



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WATER POLO RULES WORKING GROUP
FEBRUARY 17 AND 23, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Working Group approved the following rules change proposals for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 seasons. The Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Working Group requests approval from the Men's Water Polo Committee and the Women's Water Polo Committee, and the Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel:

a. Use of Video - Video Review (Rule1.1).

(1) Recommendation. 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. Note: Use of video review would be limited to goal/no goal situations, including determinations of whether the ball completely crossed the goal line.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

b. Number Of Players, Illegal Player - Goalie Cap (Rule 2.1.1).

(1) Recommendation. 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." 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.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

c. Correctable Errors (Rule 3.11).

(1) Recommendation. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 11 (Correctable Errors) that adds the following note to Article 4: "Note: The error in the time that the signal is given for the entry of an excluded player must be large enough that it affected whether the goal would have been scored provided the signal was given without undue delay. The referees have the authority to determine if the error affected whether the goal would have been scored."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

d. Starting After Regular Timeout (Rule 4.8.1).

(1) Recommendation. 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)."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

e. Start of the Game – Coin Toss (Rule 4.15.2).

(1) Recommendation. 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." 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.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Corner Throws – When Awarded (Rule 5.3).

(1) Recommendation. Permit a change to Rule 5, Section 3 (Corner Throws - When Awarded) as follows: Add the following sentence to the Interpretation at the end of Section 3: "If a shot rebounds off of the goalkeeper or the goal, strikes a defender, and

then passes fully over the goal line (not into the goal), play shall be restarted with a corner throw." For clarity, also add the words "(not into the goal)" to the first sentence of the interpretation.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. This addition is consistent with how this situation has been treated since the corner throw versus goal throw rule for field player shot deflections was changed in 2006.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

g. Simulation (Rule 7.10).

(1) Recommendation. 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, 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."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To allow for simulation to be addressed more directly by officials, and the change allows for more balance for addressing acts of simulation by the offense or defense.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

h. Minor Acts of Misconduct During Interval Time (Rule 7.12.3).

(1) Recommendation. 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."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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 is 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

i. Player Not Entitled to Play (Rule 8.6).

(1) Recommendation. 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.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To align the penalty for early entry to be the same regardless of the position of the excluded player with no game exclusion.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

j. Award of a Penalty Foul in the Last Minute (Rule 8.8.1).

(1) Recommendation. 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."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

k. Failure to Serve a Suspension.

(1) Recommendation. 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.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. In response to a directive from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel to review rules regarding illegal participation by suspended players and coaches.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

l. Commercial Logos – Field of Play.

(1) Recommendation. Permit commercial or nonprofit logos in the field of play that conform to the following standard by not interfering with competition and required field of play markings.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) 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.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and announcements.** Daniel Leyson, chair of the Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Working Group, welcomed the rules working group and invited guests and thanked them for their time.
2. **Review schedule, agenda and working group operation.** The rules working group reviewed the meeting schedule, agenda and operations manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures and principles for rules writing. The rules working group was reminded of the directive of PROP from 2014. This directive encourages all rules committees or subcommittees to strongly consider providing at least a one-year delay for institutions, particularly those with members from Division II and Division III, before implementing any rules changes that have financial or facility implications.
3. **Approval of 2025 annual meeting report.** The rules working group approved the report as written.
4. **National coordinator of officials report.** The national coordinator of officials provided a report to the rules working group.
5. **Secretary-rules editor report.** The secretary rules editor provided a report to the rules working group.
6. **Review of 2026-27 and 2027-28 rules proposals, 2026 rules survey, feedback and editorial revisions.** The rules working group reviewed and considered several rules proposals as noted above in the Action Items section of this report. Additional editorial changes were reviewed and approved, which included:
 - a. Addition of the use of intercom headset systems to the list of permitted equipment for officials;
 - b. Permit a player who receives a red card to immediately leave the venue without going to the reentry area;
 - c. Clarification on corner throw situations by a field player following a deflected shot;
 - d. Clarification on hiding the ball during competition;
 - e. Clarification on holding, sinking and pulling back, including the use of two hands to hold an opponent who is not holding the ball anywhere in the field of play;

- f. Clarification on the procedure to be followed for misconduct that occurs as a player's first, second or third personal foul;
 - g. Clarification that a tactical foul can be committed by the player who committed the original foul or by a teammate of the player who committed the original foul; and
 - h. Clarification that the player taking the penalty throw shall not release the ball inside the 5-meter line.
- 7. Review of commercial logos on playing surfaces, student-athletes' uniforms/apparel and equipment.** The rules working group reviewed and considered a rules change proposal as noted above in the Action Items section of this report related to commercial logos. In addition, and in response to legislation approved by the NCAA Division I Cabinet, the members from Division I also approved an editorial change to address the placement of commercial and nonprofit logos on the uniform and apparel. The additional logo permitted on water polo caps may not interfere with required markings and are recommended not to exceed 2 ¼ square inches.
- 8. Selection of chair.** The rules working group tabled the selection of the chair until a future meeting.
- 9. Other business.** No other business was discussed.
- 10. Future annual meeting, videoconference schedule and timeline.** The rules working group reviewed the 2025-26 timeline and discussed the 2026-27 timeline.
- 11. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m. Eastern time on Monday, February 23.

Committee Chair: Daniel Leyson, University of California, Davis, Big West Conference
Staff Liaison(s): Stanley Broaden, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating

Men’s and Women’s Water Polo Rules Working Group February 17 and 23, 2026, Annual Meeting
Attendees:
David Alberstein, Secretary-Rules Editor.
Natalie Benson, California State University, Fresno.
Daniel Leyson, University of California, Davis.
Greg Lonzo, Claremont McKenna-Harvey Mudd-Scripps Colleges.
Ted Minnis, Harvard University.
Erica Monteabaro, University of California, Irvine.
Wesley Yourth, University of the Pacific.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
Donnie Brooks, Macalester College.
Steve Redding, National Coordinator of Officials.
NCAA Staff Liaison (or Staff Support) in Attendance:
Stanley Broaden and Autumn Monaghan.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Karen Kirsch.