



## **INNER TUBE WATER POLO GAMEPLAY RULES**

### **1. PLAYER REQUIREMENTS.**

Players must wear a swimsuit at all times during gameplay. Shoes, hats, casts, shirts, jewelry and/or any other item deemed to be dangerous by the Referee must be removed prior to gameplay.

### **2. TEAM REQUIREMENTS.**

- a. For the 7x7 gameplay format, a team consists of at least 2 females and 2 males in the pool at a time, unless stated otherwise. For the 9x9 gameplay format, a team consists of at least 3 females and 3 males in the pool at a time, unless stated otherwise. The team captain may count toward this requirement.
- b. For the 7x7 gameplay format, no more than 7 players per team, including the goalkeeper, are allowed in the pool at a time. For the 9x9 gameplay format, no more than 9 players per team, including the goalkeeper, are allowed in the pool at a time.

### **3. SUBSTITUTIONS.**

A team may substitute a player(s) at any time, but the substituted player(s) cannot interfere with gameplay when out of their tube.

### **4. GAME START AND DURATION.**

- a. Two teams compete against each other per game. Each game has 2 halves of 23 minutes in length, with a continuously running clock. Half-time is 5 minutes. Teams change ends of the playing area at half-time.
- b. To start each half, both teams line up at opposite ends of the pool until the Referee drops the ball into the playing area and signals by whistle to begin gameplay. Players of both teams then propel their inner tubes toward the ball.

- c. The team that does not acquire the ball first at the start of each half will receive the ball upon the Referee's first subsequent call of Jump Ball during that half.
- d. The Referee will signal a dead ball (as caused by a Jump Ball, a violation of these rules, or any call resulting in a Free Throw) by blowing their whistle.
- e. Games ending in a tie will result in a tie. During regular season play, there are no overtime or shootouts due to time restrictions.

## **5. GAMEPLAY.**

- a. All players must sit on top of the tube. Players may not make a play on the ball until they are properly positioned on the tube in such way.
- b. Players must remain in their tubes at all times to participate in gameplay. In the event that a player leaves their tube (e.g., they are flipped), the player is no longer in gameplay and may not attempt to influence gameplay in any way.
- c. Players may travel with the ball in any manner except for holding the ball completely underwater, provided they remain on their tube.
- d. Players may not deliberately hold the ball for more than 5 seconds without attempting to advance. In such instance, and at the Referee's discretion, the Referee will signal via whistle a delay-of-game violation. Such violation results in a Free Throw.
- e. A ball that travels outside the bounds of the playing area adjacent to the goal box is given to the goalkeeper for a Free Throw. Players are not permitted to pass the ball out of bounds so as to return the ball to the goalkeeper. Such event will result in a Free Throw for the opposing team.
- f. A defending player may touch the ball when it is in possession of an opposing player by swatting the ball out of player's hand.

## **6. FREE THROWS.**

- a. Free Throws are awarded to the opposing team for violations from a point nearest (and behind) the point of the infraction. Free Throws may not be taken inside the Goal Box.
- b. The player in possession has 5 seconds to pass the ball to a teammate. During this time, the player in possession may not be guarded by the opposing team. However, their teammates may be guarded. Such pass resumes gameplay.
- c. A Free Throw is awarded when the ball passes out of the bounds of the playing area.

- d. A goal may not be scored from a Free Throw.

## **7. JUMP BALLS.**

- a. Jump Balls will be called by the Referee when 2+ players have both hands on the ball during gameplay to gain possession of the ball. The Referee will determine which team receives the Jump Ball based on the team who controlled possession at the beginning of the game. Jump Balls alternate back and forth between teams. This is an ongoing tally that changes at half time.
- b. Jump Balls are otherwise subject to the Free Throw rules.

## **8. PENALTY SHOTS.**

- a. Penalty Shots are awarded for any foul per the discretion of the Referee.
- b. Penalty Shots are shots taken from outside of the Goal Box. At such time, all opposing players except the Goalkeeper must be outside of the Goal Box area until the ball is thrown.
- c. A Penalty Shot must be taken immediately following the Referee's signal. Pump fakes are not permitted.
- d. If the result of the Penalty Shot is not a goal, the ball remains in play.

## **9. FLIPPING.**

**Flipping should never be conducted aggressively. Do not hold onto another player's tube - that pops tubes and hurts gameplay.**

- a. Flipping is only permitted by or against a player in possession of the ball.
- b. Flipping another player's tube, and therefore the player in the tube, is permitted by hands only.
- c. Players are not permitted to flip other players with their feet.
- d. Players may never grab or hold onto another player's tube. Flips should be done with a pushing or lifting motion, or a combination of both, and an open hand.

## **10. OTHER TUBE CONTACT.**

- a. Inner tube to inner tube contact is permitted. Incidental inner tube to body contact is also permitted.
- b. Players may not use their feet for anything besides swimming and getting back into a tube. Players may not use their feet to push off another player's inner tube.
- c. Any illegal contact between players will result in a foul when the player with the ball loses possession.

## **11. FOULS.**

**This is a recreational league. The purpose of this league is to have fun. As a result, fouls of any kind will not be tolerated.**

- a. Fouls include any bodily contact with another player that is purposeful or with intent to cause harm or injury. The Referee has the discretion to award a Free Throw to the offended player, issue a warning to the offending player and/or eject the offending player from the game.
- b. If the Referee determines that a player intentionally splashed another player, including but not limited to distracting them or to losing control of the ball, the Referee will issue a warning and award a Free Throw to the offended player.
- c. Boston ITWP reserves the right to prevent any offending players with multiple or repetitive fouls from playing future games in the season or any future season of inner tube water polo.

## **12. STALL WARNINGS.**

- a. Teams must make a discernible effort, in the eyes of the Referee, to advance the ball in toward the goal. Failure to do so will result in the referee calling a Stall Warning.
- b. A Stall Warning results in a Free Throw.

## **13. SCORING.**

- a. A goal is scored when a legal shot completely crosses the goal line. After a score, the goalkeeper will return the ball into play.
- b. A player scoring a goal must remain in their tube until the ball crosses the goal line or the score will be disallowed.

## **14. THE GOALKEEPER.**

- a. A team may only defend the goal with 1 goalkeeper.
- b. The goalkeeper shall not leave their tube in an attempt to block a shot from entering the goal. In the event that the goalkeeper does leave their tube in an attempt to block such shot, and such shot is successful, the opposing team earns 1 point. If such shot is unsuccessful, the opposing team takes a Penalty Shot.
- c. A goalkeeper may never pass the ball beyond the mid-point line of the playing area. In the event of such pass, the Referee will call a Free Throw.

## **15. THE GOAL BOX.**

- a. The Goal Box is the area that extends a predetermined distance from the goal line and to the entire width of the playing area. The Goal Box is demarcated by the flags and the bounds of the playing area, i.e., the pool walls.
- b. No offensive player may enter the Goal Box until the ball has entered the Goal Box. Such violation occurs when the player's head breaks the plane of the Goal Box before the ball has entered the Goal Box.
- c. Once the defense clears the ball out of the Goal Box, offensive players must also leave the Goal Box.
- d. Goal Box violations result in a Free Throw.
- e. No defensive player, other than the goalkeeper, may remain stationary near the goal so as to guard the goal. Such violation occurs when a non-goalkeeping player purposely attempts serve as goalkeeper so as to block a shot from within the goal box. This is to prevent 2 goalkeepers simultaneously guarding the goal. Such violation results in a Penalty Shot.

## **16. CONCUSSION PROTOCOL.**

**Offensive players should always make their best effort to take shots on goal without causing injury to the goalkeeper or other players. Unfortunately, though, accidental shots to the head may happen. In the event that a player takes a hard shot to the head:**

- a. The Referee immediately signals a 30-second pause in gameplay so that the offended player may recover. During such time, the play clock continues to run.
- b. The team captain of the offending player may direct the offending player to play defense or be substituted out by a teammate.

- c. If the offending player continues to cause hard shots to the head, the Referee has the discretion to eject such player from the game.
- d. The Referee has the final discretion to determine what constitutes a “hard” shot.

## 17. PLAYOFFS.

- a. Playoffs are held on the final day of each season. (All preceding days of the season are referred to herein as the “regular season.”)
- b. Players not on the team’s official roster are not permitted as substituted players during playoffs.
- c. To determine the playoffs bracket, teams are seeded according to number of wins versus losses per season and the number of points scored per game.

## 18. PLAYOFF TIE-BREAKERS.

- a. **Shootout.** In the event that a playoffs game ends in a tie, the tie will be resolved via shootout, i.e., shots taken from inside the Goal Box. Each team selects 5 players to shoot during the shootout. A team’s goalkeeper may be 1 of the shooters.
  - i. A coin flip decides which team has the option of shooting first or last.
  - ii. Each team has a total of 5 shots and will alternate each shot. No rebounds by any player are permitted.
  - iii. The thrower must wait for the Referee’s signal to start the play on each throw.
  - iv. Teams must alternate shots on goal between female and male players. Possible shot combinations are M – F – M – F – M or F – M – F – M – F.
  - v. The game is won if, after the shootout concludes, the tie is broken.
- b. **Sudden Death.** If the score remains tied at the end of the shootout, the remaining players on each team will each take a shot on goal, alternating between teams, until the tie is broken. Players who shot in the shootout are not eligible to take a shot on goal again until all other players on the team have shot.

**ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE RULES MAY BE DIRECTED TO YOUR TEAM CAPTAIN OR THE REFEREE ON DUTY.**