



NCAA WATER POLO

RULE INTERPRETATIONS

September 22, 2021

NCAA Water Polo Rule 9 specifies where the penalty throw is to be taken (Section 1), the position of other players and the goalkeeper during the throw (Section 2), and how the penalty throw is to be taken (Section 4).

Section 1 states that the shot “shall be taken... from any point on the opponent’s 5-meter line”.

Interpretation: Just as an ordinary shot is taken and the shot clock is reset when the ball leaves the hand of the shooter, the penalty throw is “taken” when the ball leaves the hand of the shooter. To comply with Section 1, the ball must be released on the 5-meter line. Nothing in Section 1 prohibits the shooter from being lined up outside the 5-meter line when the whistle is blown for the throw as long as the ball is released on the 5-meter line.

Section 2 states that all players (except the defending goalkeeper) “shall leave the 5-meter area”. Section 2 also allows the defense first right to take a position on each side closest to the player taking the throw but at least 2 meters away.

Interpretations: 1) The Section 2 requirement for at least 2 meters of separation from the player taking the penalty throw applies to all defensive players, not just those to the side of the shooter. 2) If the player taking the penalty throw chooses to line up outside the 5-meter line when the whistle is blown, nothing in Section 2 requires the defensive players on each side of the shooter also to take a position the same distance outside the 5 meter line. It is only required that all defensive players except the goalkeeper leave the 5-meter area and be at least 2 meters from the player taking the penalty throw.

Section 4 requires the player taking the penalty throw to be in possession of the ball and to “immediately throw it with an uninterrupted movement directly at the goal”. Section 4 also describes and illustrates some examples of how the penalty throw can be taken properly.

Interpretation: Nothing in Section 4 implies that the described and illustrated examples are the only proper ways to take the penalty throw.

Athletes have developed techniques for taking the penalty throw that are not described in, but comply with Section 4 if they result in an immediate and uninterrupted throw. Of particular interest currently is the technique in which the shooter lines up for the shot with their feet somewhat forward, rotates over the hips as the ball is pulled back and up for the throw, and sculls forward with their free hand.

This technique complies with Section 4 as long as the throw is immediate and uninterrupted and is allowable as long as the ball is released on the 5-meter line in compliance with Section 1. There have been instances in which this technique results in the ball being released inside the 5-meter line, in some cases by a meter or more. This is a violation of Section 1 that must be called by the referee as an incorrectly taken penalty throw (Rule 6, Section 12), resulting in the award

of the ball to the defensive team. Players taking the penalty throw using this technique can ensure that they release the ball on the 5-meter line in compliance with Section 1 by lining up for the throw a desired distance outside the 5-meter line.

For questions regarding these interpretations please contact NCAA Water Polo Secretary Rules Editor, Dave Alberstein – albersteind@gmail.com.