

**2013-14 NFHS Points of Emphasis for Coaches and Referees**  
**9-5-2013**

These points of emphasis for coaches and referees are guidelines in order to bring about consistency in the interpretation and application of the rules of the game. The list includes relevant Points of Emphasis from 2011 forward. This list also includes some of the most important new rules that can also be considered to be points of emphasis. It is important that referees call the NFHS Water Polo Rules as written and as interpreted in the rules book, case book or as distributed as interpretations during the year. It is important that referees apply the rules consistently throughout the entire game, regardless of the time remaining in the game, the time remaining on the shot clock or the score of the game. New Points of Emphasis are shaded.

1. **Responsibilities of Sportsmanship and Supervision (Points of Emphasis #1, p. 87)**  
During the contest, each coaching staff member has the responsibility to educate and set expectations for good sportsmanship. Should a player display unsporting conduct, he/she is subject to the appropriate penalty. The conduct of fans before and after a contest, as well as the coaching staff, is the responsibility of the school administration. The same expectations of good sportsmanship should be explained to all fans. The host school should have procedures in place to keep officials from being subjected to upset fans, coaches, etc. when exiting the playing venue. Good sportsmanship and expectations for all to practice good sporting conduct is a responsibility that should not be overlooked or forgotten.
2. **Putting the Ball Into Play (Point of Emphasis #2, p. 87, Rule 19-2, 4)** Referees shall ensure that the player awarded a free throw puts the ball into play properly and within a reasonable length of time. As an aid to the game clock operator and to the players, the referee administering the free throw shall point with one arm held horizontally in the direction of the attacking team and then drop the arm down to a vertical position when the ball has been put into play. The referees should inform the game clock operator before the game of this signal and of the importance that the game clock operator watch for this signal to know when to start the game clock as the clock operator may not have observed the player putting the ball into play.
3. **Use of Electronic Equipment (Point of Emphasis #3, p. 87 and Rule 1-12)** A team may use electronic devices during the game. Electronic devices include video equipment, electronic notepads, smart phones, etc. The advancement in the technology in the area of electronic audio and video devices has made such items easy to use and very accessible. Their use, if not used during the actual competition with a competitor in the pool, no longer creates an advantage or disadvantage among teams. The contest administrators and referees should be responsible for what takes place in the competition venue, and not monitoring who is using an electronic device in various locations in the facility, which is difficult, at best, to identify. The location and use of the device(s) shall not be in a restricted area as determined by host management. The referee may restrict the use of the device(s) if determined to interfere with the contest. Use of electronic devices by a coach to communicate with a player(s) in the pool is prohibited. The coach may use electronic devices such as an electronic notepad, smartphone, etc. to instruct players during time-outs or period breaks. A coach/staff member may video during the game and show that video to players during a time-out and between periods. A coach who has received a red card and has been removed from the pool area due to unsporting conduct shall not communicate with any team personnel by the use of electronic devices. Electronic video devices shall not be used for any review of an official's decision either during a game or after a game.

4. **Cap Replacement (Rule 4-1-5)** The referees shall apply the advantage rule with respect to replacement of a cap (Rule 7-3). Stopping play to replace a cap when a player is making progress towards the goal would be considered to give an advantage to the offender's team. For risk minimization, the referee should stop play as soon as possible to replace a cap, but should not stop play to replace the cap at the beginning of an extra-player situation, at the beginning of a counterattack, if there is the possibility of a direct shot, near the end of the possession time or if the team on offense has the advantage.
5. **Accommodation for Special Situations (Rule 5-4-3)** Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, ~~allow an otherwise illegal piece of equipment~~, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage. The NFHS rules no longer specifically address the wearing of soft head gear for injury prevention (Rule 5-4-3, Interpretation #4 in the 2012-13 NFHS Water Polo Rules). The decision to permit the wearing of such an item shall be considered on an individual basis by the state association and transmitted to the referees.
6. **Non-Conforming Pool Markings and Equipment (Rule 1-1, Rule 1-7, Appendix D, p. 149)** Before the game, the referees shall ensure that the field of play, game equipment, suits and caps comply with the rules, and make any corrections possible at that time. In a 25 yard pool with wall goals, the pool/coaching staff is responsible for marking the re-entry area in red two meters on the wall at each end of the pool. Note: The marker can be a red cone placed on the pool deck. The excluded player may re-enter the pool from any position along this two-meter marking. The referees should report any issues after the game with the field of play, non-conforming caps or suits, abandonment of game, forfeiture of game, etc., committed by a competing school to the state association or section office, school athletic director, and the assigning authority, in order that these may be corrected. Each state association shall establish its requirements for reporting.
7. **Change in Duties of Referees After the Game (Rule 7-8)** The referees must verify the score and sign the scoresheet after the conclusion of the game; verify that all incidents of misconduct, flagrant misconduct, fighting, yellow cards, red cards and protests have been recorded on the scoresheet; and must inform the appropriate coaches after the game of the occurrence of these fouls and cards (exception: yellow card), since there may be follow-up penalties for these fouls. It is not necessary for the referees to check the remainder of game information unless a protest is involved. This change will decrease the time the referee must spend at the site after the game checking the scoresheet. It is recommended, however, that one of the referees check the scoresheet after each period, particularly for score and number of time-outs taken. In addition, it is recommended that a referee check that the top portion of the scoresheet matches the progress of game portion of the scoresheet between periods in order to minimize errors and to prevent protests due to these errors.
8. **Recognition of and Correction of Errors (Rule 7-9)** The referees must be aware of and, if possible, correct certain errors (correctable errors) as described in this rule in the interest of fairness as soon as possible after the occurrence of the error. It is not necessary or advisable to wait for the coach to file a protest later in the game before correcting this error. No team shall gain an advantage over an opponent because of this type of error (technical errors by desk officials, equipment malfunction, difference in hand signals of the referees, misapplication of rules, etc.).

9. **Protest (Rule 7-10)** It is preferable for the coach to protest during the game as soon as possible after a protestable event occurs in order that as little as possible of the game will have to be replayed if the protest is upheld. **NOTE:** An upheld protest should not disadvantage the offended team by the correction of the protest. This principle would help decide if a correctable error should be addressed.
10. **Ball Under (Rule 9-2 and Rule 20-6)** It is an ordinary foul to take or hold the entire ball under the water when tackled. Referees should call ball under only when the ball is clearly under water for more than a fraction of a second. If the referee signals ball under (Appendix F, Fig. Q), the shot clock operator must reset the shot clock as this signal indicates that the player committed the ordinary foul of taking the ball under when tackled, resulting in a change of possession and a new shot clock. The referee must be aware that if the referee signals ball-under, the shot clock operator has been instructed to reset the shot clock.
11. **Signal for Eligibility to Take Direct Shot on Goal (Rule 14-3-3, Rule 14-3-5, Interpretation 2)** The option of a direct shot on goal taken from outside the 5-meter line comes as a result of a free throw awarded for an ordinary or exclusion foul committed by the defense outside 5 meters. Referees are instructed to apply the advantage rule (Rule 7-3) at all times. The player on offense who is fouled outside 5 meters and chooses to shoot a direct shot must do so immediately, as defined in Rule 14-3. The referee administering the free throw near the 5-meter line should determine if that foul is outside the 5-meter line in order to determine whether a direct shot on goal can be taken. If the player is eligible to take a direct shot, that referee should immediately point with one arm diagonal to the body to the 5-meter marker on the pool deck to indicate that the player was fouled outside the 5-meter line and is, therefore, eligible to shoot a direct shot on goal. (**Interpretation:** The referee is only required to signal if the player is near but outside the 5m line. “Near” is considered to be outside the 5-meter line, but within one meter of the 5-meter line.) The marker most commonly used is a yellow cone on the pool deck at the 5-meter mark. Rule 14-3-5 provides that a goal may not be scored by a direct shot on goal if the referee removed the ball from the pool for any reason other than to correct a clock error. In this case, after correcting the problem, the referee will return the ball to the player taking the free throw and whistle the ball into play. The player may then immediately take a direct shot on goal.
12. **Eligibility to Take a Direct Shot on Goal if the Ball is Inside 5 meters (Rule 14-3-4)** If at the award of a foul (ordinary foul or exclusion foul) committed by the defense outside 5 meters, the ball is inside 5 meters or closer to the defending team’s goal, a goal may be scored under this rule if the ball is returned without delay to either the place where the foul was committed, to any place on the same line as the foul or to any place behind the line of the foul, provided the shot is then immediately made from this position.
13. **Offensive Fouls (Rule 19-1-c, Rule 16-1-Note, Rule 14-3-4)** In the event of an offensive foul, the free throw is taken at the location of the ball when the foul is awarded. This includes both offensive ordinary fouls and offensive exclusion fouls. Improperly taken shots on goal should be treated like any other offensive foul (free throw is taken at the spot of the ball). Examples of improperly taken shots on goal are a shot from a free throw awarded inside 5 meters, a shot from a free throw outside 5 meters not taken immediately, a goal throw not taken immediately, or a shot from a corner throw. If the ball is in the air when an offensive foul is called, the location of the ball when the foul is called shall be considered to be the location where the team awarded the free throw takes possession of the ball. **Exception:** If the ball is inside the 2-meter area, then the free throw shall be taken on the 2-meter line.
14. **Location of Free Throw in Case of Offensive Foul Called Outside the 5-meter Line with the Ball Inside 5m Line (Rule 14-3-4, Rule 19-1-c)** In the case of a free throw awarded for

an offensive foul called on a player outside 5 meters with the ball inside 5 meters, the free throw shall be taken at the location of the ball when the foul is awarded (Rule 19-1-c).

15. **Goal Throw (Rule 16-1 Note)** A portion of the 2012-13 Rules (Rule 16-1-b Goal Throws) dealing with an improperly taken direct shot has been moved to Rule 19-1, Free Throws, as these are now considered to be offensive fouls; therefore, the resultant free throw should be taken at the location of the ball when the defending team takes possession of the ball as opposed to a goal throw. **Exception:** If the ball is inside the 2-meter area, the free throw shall be taken on the 2-meter line.

*Note: In items No. 13, 14 and 15, the application of Rule 19-1-c is that in the event of an offensive foul, the free throw is taken at the location of the ball when the foul is awarded. However, if the ball is in the air when the foul is awarded, the free throw is taken at the point where the ball lands on the water. (See exception in No. 15.)*

16. **Control of the Benches and Players in the Water (Rule 7-4)** Referees should maintain control of the benches and players in the water. If the coaches, other staff, or players on the bench start questioning calls, the referees should issue a stern warning (warnings are not recorded and are not issued to players). If the head coach, assistant coach or players continue to question the referees' calls, a yellow card shall be issued to the head coach, assistant coach or bench as appropriate, to be followed by a red card to the head coach, assistant coach or to an individual player on the bench, if necessary. The head coach and captain may address the referee at the intervals between periods, during time-outs or with permission of the referee. The rule relating to who may address the referee and at what times shall be enforced consistently and in accordance with the rules. The referees must enforce the rules equally and fairly. A player who commits an overaggressive, dangerous or violent foul should be called for either misconduct or flagrant misconduct and removed for the remainder of the game, rather than just excluded for 20 seconds. Players in the water who show disrespect toward the referees should be removed promptly for the remainder of the game for misconduct or for 20 seconds for a minor act of misconduct, depending upon the severity of the offense.
17. **Promoting Offensive Action (Rule 7-3)** Referees should promote offensive action. The referees shall refrain from declaring a foul if, in their opinion, such declaration would be an advantage to the offending player's team. It is always permissible for the referees to delay their whistle briefly to make sure that any offensive advantage is not taken away. When in doubt, the referees should make their call in favor of the team on offense. The referees should avoid calling ordinary defensive fouls (notably at the center position) away from the ball as this takes away the advantage and flow from the team on offense. If the referees have decided not to call a series of minor fouls committed by the defense, then they should not call an equally minor foul committed by the offense a moment later at that same spot.
18. **Calling the Center Position** Among the most important and difficult areas of the game for referees to call consistently is the play at the center position. Referees should consider the negative consequences of blowing a quick whistle. When the ball comes into the center position, the referees need to be patient in allowing the center forward the opportunity to play the ball. A quick whistle at the center position may take away an offensive advantage and eliminate, however unintentionally, the scoring threat of the center forward. If the center defender holds, sinks or pulls back the offensive player or is overly aggressive, an exclusion should be called unless calling a foul takes away a scoring advantage. If the center defender has established an appropriate defensive position, if the foul is not overly aggressive, and if there is no scoring advantage, an ordinary foul should be called to maintain offensive possession. If an overly aggressive foul does take away the offensive advantage, then an

exclusion foul (lost shooting opportunity) or penalty foul (loss of probable goal scoring opportunity inside the 5-meter area) should be called.

19. **Calling the Center Position When a Crash is Coming** A common strategy employed by the defense against a strong center is to swim a defender in from the outside (crash) to try to steal the entry pass. When this happens, the center defender must show both hands to show the referee he/she is not holding the center or either an ordinary or exclusion foul should be called against the center defender. If the center forward has an advantage and wants to try to shoot, the referees should wait momentarily and then call an exclusion foul if the defender commits an exclusion foul to prevent a shot attempt. If the center forward has no advantage and is fouled while trying to pass to an open teammate, it is correct for the referees to call a quick ordinary foul so that the team on offense maintains possession. The presence of a crash is not an excuse for the referee to make no call. However, if a bad entry pass is made that is closer to the defense, then the referee may refrain from calling a foul. If there is no crash coming, the referees should let the center forward work with the ball to try to create an advantage.
20. **Competing for Position at the Center Position** When the ball is not at the center position, referees should allow competing for position between the center forward and the center defender. However, neither player can commit an exclusion foul to gain a better position or to keep an existing position. Excessive force, overly physical play, arms out of the water and around an opponent, and suit grabbing to change or hold position should be called as an offensive foul. If the referee sees this type of foul, the referee should call it. If both the center forward and the center defender are facing each other and holding, the player on offense must let go and face the ball before the pass is thrown to the center position or an offensive foul should be called. At all times the referees should be in position to see who initiates the contact and call the appropriate foul.
21. **Calling Offensive Fouls** Referees should avoid calling minor fouls on the offense away from the ball if they do not affect the game. Obvious fouls (for example, holding above the water) by the player on offense should be called immediately. If the offense commits a gross or overly physical foul, such as kicking or elbowing, it should be called immediately as an offensive exclusion foul or even as an offensive misconduct foul.
22. **Impeding by Ducking Under** Impeding (Rule 20-9) is defined as preventing the free movement of an opponent who is not holding the ball. (Holding is lifting, carrying or touching the ball but does not include dribbling the ball.) Impeding includes ducking under to gain an advantage. If the player on offense gains an advantage by ducking under the defender, this should be called as an offensive foul and the ball turned over. This action can occur anywhere in the pool including on the perimeter when a driver ducks under to gain a position of advantage, at the center forward position, or in the transition from defense to offense. The referee should not call an exclusion foul on the defense if the referee does not see the player on offense duck under but then does see, immediately after that action, the defender put both arms in the air to show there is no foul. The defender does not need to get off the player on offense, as it was the player on offense who went under water to put the players into that position.
23. **Drive/Perimeter Defense** If a player on offense swims over or into a player on defense (defined as the area between the defender's shoulders), an offensive foul should be called and the ball turned over. Defenders have the right to protect themselves if the player on offense drives directly into the defender, but if the defender impedes or blocks the free movement of the player on offense by holding, sinking or pulling back, the defender should be excluded. A defender cannot hand-check, impede, hold or grab the suit of an attacker who is trying to

move. If a defender grabs the arm or hand or sinks a perimeter player before a pass has arrived, the defender should be excluded for holding (Rule 21-8).

24. **Calling the Transition Out of the Back Court** Referees should allow the former offensive and defensive players to separate after a possession change. The referee transitioning from front court to back court must be aware of the effort to separate at the center position and should call the appropriate offensive or defensive foul as determined by who either holds to prevent separation or who initiates the additional contact after separation.
25. **Fouling During a 6 on 5** Referees must carefully watch defenders during a 6 on 5 to be sure they are not sinking players on offense or grabbing their arms, especially on the posts. If they do, an exclusion foul (or a penalty foul if inside the 5-meter line and a goal was likely to occur) should be called.
26. **Simultaneous Exclusion Fouls (Rule 21-12)** The referees must be certain that both players have fouled each other simultaneously before calling a double exclusion. The referees should not call a double exclusion if a player on defense commits an exclusion foul and then a player on offense retaliates or vice versa. In this example, the first player should be excluded for 20 seconds, then the second player excluded for 20 seconds, with the first player back in, since their team was now awarded the ball. However, for example, if the center forward and the center defender are both being overly physical, it is correct for the referees to exclude both players and award the ball back to the offense with a new 30-second shot clock.