



## Water Polo Spectator's Quick Guide...

A demanding game, water polo combines the strategy and interaction of a team sport, with the skill and endurance of an individual sport. A team consists of six field players and a goalie. **Field Players** may use only one hand on the ball. The goalie may use both. The field players may not use the bottom of the pool to their advantage (ie. When passing, shooting or blocking the ball), although the goalie may. In pools with a shallow end, the goal has been enlarged to offset this advantage. When outside the five-meter line (green marking) a goalie loses their privileges," and in no case may a goalie cross the centerline (white marking).

A high school game consists of four – seven minute periods in which teams alternate ends after each period. A period begins with each team sprinting off from the pool ends and an official dropping a ball at the centerline. Following a goal, the ball is put into play by the team that was just scored upon as soon as all the players are in their half of the pool, typically lined up at the center line.

There is a two-minute interval after the first and third periods and each overtime period and a five-minute interval at half time and before the first overtime period. If a game is tied at the end of the four quarters, to three-minute overtime periods are played. If still tied, sudden victory periods are played. Each team is allowed three time-outs during regulation. Only one time-out for overtime is allowed regardless of how many time-outs were called during regulation.

Athletes and spectators need to be constantly aware of the official's whistle and hand signals that indicate violations, possessions, and points scored, ejections, etc. Also be aware of the 35-second shot clock indicating possession time. Finally, be aware of the **line markers** at the goal line, two-meters and five-meters. Unlike most sports, the official may not be challenged and, in fact, may only be spoken to during time-outs and in between periods by the coaches and/or team captains.

**Fouls** indicated by one whistle, are separated into those that result in loss of possession, those in which the offensive player gets a free throw (passing, popping the ball in the air in three seconds or less), and those that result in an exclusion or penalty shot. **Note:** a second player must touch the ball intentionally before a shot can be taken, except if the foul occurred outside the 5 meter

line, when the player that was fouled may immediately pick the ball up and may take an immediate shot. In general, a defensive foul is not called if by calling it would negate an offensive advantage.

Loss of possession fouls indicated by two whistles, include: touching the ball with two hands by a field player, pushing off the bottom, the wall, or another player to gain advantage, taking or having a ball held by the player on top it, pushed underwater, a player being off sides or inside the two meter line (yellow marker) without the ball, or swimming over a player. The ball may be put into play at the point of the foul and/or at any point further away from the goal being attacked by any player on the offensive side. The defense must not the ball before it is put into play and must be aware that the ball may be shot after a free throw outside the five-meter line.

**Exclusions** (or ejections) of 20 seconds are assessed for fouling an offensive player from behind, determined in relationship to the goal being attacked, interference with a free throw, unsportsmanlike conduct, disrespect of the officials, using two hands to block or interfere with ball movement or shots. An excluded player may reenter game play at the end of the 20 seconds, or if the possession changes, a goal is scored and must re-enter without pushing off of the bottom, or wall, otherwise resulting in an additional exclusion. A **Brutality Foul** or a **Major Ejection** ("getting rolled") is a foul that is deemed over aggressive or repeated fouling with the intent to do harm, will result in a suspension for the remainder of the game and the following game. A Brutality also allows no substitute for the remainder of that game, where, a Major Ejection, a substitute may be used at the end of 20 seconds. If a player receives three exclusions in one game, they may not reenter the game.

A **penalty** foul, commonly called a five-meter, and signaled by the official by holding one hand up with all five finger extended and a long whistle, is awarded when a shooter facing the goal inside the five meter area and is fouled from behind and the official determines that the foul takes away a certain goal or scoring opportunity from the shooter, or if a shot is illegally prevented (blocked by a player jumping off the bottom, blocking with two hands or the goalie protecting the ball by holding the ball underwater. The coach may select any play to take the penalty shot.

**Official's interpretations vary... so, players must adjust to the subtleties, idiosyncrasies, and fetishes of the various officials!!**