

**APPENDIX E**  
**modified 11.29.16**  
**Effective January 1, 2017**

**USA Water Polo Playing Rules**  
**Modifications for 12U & 10U National Competitions and FAQ**

In the interest of improved player development in younger athletes, USA Water Polo has instituted modifications to the playing rules for the 12U and 10U age divisions. The modifications are currently in effect and apply to all USA Water Polo National Sanctioned events, (Rock-tober, ODP, National Junior Olympics, and qualification tournaments) Please note that although encouraged to do so, member sanctioned events are not required to follow these rule modifications. Official playing rules for any event should be clearly communicated to all participants ahead of time, including club administration, coaches, (and in turn players), and referees.

**Where do I find more information on the new 12U and 10U rule modifications?**

Information regarding all USAWP playing rules can be found online on the USA Water Polo Website under resources/rules & ethics.

- [USAWP RULES](#)

**Modified Rules Summary:**

**1. No direct shot after foul outside of 5 meters.**

A direct shot at the goal will not be allowed after a free throw is awarded as the result of a foul being called.

On an initial infraction, the referee will remove the ball from the water and inform BOTH teams of the rule modification. Any goal that may have been scored will be dis-allowed. The referee will then return the ball to the team that was in possession at the time of the infractions and award a free throw. The shot clock **will not** be reset. Subsequent violations shall result in a contra foul against the offending team and a free throw awarded to the opposing team.

**2. On an Exclusion Foul there is no specific time a player has to serve in the exclusion area.**

The excluded player must still swim to the re-entry box, rise to surface within the re-entry area, but he/she or a substitute in the re-entry box may enter the field as soon as the original excluded player raises their head above the water in the re entry area.

If a time out is called, or if the referee stops play during a player advantage situation, (6 on 5), the teams will restart play at even strength.

If an exclusion foul is called as a period of play ends the teams will start even at the beginning of the next period.

If an excluded player interferes with play after being excluded and that interference results in a penalty foul, the excluded player will remain in the field of play for the taking of the penalty shot.

In the case of a double exclusion the referee shall remove the ball from the water to remove the excluded players and then return the ball to play when both players have reached their respective re-entry areas.

**2. “Zone” Defense is not allowed once a team that is on Offense has all of their players in their “attacking” half of the field of play.**

Once all of an attacking team’s players are inside their offensive (attacking) half, “Zone” defense shall not be allowed.

Simply put, “zone” defense can be defined as double teaming a player on offense that is not in possession of the ball.

A defender is still free to play the ball at any time, anywhere, and is free to anticipate a turnover and transition from defense to offense at any time as long as they are not in position to double team or “drop” on a player without the ball.

Zone defense, or two on one defense, is not allowed unless the attacking team does not bring all their players into their attacking half of the field of play, or if one team is a player(s) short due to a brutality foul or players having “fouled out” of the game.

On first occurrence of a Defensive player in violation of the “No Zone” Rule, there will be a stoppage of play and an explanation to both teams by the referee. The offensive team will maintain possession and will be awarded a free throw with a reset of the shot clock.

Continued infractions by either team will result in an exclusion foul on the offending player. This rule modification will not apply to player advantage (6 on 5) situations.

**4. Injury to Players**

If the referee recognizes and stops play for an injury, immediate substitution shall be allowed regardless of injury and that player may return to the game at any time as allowed by substitution rules.

**5. Size of Goal**

Current goal size for 10U age division shall be approximately 2 meters x 0.75 meters. There will be **no** mandated difference in goal size at the 12U level at this time. 12U age division will continue to use standard size goals.

**“No Zone” Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):**

**If two athletes on the perimeter are in close proximity, can the defensive player guarding the player without the ball attempt to steal the ball from near by offensive player?**

Yes, this is good defensive awareness. A defensive player is always free to play the ball.

**What happens when an athlete leaves their defensive position to go to offense early?  
AKA: “Cherry-Picking”**

This is fine and legal as long as that defensive player is not leaving their position to double team a player on offense without the ball.

**May a defensive player that commits an ordinary foul “drop” PRIOR to the ball being passed?**

No, this would fit the definition of “double teaming” a player without the ball. The defensive player may adjust their position however they choose as long as they do not interfere with the free throw or end up in a double team situation.

**Can a team send a defensive player to press the opposing Goal Keeper?**

Yes.

**Will athletes be punished for being lost or out of position on defense in regard to the “Press” rule?**

No, Referee’s are instructed to be involved as teachers of the game. For first offense of a rule during a game, the referee will do his/her best to remove the ball from the field of play and explain the rule violation. This is considered a warning to both teams. If an athlete is confused, lost or tired during the course of a game and is not pressing while on defense, the referee will encourage the athlete to get into proper positioning. The spirit of the defensive rule is to take away deliberate zone defense and double- teaming away from the ball.

**Why is there no longer a 9 Meter course marker?**

The 9 Meter “zone” has been eliminated in regard to the No “Zone” Defense rule. The rule shall apply when all of an offensive’s team’s players are inside their offensive or “attacking” half.