



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

**November 6, 2024**

**Unintentional Interference with Play Following an Exclusion**

**Background:**

Rule 7 Section 19, “Interfering with Play”, states that if an excluded player intentionally interferes with play, a penalty throw shall be awarded to the opposing team and an additional personal foul awarded against the excluded player. The rules are silent with regard to actions that should be taken if an excluded player interferes with play unintentionally. Unintentional interference can have a range of consequences; from directly resulting in a change of possession of the ball, to a disruption of the offensive team’s execution of the extra player situation, or to minimal or no consequence at all. The following interpretation is provided in response to questions that have arisen regarding how unintentional interference by an excluded player should be addressed.

**Interpretation:**

If an excluded player unintentionally interferes with play during the extra player situation, the referees shall stop play, remove the ball from the pool, reset the game clock to the time of the exclusion, reset the shot clock, place the excluded player in the reentry area with no further penalty to that player and return the ball to the offense.

**Situations:**

The following examples of potential situations are presented for further guidance:

1. An excluded player is taking a path around the extra player offense to the exclusion area and is struck by an errant pass. This is unintentional interference that should be addressed following the steps presented in the above interpretation.
2. An excluded player chooses to proceed to the exclusion area by swimming directly through the extra player offense and is struck by a rebounding shot. Since the player chose to take the highest risk path to the exclusion area, this is deemed to be intentional interference. A penalty throw is awarded to the opposing team, and an additional personal foul is awarded against the excluded player, who still must go to the exclusion area.
3. An excluded player is approaching the exclusion area when a shot is taken. The goalkeeper recovers the loose ball and passes it to the location in front of the reentry area, where it strikes the excluded teammate. Since the defense has gained possession of the ball, this unintentional contact with the ball should not be deemed to be interference. If the ball deflects out of bounds off the excluded player, it is awarded to the opposing team. Regardless, the excluded player must continue to the exclusion area and then reenter before being allowed to play the ball. In the meantime, other players from either team may play the ball. If the excluded player chooses to play the ball before arriving in the exclusion area, this is to be deemed an improper reentry. The excluded player is charged with an additional personal foul and the ball is awarded to the opposing team for either an extra

player situation or for a penalty throw, depending on which team was in possession of the ball at the time of the improper reentry.

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