

World Aquatics Water Polo rule changes June 2025

World Aquatics has agreed a set of changes to Water Polo rules with effect from June 2025. The new rules have been published in World Aquatics Competition Regulations (updated 25-06-2025).

Summary of key changes

WP1.2 Pitch length 25m for men's and women's matches.

WP2.1 A maximum of 14 players including up to 12 field players and up to 2 goalkeepers.

WP2.1 The team must have at least one goalkeeper and must start the match with 7 players including a goalkeeper. Thereafter the team can play with 7 field players and no goalkeeper.

WP2.6 and 9.2 No need for 'high five' hand touch between player and substitute in the re-entry area.

WP2.7 Any field player can substitute as a goalkeeper and must wear a red cap with their field player number. Cap changes must be done while on the bench and substitution rules must be followed.

WP2.8 The goalkeeper cannot be substituted under WP2.7 before the taking of a penalty throw except for bleeding, injury or the team calling a timeout - also see WP5.1 below.

WP5.1 and 5.5 A timeout may be called by the attacking team after a penalty throw has been awarded and before it is taken. Both teams may make substitutions during the timeout.

WP5.2 If a timeout is called after the award of a corner throw, play restarts with a throw on or behind the halfway line.

WP7.2 A player may score by taking an immediate shot or after visibly putting the ball into play if the ball is located outside 6m *even if the foul was committed inside 6m*. A player may score by visibly putting the ball into play inside 6m and swimming outside 6m to shoot, including after a stoppage or delay.

WP8.12 First possession time is 28 seconds. A subsequent possession time by the attacking team is 18 seconds. Possession following the exclusion of a defending player is reset to 18 seconds unless the attacking team has more than 18 seconds remaining. Possession is reset to 18 seconds for a penalty throw without a change of possession, or for a corner throw.

WP8.13 The former 'wasting time' rule has been deleted, and replaced by an ordinary foul if a team deliberately gives up possession of the ball or throws it away.

WP8.15 and WP9.8 Going under water to gain positional advantage (punished only when there is physical contact). Ordinary foul if done by an attacker, exclusion foul if a defender hinders the positioning of an opponent.

WP9.3 An excluded player is flagged in after 18 seconds of actual play.

WP9.4 Any player, *whether excluded or not*, who leaves the water during play (other than following the entry of a substitute) is deemed guilty of Misconduct except in the case of accident, injury, illness or with the referee's permission.

WP9.15 Simultaneous (double) exclusion time is 18 seconds, or 28s if neither team had possession.

WP9.18 If at the taking of a penalty throw the goalkeeper moves forward before the referee blows the whistle and the player takes the shot and a goal is not scored, the goalkeeper is excluded and the penalty throw re-taken. Another defending player may take the position of the goalkeeper but without the goalkeeper's privileges.

WP10.8 and 10.12 Improper re-entry by an excluded player (or substitute) is a penalty foul *whether or not their team is in possession of the ball*. The penalty throw is taken after removing the offending player from the field of play. This player receives a personal foul which is recorded as a penalty foul. The offending player is substituted immediately if needed and the penalty throw is then taken. The player or substitute can then re-enter when the original exclusion period has expired or possession changes. Illegal re-entry (by an 8th player or one with 3 personal fouls) is also a penalty foul. No red card is given.

WP11.3 Free throw When there is a counterattack, a player does not have to give up the advantage to go to the ball and take the free throw. The second closest player to the ball can take the throw as long as there is no undue delay.

WP17.3 The referee may briefly suspend the game following a player's accident, injury or illness other than bleeding and may order an immediate substitution if needed. The substituted player may later rejoin the game. (The referee cannot order a three-minute stoppage.)

References

WA Competition Regulations

<https://www.worldaquatics.com/rules/competition-regulations>

EA Instructions:

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