



**NCAA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WATER POLO PLAYING RULES
INTERPRETATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS
2025 – 2026**

February 18, 2026

Clarifications Regarding Picks

The following excerpt from Rule 6, Section 9, "Impeding," is the only content of the rule book that directly addresses picks.

"An illegal pick would be a violation of Rule 6-9. At no time may an offensive player use their hands to set a pick. Guidelines for legal picks include:

- a. Picks when both offensive players are swimming; once contact is made with the defense, they must keep swimming;*
- b. Offensive players when setting a pick may not use their arms outside their shoulder width;*
- c. When setting a non-swimming or stationary pick, offensive players must be set before making contact with the defender; and*
- d. Ducking under by the offensive player is impeding."*

Questions have arisen regarding additional aspects of pick plays. The following clarifications apply anywhere in the pool including, with particular note, the setting of picks in front of the backcourt goal during transition to the counterattack.

Is the player who sets the pick required to raise their hands to show that they are not holding?

Clarification: **No** – nothing in the rules requires the player who sets the pick to raise their hands. However, players who do so without using their arms outside their shoulder width are less likely to be called for a contra foul provided they are in compliance with the provisions of Rule 6, Section 9.

Is the player who sets the pick allowed to do so while face to face with the player against whom the pick is set?

Clarification: **Yes – but**, as explained below, this technique is more likely to result in the calling of a contra foul. Nothing in the rules prohibits a player from setting a pick face to face with their opponent. However, a player who sets a pick in this manner is more likely to be using their hands to set the pick and/or to be using their arms outside their shoulder width than a player who sets a pick with their back to their opponent. Accordingly, if the player against whom a face-to-face pick is set makes any attempt to move around the pick and appears to be hindered from doing so, the player setting the pick can be called for a contra foul. On the other hand, if a player against whom a pick is set in this manner remains in place making no attempt to move around the pick, there is no obvious basis for calling a contra foul. In addition, a player who sets a face-to-face pick is more likely to commit a violation when releasing from the pick than a player who sets a pick with their back to their opponent.

For questions regarding this interpretation, please contact NCAA Water Polo Secretary-Rules Editor, Dave Alberstein – albersteind@gmail.com.

October 23, 2025

Ball Out of Bounds Over the Sideline Lane Line.

Rule 6, Section 14, Article 1 states in part that, “The ball must pass completely over the sideline or rebound from the side of the field of play above water level to be out of bounds.”

In pools that have sideline walls, the ball is deemed to be out of bounds if the ball strikes the sideline wall above the water level. In pools that have sideline lane lines, the ball is deemed to be out of bounds only when the ball passes completely over the sideline. Consistent with Article 1, if a ball 1) strikes the sideline lane line above water level or 2) rolls for some distance along the top of the sideline lane line, the ball is not out of bounds unless it passes completely over the sideline and lands in the water on the other side of the lane line.

Also, as noted in the interpretation that follows Article 1, if a player holding the ball reaches with the ball over the sideline lane line in a manner such that the entire ball crosses the line, the ball is deemed to be out of bounds even if it does not touch the water.

It should be noted, for those who have taken the 2025-2026 rules test, that there was an error in the test regarding the expected answer to a question that addresses this issue. The test has been corrected for those who have not yet taken the test but will be taking it to be certified for the women's season.

For questions regarding this interpretation, please contact NCAA Water Polo Secretary-Rules Editor, Dave Alberstein – albersteind@gmail.com.

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