

POINTS OF EMPHASIS FOR 2010-2012 - Revised

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These points of emphasis for referees are guidelines in order to bring about consistency in the interpretation and application of the rules of the game. It is important that referees call the NCAA Water Polo Rules as written and as interpreted in the rules book or as distributed as interpretations during the year. It is also important that referees apply the rules consistently throughout the entire game regardless of the time remaining in the game, the time remaining on the shot clock, or the score of the game. For example, perimeter fouls (ordinary and exclusion) must be called consistently throughout the game, including the last minute when the team with the lead has the ball.

Note: The term “center” is used instead of “set” throughout these Points of Emphasis.

- 1. Promoting Offensive Action.** Referees should promote offensive action. The referees shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such declaration would be an advantage to the offending player's team (Rule 7-3). It is always permissible for the referees to delay their whistle briefly to make sure that any offensive advantage is not taken away. A player on offense who has gained an offensive advantage and loses that advantage due to a defensive foul should not have to “earn it twice.” When in doubt, the referees should make their call in favor of the team on offense. The referees should avoid calling ordinary defensive fouls (notably at the center position) away from the ball as this takes away the advantage and flow from the team on offense. If the referees have decided not to call a series of minor fouls committed by the defense, then they should not call an equally minor offensive foul a moment later at that same spot. Likewise, referees should call ball under only when the ball is clearly underwater for more than a fraction of a second.
- 2. Calling Offensive Fouls.** Referees should avoid calling minor offensive fouls away from the ball if they do not affect the game. Sometimes it is correct to delay making a call for a split-second to see if the offensive foul will affect the game. Obvious fouls (for example, holding above the water) by the offensive player at the center position should be called immediately. In most cases referees should call fouls on the offensive team as ordinary offensive fouls (ball turnover, with no exclusion). At the center position, the referee should call an offensive exclusion foul only in the most severe cases (an offensive turnover usually being the more appropriate call). However, if the offense commits a gross or overly physical foul, such as kicking or elbowing, it should be called immediately as an offensive exclusion foul or even as an offensive misconduct foul.
- 3. Competing for Position at the Center Position.** When the ball is not at the center position, referees should allow competing for position between the center forward and the center defender. However, neither player can commit an exclusion foul to gain a better position or to keep an existing position. Excessive force, overly physical play, arms out of the water and around an opponent, and suit grabbing to change or hold position should be called as an offensive turnover or as a defensive exclusion foul or even as misconduct, depending upon the nature of the foul. If the referee sees this type of foul, the referee should call it. If both the center forward and the center defender are facing each other and holding, the offensive player must let go and face the ball before the pass is thrown to the center position, or an offensive foul should be called. At all times the referees should be in position to see who initiates the contact and call the appropriate foul.

4. **Calling the Center Position.** Among the most important aspects of the game for referees to call consistently is the play at the center position. Referees should consider the negative consequences of blowing a quick whistle. When the ball comes into the center position, the referees need to be patient in allowing the center forward the opportunity to play the ball. A quick whistle at the center position may take away an offensive advantage and eliminate, however unintentionally, the scoring threat of the center forward. If the center defender holds, sinks or pulls back the player on offense or is overly aggressive, an exclusion should be called unless calling a foul takes away a scoring advantage. If the center defender has established an appropriate defensive position and the foul is not overly aggressive, and there is no scoring advantage, an ordinary foul should be called to maintain offensive possession. If an overly aggressive foul does take the offensive advantage away, then an exclusion foul (lost shooting opportunity) or penalty foul (probable goal scoring opportunity inside 5m) should be called.
5. **Calling the Center Position When a Crash is Coming.** When the ball is at the center position and a crash is coming, referees may call either an ordinary foul or an exclusion foul against the center defender. If the center forward has an advantage and wants to try to shoot, the referees should wait momentarily and then call an exclusion foul if the defender commits an exclusion foul to prevent a shot attempt. If the center forward has no advantage and is fouled while trying to pass to an open teammate, it is correct for the referees to call a quick ordinary foul so that the team on offense maintains possession. The presence of a crash is not an excuse for the referee to make no call. However, if a bad entry pass is made that is closer to the defense, then the referee may refrain from calling a foul. If there is no crash coming, the referees should let the center forward work with the ball to try to create an advantage.
6. **Calling the Transition out of the Back Court.** Referees should allow the former offensive and defensive players to separate after a possession change. The referee transitioning from front court to back court must be aware of the effort to separate at the center position and should call the appropriate offensive or defensive foul as determined by who either holds to prevent separation or who initiates the additional contact after separation. Do not call a foul too quickly, but if either player aggressively sinks, pulls back, or kicks off to gain initial separation, a foul should be called. Once these players have separated, a foul can be called on either or both of these players for a kick-off or for a hold, sink or pull-back. This concept primarily refers to the former center forward and center defender but should be applied to all players in the water. Again, the referees must be in position to catch the initiator of the contact that leads to a foul being awarded.
7. **Putting the Ball into Play.** Referees shall ensure that players who are awarded a free throw put the ball into play properly and within a reasonable length of time (Rule 19-4). Referees shall also ensure that defensive players do not interfere with the free throw (Rule 21-5). Both referees are instructed to hold their arm horizontally to indicate that a free throw is to be taken and to drop their arm to a vertical position when they determine the ball is in play. The clocks start when the referees' arms move from a horizontal to vertical position.
8. **Direct Shots on Goal.** The option of a direct shot on goal comes as a result of an ordinary or exclusion foul called outside 5 meters. Referees are instructed to apply Rule 7-3 at all times. This rule includes the statement: "The referee shall not declare an ordinary foul when there is still a possibility to play the ball." A foul should be called when the defender commits a foul and the offensive player is in danger of losing the ball or is no longer able to play the ball. When an ordinary foul is called outside 5 meters, the defender may not interfere with the taking of the free throw or direct shot as defined in Rule 21-5. The player on offense who is fouled outside 5 meters and chooses to shoot a direct shot must do so immediately, as defined in Rule 14-3.

9. **Drive/Perimeter Defense.** If the player on offense swims over or into a player on defense (defined as the area between the defender's shoulders), an offensive foul should be called and the ball turned over. Defenders have the right to protect themselves if the offensive player drives directly into the defender, but if the defender impedes or blocks the free movement of the offensive player by holding, sinking or pulling back, the defender should be excluded. Referees must be aware of the situation where an offensive and defensive player "lock-up" (face each other and hold each other to prevent the free movement of either player). The referee must attempt to punish the player (either offensive or defensive) who initiates the contact in this situation. If both players are holding, then the offensive player must release the defensive player before initiating a drive or receiving a pass or be called for an offensive foul (Rule 20-9 or Rule 20-10). If the offensive player attempts to separate and the defensive player does not release the offensive player, the defender should be excluded for holding (Rule 21-8). The backcourt official is instructed to be in position to watch not only the play at the ball (when the ball is on the perimeter) but also other areas of the backcourt where offensive players may be attempting to drive to create an advantage.
10. **Impeding by Ducking Under.** If the player on offense gains advantage by ducking under (Impeding—Rule 20-9) the defender, this should be called as an offensive foul and the ball turned over. This action can occur anywhere in the pool including on the perimeter when a driver ducks under to gain a position of advantage, at the center forward position, or in the transition from defense to offense. The referee should not call an exclusion foul on the defense if the referee does not see the offensive player duck under but then does see, immediately after that action, the defender put both arms in the air to show there is no foul. The defender does not need to get off the offensive player, as it was the offensive player who went underwater to put the players into that position. However, the defender may not use one or both hands to hold down the offensive player.
11. **Minor Acts of Misconduct.** The minor act of misconduct (MAM) penalty of exclusion for 20 seconds for player behavior, such as minor shoving, taunting or directing minor comments at the referees, can only occur during play (Rule 21-10). If the minor act of misconduct occurs during interval time, the referee shall exclude the player for 20 seconds with immediate substitution for the first occurrence of this foul. The referee shall then immediately warn both head coaches that the next minor act of misconduct committed by any player during interval time in that game will result in a game exclusion for misconduct.