



**NCAA MEN’S AND WOMEN’S WATER POLO PLAYING RULES  
INTERPRETATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS  
2024 – 2025**

**October 1, 2024**

**Receipt of a Second Minor Act of Misconduct (MAM) in a Game.**

Rule 7, Section 12, Article 6, “Minor Acts of Misconduct (MAM)” states, “If a player receives a second minor act of misconduct in the same game, the player will be excluded for the remainder of the game (but not given a misconduct).”

This Rules Clarification addresses two issues regarding a second MAM received in the same game.

**Clarification:**

1. Since a player excluded for the remainder of the game for a second MAM is not charged with misconduct, the referees are not to file an incident report for such an exclusion.
2. If a player is given a second MAM in the same game, the Exclusion Secretary should raise the red flag to indicate that the player is excluded from the remainder of the game. The Exclusion Board Operator should use a red marker for the second MAM to indicate that the player is excluded from the remainder of the game. Referees should inform the desk staff before the game of this procedure, which is not currently specified in the Rules Book.

For questions regarding this clarification, please contact the NCAA Water Polo Secretary-Rules Editor, David Alberstein – [albersteind@gmail.com](mailto:albersteind@gmail.com).

**September 17, 2024**

**Minor Act of Misconduct (MAM) During Interval Time.**

Rule 7, Section 12, Article 3, “Minor Acts of Misconduct (MAM)” states, “If a player of either team commits a MAM during interval time, no matter which team committed the foul, the player shall be excluded from the game for 20 seconds with immediate substitution, and the teams start even up.”

Questions have arisen regarding how to interpret the 20-second exclusion requirement in association with a MAM under these specific circumstances.

**Interpretation:**

A player excluded for a MAM during interval time may not reenter the game until: 1) 20 seconds of playing time have elapsed; or 2) a goal has been scored, whichever comes first.

Return of the excluded player during play by direct substitution (“on the fly”) or during a timeout is not allowed until after 20 seconds of playing time have elapsed.

For questions regarding this interpretation, please contact the NCAA Water Polo Secretary Rules Editor, David Alberstein – [albersteind@gmail.com](mailto:albersteind@gmail.com).

**September 11, 2024**

**Improper Entry Prior to a Penalty Throw or a Corner Throw.**

Rule 7, Section 15, “Entering Field of Play Improperly” (sometimes referred to as “Improper Entry”), addresses an excluded player (or their substitute) who enters the field of play without having received a signal from the exclusion secretary or the referee (early reentry), from a place other than the exclusion area, by jumping or pushing off from the side or wall or a lane line, or by affecting the alignment of the goal.

For an Improper Entry, the player who enters improperly is given an additional personal foul and goes to their exclusion area for up to 20 seconds. If the offending player’s team was in possession of the ball at the time of the entry, a free throw is awarded to the opposing team, and an extra player opportunity ensues. If the offending player’s team was not in possession of the ball at the time of the entry, a penalty shot is awarded to the opposing team with the offending player in the exclusion area.

In the Fall of 2018, an interpretation was issued on the NCAA Advantage to address the application of this rule when a player in the exclusion area briefly and erroneously enters the field of play after a penalty is called. The interpretation stated that this rule is intended to be applied to situations when the ball is in play and that during the time between the calling and the taking of a penalty throw, an excluded player or substitute reentering improperly should be sent back to the exclusion area with no additional penalty. However, if the player reenters improperly once the administration of the penalty throw has commenced – Rule 7, Section 15 applies – and an additional personal foul and a second penalty shot are to be awarded.

Questions have arisen regarding whether this interpretation would also apply if an excluded player briefly and erroneously enters the field of play after a corner throw has been called.

**Interpretation:**

During the time between the calling and the taking of a corner throw, an excluded player reentering improperly should be sent back to the exclusion area with no additional penalty. However, if the excluded player reenters improperly once the administration of the corner throw has commenced – Rule 7, Section 15 – applies, and an additional personal foul and a penalty shot is to be awarded.

Administration of a penalty throw or a corner throw commences when the referee begins positioning the players prior to the throw.

For questions regarding this interpretation, please contact the NCAA Water Polo Secretary-Rules Editor, David Alberstein – [albersteind@gmail.com](mailto:albersteind@gmail.com).

**August 29, 2024**

**Forward Passes into the Goal Area.**

**Background:** Rule 6, Section 11, “Inside the Goal Area,” states the following:

“Note: An attacking player in the Goal Area cannot be in front of the line of the ball at any time. If a pass into or within the Goal Area flies forward (toward the goal line) ahead of the receiving player, an ordinary offensive foul must be called, even if the passing and receiving players were at the same line at the moment of the pass. This is especially important to apply in a player advantage situation.”

Questions arose during and after the August 24, 2024, NCAA Referee School regarding whether a forward pass into or within the Goal Area that lands on the water is allowed under this rule. In this situation, could an offensive player swim to the ball where it lies in the Goal Area and play the ball if the player was at no time in front of the line of the ball while in the Goal Area?

Applicable examples that might arise include a two-on-one counterattack or situations where the center seals the center defender with inside water outside the Goal Area.

**Interpretation:** A forward pass thrown into or within the Goal Area is allowed under the following limited conditions:

- 1) The ball must land on the water in the Goal Area.
- 2) After the ball lands, offensive players may play the ball provided that they were at no time in front of the line of the ball while in the Goal Area.

For questions regarding this interpretation, please contact the NCAA Water Polo Secretary-Rules Editor, David Alberstein – [albersteind@gmail.com](mailto:albersteind@gmail.com).

**July 23, 2024**

**Clarification:**

This information is provided in addition to the recent rules change related to the Goal Area (Rule 1 – Field of Play and Equipment. Section 8 – Goal Area). The following language will be included in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Book.

**Rule 6 – Ordinary Fouls. Section 11 – Inside the Goal Area.**

To be within the opponent's Goal Area, except when behind the line of the ball. It shall not be an offense if a player is inside the 2-meter line but outside the Goal Area. Any player who is behind the line of the ball can enter the Goal Area to receive a pass.

*Note: An attacking player in the Goal Area cannot be in front of the line of the ball at any time. If a pass into or within the Goal Area flies forward (toward the goal line) ahead of the receiving player, an ordinary offensive foul must be called, even if the passing and receiving players were at the same line at the moment of the pass. This is especially important to apply in a player advantage situation.*

It shall not be an offense if a player takes the ball into the Goal Area and passes it to another player who is behind the line of the ball and who shoots at the goal immediately, before the first player has been able to leave the Goal Area. If the player receiving the pass does not shoot at the goal, the player who passed the ball must immediately leave the Goal Area to avoid being penalized under this rule.

Referees should not penalize an attacking player who momentarily enters the Goal Area without interfering with the play. If the player continues to stay there, the player is affecting play by their very presence as that player is forcing a change in how or where the defense plays, and the foul should be called.

**Rationale:** Allowing offensive players to go inside the 2-meter line if the player is located outside the Goal Area will provide more room for the offense to use and allow for more movement. The results of applying this rule in international competition have confirmed that this change will add to the appeal of the game by creating new offensive strategies, promoting more scoring opportunities, and enhancing spectator appeal. This rules change also includes adjustments to rules pertaining to the location of the free throw for fouls with the ball inside the Goal Area vs. inside the 2-meter line, violations of the Goal Area vs. the 2-meter line, and other similar adjustment. This change to Rule 6.11 is the most extensive among those adjustments.