

Water Polo Points of Emphasis -2020-22

By NFHS on July 22, 2020

water polo

Putting the Ball Into Play

Putting the ball into play (or making a ball “live”) is defined as a player, who is clearly in a position most readily to take the free throw, having clear separation with the ball and hand above the water. The ball becomes live upon the release. Methods of putting the ball into play are: (1) passing the ball, (2) dropping the ball onto the water from a raised hand, (3) popping the ball up out of the hand, (4) tossing or placing the ball before swimming, and (5) transferring the ball from one hand to another above the water. Other actions such as faking, spinning the ball in the hand, and transferring the ball from one hand to another on the surface of the water no longer constitutes putting the ball in play. The rule change was made in order to support new methods of scoring from outside of 6 meters and from corner throws. Coaches are encouraged to teach players how to put the ball in play and when a ball becomes “live” in accordance with this change. This rule change will also provide clarity as to when the ball is put into play.

New Methods of Scoring

The NFHS has adopted several changes that will enhance a team’s opportunity to score a goal.

1. Scoring outside of 6 meters - The player may now score by:

- An immediate direct shot after being fouled outside of 6 meters (this method of scoring is no longer allowed at 5 meters);
- Putting the ball into play (making themselves “live”) then moving anywhere in the field of play to shoot. For a foul to be determined outside of 6 meters both the ball and the player must be completely outside the 6-meter line. As part of these changes, the 6-meter line (yellow) has been established as a visible marking to the course and the 5-meter line (red) will now be only used for penalty shots.

2. Scoring on a corner throw - Once a corner throw has been awarded, a player may score by:

- Taking an immediate direct shot after being awarded a corner throw;
- Putting the ball into play (making themselves “live”) then shoot, or swim any where in the field of play and shoot.

By increasing methods and options for scoring there will be greater offensive spacing and improved game flow. These changes will also open up the center forward position and make the 2-meter area more accessible within the flow of the game.

Player Advantage Inside 6 Meters

A player inside of 6 meters who has established a position of advantage in a “probable goal” scenario who is then fouled or impeded from behind, will be awarded a penalty shot regardless of whether or not they are holding the ball. The referee must first allow the player to complete the action before awarding the

penalty. It is important to understand that the release of the ball by the offensive player is not a factor in the official awarding a penalty shot. It is also important to understand that this is in a “probable goal” scenario. Thus, all three factors should be present in order for an official to reward a penalty shot: The player is (1) inside the 6-meter area, (2) has established position and is (3) fouled or impeded from behind. This rule change will promote freedom of movement and reduce player risk within the high impact moments of the game.

Leaving the Field of Play

A player, without leaving the water, may leave the field of play anywhere under the sideline or goal line. However, the player or the substitute must re-enter the field of play from the re-entry area nearest their goal line unless a stoppage has occurred such as a goal, time-out, or end of the period. This change has been added to reduce risk to players. A player who is injured must be able to immediately remove him/herself from the field of play if necessary. It is important to understand and instruct that a violation occurs only when a player leaves the water or re-enters the game illegally.

Goalkeeper Privileges

A goalkeeper may now move past half court and can become part of the offense. The goalkeeper may now take part in a shootout as a shooter or take a penalty shot. If a goalie is excluded another goalie may be substituted for an existing field player during the exclusion time. An exclusion is on the player, not the position. By allowing the goalkeeper to participate offensively it provides more scoring options for teams and encourages more tactical adjustments in different game scenarios.