

Scoring

The object in water polo is to put the ball into the opponent's net; the resulting action is called a goal. One point is awarded for each goal. The team with the most goals at the end of the game wins.

Goal

A goal is scored when the entire ball crosses the goal line between the posts and under the crossbar -- provided it hasn't been punched across the line by an offensive player. Other than the fist, any part of the body may be used to knock the ball into the goal. (On rare occasions a goal will score on a header or a deft kick.)

Duration

Play consists of four eight-minute periods, with two-minute breaks between quarters. Halftime is five minutes at which time teams switch ends of the pool. The clock stops temporarily for fouls and after a goal is scored.

Timeouts

Each team is entitled to two timeouts in a game, plus a third that can only be requested in overtime. Timeouts, which do not carry over into overtime if unused during regulation time, are one minute in length and called by the coach of the team in possession of the ball. After the timeout, the ball is put into play at the half distance line.

Shot clock

The second clock on the scoreboard is the shot clock, which indicates how much time remains for the offensive team to shoot the ball. A team is allowed 30 seconds to shoot the ball.

In play

Play is started each quarter by a sprint: Each team lines up along its own end line, and at the referee's whistle, sprints for mid-pool, where the ball is floating.

Offsides

The two-meter line marks offside violations. No offensive player may cross the two-meter line unless he or she is preceded by the ball. A two-meter (or offside) call results in a change of possession.

Ties and overtime

Ties are not broken in the preliminary round. In the final round for the men, overtime will be played for the 1-8 placing but not for 9-12. For the women, ties will be broken in all final round games (1-6). In a game in which a winner is required, two 3-minute periods, with one minute of rest between periods, will be played. If at the end of the two periods the game is still tied, there shall be a one-minute rest, and a penalty shootout to decide the winner.

Penalty Shootout

If, at the conclusion of extra time, the teams are tied, a penalty shootout similar to that used in soccer will take place. The referees, in the presence of the team captains, will conduct a coin toss to determine which team will shoot first. There will be no change of ends and each team will shoot at their opponent's goal. Each coach is to nominate five players to be shooters. These five players must be listed in the order in which they will shoot. The player must be eligible to play, that is, that athlete must be on the roster and may not have been excluded from the remainder of the game (third personal foul, game exclusion foul). During the shootout, a team may use any eligible player as a goalkeeper. The same player need not serve as goalkeeper for every throw. The teams will take alternative throws until all five shooters of each team have taken their throws. The first listed player on the first team will shoot, then the first listed player on the other team will shoot. Next, the second listed player on the first team will shoot, then the second listed player on the other team will shoot. If the teams are tied after all five players of each team have shot, then alternating pairs of shots (the first listed players of both teams, then the second listed players of both teams, and so on) will be taken until one team has a lead and both teams have taken an equal number of shots. The same players as listed originally by the coach must shoot and they must shoot in the same sequence.

Substitutions

A team can substitute after a goal, between quarters, when one of its players has been excluded or injured, or when one of its players leaves the pool at the re-entry area nearest his or her own goal line. The substitute may enter the pool from the re-entry area as soon as the player leaving has visibly risen to the surface within the re-entry area.