



2026 Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules - Survey Results

Methods

- This was a survey of head coaches, directors of athletics, senior woman administrators, conference commissioners, conference sport administrator, conference coordinator of officials and game officials. The purpose was to assess feedback regarding proposed rules changes.
- The survey was designed to take no more than 20 minutes and was administered online through the Qualtrics survey software.
- The survey was open from January 16 to February 1, 2026.
- The survey was distributed via email to head coaches, officials, conference sport administrators and coordinators of officials. The link to the survey was made available through an online survey dashboard designed for athletic directors, senior woman administrators and conference commissioners to provide rules feedback during the 2025-26 academic year. A notice about the use of the survey dashboard was emailed to all athletics directors and conference commissioners prior to the survey launch. A follow-up email was sent to those who received the survey via email and a notice about survey dashboard availability appeared in the *NCAA Weekly* each Monday while the survey was open. Of the 430 possible participants, there were 90 completed surveys (21 percent response rate).

2026 Men's and Women's Water Polo Rules Survey Report

QUANTITATIVE DATA

February 4, 2026

Title	Recorded	Possible	Response Rate
DI Men's Head Coach	10	29	34%
DII Men's Head Coach	3	7	43%
DIII Men's Head Coach	0	17	0%
TOTAL MEN'S COACHES	13	53	25%
DI Women's Head Coach	7	36	19%
DII Women's Head Coach	2	9	22%
DIII Women's Head Coach	3	18	17%
TOTAL WOMEN'S COACHES	12	63	19%
DI MW Head Coach	5	56	9%
DII MW Head Coach	1	14	7%
DIII MW Head Coach	5	21	24%
TOTAL MW COACHES	11	91	12%
DI Director of Athletics	0	42	0%
DII Director of Athletics	0	10	0%
DIII Director of Athletics	1	20	5%
TOTAL ATHL. DIRECTORS	1	72	1%
DI Commissioner	1	7	14%
DII Commissioner	1	1	100%
DIII Commissioner	0	1	0%
TOTAL COMMISSIONERS	2	9	22%
DI Conf. Sport Admin. (Men)	1	2	50%
DI Conf. Spt. Admin. (Women)	1	1	100%
TOTAL CONF. SPORT ADMIN.	1	3	33%
COORDINATOR OF OFFICIALS	3	9	33%
OFFICIAL	47	130	36%
TOTAL	90	430	21%

Throughout the report, data are provided for groups in which the n = 10.

PROPOSED RULES CHANGES

Please share your opinion on the following proposals/concepts

1. Permit a change in the out of bounds rules such that a ball that touches the goal line lane line or the wall behind the goal line is not deemed to be out of bounds.

Note: The goal line lane line and the wall behind the goal line would be treated the same as the sideline or sidewall in determining whether the ball is out of bounds.

Rationale: In some pools, the distance between the goal line and the goal line lane line or the wall behind the goal line is not 0.3 meters as specified in the rules. In addition, the smaller diameter of the women’s ball means that the ball actually crosses the goal line before it touches the goal line lane line. This change would eliminate inconsistency and simplify the determination of whether the ball is out of bounds.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	15%	2	20%	2
Oppose	69%	9	80%	8
No Opinion	15%	2	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	27%	3
Oppose	45%	5
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	45%	5
Oppose	55%	6
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	38%	18
Oppose	53%	25
No Opinion	9%	4
TOTAL	100%	47

2. 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 and whether a shot was released before the sounding of the horn signaling the expiration of the shot clock or the end of the period.

Rationale: In this modern age of sports, water polo is one of the few sports that does not have some sort of video review. After the 2025 men's national championship game, in which a split-second decision decided the game, it is time that water polo adopts video review for selected situations. In recognition of the cost of using video review throughout the season, this proposal is limited to its use during NCAA postseason. The current rules change proposal does not have to extend as far as World Aquatics has taken it to look at overaggressive plays.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	92%	11	89%	8
Oppose	8%	1	11%	1
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	12	100%	9

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	91%	10
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	83%	38
Oppose	9%	4
No Opinion	9%	4
TOTAL	100%	46

3. 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.

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.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	90%	9
Oppose	8%	1	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	55%	6
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 3 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	85%	40
Oppose	9%	4
No Opinion	6%	3
TOTAL	100%	47

4. Permit a change to Rule 2, Section 6, Article 1 (Direct [Live-Ball] Substitution) that provides for substitution during play, in addition to the reentry area, anywhere along the sideline in the defensive half of the field of play.

Note: A half meter of space would be needed between the sideline lane line and the wall. The rules change would not apply in facilities that do not have the needed space along the sidelines. A substitute would have to enter the water behind the goal line near the bench and then swim along the wall outside the sideline. The player exiting would be required to exit under the sideline and resurface before an above water hand tag is made with the substitute player. The substitute could then enter from under the sideline.

Rationale: As has been demonstrated in international play, allowing direct substitution along the sideline provides for new strategies both on offense and defense and enhances spectator appeal. At times, it can take several minutes of play for either team to score a goal. A live-ball substitution from the reentry area puts the team on offense in a disadvantageous situation. With substitution being allowed on the sideline in the defensive half of the field of play, teams can make substitutions anytime and not spend a possession with one less player on offense or have to expend a timeout to make substitutions.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	50%	6	56%	5
Oppose	50%	6	44%	4
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	12	100%	9

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	100%	11
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 4 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	72%	34
Oppose	23%	11
No Opinion	4%	2
TOTAL	100%	47

5. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 6 (Referees – Control Over Conduct) to eliminate the requirement for a coach or other team official who receives a red card to be suspended from their next traditional season game.

Note: The next game suspension would still be required for a player who receives a red card. Additional penalties imposed on a coach or other team official, such as suspension for subsequent game(s), would, for the first two red cards issued in a single season, be left to the discretion of the conference to which the team belongs (or to the Men’s or Women’s Water Polo Committee in the case of a red card issued during NCAA postseason). However, if a coach receives more than two red cards in a single season, the coach will receive an automatic suspension from the next traditional game beginning with the third and each subsequent red card.

Rationale: Issues with the Current Rule: Officials have acknowledged during discussions that they may hesitate to issue a red card, even when warranted, because of the downstream consequences such as sidelining a coach for the following contest, which may have substantial competitive implications depending on the timing (e.g., a conference championship semifinal that prevents the coach from participating in the championship game).

Officials have also expressed concern that issuing a red card to a coach could lead to complaints directed to conference supervisors of officials, potentially impacting future assignments or evaluations.

Benefits of the Proposed Change:

By eliminating the automatic next-game suspension for coaches and team officials, this proposal:

Empowers officials to address poor conduct decisively and immediately by removing a coach from the current game, thereby defusing volatile situations in real time.

Aligns with practices in other sports, such as basketball, where a coach receiving two technical fouls is ejected from the game but is not automatically suspended from the next contest.

Maintains accountability through a progressive discipline model, ensuring that repeated misconduct (third red card and beyond) results in meaningful penalties.

Returns appropriate authority to conferences, allowing them to enforce stricter bylaws or additional penalties if desired, while maintaining a consistent NCAA standard.

Overall, this change strikes a balance between effective game management, support for officials, and appropriate consequences for repeated misconduct, while preserving the existing next-game suspension for student-athletes.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	80%	8
Oppose	15%	2	20%	2
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

Question 5 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	55%	6
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	91%	10
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	52%	24
Oppose	43%	20
No Opinion	4%	2
TOTAL	100%	46

6. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 6 (Referees – Control Over Conduct) to eliminate the Yellow/Red combined card.

Rationale: Decorum on deck has gotten worse since the introduction of the yellow/red card. A head coach that continues to yell at referees has the liberty to do it at least three times: a warning, a yellow card, and yellow/red card. The only punishment associated with the yellow/red card is the coach not being allowed to go past 2m when the coach's team is on offense. The yellow/red card should be replaced with instruction to the officials that if there is another minor violation after a yellow card, a final verbal warning can be given (if appropriate) prior to issuing a red card. This change would more effectively address coaches who take advantage and push the limit.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	54%	7	40%	4
Oppose	38%	5	50%	5
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

Question 6 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	55%	6
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	45%	5
Oppose	45%	5
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	73%	33
Oppose	13%	6
No Opinion	13%	6
TOTAL	100%	45

7. 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. The referees have the authority to determine if the error affected whether the goal would have been scored.”

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. This rule change will address these issues.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	77%	10	70%	7
Oppose	23%	3	30%	3
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	36%	4
Oppose	45%	5
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 7 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	73%	8
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	84%	38
Oppose	11%	5
No Opinion	4%	2
TOTAL	100%	45

8. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 18 (Shot Clock Timer—Duties) and to Rule 6, Section 15 (Keeping the Ball Without Shooting) such that if the attacking team recovers the ball following a shot, including the awarding of a corner throw, or if an exclusion is called with less than 20 seconds on the shot clock, the clock is reset to 20 seconds.

Note: If an exclusion is called with more than 20 seconds on the shot clock, the clock would not be reset.

Rationale: As demonstrated over the last several years in international competition, this proposed change would significantly speed up the game and reward quick and skillful passing and play by forcing the offense to attack quickly after a missed shot or after earning an exclusion. It would also create a better balance with regard to how long a team is on defense following a missed shot. The argument against this proposal in the past has been technology and equipment (i.e., not everyone has a system with this capability or can afford to acquire such a system). However, water polo timing systems are computers with multiple unused buttons and can easily be reprogrammed to make an unused button reset the shot clock to 20 seconds. This is a simple procedure without expense.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	54%	7	60%	6
Oppose	31%	4	20%	2
No Opinion	15%	2	20%	2
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	27%	3
Oppose	55%	6
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 8 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	55%	6
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	69%	31
Oppose	20%	9
No Opinion	11%	5
TOTAL	100%	45

9. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 18, Article 3 and associated rules such that the shot clock would not be reset when the ball leaves the hand of the shooter, but instead upon contact with the goalie, the goal posts, or the crossbar.

Rationale: If the defense does a good job by making a field block but the offense recovers the rebound, the defense should not be punished by awarding the offense with a new possession clock when the shot did not make it to the goal. This is consistent with the philosophy behind the rule that awards the ball to the defense if a field block results in the ball going out of play.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	62%	8	60%	6
Oppose	31%	4	30%	3
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	64%	7
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	55%	6
Oppose	45%	5
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 9 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	44%	20
Oppose	51%	23
No Opinion	4%	2
TOTAL	100%	45

10. 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)."

Rationale: Under the current rule, when a timeout is called after a goal is scored, the ball is put into play following the timeout in the same manner regardless of which team called the timeout. This provides a significant advantage when a team that has just scored calls the timeout, because it allows the team to press the offense all over the pool before the ball is put back into play. This tactic is particularly advantageous because the rules currently allow the goalkeeper to play anywhere in the field of play. Forcing the offense into a disadvantageous situation like this is not consistent with the concept of advantage as it is commonly understood. To remedy this situation, it is proposed that if the team just scored upon calls a timeout, the ball will be put back into play following the timeout 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.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	46%	6	40%	4
Oppose	31%	4	30%	3
No Opinion	23%	3	30%	3
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	36%	4
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	45%	5
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 10 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	62%	28
Oppose	27%	12
No Opinion	11%	5
TOTAL	100%	45

11. Permit the following change to Rule 4, Section 21 (Goals - How Scored) and associated rules to allow the following additional means of scoring: (1) If a foul is called inside the 6-meter line while the ball is outside the 6-meter line, the player with the ball may take a direct shot or may put the ball into play and then take an indirect shot; and (2) If a foul is called for an offensive player inside the 6-meter line who is in possession of the ball, the player with the ball may put the ball into play, swim the ball to a position outside the 6-meter line, and then shoot the ball.

Rationale: This rule change in international water polo has demonstrated that it adds new, creative ways for teams to score and enhances the spectator appeal of water polo. Additionally, this change will help more closely align the NCAA rules with all other rule sets.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	77%	10	90%	9
Oppose	8%	1	0%	0
No Opinion	15%	2	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	45%	5
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	73%	8
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 11 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	98%	42
Oppose	2%	1
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	43

12. Permit the following change to Rule 6, Section 6 (Taking the Ball Under): Add the following to the end of the first sentence of Section 6: “...or to deliberately hide the ball from the opposing team.”

Rationale: Hiding the ball (e.g., by swimming with the ball between the legs) is a deceptive, unsportsmanlike practice that is prohibited in other rule sets.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	46%	6	40%	4
Oppose	46%	6	50%	5
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	45%	5
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	27%	3
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	45%	5
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	74%	32
Oppose	19%	8
No Opinion	7%	3
TOTAL	100%	43

13. 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."

Rationale: Simulation continues to be a significant problem. The current simulation rule is unduly complicated and awkward to administer, and does not serve as a sufficient deterrent. The proposed rule is fair and balanced for the offense and the defense. It also allows the officials to address simulation more directly.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	69%	9	60%	6
Oppose	23%	3	30%	3
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	45%	5
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	53%	23
Oppose	37%	16
No Opinion	9%	4
TOTAL	100%	43

14. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 13 (Flagrant Misconduct, Including Fighting): Revise the first paragraph of Article 2 as follows: “The player who commits an act of flagrant misconduct during play or during interval time (i.e., the time between periods, during a timeout, before the restart after a goal, before a penalty throw is taken or when the referee removes the ball for administrative purposes) shall be excluded from the remainder of the game, leave the venue, and remain out of sight and sound. A penalty throw is awarded. The substitute for the excluded player may not reenter the game until 4 minutes of playing time have elapsed.”

Note: If adopted, this change will require several changes in other sections of the rules that address the current practice of having a dead-ball penalty shot followed by a 20-second exclusion.

Rationale: Flagrant misconduct and fighting are serious acts that can severely hurt someone. The punishment provided in the current rule (a dead-ball penalty shot followed by a 20 second exclusion) is not as severe or serious as the act and does not provide sufficient deterrence. A team's best player could be out of the game or the rest of the season because of this act, yet the punishment is only a penalty shot and a 20 second exclusion.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	58%	7	50%	5
Oppose	42%	5	50%	5
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	12	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	58%	7
Oppose	17%	2
No Opinion	25%	3
TOTAL	100%	12

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	86%	37
Oppose	7%	3
No Opinion	7%	3
TOTAL	100%	43

15. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 14 (Simultaneous Personal Fouls): Add the following at the end of Section 14 as paragraph e: "e. If simultaneous misconduct and flagrant misconduct fouls are committed during play, both players are excluded from the remainder of the game as provided in Rule 7, Sections 11 and 13, respectively, with substitutions in the reentry area. A dead-ball penalty throw shall be taken by the team awarded the penalty throw as a result of the flagrant misconduct. Following the penalty throw, the team awarded the penalty throw shall restart play at or behind the half-distance line as after a timeout. Both substitutes shall remain in the reentry area following the restart until the earliest occurrence of an event referred to in Rule 7-3."

Rationale: This change addresses a situation that has occurred and is not currently addressed in the rules. Requiring the team that committed the misconduct violation to play with the substitute for the offender in the reentry area instead allowing the substitute to reenter immediately following the penalty throw provides an appropriate balance for the seriousness of both violations.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	69%	9	70%	7
Oppose	15%	2	20%	2
No Opinion	15%	2	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	81%	35
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	19%	8
TOTAL	100%	43

16. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 17 (Failure of Defenders to Take Position During a Penalty Throw: Designate the existing text of Rule 7-17 as Article 1. Add the following as Article 2: "Art. 2. If the defending goalkeeper moves forward from the correct position before the referee blows the whistle and a goal is not scored, the goalkeeper shall be excluded, and the penalty throw shall be retaken. Another player may take the position of the goalkeeper, but without the goalkeeper's privileges or limitations."

Rationale: The rules do not currently specify the procedure to be followed when the goalkeeper moves forward, the whistle blows, and the penalty throw is missed. The penalty specified in the new Article 2 is consistent with that specified in the current rule for failing to assume the proper position, which will be designated as Article 1.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	80%	8
Oppose	15%	2	20%	2
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	60%	6
Oppose	30%	3
No Opinion	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	45%	5
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	90%	38
Oppose	5%	2
No Opinion	5%	2
TOTAL	100%	42

17. 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.

Rationale: Currently, the penalty for a player making a mistake (e.g., entering early) is different based on the location of the player that was excluded. For example, if an excluded player is making their way to the reentry area by way of the field of play, and the substitute enters before the excluded player exits the field of play, the substitute becomes an eighth player, which results in a penalty throw and a game exclusion for the entering player regardless of who is in possession of the ball. However, if the excluded player has left the field of play properly but has not made it to the reentry area prior to the substitute entering the field of play, the penalty is determined by possession of the ball (e.g., if on defense then a penalty and if on offense then an exclusion) and does not result in a game exclusion of the substitute.

Under the proposed change, the penalty for the early entry would be the same regardless of the position of the excluded player with no game exclusion in either case.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	92%	12	90%	9
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	91%	10
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	76%	31
Oppose	22%	9
No Opinion	2%	1
TOTAL	100%	41

18. 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."

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. This tactic is particularly advantageous because the rules now allow the goalkeeper to play anywhere in the field of play. Forcing the offense into a disadvantageous situation like this is not consistent with the concept of advantage as it is commonly 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. To remedy this situation, it is proposed that if a team declines a penalty shot in the last minute of play, the ball will 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.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	90%	9
Oppose	15%	2	10%	1
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	55%	6
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	88%	36
Oppose	7%	3
No Opinion	5%	2
TOTAL	100%	41

19. Permit the following change to Rule 9, Section 2, (Position of Other Players and Goalkeeper): Revise the first sentence of Section 2 as follows: “All players shall leave the 5-meter area and shall be at least 3 meters from the player taking the throw.”

Rationale: Given the size and quickness of many water polo players today, a requirement to be at least 2 meters from the player taking the penalty throw is no longer sufficient to ensure that the defenders closest to the player taking the throw do not interfere. Increasing the distance required to 3 meters will significantly reduce the likelihood of interference with the penalty throw, while not significantly affecting the ability of the defenders to gain possession of a rebound, should one occur. In addition, it will make the process of positioning players for the throw easier and quicker, thereby reducing the opportunity for the defense to “ice the shooter.”

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	54%	7	50%	5
Oppose	38%	5	40%	4
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	36%	4
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	45%	5
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	93%	37
Oppose	5%	2
No Opinion	3%	1
TOTAL	100%	40

20. Permit a change to Rule 9, Section 2 (Position of Other Players and Goalkeeper), such that all penalty throws are taken on a “Make or Miss” basis. Under this change, with the exception of penalty throws awarded as a result of flagrant misconduct or fighting, the ball would be awarded after the throw to the defense at the halfway line regardless of whether the penalty throw is scored. Play would restart after a goal. All players except the shooter and the goalkeeper would be required to take positions in their respective halves of the field of play, with the players in the half in which the penalty throw is being taken being no more than 3 meters from the halfway line.

Rationale: This change would eliminate all issues regarding players having to back up or spread out away from the shooter or trying to disrupt the shooter, and the officials would have to focus only on the positions of the goalkeeper and the shooter.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	62%	8	60%	6
Oppose	15%	2	10%	1
No Opinion	23%	3	30%	3
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	55%	6
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	55%	6
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	38%	15
Oppose	55%	22
No Opinion	8%	3
TOTAL	100%	40

21. Permit the following change to Rule 3, Section 3, Article 3 (Referees – Eligibility, Authority, Uniform): Insert the following after the first sentence of Article 3: “The referees may use an intercom headset system.”

Rationale: Intercom headsets have been demonstrated to be an effective tool for referee communication and collaboration. This change formalizes their use by adding them to the list of equipment for referees.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	100%	13	100%	10
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	100%	11
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	100%	11
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	93%	37
Oppose	5%	2
No Opinion	3%	1
TOTAL	100%	40

22. Permit a change to Rule 3, Section 6, Article 3d (Red Card – Interpretation a.) to add the following at the end of Interpretation a: "A player in the water who receives a red card is not required to go to the reentry area before leaving the venue."

Rationale: When a player in the water receives a red card for disruptive behavior, the player has to some degree lost control of their emotions. Requiring the player to go to the reentry area before leaving the venue provides time for additional disruptive behavior that is avoided by requiring the player to leave the venue immediately.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	69%	9	70%	7
Oppose	15%	2	20%	2
No Opinion	15%	2	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	18%	2
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	78%	31
Oppose	18%	7
No Opinion	5%	2
TOTAL	100%	40

23. 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.

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.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	69%	9	80%	8
Oppose	8%	1	10%	1
No Opinion	23%	3	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	55%	6
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	77%	30
Oppose	8%	3
No Opinion	15%	6
TOTAL	100%	39

24. 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.

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. The addition is intended to formalize this convention.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	80%	8
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	15%	2	20%	2
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	93%	37
Oppose	3%	1
No Opinion	5%	2
TOTAL	100%	40

25. Permit a change to Rule 7, Section 2, Article 1 (Method of Leaving Field of Play) as follows: Revise the second sentence of Article 1 as follows: “An excluded player who leaves the water, other than from the reentry area, shall be excluded for the remainder of the game.”

Rationale: This change clarifies the intent of the current rule and clears up any contradiction between the second sentence of Article 1 and the last sentence of Article 2.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	85%	11	90%	9
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	15%	2	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	27%	3
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	64%	7
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	92%	36
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	3
TOTAL	100%	39

26. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 7 (Holding, Sinking, Pulling Back): Insert the following sentence after the second sentence in Section 7: “In women’s competition, holding the suit of a player who is not holding the ball is considered to be holding the player.” Clarify the next sentence as follows: “Holding the ball is lifting, carrying or touching the ball with the palm side of the hand, but does not include dribbling the ball.”

Rationale: This change formalizes a convention that has been commonly understood for several years.

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	75%	9
Oppose	8%	1
No Opinion	17%	2
TOTAL	100%	12

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	85%	33
Oppose	3%	1
No Opinion	13%	5
TOTAL	100%	39

27. Permit a change to Rule 7, Section 8 (Use of Two Hands to Hold) as follows: "To use two hands to hold an opponent who is not holding the ball anywhere in the field of play."

Rationale: Adding the words "who is not holding the ball," ensures consistency with Rule 7, Section 7 (Holding, Sinking, Pulling Back), which explicitly applies to a player "who is not holding the ball". The change also makes the wording of the NCAA rule consistent with that in all other rule sets.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	92%	12	90%	9
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

Question 27 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	100%	11
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	91%	10
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	95%	38
Oppose	3%	1
No Opinion	3%	1
TOTAL	100%	40

28. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 11, Article 3 (Misconduct): Revise the first sentence of Article 3 as follows: "If a player commits misconduct, regardless of whether it is that player's first, second, or third personal foul, the player is excluded from the remainder of the game."

Rationale: This change clarifies the procedure to be followed following misconduct that occurs as a player's first, second, or third personal foul. The current wording of the sentence implies that the procedure could be different following misconduct that occurs as a player's third personal foul.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	92%	12	90%	9
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	1	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 28 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	82%	9
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	95%	38
Oppose	3%	1
No Opinion	3%	1
TOTAL	100%	40

29. 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."

Rationale: This change provides a specific criterion for the return to play of a player excluded for a minor act of misconduct during interval time. The current rule does not define a criterion and has been subject to varying interpretations. 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. That interpretation would allow a player who commits a penalty foul followed by a minor act of misconduct to reenter immediately if the penalty shot were scored. 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.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	92%	12	100%	10
Oppose	0%	0	0%	0
No Opinion	8%	1	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	64%	7
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 29 CONTINUED

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	64%	7
Oppose	36%	4
No Opinion	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL

Overall

Support	83%	33
Oppose	10%	4
No Opinion	8%	3
TOTAL	100%	40

30. Permit the following change to Rule 7, Section 21 (Penalty for a Tactical Foul): Revise the first sentence of Section 21 as follows: "It shall be an exclusion foul if a player on defense commits an ordinary foul outside of 6 meters and that player or a teammate does one of the following (but not limited to) as a "tactical foul" to prevent the offensive team from shooting a direct shot:"

Rationale: This change clarifies that a tactical foul as described in the rules can be committed by the player who committed the original foul or by a teammate of the player who committed the original foul.

HEAD COACH - Men's

Overall*

DI Men's Head Coach

Support	69%	9	80%	8
Oppose	23%	3	20%	2
No Opinion	8%	1	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's

Overall*

Support	82%	9
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW

Overall*

Support	64%	7
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	36%	4
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

Question 30 CONTINUED

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	93%	37
Oppose	3%	1
No Opinion	5%	2
TOTAL	100%	40

31. Permit the following change to Rule 8, Section 3 (Kicking, Striking or Other Physical Misconduct....): Add physical minor acts of misconduct as follows: "For a defending player within the 6-meter area to kick or strike an opponent or commit any act of physical misconduct (including a minor act of misconduct) against an opponent,"

Rationale: The change provides addition tools for the officials to control physical play.

HEAD COACH - Men's	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	77%	10	80%	8
Oppose	8%	1	10%	1
No Opinion	15%	2	10%	1
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - Women's	Overall*	
Support	73%	8
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	27%	3
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

HEAD COACH - MW	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

GAME OFFICIAL	Overall	
Support	75%	30
Oppose	8%	3
No Opinion	18%	7
TOTAL	100%	40

**32. Permit a change to Rule 9, Section 4 (How Taken) to add the following after the first sentence of Section 4:
 “The player taking the penalty throw shall not release the ball inside the 5-meter line.”**

Rationale: The addition of this sentence is intended to make it clear and to emphasize that the ball may not be released inside the 5-meter line.

<i>HEAD COACH - Men's</i>	Overall*		DI Men's Head Coach	
Support	92%	12	100%	10
Oppose	8%	1	0%	0
No Opinion	0%	0	0%	0
TOTAL	100%	13	100%	10

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - Women's</i>	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	9%	1
No Opinion	9%	1
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>HEAD COACH - MW</i>	Overall*	
Support	82%	9
Oppose	0%	0
No Opinion	18%	2
TOTAL	100%	11

*Includes all divisions

<i>GAME OFFICIAL</i>	Overall	
Support	75%	30
Oppose	18%	7
No Opinion	8%	3
TOTAL	100%	40