender tries to intercept a pass following a free throw taken by the attacking team inside the 6m and, by deflection, the ball enters the goal or crosses the goal line or the side line, the resulting goal, corner throw or free throw shall be awarded to the attacking team

### Restart of play after interval time

After interval time it is not allowed to take a direct shot at the goal.

When a referee takes the ball out of the water, for cap replacement, injuries or other matters, this is considered to be interval time. After the matter is resolved and the ball is returned to a player of the attacking team, no direct shot at the goal is allowed according to the rules.

However, after interval time, when the ball is returned to a player taking a corner throw or to a player outside the 6m area, after a stoppage for cap replacement, injuries or other matters, after putting the ball into play, this player can shoot at the goal (or fake, or swim) and score.

## VI.8 ORDINARY FOULS

### Ordinary Foul and Advantage Rule

The Advantage Rule must be applied to the fullest extent. An ordinary foul for the team in possession of the ball should only be called if it gives an advantage to the attack, or if it will assist in controlling the physical play of the game.

It is not in the spirit of the game if a team losing possession of the ball through a bad pass is then rewarded by the awarding of a free throw for another foul somewhere else.

When a referee whistles an exclusion, it must be for a foul which deserves exclusion, giving an advantage to compensate for the loss of an advantage taken away by the foul. It is an exclusion when any foul clearly destroys the advantage or the possibility of the attacking player to shoot or to move toward the goal. Any ordinary foul, offensive foul or exclusion foul must be in relationship with the game and the location of the ball.

### Offensive fouls

Regarding offensive fouls:

When calling an offensive foul, the referee must ensure that the teams clearly understand the situation to avoid any confusion; this by correct use of whistle and signals.

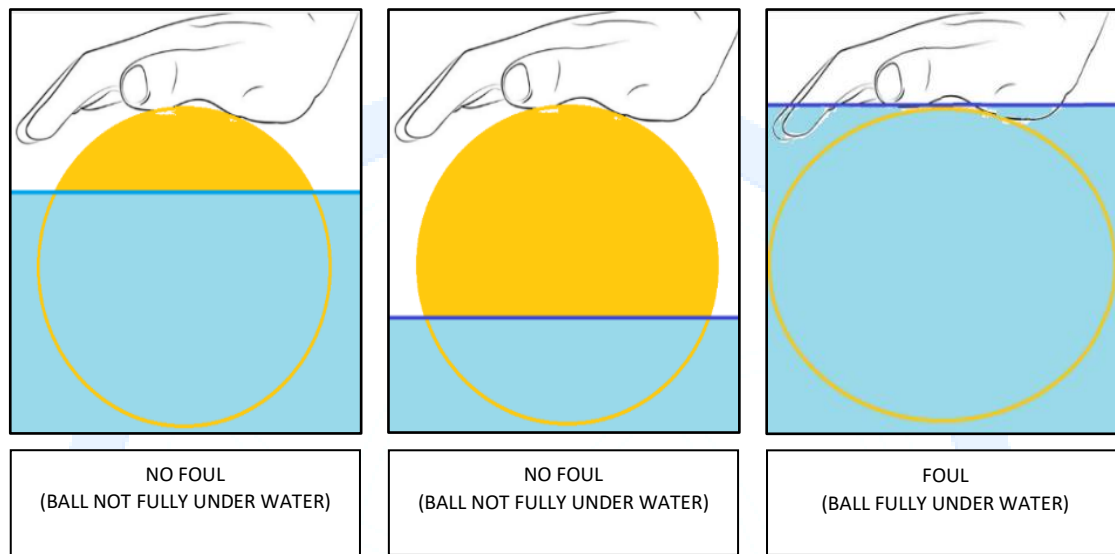
Do not call offensive fouls which do not affect the game, these calls are unnecessary and they affect the positive flow of the game.

Do not call an offensive foul when a player from the perimeter tries to drive into the front court area. In a contact situation the referee must advantage the action, the attack; priority must be given to the movement of the attacking player.

### Ball under

According to VI.8.6, ball under water must be punished when it is clear and referees shall refrain from calling this kind of foul when the ball is not fully under water, (see Figure 3) or the player in possession of the ball is not tackled by an opponent.

Figure 3



To hold the ball under water with the intention to hide it from the opposing team has to be punished in the same way as when the ball is held under water when being tackled.

It is an ordinary foul to take or hold the ball under water when tackled, even if the player holding the ball has it forced under water as a result of the opponent's challenge (figure 4). It makes no difference that the ball goes under water against the player's will. What is important is that the foul is awarded against the player who was in contact with the ball at the moment it was taken under the water.

Figure 4



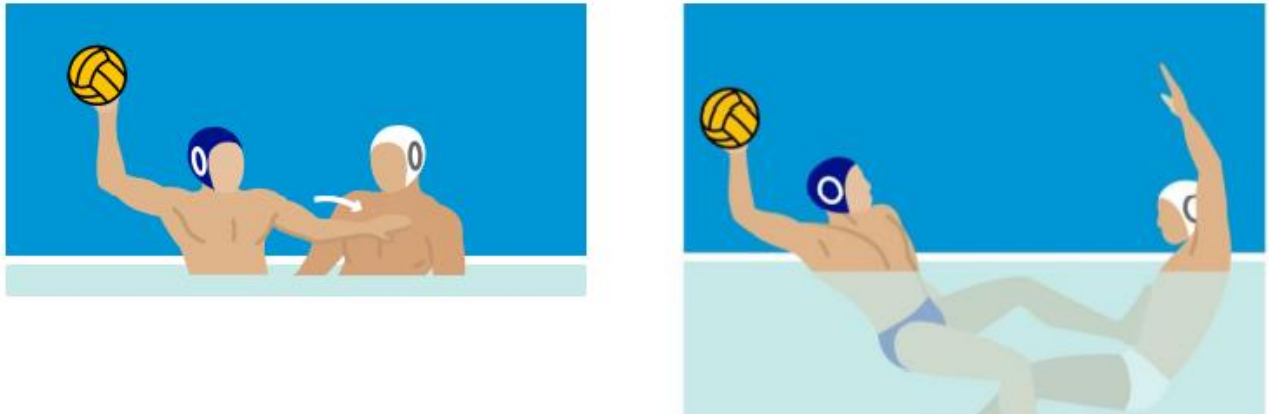
It is important to remember that this offence can only occur when a player takes the ball under when tackled. Thus, if the goalkeeper emerges high out of the water to save a shot and then while falling back takes the ball under water, the goalkeeper has committed no offence; but if the goalkeeper then holds the ball under water when challenged by an opponent, the goalkeeper will have committed an infringement of this Rule and if the goalkeeper's actions prevented a probable goal, a penalty throw must be awarded.

### Pushing

Pushing can take place in various forms, including with the hand (figure 5) or with the foot (figure 6). In the cases illustrated, the punishment is a free throw for an ordinary foul. However, referees must take care to differentiate between pushing with the foot and kicking – which then becomes an exclusion foul or even an act of violence (VI.9.14).

If the foot is already in contact with the opponent when the movement begins, this will usually be pushing, but if the movement begins before such contact with the opponent is made, then this should generally be regarded as kicking.

Figure 5 & 6



### Goal Area Foul

As provided by the Rules, the Goal Area is a rectangular box extending 2 metres from the lateral outsides of the goal posts to the 2 metre line opposite the goal line. In this area, attacking players must not enter without possession of the ball, unless they are behind the line of the ball.

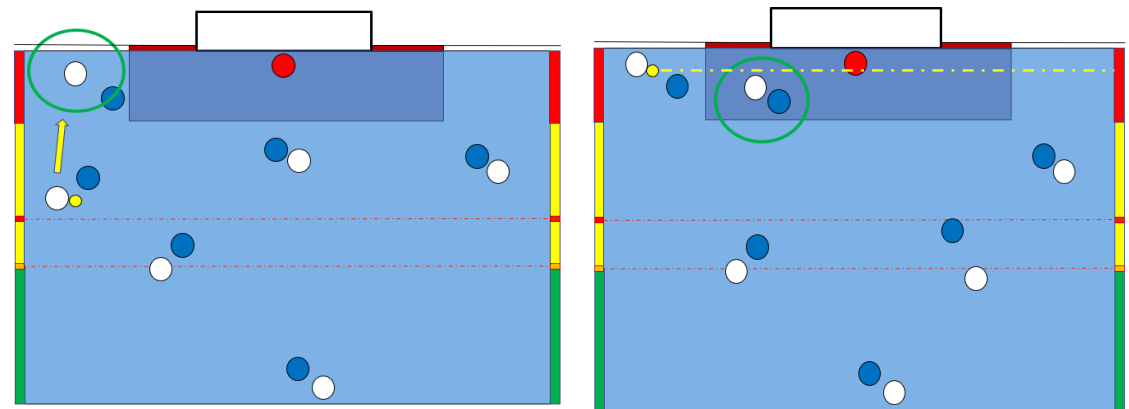
For the application of Goal Area Foul (VI.8.10), it is important to note that:

- an attacking player can never be in front of the line (parallel line with the goal line) of the ball at any time during the game in the Goal Area of the opponent team;
- no passive situation exists when an attacking player in front of the line of the ball is in Goal Area;
- if the player receiving the pass does not shoot at goal, the player who passed the ball must quickly leave the Goal Area to avoid being penalized under this Rule.
- if an attacking player inside the Goal Area is behind the line of the ball and, after a pass of a teammate, is in front of the line of the ball, this player must leave quickly the Goal Area.
- If a defender pushes, holds or pulls back an attacker inside the Goal Area to receive a foul in favor of his team, this player will be excluded, except in case of advantage.

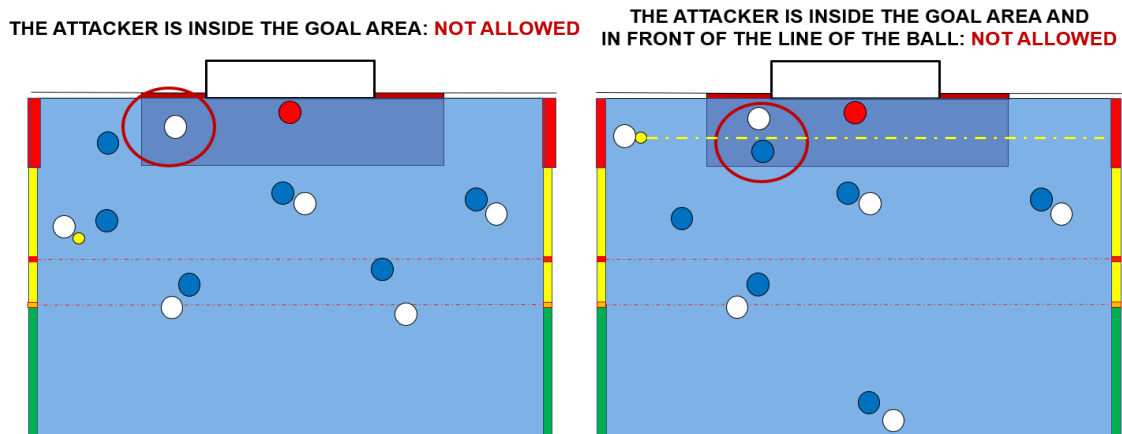
Figure 7

THE ATTACKER IS OUTSIDE THE GOAL AREA: **ALLOWED**

THE ATTACKER IS INSIDE THE GOAL AREA BUT BEHIND THE LINE OF THE BALL: **ALLOWED**







If a pass within the Goal Area flies toward the goal line a free throw must be awarded, even if the two attacking players were at the same line at the moment of the pass. This is especially important to apply in men up situation. If the ball is passed on the water, the attacking teammate has the right to swim to take the ball, even if the pass was flying toward the goal line.

### Direct shot taking a free throw inside 6m area

A direct shot at the goal taken after a free throw has been awarded inside the 6 metre line is an ordinary foul, and the referee has to award a free throw in favor of the opposing team (see VI.8.11). The ball should be put into play at the location of the ball, or by the goalkeeper or another teammate within the 2m area if the ball was shot out of the field of play.

### 20 or 30 seconds

The timekeeper and referees must decide whether there was a shot or no shot before the expiration of time (shot clock or game clock), but the referees have the final decision.

Referees can review the situation with the support of VAR system if necessary.

It is important to note that:

- If there is a double exclusion, the time is not to be reset and the time on the possession clock will remain the same.
- The shot clock will be reset to 30 seconds after a neutral throw.
- In the last minute of the game, a coach in possession of the ball may choose not to take a penalty shot and choose for a new ball possession. In this case the game will be restarted from the halfway line, or behind, as after a time out and the shot clock will be reset to 30 seconds.
- When there are simultaneous violent actions during live play, the shot clock will be reset to 30 seconds after the second penalty has been taken and the match will restart from the half distance line as after a goal.

### To waste time

It is always permissible for a referee to award an ordinary foul under this Rule before the 20 or 30 seconds possession period has elapsed.

In the last minute of the game, the referees must be certain that there is intentional wasting time before applying this Rule.

The team in possession of the ball is entitled to control and play with the ball through the whole duration of the shot clock. Wasting time is only a foul if:

- a player throws the ball away and refuses to play (this usually occurs before the expiration of the attack);

- a player intentionally refuses to put the ball into play;
- a player or goalkeeper is the only player of the team in their own half of the field of play and receives the ball from teammate from the attacking half of the field of play;
- If an attacking player with the ball from the offensive half starts to swim or move with the ball to the defensive half.

### To simulate being fouled

Simulation means an action taken by a player with the apparent intent of causing a referee to award a foul incorrectly against an opposing player. A referee may issue a yellow card against a team for repeated simulation and may apply VI.9.13.3 (misconduct) to sanction offending players.

### Hiding under water and stealing the ball from under water

Hiding under water and stealing the ball from under the water was always a part of the game. There is no rule which disallows this.

However, only when two players are struggling for position (in static or swimming situation) and one of them hides under water and takes a positional advantage, this cannot be done without impeding and must be punished by the referee.

In all the other situations, all players are allowed to swim or hide under water to attempt to the ball.

## VI.9 EXCLUSION FOULS

Most often, the point of complaint and criticism of the referee's decisions by the coach, players and the fans is the lack of consistency by the referee.

The referee who has the right attitude in mind and behaviour will try to find their level and maintain it throughout the game.

It is most important that the referees apply the Rules appropriately and be consistent from the beginning to the end of game. The referees should not call inconsistent fouls; the foul must be part of the action however, an exclusion foul for aggressive play or violent action, must be called, whether committed by an attacking or defending player, and in any part of the field of play.

The referee must apply this Rule and cannot interpret it otherwise:

- Only call exclusions for rule infringements that actually deserve to be penalised with an exclusion.
- By calling an exclusion, the referee penalises the infringing player for taking away the advantage from the attacking team
- Exclusion must be called when a foul clearly takes away the advantage or the possibility for the attacking player to **shoot** or to **move towards the goal**.
- When a foul is committed, but the attacking player is not in a situation as described at point iii), an ordinary foul can be awarded in order to prevent loss of the ball for the attacking player.
- Fouls which have no relation to the game should not be called; this goes for ordinary fouls, offensive fouls and exclusion fouls.

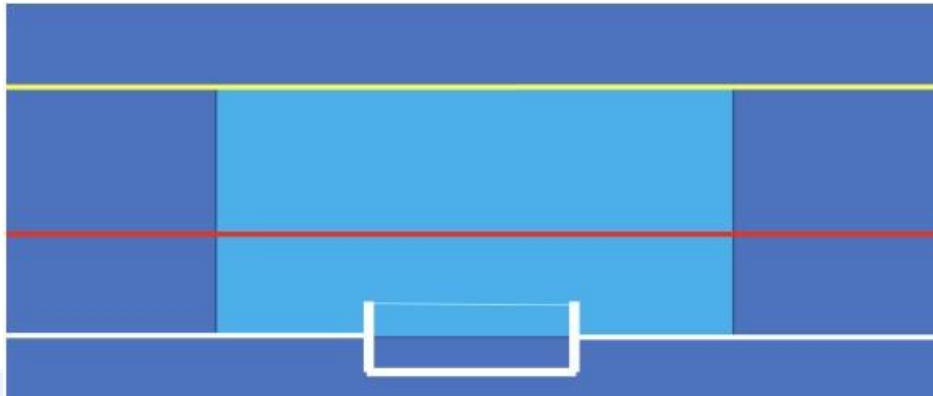
Clear signalization helps the involved parties to understand what has happened or why an exclusion has been called. Hence, a referee should use signals to the benefit of the game.

### Procedure in case of exclusion without the ball

Should the exclusion foul occur within the defending team's light blue area (Figure 8), without the ball, a clear and definite procedure shall be followed.



Figure 8



In this situation, the Referee:

- a) signals the exclusion by whistling,
- b) signals the number of the excluded player;
- c) allows the restart of the game by a visible hand signal.

Only after completing the procedure the free throw can be taken.

If the free throw is taken too quick, the referee must indicate that the free throw has to be retaken from the spot where the ball is.

It shall not be necessary for the excluded player to consequently remain in the re-entry area to await the arrival of an intended substitute.

The re-entry of an excluded player must be permitted immediately when the referee indicates a change of possession and/or direction of play. The interpretation of this is that the signal by the referee of change of direction allows re-entry of the excluded player and the referee does not have to display any other signal; that clearly it is still applicable that the secretary may signal re-entry of the excluded player should the exclusion period elapse without a score or change of possession.

A change of possession does not occur merely because of the end of a period. An excluded player or substitute shall be eligible to re-enter only if the team wins the ball at the swim up at the start of the next period. If a player is excluded when the end of a period is signalled, the referees and the secretary shall ensure that the teams have the correct number of players before signalling for the restart.

### VI. 9.3 Signalisation of re-entry by the referees

A substitute shall not be signalled in by a referee and nor shall the secretary signal the expiration of the 20 seconds exclusion period until the excluded player has reached the re-entry area nearest to the player's own goal line. This shall also apply to the re-entry of a substitute who is to replace a player excluded from the remainder of the game. In the event of an excluded player failing to return to the player's re-entry area, a substitute shall not be permitted to enter until a goal has been scored or at the end of a period or during a timeout.

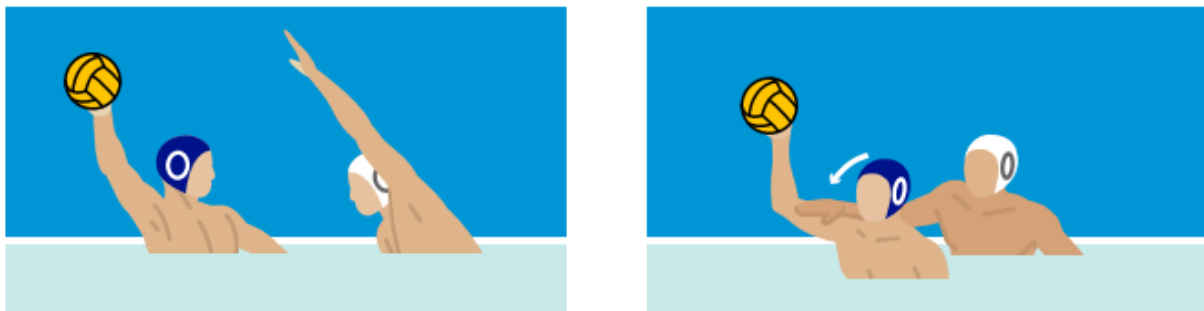
The primary responsibility for giving the signal for the re-entry of an excluded player or a substitute is with the defensive referee. However, the attacking referee may also assist in this regard and the signal of either referee shall be valid. If a referee suspects an improper re-entry or the assistant referee signals such an improper re-entry, then the referee should first be satisfied that the other referee had not signalled the re-entry.

Before giving the signal for the re-entry of an excluded player or a substitute, the defensive referee should wait momentarily in case the attacking referee whistles to restore possession to the opponent's team.

### VI.9.5 Interference with the taking of a free throw, goal throw or corner throw

A player is not to be penalised under this Rule if the player does not hear the whistle as a result of being under the water. The referees must determine if the actions of the player are intentional. Interference with a throw may take place indirectly when the ball is hampered, delayed or prevented from reaching the player who is to take the throw, or it may occur when the execution of the throw is interfered with by an opponent blocking the direction of the throw (figure 9), by disturbing the actual movement of the thrower (figure 10) or by an opponent committing a foul under VI.8.2. For interference with a penalty throw, see also VI.9.17.

Figures 9 & 10



### VI.9.6 Two hands foul

If the player attempts to block a shot with two hands the player shall be punished:

- with a penalty shot when the defensive player is **inside the 6 metre area**,
- with an exclusion foul when the defensive player is **outside the 6 metre area**.

### VI. 9.7 Splashing

Splashing is frequently used as an unfair tactic but is often only penalised in the obvious situation when players are facing one another (see figure 11). However, it can also occur less obviously when a player produces a curtain of water with an arm, seemingly without deliberate intent, in an attempt to block the view of the opponent who is about to shoot at goal or to make a pass.

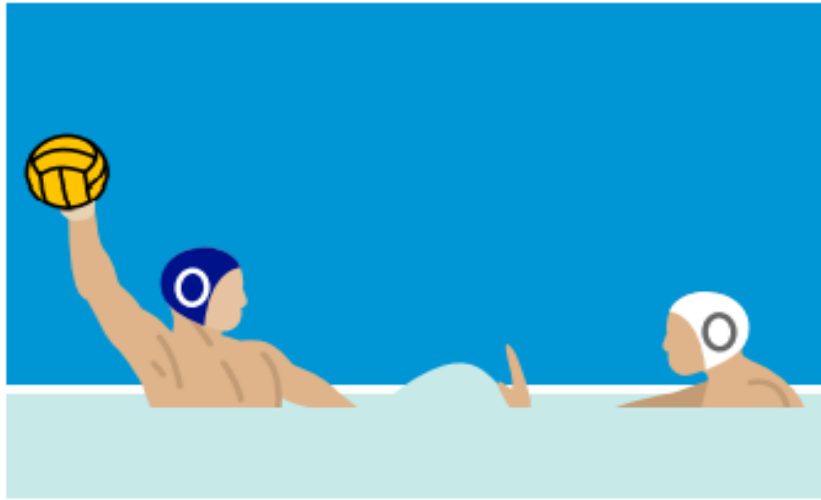
The punishment for intentionally splashing an opponent is exclusion or a penalty throw if the opponent is inside the 6 metre area and is attempting to shoot at goal.

In the case of splashing, it is the position of the attacking player which determines whether a penalty throw or exclusion is awarded.

Whether to award a penalty throw or an exclusion is decided solely by the positioning and actions of the attacking player; whether the offending player is inside the 6 metre area or outside is not a decisive factor.

If the attacking player is inside the 6 metre area and a probable goal is prevented by a defending player splashing, it is a penalty, irrespective of whether the defending player is inside or outside the 6 metre line. In all other cases, the correct decision is exclusion.

Figure 11



## VI. 9.8 Impeding

Regarding Impeding Rule:

To protect the free movement of an opponent, the action and flow of the game is a key concept in water polo.

Strict application of this rule is required in the following situations:

- Any foul to prevent the free movement of an attacking player driving towards the goal area.
- The tactical play of 'pressing' whereby free movement is impeded.
- Use of two hands for holding.
- Continuous or frequent contact of the opponent's body which prevents free movement.
- Swimming on/over the opponent's shoulders, back or legs preventing free movement

This Rule can also be applied to advantage the attacking team. If a counter attack is in progress and a foul is committed which limits the attack, the offending player shall be excluded. The first thing for the referee to consider is whether the opponent is holding the ball, because if the player is doing so, the player making the challenge cannot be penalised for "impeding".

It is clear that a player is holding the ball if it is held raised above the water (figure 12). The player is also holding the ball if the player swims with it held in the hand or makes contact with the ball while it is lying on the surface of the water (figure 13).

Swimming with the ball (dribbling), as shown in figure 14, is not considered to be holding. A common form of impeding is where the player swims across the opponent's legs (figure 15), thus reducing the pace at which the opponent can move and interfering with the normal leg action. Another form is swimming on the opponent's shoulders. It must also be remembered that the foul of impeding can be committed by the player who is in possession of the ball.

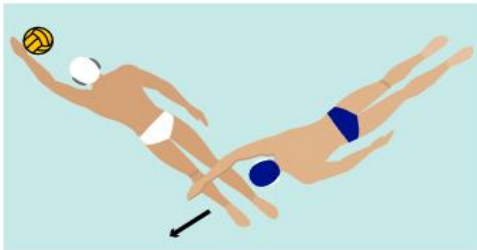
Figures 12 & 13



Figure 14



Figures 15 & 16



For example, figure 16 shows a player keeping one hand on the ball and trying to force the opponent away to gain more space. Figure 17 shows a player in possession of the ball impeding the opponent by pushing the opponent back with the head. Care must be taken with figures 16 & 17, because any violent movement by the player in possession of the ball might constitute striking or even act of violence; the figures are intended to illustrate impeding without any violent movement.

Figures 17 & 18



A player may also commit the offence of impeding even if the player is not holding or touching the ball. Figure 18 shows a player intentionally blocking the opponent with the player's body and with the arms flung open, thus making access to the ball impossible. This offence is most often committed near the boundaries of the field of play.

This rule was previously applied as an ordinary foul: accordingly this is a significant change but it refers only to an opponent not holding the ball. This is to apply anywhere in the field of play and is not restricted to the centre forward – centre back position. Also, similarly if the foul is by the attacking

player (centre forward) against the defending player (centre back) the referee should simply award an ordinary foul against the attacking player, that is an offensive or contra foul awarded against the attacking player.

Protecting the movement, the action and the attack of the player is a key concept to the playing of water polo. Accordingly, the referee must be very strict to whistle exclusion in these situations: - any foul to prevent the movement of the player to drive to the 6 m. area - when there is “pressing” that impedes the movement of an attacker - when using one or two hands to hold - when touching the body continuously, or consistently, to prevent free movement of an attacker - when swimming on the opponents shoulders, back or legs to impede movement.

This is to apply anywhere in the field of play and is not restricted to the centre forward – centre back position.

### VI.9.9 Hold, sink and pull back

The correct application of this Rule is very important both as to the presentation of the game and in arriving at a proper and fair result. The wording of the Rule is clear and explicit and can only be interpreted in one way: to hold (figure 19), sink (figure 20) or pull back (figure 21) an opponent who is not holding the ball is an exclusion foul. It is essential that referees apply this Rule correctly, without personal arbitrary interpretation, to ensure that the proper limits to rough play are not exceeded.

In addition, referees must note that an infringement of VI.9.9 within the 6 metre area which prevents a probable goal must be punished by the award of a penalty throw.

Figures 19 & 20

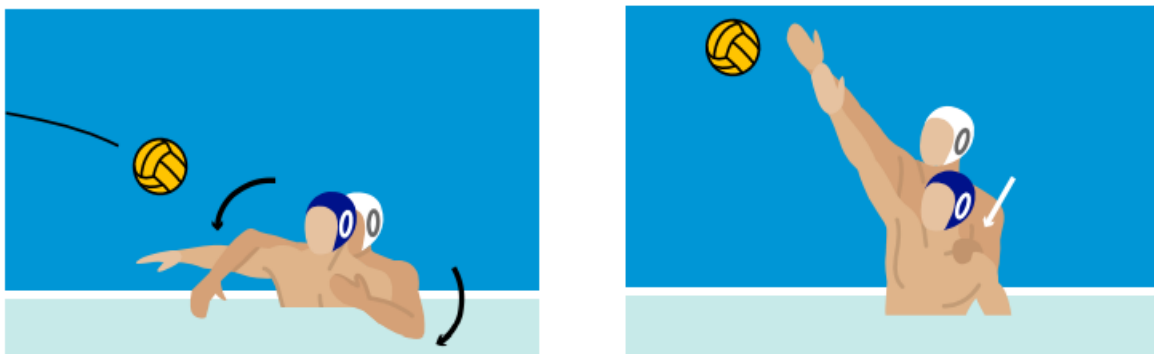
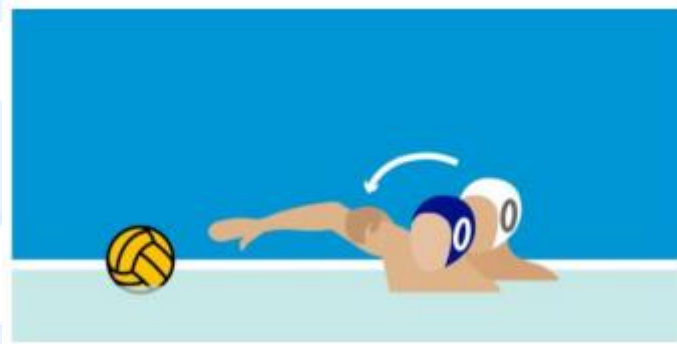


Figure 21



This includes holding the **suit of another player**. The referee must understand and recognise the difference between the men's game and the women's game. Unfortunately, grabbing and holding of the swimsuit is a large factor in the women's game; this because it gives an advantage for the player holding the swimsuit. However, this advantage is unfair and an infringement on the rules of the game;

therefore, the punishment should be accordingly: Grabbing of the swimsuit should be exclusion if done by a defensive player and an offensive foul if done by an attacking player.

When the **ball is in flight** and directed towards an attacking player, sinking committed by the defending player must be punished by exclusion. If the attacking player loses the ball or loses the opportunity to receive the ball, because of an ordinary foul by the defending player, the referee shall award a free throw.

**Contact between opposing players** is permitted. The referees should allow opposing players to compete for position and should only intervene to penalise a foul committed by a player of the team in possession of the ball, or to award an exclusion foul or in certain circumstances for an ordinary foul. The referee must give the **centre forward** an opportunity to finish their action. When the centre forward has the ball, the referee must delay the whistle a little, as it's better to give a possibility to shoot than to whistle exclusion and in certain situations the penalty.

Any backward movement of the centre forward outside the shoulder line, and especially out of the water, is an offensive foul to be awarded to the defender.

Awarding an ordinary foul is an option where the centre forward has **no immediate opportunity to shoot** or **where two or more defenders are engaged** in this situation; note an ordinary foul must have of course been committed. Often referees award either all or nothing; there is a middle ground.

### VI.9.11 Tactical Foul

It is an exclusion foul for a defending player to commit a foul on any player of the team in possession of the ball with the intent to stop the flow of the attack, anywhere in the field of play.

Examples of Tactical Fouls are:

- Raising both hands
- To interfere with a free throw
- Pushing the ball after a free throw
- Fouls with two hands
- Aggressive foul to prevent advantage
- Physical fouls while men up situation is in progress

This is a clear reinforcement of VI.9.9. Any foul with the simple objective to stop the flow of the game especially the counter attack must result in an exclusion of the player committing the foul. This kind of foul is also known as a 'professional foul' or a 'tactical foul'.

Anywhere in the field of play when a defender is stopping the flow of the game by a tactical foul, this Rule must be applied.

### VI.9.12 Kick or strike

The offence of kicking or striking can take a number of different forms, including being committed by a player in possession of the ball or by an opposing player; possession of the ball is not a decisive factor. What is important is the action of the offending player, including if the player makes disproportionate movements in an attempt to kick or strike, even if the player fails to make contact.

One of the most serious acts of striking is elbowing backwards (figure 22), which can result in serious injury to the opponent. Similarly, serious injury can occur when a player intentionally heads back into the face of an opponent who is marking the player closely. In these circumstances, the referee would also be justified in punishing the offence under VI.9.14 (act of violence) rather than under VI.9.12 (disproportionate movements).

Figure 22



All referees should note that to commit an act of violence is always a penalty, no matter where it occurs if within the 6 metre area.

In the Rules there are three similar but different types of exclusions (VI.9.12; VI.9.13 and VI.9.14) with three different sanctions for kicking, striking, aggressive or persistent foul play and act of violence. The difference between these fouls must be the degree or gravity of fouling. On the other hand, the criterion to distinguish between aggressive play and act of violence must be the "intention" to cause an injury.

### VI.9.13 Aggressive Play

All of the various parts of this rule must be applied consistently, especially aggressive or persistent foul play. By applying this rule, behaviour against the rules, which are likely to bring the game into disrepute, can be sanctioned.

Any form of misconduct or disrespect towards the referee by a player, whether by word or action, should be punished by exclusion with substitution. The referee should carefully consider the level for this exclusion foul because it is a definitive decision. A referee should not be too narrow-minded to interpret every critical look, word or gesture of a player as disrespect, but any personal insult should be dealt with by this Rule.

Control of coaches and benches and yellow and red cards must be applied from the first minute of the game, if appropriate, and not only at the end of the game.

### VI.9.14 Act of Violence

It is important that the referees collaborate to cover the field of play in order to see all possible violent actions which may occur.

Note that if the referee, VAR assistant referee or delegate suspects that a violent action may have occurred, the referees may review VAR according to the VAR protocol.

In this case:

- if the referees determine that a violent action occurred, the referees will sanction the incident according to the rules and the game should recommence from the time of the incident.
- if the game was stopped at an appropriate moment and violent action was determined, all goals and personal fouls between the time of the incident and time of stoppage are then nullified but all yellow and red cards, acts of violence and misconducts will remain on the match protocol.
- if no incident was identified, the game should recommence according to the rules.



### Comparison of VI.9.12, VI.9.13 and VI.9.14

The main difference between these fouls must be the degree or gravity of fouling. On the other hand the criterion to distinguish is the "intention" to cause an injury, as described in the next table.

	RISK OF INJURY FOR THE OPPONENT?	INTENTION OF PLAYER TO HIT ?
<b>VI.9.12</b> DISPROPORTIONATE MOVEMENTS INCLUDING KICKING AND STRIKING	<i>NO</i>	<i>NO</i>
<b>Exclusion foul play without intention (and risk) to injure and / or to hit an opponent</b>		
<b>VI.9.13</b> AGRESSIVE PLAY	<b>YES</b>	<i>NO</i>
Uncontrolled disproportional movements with the risk of injury for the opponent but <b>without the malicious intention</b> to do it		
<b>VI.9.14</b> ACT OF VIOLENCE	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
In case of acts of violence, the player has the malicious intent to commit an act able to injure an opponent.		

### VI.9.15 Simultaneous exclusions

In the case of simultaneous exclusion of players of opposing teams during play, both players are excluded for 20 seconds. The possession clock is not reset. Play is restarted with a free throw to the team which had possession of the ball. When neither team has possession at the time of the simultaneous exclusion, for example when after a shot the ball rebounded off the goalkeeper and was floating 'in no-man's-land', the possession clock is reset to 30 seconds and play is restarted with a neutral throw.

It is important for referees to establish if there was ball possession or not at the time of the simultaneous exclusion.

If there is an exclusion of a player or simultaneous exclusion of a player of both teams, the teams **are not able** to continue the game without a goalkeeper during the period of exclusion because an excluded player or his substitute is considered to be one of these 7 and a team with 7 players must have a goalkeeper.

The referees must ensure that both excluded players reach their respective re-entry area before putting the ball back into play.

Both players excluded under this Rule, shall be permitted to re-enter at the next earliest occurrence referred to in VI.9.3 or at the next change of possession.



If two players have been excluded under this Rule and are eligible to re-enter, the defensive referee may wave in the player as soon as that player is ready to re-enter. The referee does not have to wait until both players are ready to re-enter.

### VI.10.3 Interference after an exclusion foul

An excluded player must leave the field of play immediately and without generating any interference and/or problem to the team in possession of the ball. Otherwise, he/she will be punished with the award of a penalty throw to the opposing team.

If necessary, the excluded player must swim under water or outside the field of play to prevent any risk of interference with the action of the opponent team.

The following situations are considered intentional interferences when the excluded player: does not commence leaving the field of play almost immediately causing confusion in the opponent team;

- is hit by the ball while swimming in front of the goal;
- after the exclusion is called, persists to hold the opponent or commits any other foul against an opponent.
- 

When the excluded player, in situations other than the previous 2, is clearly unintentionally hit by the ball, the game will continue but, in case this contact with the ball causes a disadvantage to the attacking team, referees will return possession of the ball to the attacking team to play the remaining seconds of shot clock.

When an attacking player intentionally hits with the ball or touches the excluded player to receive an unfair penalty throw, the player will be sanctioned for simulation and for misconduct/act of violence, if applicable in the specific situation.

### VI.9.16 Improper re-entry

When a **defensive player re-enters** the field of play **improperly** the player is excluded for an additional 20 seconds and a penalty throw is awarded to the attacking team. However, on the score sheet only one additional personal foul (marked as EP) shall be recorded against the offending player.

When an **offensive player re-enters** the field of play **improperly** the player is excluded for an additional 20 seconds and a free throw is awarded to the opposing team. On the score sheet an additional personal foul shall be recorded against the offending player.

An excluded player who goes towards his re-entry area and, before reaching it, returns to the game, is an excluded player who interferes in the game and, consequently, the penalty throw must be awarded. As there has been a change of possession, this player will remain on the field of play during the penalty shot.

An excluded player or substitute without a cap who re-enters the field of play will be considered to have improperly re-entered: if his/her team was not in possession of the ball while he/she re-entered, a penalty throw will be awarded; otherwise, the player will be punished with an exclusion foul.

### VI.9.17 Interference with a penalty throw

The most common form of interference with a penalty throw is when an opponent aims a kick at the player taking the throw, just as the throw is about to be taken.

It is essential for the referees to ensure that all players are outside 6 metre area at least 3 metres from the thrower, to prevent such interference taking place. The referee should also allow the defending team the first right to take position.

### VI.9.18 Position of the players on Penalty Throw

According to VI.9.18 and VI.15.2, it is an exclusion foul if:

- the defending goalkeeper fails to take up the correct position on the goal line at the taking of a penalty throw having been ordered once to do so by the referee;
- a player other than the goalkeeper fails to take up the correct position in the field before the taking of the penalty throw.

In both the previous situations, when the referee has given one warning in the game, it's not necessary to repeat the warning again and the goalkeeper or the other player may be excluded for 20 seconds the next time they fail to take up the correct position.

### Centre forward position

The referee must give the centre forward an opportunity to shoot. When the centre forward has the ball, you must delay your whistle a little, it's better to give a possibility to shoot than to whistle exclusion.

Any backward movement of the centre forward outside the shoulder line, and especially out of the water, is a contra foul to be awarded to the defender.

An ordinary foul is an option at the centre forward position when there is no immediate threat to score, or there are 2 or more defenders around; in this situation, the referee has this alternative as well as to whistle exclusion or apply "no call".

### Some general observations

- If a player is under the water when the referee awards a free throw and may not have heard the whistle, the referee shall immediately repeat the whistle when the player has resurfaced.
- In the case of splashing, it is the position of the attacking player, which determines whether a penalty throw or exclusion is awarded. If the attacking player is inside the 6 metre area and a probable goal is prevented by a defending player splashing, it is a penalty, irrespective of whether the defending player is inside or outside the 6 metre line. In all other cases, the correct decision is exclusion.
- When the ball is in flight and directed towards an attacking player, sinking committed by the defending player must be punished by exclusion. If the attacking player loses the ball or loses the opportunity to receive the ball, because of an ordinary foul by the defending player, the referee shall award a free throw.
- Contact between opposing players is permitted.

The referees should allow opposing players to compete for position and should only intervene to penalise a foul committed by a player of the team in possession of the ball, or to award an exclusion foul or in certain circumstances for an ordinary foul.

## VI.10 PENALTY FOULS

### VI.10.2 Definition of 'probable goal'

This rule says very clearly "any foul committed" and this includes also fouls, which in other cases, are only regarded as ordinary fouls. So, the most important decision is to decide what is "probable". The application used for many years is that the attacking player must be in a position facing the goal or must make movements towards the goal, either in possession of the ball or awaiting a pass so the player can shoot.

It is sometimes critical to decide quickly, whether the attacking player releases the ball and the defending player releases the attacking player more or less at the same moment.

It is the referee who has to decide if it is a lazy attacking player or a good actor (simulator) who wants the penalty as a gift or if it is an attacking player who wants to score and is still hindered from doing so by any foul.

This situation may occur either after a struggle between the centre forward and their defending player or by a player swimming in. But the application is clear, in a side position (not swimming towards the goal) or a position with the back to the goal, the referee can imply a probable goal and award a penalty only when the goalkeeper is completely out of the goal (this is the above mentioned exception).

Position or swimming towards the goal implies that it is absolutely forbidden to award a free throw to the attacking player. The principle should also be applied in a side position when the player is in a good position to score. As this is a dangerous position for the defending player, the attacking player very often is held by the defending player, which means exclusion foul, while a defending player usually tries to commit only ordinary fouls when the attacking player has their back to the goal.

A penalty throw must always be awarded when a foul committed by a defending player inside the 6 metre area prevents a probable goal, and in the other situations described in VI.10.

However, the referee should not award a penalty throw if:

- the attacking player has their back to the goal;
- the ball is legitimately intercepted by a defending player, or when a bad pass is made (including the ball being too high)

or (In these situations, the referee shall not make any award in favour of the attacking player, even if the player has been fouled.)

- the attacking player is not in a position to score a probable goal.

If the attacking player, holding the ball, turns the defending player in front of the goal, no offence has been committed. If the attacking player releases the ball and the defending player immediately then releases the attacking player, there is still no offence.

However, if the attacking player makes an attempt to regain the ball and is prevented from doing so by a foul committed by the defending player, then a penalty throw is awarded.

It is also important to note that:

- If an attacking player with the intention to shoot has front position on a defender while moving toward the goal, the defender is not allowed to commit a foul without giving away a potential penalty shot to the attacker. This is stopping a probable goal and falls within the meaning of VI.10.2. The only way to defend from behind in this situation is for the defender to make contact only with the ball. This will eliminate the potential decision and call of the referee that the 'ball was in the hand' that we saw in the past and which was incorrect in many cases.

- If the defender is trying to play the ball without any further touching or impeding the attacker and the referee does not observe that the fingers are touched, the referee must award this intention to play “clean defence” and not award a penalty.
- When an attacking player is in front of the goal with the ball on the water and his hand on top of the ball and the goalkeeper in this situation puts the hand and the ball under water this is correct, the goalkeeper attacked from in front and not from behind, so in this situation no penalty should be called but a free throw in favour of the goalkeeper. After a penalty throw is awarded, no substitution is allowed from any re-entry area, before the penalty is taken.

### Delay of the call

When a defending player commits any foul within the 6 metre area if a goal would probably have resulted, the referee can delay whistling and wait to see if the attacking player scores a goal in the same action. If the player does not score, the referee should sanction the penalty.

The referee may raise an arm indicating a possible penalty.

When the referee delays the call of the penalty and meanwhile the period ends or the shot clock expires, the penalty throw must be awarded.

### Penalty Foul by Goalkeeper

In the case of foul by the Goalkeeper inside the 6 metre area, to evaluate if the situation of a probable goal occurred, it is important to verify if the Goalkeeper committed the foul:

- inside the light blue area (see Figure 23 below): in this case a penalty throw will be awarded, including for ball under;
- outside the light blue area: in this case an exclusion foul will be awarded, except for 'ball under' foul, for which an ordinary foul will be awarded to the opponent team.

Figure 23



When a Goalkeeper commits, within 6 metre area, any foul against an opponent who is not entitled to shoot on goal this is not considered as a situation of probable goal and the referee will award an exclusion foul or an ordinary foul, depending what is provided by the Rules, as in the following examples:

- when the foul is committed against an attacker who had taken a free throw inside 6 metre area putting in play the ball;
- when the goalkeeper interferes with the taking of a free throw inside 6 metre area.

### VI.10.10 Penalty for action committed with intent to prevent a probable goal or to delay the game

Any player inside the water who takes any action with intent to prevent a probable goal or to delay the game will receive a personal foul in relation to the penalty caused by him/her.

‘To delay the game’ means while the game is in progress and should a coach, team official or player take any action with intent to prevent a probable goal or to delay the game a penalty throw shall be awarded to the opposing team.

'To delay the game' does not relate to interval time such as between periods or after a time out. A coach delaying the game after the end of interval time or following a time out (by not having their team lining up on time for example) should receive a yellow card but no penalty throw is awarded.

This rule must be applied to the situation where the coach or any team official, or player takes any action with intent to prevent a probable goal or to delay the game, including:

- a defending player deliberately throwing the ball away before the attacking team can take a free throw
- a defending player, after a free throw outside the 6 metre line, deliberately pushing the ball inside the 6 metre line, to avoid a direct shot.

No personal foul shall be recorded for this offence by the coach or any team official.

If by the same offence punished according to VI.10.10, a player or a coach or a team official commits also an act of violence or misconduct he/she will be additionally punished as provided by VI.9.14 or VI.9.13 and a penalty throw will be awarded to the opposing team (for example, a player on the bench throws the ball against the face of an attacker who is shooting).

## VI.11 FREE THROWS

A free throw shall be taken without undue delay at the location of the ball, unless, after a foul committed by a defending player, the ball is inside the Goal Area. The free throw must be taken outside the goal area opposite to where the ball is or on the lateral side outside goal area.

It is an offence if a player who is clearly in position most readily to take a free throw does not do so.

It may be the case that in some situations the ball is away from the place where the free throw is awarded. In all cases, the player with the ball, in static or swimming position, must put the ball in play so as to be clearly visible for all involved (referees, players, coaches, desk officials etc).

All throws shall be taken by the player nearest to the ball. There should be no undue delay in taking a free throw, goal throw or corner throw, which must be taken in such a manner so as to enable the other players to observe the ball leaving the thrower's hand. Players often make the mistake of delaying the throw because they overlook the provisions of VI.11.3, which permit the thrower to dribble the ball before passing to another player.

The throw can thus be taken immediately, even though the thrower cannot at that moment find a player to whom to pass the ball. On such an occasion, the player is allowed to take the throw either by dropping it from a raised hand on to the surface of the water (figure 24) or by throwing it in the air (figure 25) and then swim with or dribble the ball. In either case, the throw must be taken so that the other players are able to observe it.

Figures 24 & 25



Throwing the ball from left to right hand is considered to put the ball in play.  
It is not allowed to put the ball in play by foot.

The defending player who committed the foul must move away from the player taking the free throw to allow space for the player to take the free throw without interference. Whilst exact distance has not been specified, the notional distance is 1 metre. (VI.11.2 “A defending player having committed a foul shall move away not less than 1 metre from the player taking the free throw”).

Accordingly a defending player within 1 metre of the player taking the free throw gives the referee the opportunity to exclude the defending player.

When there is a counter attack, a player with advantage does not have to give up the advantage to go to the ball and take the free throw, goal throw or corner throw. Another player from that team can take the throw as long as there is no undue delay.

Figure 26

**N° 8 BLUE IS WITH ADVANTAGE: N° 5 BLUE CAN TAKE THE FREE THROW**

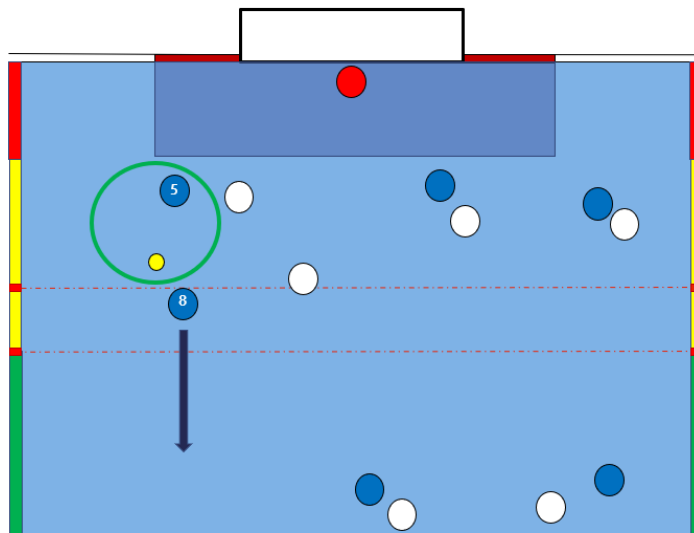
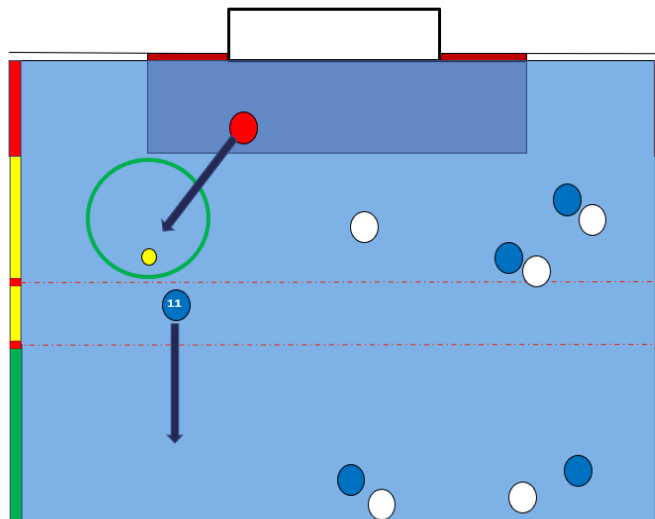


Figure 27

**N° 11 BLUE IS WITH ADVANTAGE: GOALKEEPER CAN TAKE THE FREE THROW**





If a player is under the water when the referee awards a free throw and may **not have heard the whistle**, the referee shall immediately repeat the whistle when the player has resurfaced.

When the ball is **sent out of the side of the field of play** following a shot having last been touched by a player other than goalkeeper of the defending team a free throw is awarded to the defending team.

## VI.12 GOAL THROWS

When a goal throw or a free throw is awarded in favour of the defensive team and the ball, after crossing the end line, bounces off a wall or other obstacle rebounding in the field, referees allow the goalkeeper or another player to take the throw inside the 2 metres area close to the bench of the team.

In all the other situations (i.e. when the Assistant Referee throws the ball outside the Goal Area), the Goal Throws can be taken from the location of the ball.

## VI.13 CORNER THROWS

At the taking of a corner throw the referee shall ensure that the throw is taken from the correct position by pointing with one arm to where the ball has to be put into play.

- On the side opposite to the attacking referee, the defensive referee shall ensure that the throw is taken from the correct position by going to the 2 metre line.
- A corner throw shall be taken without undue delay. If no attacking players are inside the Goal Area, referee will allow to proceed taking a corner throw.
- If one referee signals for a corner throw, and the other signals for a goal throw, the corner throw shall be awarded.
- A player taking a corner throw may shoot directly.
- After putting the ball in play, the player may swim, fake and shoot without passing or pass to another player.

Before taking a corner throw, if the referee takes the ball out of the water, after time out, cap replacement, injuries, or other matters, the player who retakes the corner throw after the matter is resolved, cannot shoot directly and should put the ball into the play.

If a defensive field player deliberately deflects a pass and sends the ball out over the goal line the play shall be restarted with a corner throw.

## VI.14 NEUTRAL THROWS

If referees award free throws simultaneously in favour of opposing teams, the result shall be a neutral throw.

A referee should only change their decision under these circumstances if the referee realises a mistake occurred.

At a neutral throw a referee shall throw the ball into the field of play at approximately the same lateral position as the event occurred in such a manner as to allow the players of both teams to have equal opportunity to reach the ball. Referees are reminded that should the players touch the ball before it reaches the water, there is no foul and play should continue.

## VI.15 PENALTY THROWS

It is important that referees ensure that the penalty throw is taken on the opponents' 5 metre line as there is a tendency for the player taking the penalty shot to move forward in the action of the penalty throw such that the shot actually occurs from within the opponents' 5 metre.

During a penalty throw, depending if the shooter is right- or left-handed, one referee shall control the penalty area and the execution of the penalty shot, the other referee shall control the other players in the field of play.

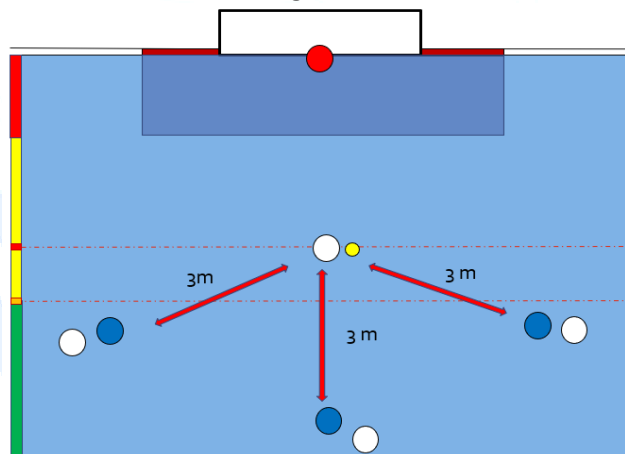
Note that:

The goalkeeper cannot move from their position beyond the goal line until the referee has blown the whistle. After the whistle, the goalkeeper can move forward, jump etc.

All players shall leave the 6m area and shall be at least 3 metres from the player taking the throw.

None of the players outside the 6m area can enter this area or approach the shooter before the ball has left the hand of the shooter. After the ball has left the hand of the shooter, the defenders can move from their position as the ball is live.

Figure 28



In case a defender interferes after the whistle of the referee but before the ball has left the hand of the shooter, the referee shall apply VI.9.17.

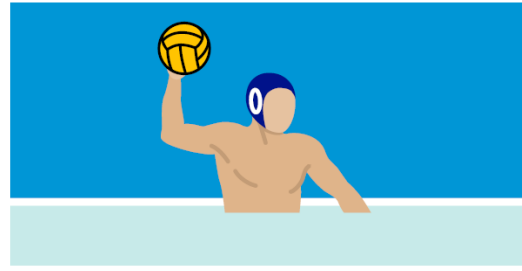
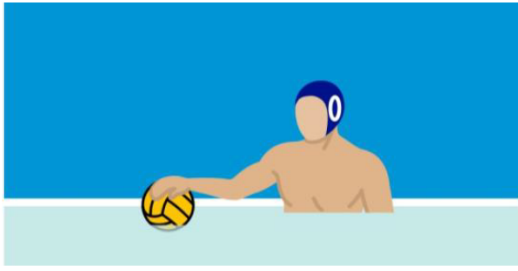
The lowering of the arm at the same time as the signal by whistle makes it possible under any conditions, even amidst noise by spectators, to execute the throw in accordance with the rules. As the arm is lifted, the player taking the throw will concentrate, for the player knows that the signal will follow immediately.

The player taking the penalty throw shall have possession of the ball and shall immediately throw it with an uninterrupted movement directly at the goal. The player may take the throw by lifting the ball from the water (figure 29) or with the ball held in the raised hand (figure 30) and the ball may be taken backwards from the direction of the goal in preparation for the forward throw, provided that the continuity of the movement shall not be interrupted before the ball leaves the thrower's hand.

There is nothing in the rules to prevent a player taking the throw with the player's back to the goal while the player adopts a half screw or full screw action.



Figures 29 & 30



### Penalty awarded in the last minute of the game

When a **penalty throw is awarded in the last minute of the regulation time** a coach may request to maintain the possession instead of taking the penalty throw. The coach must show the referee immediately by crossing their arms in front of his chest to signal possession or show 5 fingers to request a penalty throw.

If a team requests possession play shall be restarted on the half distance line or behind the half distance line and the possession clock shall be reset to 30 seconds and the game will be restarted as after a time-out.

It is the responsibility of the coach to give a clear signal without delay if the team wishes to maintain possession of the ball in accordance with this Rule.

## VI.16 PERSONAL FOULS, YELLOW AND RED CARDS

Control of coaches and benches and yellow and red cards must be applied from the first minute of the game, if appropriate, and not only at the end of the game.

If for any reason, a game (or part of a game) must be replayed, the exclusions for violent action, misconduct or any red/yellow card exclusions are recorded on the game score sheet must remain according to VI.4.4

## VI.17 ACCIDENT, INJURY AND ILLNESS

The attention of referees is drawn to the special provision when a player is bleeding. The referee should stop play to allow the player leave the water.

A substitute shall be permitted to enter immediately. When the player has been treated and the bleeding has stopped, the player may return to the game under the normal substitution rules.

In case of accident, injury or illness, other than bleeding, if after the 3 minutes stoppage, the injured player is not able to participate in the game and he/she is replaced, that player shall not be allowed to take further part in the game, otherwise he/she will be punished as an illegal player.

## APPENDIX A, REFEREE SIGNALS

The images below show signals which must be used when officiating at water polo games.



Fig. **A**

The referee lowers the arm from a vertical position to signal :

- (i) the start of the period
- (ii) to restart after a goal
- (iii) the taking of a penalty throw.



Fig. **C**

To signal a neutral throw.  
The referee points to the place where the neutral throw has been awarded, points both thumbs up and calls for the ball.



Fig. **B**

To point with one arm in the direction of the attack and to use the other arm to indicate the place where the ball is to be put into play at a free throw, goal throw or corner throw.



Fig. **D**

To signal the exclusion of a player.  
The referee points to the player and then moves the arm quickly towards the boundary of the field of play.  
The referee then signals the excluded player's cap number so that it is visible to the field of play and the table.



Fig. **E**

To signal the simultaneous exclusion of two players.  
The referee points with both hands to the two players, signals their exclusion in accordance with Fig. D, and then immediately signals the players' cap numbers.



Fig. **G**

To signal the exclusion of a player with substitution after four (4) minutes.  
The referee signals exclusion in accordance with Fig. D (or Fig. E if appropriate) and then crosses the arms in such a way that is visible to both the field of play and the table in addition to issuing the player with a red card.  
The referee then signals the excluded player's cap number to the table.



Fig. **F**

To signal the exclusion of a player for misconduct.  
The referee signals exclusion in accordance with Fig. D (or Fig. E if appropriate) and then rotates the hands round one another in such a way that is visible to both the field of play and the table in addition to issuing the player with a red card.  
The referee then signals the excluded player's cap number to the table.



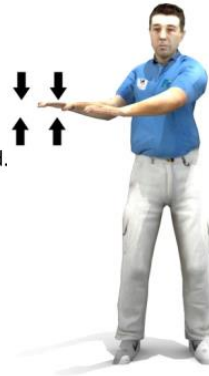
Fig. **H**

To signal the award of a penalty throw.  
The referee raises an arm with five fingers in the air.  
The referee then signals the offending player's cap number to the table.



**I**  
Fig.

To signal that a goal has been scored.  
The referee signals by whistle and by immediately pointing to the centre of the field of play.



**K**  
Fig.

To indicate the exclusion foul of sinking an opponent.  
The referee makes a downward motion with both hands starting from a horizontal position



**J**  
Fig.

To indicate the exclusion foul of holding an opponent.  
The referee makes a motion holding the wrist of one hand with the other hand.



**L**  
Fig.

To indicate the exclusion foul of pulling back an opponent.  
The referee makes a pulling motion with both hands vertically extended and pulling towards his body.



**M**  
Fig.

To indicate the exclusion foul of kicking an opponent.  
The referee makes a kicking movement.



**O**  
Fig.

To indicate the ordinary foul of pushing or pushing off from an opponent.  
The referee makes a pushing motion away from the body starting from a horizontal position.



**N**  
Fig.

To indicate the exclusion foul of striking an opponent.  
The referee makes a striking motion with a closed fist starting from a horizontal position.

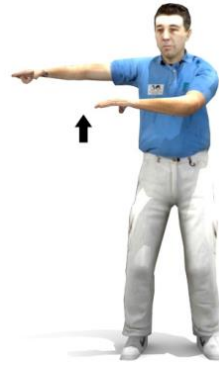


**P**  
Fig.

To indicate the ordinary foul of impeding an opponent.  
The referee makes a crossing motion with one hand horizontally crossing the other.



**Fig. Q**  
To indicate the ordinary foul of taking the ball under the water.  
The referee makes a downward motion with a hand starting from a horizontal position.



**Fig. S**  
To indicate the ordinary foul of undue delay in the taking of a free throw, goal throw or corner throw.  
The referee raises a hand once or twice with the palm turned upwards.



**Fig. R**  
To indicate the ordinary foul of standing on the bottom of the pool.  
The referee raises and lowers one foot.



**Fig. T**  
To indicate a violation of the two-meter Rule.  
The referee indicates the number 2 by raising the fore and middle fingers in the air with the arm vertically extended.



**Fig. U**  
To indicate the ordinary fouls of wasting time and expiry of 30 seconds' possession.  
The referee moves a hand in a circular motion two or three times.

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# WATER POLO

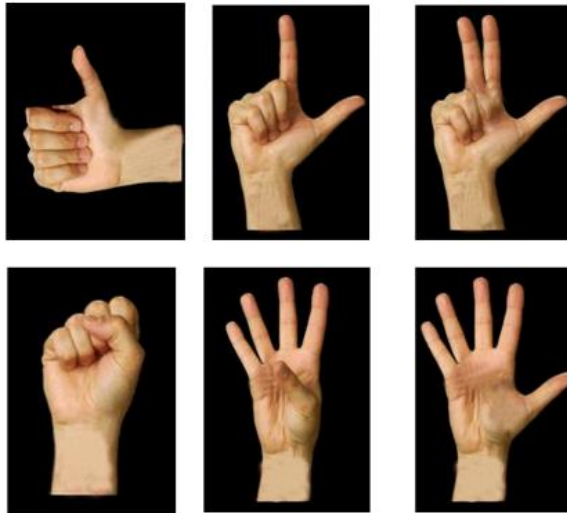


Fig. **Z**

To indicate a player's cap number.

To enable the referee to communicate better with the players and the secretary, signals are made using both hands if appropriate where the number exceeds five.

One hand shows five fingers with the other hand showing additional fingers to make up the sum of the player's number.

For the number ten, a clenched fist is shown.

If the number exceeds ten, one hand is shown as a clenched fist with the other hand showing additional fingers.



NOTE: Alphabetical images V, W, X, Y are excluded, as they pertain to goal judge signals.

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# WATER POLO