

***Wisdom of a Wednesday (on a Friday)***  
***October 1, 2021***

I hope this WOW finds you and your loved ones doing well. September flew by and October, along with conference play, is here. Many games have been played with fans in the stands and many are being streamed so there should be no excuse for missing out on NCAA water polo.

My thoughts this week are focused on the need for all referees to do their job completely. While what is below may seem redundant, please take the time to read this through and make sure you are applying all the rules correctly.

Let's take a look at the rules, specifically pre-game player inspections...

**Rule 2 Section 4**

Article 4 Before taking part in a game, players shall remove any articles likely to cause injury, including, but not limited to, the following: jewelry, watches, swim goggles and sharp fingernails or toenails. The referees shall order the removal of any item they consider likely to cause injury, either to the player wearing the item or to the opposing players in the game.

Article 5 A player will be permitted to wear mouthguard, prescription goggles of the type designed specifically for contact sports to withstand impact and to decrease the likelihood of injury to the eye, a protective plastic face mask prescribed by a physician that closely adheres to the upper face, a plastic protective nose guard and other similar protective devices designed to prevent injury prescribed by a physician ***if the institution has written approval from the NCAA secretary-rules editor. This letter must be provided to the referees before each game.***

Let's be clear, if during your pre-game inspections, you find a player is using something other than simply tape to assist with an injury, you MUST inquire and inspect further to determine if the team has written approval from Dave Alberstein, the Secretary Rules Editor (SRE). Some injuries will occur during warm up or in the course of the game. In these circumstances, you, the referee team, will make the decision if anything other than tape is used.

It can be challenging for our SRE to determine from pictures if a device or "soft cast" is acceptable. If you are confronted with a situation where no written approval has been granted, then the player must remove the device or not participate in the game. No matter the player or the team, if it is likely to cause harm to ANY PLAYER, then it cannot be allowed. In addition to your conference supervisor of

officials, both Dave and I are here to support you so please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

## **Rule 2 Section 5**

Article 1 Players shall not have grease, oil or any similar substance on the body. If a referee ascertains before the start of play that such a substance has been used, the referee shall order it to be removed immediately. The start of play shall not be delayed for the substance to be removed. If the offense is detected after the play has started, the player must remove the foreign substance or trim the nails before the player can re-enter the pool as a substitute.

*Note: A meeting of captains and referees shall be held before the game to discuss the ground rules, the fingernails rule and to answer any questions. Coaches may attend this meeting with the captains and referees. The referees shall inspect all players for articles likely to cause injury: toenails and fingernails that are sharp/dangerous; the presence of oil, grease or similar substances on the body; the presence of goggles; as well as the color of the swim cap and conformance with the rules on suits. The referee must order an offending player to correct the violation immediately. Should an offense be detected after the game has started, the referee must remove the player, order the player to cut the nails or remove the offending substance immediately, and then must resume the game. If a referee instructs a player to trim the nails or remove a foreign substance, the referee must check the player before that player may enter or re-enter the game. The game shall not be delayed for this to occur.*

Article 2 A player shall not use a substance on the hand(s) to improve the grip on the ball. If such a substance is found, the referee shall order the player to remove the substance and shall inspect the player's hands before the player returns to the game. The referee shall warn both teams through the coaches that if another player is found with this substance on his/her hand(s), that player shall be removed for the remainder of the game.

As you are conducting your nail checks, I highly recommend that you look at the toenails, the fingernails, the arms and the palms of their hands. Fortunately, we do not see it very often, but we still must be look for foreign substances on the body or hands. Usually, a sticky substance on the hands will cause the water to appear in drops and sit on the skin instead of the water being absorbed. Foreign substances also tend to cause the skin to be discolored slightly or appear shiny. In addition, excessive sunscreen should not be allowed as it can be transferred to the ball. Should you suspect a foreign substance prior to the start of the game you must require the player to remove/wipe it off. Once they have, you must check them again prior to allowing them to participate in the game.

Excellent and consistent referee judgement cannot be emphasized enough and is required prior to the first whistle of the game. The better and more consistent the judgement, the better the referee. Please always endeavor to be clear, consistent & correct. Embrace the

NCAA game, the player and coach creativity, the different rules and the unique student athlete experience.

As always, more to follow..

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