

Water Polo Points of Emphasis - 2018-20

By NFHS on July 18, 2018

water polo

Bench Decorum

NFHS water polo is unique, in that it is played in an education-based high school setting. The opportunity to participate in sports as a part of a young person's overall educational experience is a privilege that provides learning opportunities as an extension of the classroom. Through participation in high school water polo, students learn the concepts of sportsmanship, playing by the rules, teamwork and perseverance. While some of these principles can be learned simply through involvement in the sport, others require the intentional focus of coaches, administrators and other school leaders. Coaches must serve as role models and educators with regards to behavior and bench decorum. As such, high school water polo rules recognize the head coach as the individual responsible for all team personnel in or out of the water during the game. When the behavior of participants not in the water is inappropriate, the referees can issue yellow or red cards. The yellow card is now reserved only for the head coach and the "bench" (players collectively), which serves as a warning that their behavior is unacceptable. The next occurrence of disruptive behavior could result in a red card of a specific player or the head coach for failing to control behavior. Disruptive behavior of an assistant coach or other team personnel is an immediate red card to that individual.

Minor Acts of Misconduct

In keeping with the philosophy that high school water polo should be conducted as an extension of the classroom, the NFHS Water Polo Committee wishes to emphasize the importance of good sporting behavior. Multiple minor acts of misconduct will not be permitted without a subsequent penalty. Upon the first offense, the player will be issued a 20-second exclusion. The second offense will result in a game exclusion. Consequently, State Association conduct policies for game exclusions will apply.

Simulation

Simulation is now defined as an action taken by a player with the intent of causing the referee to award a foul incorrectly against an opposing player. Penalties for simulation for both offensive and defensive players have been established. The purpose of this rule change is to reduce deceptive and unsporting behavior by penalizing the use of simulation during play. Coaches are encouraged to teach their players how to use their bodies to gain distance from the defensive player in order to be able to make a good pass or shot. The new rule is intended to improve conduct and promote fair play.

Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning or Thunder Disturbances

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) convened in March 2018 and revised its “Guidelines on Handling Practices and Contests During Lightning or Thunder Disturbances” (see Appendix H). These revised guidelines provide a model policy for consideration by those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. Even though large, substantial buildings containing electrical wiring and plumbing are generally considered as safe, there may still be a potential risk of lightning injury in certain situations indoors. Lightning can enter a building through electrical or telephone wiring and plumbing, which makes locker-room shower areas, swimming pools landline telephones, and electrical appliances unsafe during thunderstorms because of the potential contact injury. Even if the building is customarily grounded for electricity, lightning is often fast enough and powerful enough to spread and injure someone before the ground fault interrupters or other systems are triggered to protect the person touching any of these systems. Indoor swimming pools are just as dangerous as outdoor pools because lighting, heating, plumbing, and drains used in indoor pools ultimately connect to materials outside the building that can be used to transmit the lightning energy into the building or pool. If people cannot reach a safer location when thunderstorms are in their area, they should at least avoid the riskiest locations and activities, including elevated places, open areas, tall isolated objects, and being in, on, or at the edge of large bodies of water, including swimming pools, as all of these locations are not lightning safe.

Remember, the NFHS guidelines state that activities should be suspended at the first sound of thunder or sighting of lightning and should not be resumed until 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is seen. Host management should have a plan in place regarding inclement weather that includes assignment of a staff member to monitor local weather conditions, development of an evacuation plan, and development of criteria for suspension and resumption of play. The lightning safety policy should be reviewed annually with all administrators, coaches, officials, and meet personnel. Student-athletes and their parents should be informed of the lightning policy at the start of each sports season. A lightning safety policy is only effective if it is enforced. Everyone should be aware of lightning as a threat, and those who oversee participants, whether they are responsible for health care, are coaches, or meet officials, should be proactive in vacating all student-athletes and spectators to a safer location.