



2026-27 and 2027-28 Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Changes

*The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Working Group, Men's Water Polo Committee, Women's Water Polo Committee, and Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel.
All rules changes are effective with the 2026-27 season.*

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
Rule 1	
Rule 1, Section 13, Article 2 Use of Video	<p>Permit a change to Rule 1, Section 13, Article 2 (Use of Video) that provides for use of video review during NCAA postseason when available. <i>Note: Use of video review would be limited to goal/no goal situations, including determinations of whether the ball completely crossed the goal line.</i></p> <p>Rationale: To align NCAA men's and women's water polo with other NCAA sports by introducing the use of video review during NCAA postseason competition.</p>
Rule 2	
Rule 2, Section 1, Article 1 Number Of Players, Illegal Player	<p>Permit a change to Rule 2, Section 1, Article 1, as follows: "At the beginning of a game, each team shall consist of seven players in the water, only one of whom shall be the goalkeeper and wear the goalkeeper's cap. In addition, each team can have reserves that may be used as substitutes. After the start, a team may have fewer than seven players if necessary. Each team is permitted one player with goalkeeper privileges in the field of play at any given time, identified by a goalkeeper's cap. After the start, a team is not required to have a goalkeeper in the field of play and can play with seven field players. If a team plays without a player wearing the goalkeeper's cap, none of its players in the water shall be granted goalkeeper privileges."</p> <p><i>Note: This change would also require a change to Rule 7, Section 3, Article 5, which currently requires a team with seven or more eligible players to play with a goalkeeper unless the goalkeeper has been excluded and is in the reentry area.</i></p> <p>Rationale: Many teams choose in certain situations to replace their goalkeeper with a field player. In these cases, the goalkeeper and the field player change caps. A detailed process for reporting changes in cap number is specified and required in Rule 1, Section 26, Article 2. Under this proposed change, cap numbers would not be changed, and the delay associated with the reporting of changes in cap number and, in this situation, the penalties for not following the cap change reporting requirements would be eliminated. Changes in cap number would be needed only if a cap were lost or damaged and had to be replaced. This change would also allow teams the flexibility to play without a goalkeeper in other situations and to substitute a field player for the goalkeeper in the reentry area during play. The rule would allow a team the option to weigh the risks of not having a player with goalkeeper privileges against the advantages of having a seventh field player in the water.</p>
Rule 3	
Rule 3, Section 11	<p>Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 11 (Correctable Errors) that adds the following note to Article 4:</p>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
Correctable Errors	<p>“Note: The error in the time that the signal is given for the entry of an excluded player, provided the signal was given without undue delay, must be large enough that it affected whether the goal would have been scored. The referees have the authority to determine if the error affected whether the goal would have been scored.”</p> <p>Rationale: No provisions exist in the rules under which the referees can determine the action to take if the delay in the entry signal is clearly not significant enough to affect play. This omission in the rules has resulted in goals being taken away in situations where the delay in the entry signal was not significant enough to affect play.</p>
Rule 4	
Rule 4, Section 8, Article 1 Starting After Regular Timeout	<p>Permit changes to Rule 4, Section 8, Article 1 (Starting After Regular Timeout) as follows: Revise the first line of paragraph b. as follows: "If the timeout is requested by the team just scored upon after a goal has been scored, the referees shall...." Add the following as a new paragraph c.: "If the timeout is requested by the team that has just scored a goal, the ball will be put in play by the team just scored upon in accordance with Rule 4, Section 25, (Method of Restarting After a Goal)."</p> <p>Rationale: This change will allow the ball to be put back into play in the same manner as it is put back into play following a goal, with the players on each team positioned in their respective halves of the field of play.</p>
Rule 4, Section 15, Article 2 Start of the Game – Coin Toss	<p>Permit the following change to Rule 4, Section 15, Article 2 (Start of the Game - Coin Toss): Revise the second sentence of Article 2 and add a third sentence as follows: "In addition, if directly requested of the referees by one coach before or during the pregame meeting, the teams must change ends and benches after each period (see Rule 2-2-c). After the pregame meeting, a request to change ends after each period will be granted only if the request is made by both coaches."</p> <p>Note: This change will also require changes to Rule 2, Section 2, paragraph c and changes to Rule 2, Section 5, Article 1 to ensure consistency throughout the rules.</p> <p>Rationale: This change is a minor modification of the interpretation on change of ends after each period that was issued on February 17, 2025. It specifies that the coach must request a period-by-period change of ends directly of the referees (i.e., not through the team captain) prior to or during the pregame meeting, and if such a request is made after the pregame meeting, it must be agreed to by both coaches.</p>
Rule 7	
Rule 7, Section 10	<p>Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 10 (Simulation). Revise Rule 7-10 as follows: Delete the interpretation at the end of Rule 7-10. Retain the first two sentences of Rule 7-10, and replace the remainder of the rule with the following: "For an act of simulation committed by the team in possession of the ball, the referee shall stop play, remove the ball from the water,</p>

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Simulation	<p>and award the ball to the opposing team. For an act of simulation committed by the team not in possession of the ball, the referee shall, subject to the provisions of the advantage rule, stop play, remove the ball from the water, order the shot clock to be reset, and return the ball to the team in possession of the ball. In both cases, play shall be restarted as after a timeout, and the offending player shall be assessed a minor act of misconduct but shall not be excluded."</p> <p>Rationale: To allow for simulation to be addressed more directly by officials, and to provide balance for addressing acts of simulation by the offense or defense.</p>
<p>Rule 7, Section 12, Article 3</p> <p>Minor Acts of Misconduct During Interval Time</p>	<p>Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 12, Article 3 (Minor Acts of Misconduct During Interval Time): Add the following sentence at the end of Article 3: "A player excluded for a minor act of misconduct during interval time may not reenter the game until 20 seconds of playing time have elapsed."</p> <p>Rationale: To provide a specific criterion for the return to play of a player excluded for a minor act of misconduct during interval time. This change modifies the interpretation of September 17, 2024, which allowed a player to reenter after the scoring of a goal that happened before 20 seconds of playing time had elapsed. This was not consistent with the intent of the rule that a player committing a minor act of misconduct during interval time is not allowed to participate for a period of time.</p>
Rule 8	
<p>Rule 8, Section 6</p> <p>Player Not Entitled to Play</p>	<p>Permit a change to Rule 8, Section 6 (Player Not Entitled to Play) that would explicitly state that the exception provided for Rule 7-15 also applies even if the player who enters improperly becomes the eighth player in the field of play.</p> <p>Rationale: Currently, the penalty for a player entering early is different based on whether the player that was excluded is still in the field of play. This change will align the penalty for early entry to be the same regardless of the position of the excluded player, with no game exclusion assessed in either case.</p>
<p>Rule 8, Section 8, Article 1</p> <p>Award of a Penalty Foul in the Last Minute</p>	<p>Permit a revision to the last sentence of Rule 8, Section 8, Article 1 (Award of a Penalty Foul in the Last Minute), as follows: "The team will be awarded a free throw on or behind the half-distance line with a new possession clock and will start play as after a goal."</p> <p>Rationale: Under the current rule, when a team declines a penalty shot during the last minute of play, the ball is put into play in the same manner as it is put into play following a timeout. This provides a significant advantage to the team that committed the penalty violation, because it allows the team to press the offense all over the pool before the ball is put back into play. Forcing the offense into a disadvantageous situation like this is not consistent with the concept of advantage as it is commonly</p>

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	<p>understood. It is also not consistent with the intent of the rule that allows a team to decline a penalty shot during the last minute of play.</p> <p>This change will allow the ball to be put back into play in the same manner as it is put back into play following a goal, with the players on each team positioned in their respective halves of the field of play.</p>
Misc.	
N/A	<p>Require the following penalties for failure to properly serve a suspension: (1) Two-game suspension for the individual; and (2) Two-game suspension for the head coach.</p> <p>Rationale: In response to a directive from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel to review rules regarding illegal participation by suspended players and coaches.</p>
N/A	<p>Permit commercial or nonprofit logos in the field of play that conform to the following standard by not interfering with required field of play markings.</p> <p>Rationale. To increase revenue opportunities for institutions and to align with other NCAA sports that permit commercial advertising on the playing surface or field of play.</p>
N/A	<p>Permit commercial or nonprofit logos on student-athletes’ uniforms/apparel and equipment that conform to the following standard by not interfering with required uniform or equipment markings. The additional logo permitted on water polo caps may not interfere with required markings and are recommended not to exceed 2 ¼ square inches.</p> <p>Rationale: In response to legislation approved by the NCAA Division I Cabinet, the Division I members of the men’s and women’s water polo committee approved an editorial change to address the placement of commercial and nonprofit logos on the uniform and apparel.</p>