



## Policies and Procedures Manual of the Georgia Water Polo League

Approved by GWPL 7/15/2025

In the inaugural and following years of this League, *your* League, we anticipate that these policies and procedures will evolve and change as we learn from *you* and hear *your* feedback. Please work with us, the Board, to develop a foundation and culture which supports and develops our players and participants. Water polo is an amazingly dynamic, physical sport, and our players and teams deserve our mature best. We welcome your suggestions for improvement!

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## **I. Game Rules**

1. GWPL follows the USAWP for Water Polo (2022-2024 rule cycle).
2. The following are exceptions to the USAWP rules as applied to GWPL games:
  - 2.1. Referees do not verify the availability of duplicate caps or swim suits. There is no video assistant referee.
  - 2.2. Due to system limitations, there will not be a 20 second shot clock reset following a shot recovered by the shooting team, and the shot clock buzzer will make the same sound as the game clock buzzer.
  - 2.3. 7 minute periods for A, B and Women's levels; 6-minute with running clock in Development level.
  - 2.4. To avoid a forfeit, teams must start with a minimum of 7 players, but may continue with fewer than 7 players.
  - 2.5. If a game is tied at the end of regulation time:
    - 2.5.1. If the game is in regular season play the game will end in a tie.
    - 2.5.2. If the game is a post-season (or tournament game that requires a definite outcome), the game shall be decided by penalty shots per the USAWP rules.
3. All protective gear (eye shields, padded goalie caps, etc.) must be cleared with the officials prior to the start of the game. The coach must approach the officials and inform them of the players and the specific protective gear to be worn prior to the start of game play.
  - 3.1. Eye shields must conform to ASTM F803, and must be marked by the manufacturer indicating conformance with ASTM F803.
  - 3.2. The Kap7 Head Guard or equivalent may be worn by goalies ONLY (except see 3.3). Field players are not permitted anything other than a swim cap under their water polo caps
  - 3.3. The Kap7 Head Guard or equivalent may be worn by field players if medically recommended.

## **II. Protest Procedures**

1. Protests
  - 1.1. Protests are handled by the referees calling the game in which a protestable incident occurs.
  - 1.2. Protests may be lodged only for misapplication of the rules, equipment malfunction and errors in recording information or other desk errors.
  - 1.3. Protests may not be filed for judgment calls.
  - 1.4. Red and yellow cards are judgement calls, and not protestable.
  - 1.5. A referee may alter a decision provided that it is done before the ball is put into play.
  - 1.6. Differences of opinion of the referees shall not serve as a basis for protest or appeal.
2. When can protests be filed
  - 2.1. A coach wishing to file a protest must do so by notifying the referee at the time of the incident, at the next goal or timeout, or at the start of the next period, whichever comes first.
  - 2.2. If an incident occurs in the fourth quarter, a coach should follow the same procedures as above or has until five minutes after the game, whichever occurs first.
  - 2.3. If a coach fails to notify the referee by the procedure listed above, the opportunity to protest is lost.
  - 2.4. The GWPL will not entertain protests filed directly with the Board.

### 3. Procedure

- 3.1. If a coach wishes to protest during a game, the coach should approach the referee as soon as possible after the event occurred at the next normal stoppage of play, without taking the advantage away from either team, and inform the referee of the rule or event that the coach is protesting.
- 3.2. If the referees agree that the protest is not for a judgment call and that they can handle the protest at that time, the referees will rule on the protest immediately.
- 3.3. If the protest is upheld, if necessary, the game will be replayed with the clocks reset to the point of the event protested.
- 3.4. The coach must file a brief written description of the protest after the game, signed by the referees, in order to have a written record of the protest. This may be done on the scoresheet or on a separate sheet.

## III. Referees

1. After the pregame meeting, the head coach or an assistant coach, and captain, are the only individuals permitted to address the referees. The head coach, assistant coach, and captain may address the referees at intervals between periods and during timeouts, or with the permission of the referee or, in the case of the head coach, when filing a protest. The head coach, assistant coach and captain may discuss rule clarifications and misapplications of rules with the officials at these times, but may not comment to or address the referee during the actual play of the game. Judgment calls are not an appropriate topic of discussion at any time.

## IV. Gameday Policies

### 1. PRE-GAME

#### 1.1. CANCELLATION/FORFEIT POLICY

- 1.1.1. It is highly important that a team be at all of its scheduled games. The success of our league is dependent on all teams being present and playing in all games. In the event that you are unable to field a team for one of your games, you must call the GWPL scheduling coordinator as soon as possible.

#### 1.2. ARRIVAL

- 1.2.1. You must arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.
- 1.2.2. Teams scheduled for the first game at a venue on a given day must assist with the set up of the pool, goals, tables, etc. Plan accordingly for arrival time.
- 1.2.3. See Section IV.7 for additional requirements and consequences for team arrival and readiness to play.

#### 1.3. ROSTER and SCORE SHEET

- 1.3.1. Upon arrival, you must present the table with a USAWP roster for your team including each player's full name, cap number, and photograph.
- 1.3.2. Upon arrival, you must present the table a team-specific USAWP score sheet.

#### 1.4. CAPTAINS' MEETING

- 1.4.1. The official will hold a captains' meeting at least 2 minutes prior to the start.

#### 1.5. REFEREE

- 1.5.1. If the referee does not show up, call the GWPL head referee or acting head referee.
- 1.6. COACHES
  - 1.6.1. USAWP allows for an “interim coach” to serve during a game if no rostered coaches are available, so long as that person is SafeSport certified and has passed a background check. For example, a team administrator, if they satisfy the conditions above, may be on the bench and coach, but only if no other USAWP rostered coach is available during that time.
2. DURING THE GAME
  - 2.1. BEHAVIOR/CONDUCT – See Section V; GWPL Code of Conduct
  - 2.2. TABLE
    - 2.2.1. Teams must provide 2 Table Workers per weekend game, as described below. The two workers need not be from the team’s own supporters. Exception to this requirement is permitted for non-Atlanta area games, as well as weekday games, in which event each team must provide at least 1 experienced table worker. If the table worker is under 18 years of age, he/she must be approved by the head referee.
      - 2.2.1.1. For each game, the 1st team listed on the schedule (white caps) should provide 2 volunteers as table workers, one of whom is designated to run the clock.
      - 2.2.1.2. For each game, the 2nd team listed on the schedule (dark caps) should provide 2 volunteers as table workers, one of whom is designated to keep the book.
      - 2.2.1.3. The 2 undesignated volunteers will either call, manage the flags, or train.
    - 2.2.2. Teams will be charged \$50 per game if no table workers are provided.
3. PLAYERS
  - 3.1. Players may not wear any jewelry during the game. Also, nails should be cut short.
  - 3.2. Changing into and out of swimsuits outside designated locker room areas by athletes at any level of competition is prohibited at GWPL events. Prohibited areas include, but are not limited to, practice, team, spectator seating sections, as well as warm-up and competition pool decks. Athletes must remain in full uniform (suits completely on) for the entire duration of their warm up, and post-game activities (cool down, team chat, etc.).
4. GAME GUIDELINES TO MANAGE UNEVENLY MATCHED PLAY
  - 4.1. At any time after completion of the first half of the game, if there is a goal differential of 10 or more the Referee at their sole discretion may transition to a running clock, in the interest of maintaining game scheduling. The referee shall inform both coaches of the transition to running clock.
  - 4.2. Once the running clock is initiated, the game clock shall run continuously, with the exception of the period between quarters and any timeout taken by a team or officials (ball called from the water), injuries, penalty throws, or a score by either team. By mutual agreement with the referee and both coaches, the clock may also run continuously following a goal, except for goals occurring in the last 1:00 minute of a period. The shot clock shall start/stop as usual.

## 5. TEAM REPRESENTATIVES ON DECK

- 5.1. Each team will be allowed a single representative on the deck for the purpose of video recording of their games.
- 5.2. A team's on-deck video representative may not record the opposing team's bench areas during stoppage of play (timeouts, quarters, halftime, or post-game).
- 5.3. A team's on-deck video representative may be ordered to leave the deck at any time by the game's referee(s).
- 5.4. If, in the sole judgment of the game's referee(s), a team's on-deck video representative disrupts a game in progress and refuses to comply with instructions, the referee may stop the game and declare the game forfeit to the advantage of the opposing team.

## 6. POST-GAME

- 6.1. REPORTING SCORES: Each team must report the score through the "report game scores" submission form on the "Season Schedule" page of the League website (<https://georgiawaterpololeague.com/schedule>) by the end of the day, or by such other means as established by the League and communicated to the teams.
- 6.2. Teams scheduled for the last playing slot on a given day must assist with the take-down of the pool as needed for each facility.

## 7. FORFEITURE AND LATE ARRIVALS/UNREADY TO PLAY

### 7.1. REGULAR SEASON:

#### 7.1.1. Late arrivals and late preparation:

- 7.1.1.1. Teams should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to scheduled game time, and must be ready to start by game time, unless there is mutual consent between the competing teams to wait an additional period of time (if possible based on the pool availability), or to reschedule. Good sportsmanship would include taking into account unusual traffic situations and other unavoidable circumstances, but all teams have the responsibility to plan for normal traffic patterns.
- 7.1.1.2. In the event there is not mutual consent to wait or reschedule, the late arriving team shall be given a 5-minute grace period. For each minute elapsed during the grace period the late arriving team remains unready to start, the referee shall award 1 goal to the other team.
- 7.1.1.3. After the 5-minutes has elapsed a forfeit will be declared against the team not prepared to start.
- 7.1.1.4. A team must have at least 7 players present at the start of the game to avoid the forfeit process as stated above.
- 7.1.1.5. The forfeiting team shall be assessed a 5-0 loss to be reflected in their record but will not be assessed a monetary penalty so long as the game is still played as exhibition with borrowed players. Otherwise, there will be a \$100 penalty paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit.

- 7.1.1.6. If a team is present, but is otherwise not prepared to play (e.g., nails are not properly trimmed as found during pre-game nail check), then 7.1.1.2 shall apply.
- 7.1.2. Rescheduling: A team that knows in advance it will be unable to play in a scheduled game must notify the other team and the GWPL scheduling coordinator as far in advance as possible, and may either accept a technical forfeit as outlined below, or may request a reschedule.
- 7.1.2.1. If a reschedule is requested, the other team is not under obligation to reschedule the game, but may do so in the interest of sportsmanship.
- 7.1.2.2. No penalty or forfeit will be assessed if the game is rescheduled by mutual agreement as played as normal at the rescheduled time. However, if there is no pool time or referees available for a reschedule, or no agreement on a time to reschedule, the team requesting the reschedule must take a technical forfeit.
- 7.1.3. Technical forfeit: A “technical forfeit” would be a forfeit that a team voluntarily chooses to take, which will not provide any competitive advantage for the forfeiting team. An example would be having an insufficient number of players available to play due to a school scheduling conflict, but by “borrowing” players from another team, the forfeiting team is ready, willing and able to play the game as an exhibition.
- 7.1.3.1. A technical forfeit is a 5-0 loss for the team forfeiting.
- 7.1.3.2. There will be no monetary penalty as long as the other team provides notification at least 24 hours in advance and the game takes place as exhibition. If such notice was not given, or if an exhibition game was not played, the forfeiting team will be assessed a \$100 penalty to be paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit.
- 7.1.4. No shows: If a team is a “no-show” for a scheduled game (i.e. does not notify the GWPL scheduling coordinator and the other team at least 24 hours ahead of game time and does not show up for the game), the “no-showing” team will be assessed a 5-0 loss and will be charged \$100, to be paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit. A team/representative that does not notify the GWPL scheduling coordinator and the other team at least 24 hours ahead of game time is a violation of the forfeit policy. If a team fails to attend a scheduled event and is a “no-show” the team will be assessed a 5-0 loss and will be fined \$100, to be paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit.
- 7.1.5. Failure to complete a game: Any team that starts but fails to complete a game in progress will be charged a forfeit. In such event, the existing score or 5-0, whichever reflects a greater goal difference, shall be recorded as the game score. If there is a finding by the GWPL Board that failure to complete is an intentional act, the forfeiting team shall be fined \$100. This fee is to be paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit. Exceptions to the above include participation depletion due to injury or due to game exclusions.
- 7.1.6. Strategic forfeits: The GWPL prohibits strategic forfeits.
- 7.1.6.1. A strategic forfeit differs from other forfeits in that a strategic forfeit is defined as an intentional, strategic, or has the goal to gain a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is not limited to the advantage afforded to the forfeiting team but also applies to the team(s) that may be disadvantaged because of the forfeit. For example, causing a team to change its status or seeding in relation to other teams on its face is a strategic forfeit and subject to review by the Board.

7.1.6.2. The GWPL Board determines in its discretion whether or not the reason for the forfeit is strategic or otherwise. Forfeitures announced in advance or the game is played as exhibition; a strategic forfeit will be scored as a 5-0 loss for the forfeiting team. A team who committed such a forfeit will be assessed a penalty fine of \$100 paid to GWPL within 2 weeks of the forfeit. In addition, to discourage strategic forfeits, the GWPL Board reserves the right to imposed additional penalties at its discretion.

7.2. POST-SEASON TOURNAMENTS:

7.2.1. Strategic Forfeits during Tournament: Strategic forfeits during a post-season tournament are prohibited. If a team strategically forfeits in their tournament, that team will be fined \$500, plus GWPL Board reserves the right in its discretion to impose additional penalties, up to and including disqualification from the rest of the tournament and/or barring tournament participation the following year.

7.2.2. Other Forfeits: Unintentional forfeits as those referred to as caused by events or circumstance beyond the control of a team during a post-season shall be handled the same as in the regular season.

7.2.3. Opting-Out: If a team knows it will have difficulty fielding a full team during one or more games during the post-game tournament, they may opt out of the tournament altogether and thereby avoid any forfeit penalty. To opt-out, the team must notify the GWPL Board via email at least 7 days prior to the first game of the tournament.

8. FINES:

8.1. Failure to Pay Fines:

8.1.1. Failure to pay forfeit fines within the specified two weeks shall result in a late charge of 10% of the fine.

8.1.2. Failure to pay any fines or late charges by the end of the regular season causes the delinquent team to be removed from the applicable post-season tournament.

8.1.3. Unpaid fees will be added to the team registration fees the following GWPL season.

8.2. Waiver of Forfeit Fees: The GWPL Board reserves the right to waive or reduce forfeit fees on its sole discretion.

## V. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Process

1. The Georgia Water Polo League desires to foster a harmonious and competitive environment for all participants in the game of water polo. "Participants" include teams, players, coaches, parents, legal guardians, and spectators. Players play; coaches coach; spectators support their teams; and referees call the game.

1.1. Adult participants are expected to remain courteous and respectful at all times. Coaching staff are expected to remain professional and objective in their interactions with referees, volunteers, table workers, and League personnel at all times. All disagreements must be handled professionally and dispassionately (this is school-level water polo, after all). A goal of the GWPL is to develop mature, well-grounded, responsible athletes; what message is sent when the adults in the room cannot control themselves, and cannot behave maturely?



- 1.2. Participants should engage in respectful and honest behavior. GWPL does not permit the use of any profane language or actions that can hurt or frighten another person.
  - 1.3. Respect for the schools and venues that are hosting water polo matches is critical. Any inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to: vandalism, aggressive or threatening behavior, harassment of any type, inappropriate language, or any other inappropriate activity, whether in the water or at the facility where matches are held, will result in consequences, up to and including suspension of players, ejection of participants from facilities, and fines levied against teams.
2. GWPL insists that all Participants comply with the letter and the spirit of the following Rules:
    - 2.1. Abusive language, insulting language and profanity will not be tolerated.
    - 2.2. Fighting with or taunting opposing players, coaches or spectators will not be tolerated.
      - 2.2.1. In-game discipline is the job of the referees and coaches. Let the process work and do not retaliate.
    - 2.3. Any and all acts of disrespect to Referees will not be tolerated.
    - 2.4. Any and all attempts to intentionally harm or injure another player will not be tolerated.
    - 2.5. Actions that undermine the integrity and function of a team or of the League, either individually or in concert with others, are contrary to the code of conduct of the GWPL, and may lead to disciplinary action.
    - 2.6. Threats or intimidation, in any GWPL context or forum, by any member, is a violation of the GWPL code of conduct. Members who are found to have engaged in threatening or intimidating conduct may be subject to disciplinary action.
    - 2.7. The GWPL Board may investigate player or non-player code of conduct violations based on submitted written complaints or based on conduct it witnesses or experiences at anytime in the course of its business. The GWPL may appoint a body, or request the assistance of third parties, to investigate code of conduct violations.
3. EFFECT
    - 3.1. Any Participant found responsible for breach of these conduct rules shall be ejected from the game in which the conduct occurred and may face possible further disciplinary actions, which may include suspension and/or permanent exclusion from one or more water polo matches. If the ejected participant is not a student, they must leave the venue.
    - 3.2. Any player or coach who receives a red card is required to sit out their next scheduled game in which they would have participated. Further disciplinary action may also be applied.
    - 3.3. If a member, player or non-player, has been found to have violated the code of conduct, the GWPL may impose such sanctions as it deems fit, up to and including suspension of membership or expulsion from membership.
4. OTHER PRINCIPLES
    - 4.1. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players. Teams are responsible for the conduct of the spectators whom they bring to matches. Teams, coaches, and players are responsible for

informing the spectators they bring to matches of these rules. Accordingly, team conduct may result in penalties to coaches and spectator conduct may result in penalties to those who bring the spectators. If a team's spectator is excluded by the referee from the pool due to misconduct, that spectator's team shall be fined \$250.

- 4.2. The referees' judgment is final.
- 4.3. No one other than coaches and team captains may address questions of rules application to the referees, and only during stoppages of play.
- 4.4. Referees are human beings who can only call what they can see and hear. Accordingly, coaches are requested to bring issues to the attention of referees before the end of games so that referees are alerted to watch for inappropriate conduct.
- 4.5. Coaches may conduct internal team discipline as they see fit.

## 5. USE OF VIDEO AND POST-GAME DISCIPLINARY PETITION PROCESS

- 5.1. In the event an incident occurs which is not noticed by the referee(s) during a match, the head coach or appointed team representative may file a petition for post-discipline for the alleged incident.
  - 5.1.1. To qualify for a petition, the incident must have resulted in visible physical injury documented immediately proximate to the incident of concern, or be supported by undisputable video evidence. Note that in such an instance, it is almost certain that an incident report must be filed through both USAWP and the Center for SafeSport. Should the Center of SafeSport take up the matter under their jurisdiction, the GWPL will suspend its exploration of the incident pending further action from SafeSport.
  - 5.1.2. Petitions must be filed within 2 hours of the alleged incident, with supporting evidence submitted within 48 hours. The Board will provide the opposing head coach a copy of the petition within 24 hours of receipt. The opposing head coach will have 48 hours from delivery of the petition to respond with comments. The Board will collect comments from the game officials regarding the alleged incident.
  - 5.1.3. The Board will communicate results of findings with the head coaches involved once a decision has been reached. Updates will be provided to the head coaches involved within a week's time of the initial petition filing. The Board's decisions are final. Note that action from USAWP and/or the Center for SafeSport may be additional.

## 6. PLAYER OR COACH SUSPENSION

- 6.1. Acts of misconduct, brutality and red cards will incur game suspensions as found in the USAWP Rules, Appendix C, "Regulations for Disciplinary Actions In Water Polo," at minimum.
- 6.2. Depending on the infraction, suspensions may range from 1 game up to lifetime.

## **VI. Tie-Break Policy for Seeding at End-of-Season Tournament**

### **Tie Breaker System: Two Teams**

If the win/loss records of two teams are the same, the team that won in their head-to-head competition is the higher seed. If these teams each beat one another, tie breaking will proceed as follows:

1. The goal differential in their games is used to break the tie, with a limit of 5 goals.
2. If the goal differential in their contests against one another is the same, the total of goals scored against each other is used.
3. If the total of goals scored between the teams is equal, the goal differential against all common opponents seeded higher is used, with a limit of 5 goals per game.
4. If no common opponents are seeded higher, the goal differential against the highest seeded common opponent is used, with a limit of 5 goals.
5. If 1-4 does not break the tie, a coin flip will determine the higher seed.

### **Tie Breaker System: 3 or More Teams**

If more than two teams are tied in won/loss records, goal differentials among the teams tied serves as the tiebreaker to determine the best team within the group until only two teams remain. The final two teams use their head-to-head results to break the tie. If the top two teams based on goal differentials are tied, the tie is broken with the results of their head-to-head competition.

1. If the goal differential among all teams tied is the same:
2. The total of goals scored against each other is used.
3. If the total of goals scored between the teams is equal, the goal differential between common opponents seeded higher will be used to determine ranking. (This may require averaging the goal differential per game if the number of games between common opponents is unequal) with a limit of 5 goals per game.
4. Should teams be tied in won/loss record and they have not played each other, goal differentials against common opponents that are seeded above them are used, with a limit of 5 goals per game.
5. If no common opponents are seeded higher, the goal differential against the highest seeded common opponent is used, with a limit of 5 goals.
6. If 1-4 does not break the tie, a blind draw will determine the order of seeding.

## **VII. Teams and Players (“Geography” policy)**

### **1. TEAMS**

1.1 Home Location: Teams whose home or training pool is not on their campus must provide the name and addresses of their members’ school of attendance and practice venue(s), and designate an “Associated High School” based on this information as part of their annual membership application.

1.1.1 Until such time that water polo becomes a recognized varsity sport within the State of Georgia, clubs need not have a formal relationship with the designated High School.

1.1.2 The Associated School should represent the school of attendance for the majority of the high-school aged members of the Club.

1.1.3 For Clubs with high-school aged members from multiple schools in the same school district, the designated school should be the school that is geographically closest to its collective members.

1.1.4 The GWPL may request a change to a Club's Associated School if the school of attendance of the team's collective membership does not adequately map to the Associated School.

1.1.5 The GWPL may assign a Club's Associated School if it determines that the Club's designation is inconsistent with the attendance of its school-aged membership.

1.1.6 The Associated School designated for each Club will be used by the GWPL for application of player eligibility policies.

1.2 Roster Compliance: Teams are responsible to ensure their rosters comply with player eligibility rules at all times. Failure to properly enforce can result in forfeited games, suspension (player, coach, administrator and/or team) or expulsion as determined by the GWPL member teams based on the severity of the failure.

1.3 Team Review All teams starting in their 2nd year with GWPL will be reviewed with respect to the mapping of their rosters to schools, to assess the feasibility of standing up new teams based on a single school. The GWPL Board and USAWP will assist with any required roster division, as well as help develop the new team.

## 2. PLAYERS

2.1 Eligibility: To be eligible to play for a GWPL team, the player must be a legal resident of Georgia and attend a public or private high school, middle school, or be 18 years old or younger and home schooled in the State of Georgia.

To be eligible, players must be in high school (9-12<sup>th</sup> grade). Middle school age players (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) are permitted provided the team has obtained written permission from the player's parent or guardian, and the team, its coaches and administrators assume the proper precaution for their play. For games and scrimmages organized by GWPL expressly for elementary and middle school players, the terms and conditions for play will be determined independent of league season play and the rules provided herein.

2.2 Team Assignment: The determination as to which GWPL team a player is eligible to play for shall be determined by the following rules, with certain exceptions as noted.

And, until such time as there are sufficient teams within a core of contiguous counties within the Atlanta Metropolitan area (Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties), the Board may make player-team assignment decisions taking into account the goal of league development.

### 2.2.1 Geography Rule:

2.2.1.1 If a player attends a school that has an associated GWPL team, then that player must play for that team. In the case of players home-schooled or not yet in high school,

this applies for the school they will be attending for high school based on their current private school enrollment or, if not in private school, their public school attendance mapping. An elementary school that feeds rising enrollment to a specific high school will be understood to be associated to that high school for the purposes of this rule.

2.2.1.2 If a player attends a school that does not have an associated GWPL team, then that player must play for the team of the nearest school that does have a team.

2.2.1.3 If a Club ceases operation, or is unable to field a squad in a Division, the GWPL may assign impacted players to other GWPL teams at its discretion, primarily in consideration of League development, and secondarily in the context of the geography policy.

2.2.2 All players rostered on a GWPL team at the time of the League's Founding shall remain with that team for the balance of their GWPL career.

2.3: Changing Teams: Once a player is registered to a GWPL team or put on their roster for a GWPL competition season, the player may not change to a different GWPL team during the remainder of their GWPL playing career, unless the player's family relocates their permanent residences into the geographic extent of a different team.

2.3.2 Exception for Changing Schools. If a current player withdraws from his/her current school for bona fide reasons unrelated to water polo, and re-enrolls in a new school which also has an associated GWPL team, the player may choose between being grandfathered to the current team, or changing to the team associated with his/her new school. To confirm the circumstances of the change, the Board must be notified in writing of any player intending to utilize the school change exception.

2.3.3 Exception with Board Approval: A player may petition to change teams to alleviate hardship or alleviate physical access barriers to participation. In such case, the GWPL Board reserves the right to approve, approve with conditions, or deny any such petition in its sole and absolute discretion. In this process, the Board may also confer with the affected teams' coaches and team Boards for the purposes of assisting with developing a solution suitable to the player, the team and the GWPL Board.

2.4 Other Situations: Other eligibility or team assignment situations not covered under this policy will be determined by the Board via a petition process. In this process, the Board may also confer with the affected teams' coaches and team Boards for the purposes of assisting with developing a solution suitable to the player, affected team(s) and the GWPL Board. Note that petitions for the purposes of player development, competitiveness, dissatisfaction with the current team, or any combination thereof, generally will not be entertained. The Board reserves the right to approve, approve with conditions, or deny any such petition in its sole and absolute discretion.

2.5 Player Information: GWPL officers or their designees may request player registration details (including legal place of residence) for any player(s) from any team and/or the sanctioning body designated by the GWPL at any time but solely for the purpose of enforcement of the "Geography Rule." To protect player privacy GWPL officers and their designees may not publish, save, otherwise distribute or in any way risk exposure of said information.

2.6 State Tournament Eligibility: The athlete must play for a minimum of one-third (1/3<sup>rd</sup>) of the scheduled games for their team, unless injured, to be eligible to play in the state tournament. Forfeited games or games a player sat out due to documented injury, illness will count toward games played.

### 3. PETITION PROCESS

3.1 Petition: The player seeking assignment to an alternative team may submit via e-mail to the Board a petition for consideration. The petition must state the player's name, age, address, team currently assigned, and desired team. The petition must explain and justify setting aside the League rules. Note that petitions for the purposes of player development, competitiveness, dissatisfaction with the current team, or any combination thereof, generally will not be entertained.

3.2 Dates of Action: Petitions for player eligibility will be accepted beginning on the first official day of application, July 1<sup>st</sup>, and ending July 31<sup>st</sup>, in each calendar year. All decisions on team placement and assignment arising from a petition will be made as soon as possible and no later than 7 days before the first Monday in the second week of August.

3.3. Should a petition for alternative assignment be granted, the Board will advise the player and both affected teams. Should a petition for alternative assignment not be granted, only the petitioning player shall be notified.

3.4. The Board will make player-team assignment decision in response to properly filed petitions taking into account the geography rules here and the goal of league development.

## VIII. Roster Policies

1. Preliminary Roster: Each season, teams must provide a preliminary roster to the GWPL board no less than 1 week prior to their first game. All players must meet player eligibility requirements, and must be current members in good standing with whichever national association the GWPL is affiliated with for insurance purposes that season (USA Water Polo unless otherwise amended).

2. Roster Limits: There is no limit on the number of players placed on a team roster, but each player must have a unique cap number. In the event a player is either home-schooled or in middle school, please also note on the roster the players' high school district based on their residence.

*2.1 (suspended for 2024 inaugural season, pending further consideration post-season) For schools/programs fielding more than one team (e.g., A, B, Development, Women's), players must be assigned to one of the teams exclusively; they cannot be on more than one team roster simultaneously, i.e. no "floaters" and no females playing on both a Women's and Co-Ed team ("One Roster Rule").*

*2.1 For schools/programs fielding more than one team in the Boys A, Boys B and Girls divisions:*

*2.1.1 In any given week, players must be assigned to one of the teams exclusively; they cannot be on more than one team roster simultaneously.*

2.1.2 *Week to week, players in the Boys A and Boys B Division may be rostered for either Division, but not more than one for any given week.*

2.1.3 *In any week, players in the Development Division may “roster up” and be rostered on the Development Team and on one of the Boys A, Boys B, or Girls rosters. Only Development Team players may be double-rostered in this fashion.*

3. **Roster Changes:** In all divisions, deletions or cap number changes are permitted throughout the season without restriction; however, the updated roster must be submitted to the league at the time of the change. Additions of new players are permitted at any time without restriction.

4. **USAWP** All players, regardless of when placed on a roster, must have (as applicable) a valid USA Water Polo membership in force as a prerequisite to playing in any game or practice. It is the team’s responsibility to verify and enforce this requirement.

## **IX. Determining Division Placements**

1. **Creation of Divisions:** To promote growth and competitive play among member teams, the Board may create such divisional structures as necessary. Initial Divisions include “Boys,” “Girls,” and “Development.” With growth of the League, additional tiers and/or divisions may be created to serve the needs of the teams and the League.

1.2 The Board reserves the right to create formal or informal scheduling tiers within a division to aid in scheduling more competitive regular season games. The Board will take into account all relevant information, including prior season record and number of player graduations.

## **X. Concussion Management**

Approved by GWPL board 8/21/2024

It is the responsibility of each and every team’s coaching staff, supporting volunteers, parents, and guardians to responsibly manage the health and wellbeing of the athletes within their care. Recognition of the symptoms, side effects, and consequences of concussion, as well as the proper management and return to play of athletes is critically important. The following materials are for use by each team, coaching staff, volunteers, parents and guardians to inform their management of concussion.

Adapted from Georgia High School Association, <https://www.ghsa.net/concussion-management-high-school-athletics>

1. **Concussion Awareness:** Concussions at all levels of sports have received a great deal of attention in the past few years. Attention has increased even more over the past year, culminating with the NFL, NCAA and National Federation of State High School Associations testifying before the United States Congress about what each organization is doing to protect athletes from concussion. At least four states have enacted legislation dealing with the issue of head injuries sustained in athletic competitions. Adolescent athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of concussion. Once considered little more than a minor “ding” on the head, it is now understood that a concussion has the potential to result in death, or short- and long-term changes in brain function. A concussion is a brain injury that results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. Continued

participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death. The well-being of the athlete is of paramount concern during any athletic contest. Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure that concussed athletes do not continue to participate. Thus, coaches, players, officials, and administrators should also be looking for signs of concussion in all athletes and should immediately remove any suspected concussed athlete from play.

2. NFHS Rules Change: Previous rules books for most sports included language directing officials to remove an athlete from play if “unconscious or apparently unconscious.” We now know that a person does not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion. In fact, according to our most recent data from the High School Reporting Information Online (RIO) and the National High School Sports Related Injury Surveillance Study, only 3.2 percent of all concussed athletes lost consciousness during the 2009 football season. That language has been changed to the following: Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

3. Role of Officials: Neither officials, nor coaches, are expected to “diagnose” a concussion, as that is the job of an appropriate health-care professional. Officials are being asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors, but are no longer being asked to make what could be perceived to be a medical opinion. This is the same type of monitoring procedure that has been used with orthopedic injuries and the “blood rule” in the past. The game official is not responsible for the sideline evaluation or management of the athlete after he or she is removed from play. The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, appropriate health-care professional, or other individual designated by school administrators. If an appropriate health-care professional on the sideline determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play. If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach to return to play. The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play, nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. Ensuring compliance with the Suggested Management Guidelines is a health and safety issue and should be the responsibility of the head coach and school administration, NOT the game official.

4. School Responsibilities: Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day. NOTE: An “appropriate health-care professional” must be determined by each school district with respect to state laws and local preferences. Such individuals should be knowledgeable in the evaluation and management of sports-related concussions and may, depending on controlling law, include MDs, DOs and certified athletic trainers

5. Return to Play: No athlete should return to play or practice on the same day after a concussion has been diagnosed.

5.1 Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition. The formulation of a gradual return to play protocol should be a part of the medical clearance. NOTE: Athletes with continued concussion symptoms are at significant risk for recurrent, cumulative and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussive injury. Such risks are minimized if the athlete is allowed time to



recover from the concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete should return-to-sport or other at-risk participation when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing.

6. Application: These guidelines should be applied to both practices and scrimmages.

7. Online Course: It is recommended that coaches participate in a free, online course on concussion management prepared by the CDC or by NFHS. "Concussion in Sports" is an extremely well-prepared presentation that can be found at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com). The CDC course is accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>

## **XI. Water Polo Swimming Suit Fit and Wear**

1. Players shall wear non-transparent, one-piece competitive swim suits. Males shall wear suits which completely cover the buttocks. Females shall wear suits which completely cover the buttocks and breasts. The female suit shall have a solid high back with broad straps (USAWP rule 5.4).
2. Water polo swimming suit fitting as prescribed by the manufacturer is recognized by and is acceptable to the GWPL League. Any question or issue with swim suit selection and fit shall be addressed by the Club/Team coach with the athlete and the parent/guardian. Among other providers, the following manufacturers provide fit instructions as reference and can be communicated to the athlete and the parent/guardian:
  - a. [www.tyr.com/sizing](http://www.tyr.com/sizing)
  - b. <https://turboswim.com/en/frequent-questions.html> ("sizing guide" pop-down on each suit's page)
3. Each Team/Club should provide guidance to their athletes and/or to their parent/guardian to communicate the recommended requirements for proper suit selection. Each Team/Club will be in charge of compliance and communicate with their athlete and/or parent/guardian for conformance.
4. All athletes are expected to wear the competition suit as prescribed from the warm up period through the end of the post-game sportsmanship handshake. Suit straps for female athletes must remain on the shoulders until after the handshake.
5. Swim attire policy imposed by the management of a venue used by the GWPL takes precedence over GWPL policy.
6. Women players must wear suits specifically designed for water polo. A regular swim team suit is not acceptable. At the referee's discretion, a one-time exception can be granted to a brand new player on their first weekend of play only, and then only if the player is unable to borrow a water polo suit from another player. It is the coach's and club's responsibility to ensure that new players wear water polo-specific suits.
7. Compliance and enforcement shall be governed by the Policies of the Georgia Water Polo League.

## **XII. Safe Sports**

As an affiliate of USAWP, the GWPL will follow the policies and procedures required by USAWP for the protection of minor athletes (<https://usawaterpolo.org/sports/2021/1/20/health-safety.aspx>). This includes the policies, procedures, and reporting requirements of the U.S. Center for SafeSport (<https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>).

## **XIII. Appendices**

# **1. Charges for Standing Committees of the GWPL**

## **Administration Committee**

Schedule meetings consistent with the needs of the GWPL.

Supervision and coordination of all Special Committees.

Referee coordination.

Organization and coordination of Tournaments

## **Funds & Scheduling Committee**

Prepare and steward the annual budget

Responsible for schedules for GWPL tournaments with input from the Board of Directors and team boards

Coordinate volunteers to work tournaments

Acquire pool space for tournament weekends

Organization and coordination of Tournaments

## **Marketing & Sponsorships Committee**

Maintain the GWPL web pages with current information (schedules, teams, league updates)

Create or coordinate creation of any marketing materials

Focus on league recruitment via sponsorships/events

Run external communications to teams and boards

Prepare and distribute press releases

## **Safety & Compliance Committee**

Implement and surveil such safety and abuse prevention policies and procedures as are required of the League by USAWP

Maintain record of reports by season and manage reporting to USAWP as necessary

Develop and publish “Best practices” for team conduct policies

**Development Committee (Associate Treasurer ex-officio)**

Coordinate player-development clinics

Coordinate splash-ball clinics

Review, develop and publish training materials for players, coaches, referees, etc.

## 2. Policy Manual Change Log

Date	Rev#	Change
8/21/24	0	Adopted by the Board
8/31/24	0.1	Updates to game rule policies for dev games (6 minute qtrs, running clock); updates to roster section
12/17/24	1	Updates to reflect lessons from Season 1
1/7/25	1.1	Updated language for Standing Committees; added new “Development” committee with charge
7/8/25	2.0	Changes to “Teams and Players”, Geography rule, petition process