

# WATER POLO FACT SHEET

The following is meant to provide the spectator basic information about the game. While the information provided does not cover every situation, it should help to explain the overall play of the game.

You can find some of the water polo terminology explained in the FCSL Water Polo FAQ's or consult all the FINA/USAWP or FCSL Rules in the Downloads section on the FCSL web-site, [www.fcsl.info](http://www.fcsl.info)

## TIME

1. **Periods** – In the FCSL, there are 4 quarters in a game. The time of each quarter varies by age group.
2. **Overtimes** – May be played in agreement of the 2 coaches unless a final winner needs to be determined at the end of the season tournaments.

## PLAYERS

1. Each team consists of six 'field' players and a goalie. The FCSL also has rules about the minimum number of girls that need to be in the water at any given time (varies by age group).
2. After a goal is scored, player substitutions may be made, from any location. During a timeout or between periods, substitutions may be made. A substitution can also be made during play by having a player go to his ejection area, where his substitute, upon the player's arrival, may enter the game.

## AGE GROUPS

A players age is determined on June 15<sup>th</sup> each year under FCSL Rules.

There are three age group levels for games:

**Midgets** : 10 & Under

**Juniors** : 11-13

**Seniors** : 14-17

**Exception:** A player may 'play up', but only by one year. That is, a player who is 10 years old may play as a Junior; a player who is 13 years old may play as a Senior. However, a player may only play in one age group in a given set of games between two clubs or in FCSL Championship Tournament.

## GOALIE PRIVILEGES

The goalie may use both hands, strike the ball with a fist, and stand on the bottom in the shallow end. The goalie loses these privileges when he goes beyond his five-meter line.

The goalie is not allowed to go beyond the half-court line.

In the event that the goalie is given an exclusion foul, a field player filling in for the goalie does NOT have goalie privileges.

## **FOULS**

### **1. Ordinary Fouls**

- starting before the referee's whistle at the beginning of a quarter
- pushing off the bottom or the side of the pool to influence the play
- taking or holding the entire ball under when being 'tackled'
- striking the ball with a fist (except the goalie)
- Using two hands (except the goalie)
- impeding a player who is not holding the ball
- pushing or pushing off
- offsides, offensive player inside 2 meters, except when behind the line of the ball
- delay in taking a free throw
- goalkeeper beyond mid-court line
- sending the ball out of bounds over the side line
- use the bottom to influence play (except the goalie)

The opposing team will be awarded a free throw either at the point of infraction, or, if the ball has been knocked further away from the offensive goal, the free throw is at the location of the ball, or, if the infraction takes place inside two-meters, the free throw must be taken outside the two-meter line.

### **2. Exclusion Fouls**

- interfering with a free throw, goal throw or corner throw
- attempting to block a shot with two hands while outside the five-meter line
- intentionally splashing an opponent
- holding, sinking or pulling back an opponent who is not holding the ball
- kicking or striking an opponent intentionally
- misconduct, including obscene language, overaggressive fouls
- brutality\*
- improper entry or re-entry into the field of play
- interference with a penalty shot\*

A defensive player (and in some cases an offensive player) shall be removed for 20 seconds or until a goal is scored or there is a change of possession. After three exclusion fouls, the player has fouled out of the game.

In the situations marked \*, the player will be ejected from the game, with substitution permitted under the 20 second rule.

A player ejected for brutality may not play in his team's next game and, in a tournament, may be excluded from any remaining games. The FCSL Board also has the authority to suspend players for longer periods of time after performing an investigation.

### **3. Penalty Fouls**

A Penalty Shot will be awarded when:

- a defending player commits any foul within the five-meter area but for which a goal would probably have resulted
- attempting to block a shot with two hands within the five-meter area (except the goalie)
- a defending player kicks or strikes an opponent within the five-meter area
- a brutality foul is committed
- an excluded player interferes with play
- an ineligible player enters the field of play

In the last minute of a game or in the last minute of the second overtime or at any time during sudden-death overtime periods, the coach may elect to maintain possession rather than take the penalty shot.

## **FREE THROWS**

Free throws, including corner throws and goal throws, are used to put the ball in play after a foul is committed or after the ball goes out of bounds. The player nearest the ball must put the ball in play within a reasonable amount of time, without undue delay. If, in the judgment of the referee, he does not put the ball in play in time, the opposing team will be awarded a free throw at that point.

In general, a player may not shoot on a free throw, unless, after he puts the ball in play, his defensive player initiates contact with the ball. Otherwise, another offensive player must handle the ball before a goal can be scored.

## **WAYS TO SCORE**

- 1. Counterattack** – Following a turnover (steal, blocked or missed shot, offensive foul), teams will often fast break to try to create an easy scoring opportunity. Anticipation and quick, aggressive transitions are essential to a good counterattack.
- 2. Driving Shots, Perimeter Shots & Hole (two-meter man) Shots**
- 3. Man-Up Possessions**
- 4. Penalty Shots**

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The referees (one generally at Midget or Junior FCSL games, or two at Senior FCSL games) are in full control of the flow of the game. Recognizing that in the water many fouls can not be detected, a referee can call only what he sees and will try to set the tone of play by calling a consistent ball game. At no time will a player challenge the call of the referee – to do so is to risk an almost certain exclusion foul. The players must adapt to the type of game the referee is calling.

Neither coaches nor spectators may challenge the call of the referee either – to do so is to risk their own expulsion from the game or even the facility.

The referee will not call a foul that he sees being made by the defensive team IF he feels that the call would be taking away the offensive advantage of the team with the ball. The spectator should also realize that what looks like a 'nothing' foul in terms of physical contact may be called, with a free throw awarded, and, depending on the circumstances, a player ejected. But, if the player is actually holding the ball, he may be 'tackled' without a foul being called.

Water polo is a game of transitions. Awareness of ball possession and change of possession – as denoted by the tone of the referee's whistle and the direction in which he points – is a key to the movement. In fact, if two referees point in different directions, then, in order to be fair to both teams, they must call the ball out of the water, decide to which team to award the ball, and start play over again.

Nonetheless, a player who has to look too often at the referee will surely be beaten by his opponent, and the result is likely to be a kick-out foul against the player or a successful counterattack by the opposition. The players, especially the goalies, must communicate ball possession.

## THE FIELD OF PLAY

The field of play for many water polo games may be either 25 yards or 25 meters long. The width of the pool should be 20 yards or 20 meters. The size of the facility will, however, dictate the actual dimensions of the field of play in FCSL games.

The goal is ten feet wide. In deep water (5' or deeper), the cross bar is three feet above water level. In shallow water (less than 5') the cross bar is eight feet above the pool bottom.

Ejection areas are generally in the defensive corners opposite the scorer's table, immediately in front of the team bench. Adjustments are made by the referees based on configuration of the pool being used.

**The Goal Line** is even with the front of the goal posts.

- If the ball goes entirely behind the goal line it is either a goal or out of bounds.
- If the ball goes over the goal line either on a shot or a block by a defensive player (other than the goalie) the defending team will be awarded a free throw, which may be taken by any player inside the two-meter line.
- If the ball goes over the goal line as a result of being touched by the goalie, the offensive team will be awarded a corner free throw at the two-meter line.

**The Two-Meter Line** denotes the line beyond which no offensive player may go inside unless he is in possession of the ball or is otherwise behind the line of the ball. No offensive player may take a free throw inside the two-meter line.

**The Five-Meter Line** denotes the location inside of which the referee may award a penalty shot for a major foul. It also marks the location where the penalty shot must be taken. The five-meter line is also the line at which a goalie loses his privileges.

**The Mid-Court Line** denotes the location at which the referee throws in the ball for the sprint-off at the beginning of each period. After each goal, the teams must return to their defensive side of the mid-court line. The goalie may not cross the mid-court line.

Note: FCSL WP thanks Terry Lowe from whose HS Water Polo Fact Sheet this FCSL Water Polo Fact Sheet has been adapted.

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