



WATER POLO AUSTRALIA
MATCH OFFICIAL
FRAMEWORK



MATCH OFFICIAL FRAMEWORK

WATER POLO AUSTRALIA MATCH OFFICIAL FRAMEWORK

The Water Polo Match Official Framework provides structure and understanding to the officiating community and administrators.

THE FRAMEWORK ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS TO UNDERSTAND CLEARLY:

1. The profile of a match official at different levels
2. The expectations of the level of education and continuous learning opportunities available at different levels.
3. How to advance through the levels and opportunities for each level
4. The code of behaviour and presentation expectations
5. The role of Delegate
6. The obligation of their club, state and Water Polo Australia.

THE FRAMEWORK ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS TO UNDERSTAND CLEARLY:

- **PERFORMANCE ABILITY:** The capacity of a referee to consistently deliver high officiating in a competitive environment .
- **TACTICAL:** Understanding and interpreting team strategies and game play patterns to anticipate and respond appropriately during matches
- **TECHNICAL:** Comprehensive knowledge of the rules and the skilful, consistent, and context-appropriate application of those rules during a match.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Mentoring and educating others, preparing and presenting as your best self for the match and making critical decisions.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Effective, timely, and respectful in-game and off-game communication with players, coaches, fellow referees, table officials, and administrators.
- **TEAM FIT:** The ability to contribute positively to referee teams and officiating environments through respectful behaviour, collaboration, and cultural awareness.



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OUR SUCCESS INDICATORS AND KEY ACTIONS

PROFILE	REPRESENTATIVE LEVEL	WPA ELIGIBLE EVENTS	WPA MATCH PAYMENT RATES TOURNAMENTS ONLY (EXCLUDES AWL)	INCENTIVES
ELITE	Eligible to be nominated to World Aquatics Panel by WPA	All WPA Events & AWL	\$200 per day	Appointment opportunities to International Competitions such as Olympic and World Championships or International Tours - WPA Funding available for Professional Development Opportunities*
AWL PANEL	Must be selected to panel by WPA not all Advanced Referee's will be added to panel	AWL	\$80 Per Game	Same as Advanced
ADVANCED	Eligible to nominated to AWL Panel by WPA	All WPA Events	\$160 per day	International exchange opportunities available- WPA Funding available for Professional Development Opportunities *
DEVELOPMENT	Eligible to officiate at or on State Programs and National Age Group Programs	NSC & AYWPC	\$140 per day	Appointment opportunities at National or State Events and/or to be partnered with an Advanced/Elite Referee as part of a mentor relationship
COMMUNITY	N/A	AYWPC	\$120 per day	Appointment opportunities at State Events
DELEGATE	All Levels	All WPA Events	\$200 per day	WPA Funding available for Professional Development Opportunities*

- NSC - National State Championships - AYWPC - Australian Youth Water Polo Championships - AWL - Australian Water Polo League
- * Applicants must provide a clear rationale, including defined objectives and evidence-based justification for the requested support. All applications will be assessed against established criteria, and submission does not guarantee approval. Final funding decisions rest solely with WPA, and only selected applications will be successful.
- Match payment levels are for WPA managed events only, clubs and states will have their own pay rates.



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REFEREE FRAMEWORK

PERFORMANCE ABILITY

This area assesses a referee's ability to maintain control of the game. It includes focus, consistency in decision-making, and an ability to handle high-stakes scenarios. Elite performance requires anticipation, resilience and confidence. It's not just about getting calls right—it's about managing the game in a way that supports fairness, flow, and respect for all participants.



LEADERSHIP

Leadership for referees involves setting a professional standard on and off the pool deck. It includes taking responsibility for tough decisions, learning from mistakes, and showing confidence without arrogance. As referees progress, they also take on roles in mentoring junior officials, giving feedback, and demonstrating the behaviours they wish to see in others. Preparation, composure, and emotional intelligence are essential leadership traits in the officiating environment.



TEAM FIT

Team fit is about how a referee works with others—before, during, and after the match. This includes being reliable, respectful, prepared and punctual, receptive to feedback, and aligned with the cultural expectations of the referee community. Referees who fit well within a team are easy to appoint; help build a strong team environment and maintain good relationships with colleagues and stakeholders. It also involves awareness of how one's behaviour affects team dynamics and the ability to adapt appropriately.



TECHNICAL

Technical proficiency means knowing the rules inside and out, including recent updates and interpretations. More importantly, it's about applying them with consistency, clarity, and fairness—understanding how to manage infractions based on severity, intent, and game context. Referees must also demonstrate proper signalling, whistle use, and positioning. Advanced technical referees know when to intervene and when to let the game continue, balancing control with game flow.



TACTICAL

Tactical competence goes beyond the rulebook—it involves a deep understanding of how water polo is played. A tactically aware referee can anticipate the next phase of play, adjust positioning accordingly, and differentiate between legal physicality and illegal advantage. It allows for game flow to be maintained and for officials to make informed decisions in context. This understanding grows with game experience and learning from observing different styles of play.



COMMUNICATION

This includes verbal and non-verbal communication such as signals, whistle tone, body language, and dialogue. Referees must communicate decisions clearly and confidently, de-escalate conflict using tools in timely and competent manner with minimal impact on game flow and momentum, and handle feedback or dissent respectfully. Off the field, communication extends to participation in meetings, reviews, and interactions with event organisers. Elite referees balance assertiveness with diplomacy to build credibility and trust.



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REFEREE FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

PROFILE	PERFORMANCE ABILITY	TACTICAL	TECHNICAL	LEADERSHIP	COMMUNICATION	TEAM FIT
AWL PANEL & ELITE	Consistently perform at the highest level at national/international matches	Develop tactical awareness to make accurate and fair decisions during games. Anticipate play and manage game flow effectively.	Understand the tactics of the game to maintain flow, applying rules convincingly to assure participants the game is well-managed	Set the standard for junior officials; mentor others; lead in high-pressure environments	Display diplomacy, clarity, and control in all communications; influence positively across all levels	Demonstrate professionalism, initiative, and leadership in all team settings
ADVANCED	Deliver strong, consistent performances in regional and national games	Recognize and adapt to various tactical strategies; anticipate developing plays	Demonstrate consistent and fair application of rules; resolve complex situations confidently	Partner with less experienced referees to help develop their skills; take ownership of match leadership	Resolve disputes confidently; maintain respectful relationships with all stakeholders	Represent the refereeing body with professionalism; collaborate effectively with all team members
DEVELOPMENT	Show growth in decision-making, positioning, and consistency across local/regional matches	Begin to understand how tactical choices affect game flow; adjust positioning accordingly	Apply rules with improving accuracy; manage typical in-game scenarios with support as needed	Follow the lead of senior referees; begin offering support to peers	Build confidence in whistle use, gestures, and explanations; begin managing coach/player interactions	Be punctual, receptive to feedback, and demonstrate a desire to learn
COMMUNITY	Develop automatic responses to routine parts of the game to improve focus in more challenging moments	Adopt a style of officiating that reflects the level of competition; focus on fairness and game enjoyment	Build Knowledge of rules, Applying correctly with minimal intervention; ensure safety and fairness at lower-stakes levels	Demonstrate responsibility in preparation; listen to and apply senior feedback	Communicate clearly and respectfully with players, coaches, and co-officials	Arrive on time, appropriately dressed, and prepared for the assigned role

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REFEREE GAME ASSESSMENT MATRIX - Used by Match Delegates for game assessments

PROFILE	PERFORMANCE ABILITY	TACTICAL	TECHNICAL	LEADERSHIP	COMMUNICATION	TEAM FIT
AWL PANEL & ELITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >95% correct call rate Controlled high pressure situation Used proactive game control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read tactics early Applied advantage rule effectively >95% Positioned proactively >95% correct calls on centre forward and centre back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >95% major/penalty fouls correct calls Applied rules in complex scenarios 0-2 technical errors/ game Correct use of all signals Correct VAR protocols (where applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided mentorship during game (where applicable) Marked key game decisions with authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicated clearly in all match moments Managed dissent effectively Professional coach interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as role model Punctual, prepared, proactive Supports fellow referee during game International /National Tournament preparation
ADVANCED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >90% call accuracy rate Handled contested calls with composure Demonstrated excellent knowledge of rules and application with consistency across quarters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjusted to offensive/ defensive structures Correct positioning on pool deck Applied advantage rule effectively >90% >90% correct calls on centre forward and centre back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >90% major/penalty fouls correct calls Resolved rule challenges with confidence Applied new/current rules correctly Correct use of all signals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted less experienced referees Contributed to pre/post-match discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handled game conflict Explained decisions clearly Avoided escalation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in team briefings and feedback Works collaboratively with all levels Tournament preparation
DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >80 % call accuracy in major and minor fouls Made timely calls under basic pressure Demonstrated knowledge of rules Had Consistence game management with fellow referee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referee transitions correctly Adjusted based on tactical cues >80% correct calls on centre forward and centre back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective whistle timing and mechanics Applied exclusions and penalties consistently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed to pre/post-match discussions Took ownership of match role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed player/coach interactions Used standard verbal cues correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receptive to feedback Takes initiative in duties (e.g., table checks)
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly handled routine calls Maintained basic game flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had basic knowledge of rules and hand signals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated correct signal use in calls Whistle timing and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At game early and prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicated fouls and signals clearly Avoided verbal conflict or confusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dresses appropriately Supported pool setup and pregame pool management

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LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PATH

PROFILE	INDIVIDUAL ON POOL LEARNING REQUIREMENTS TO PROGRESS TO NEXT LEVEL	ONLINE LEARNING OR IN PERSON COURSES	STATE COMPETITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR SELECTION/ APPOINTMENT	NATIONAL COMPETITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR SELECTION	INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR SELECTION	WHO DOES ASSESSMENTS	ASSESSMENT REQUIRED
ELITE	WPA to make assessments for the World Aquatics Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow World Aquatics Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All State Competitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All WPA Tournaments 	World Aquatics Panel Olympics, Senior & Junior World Championships & Tours	WPA	TBD
AWL PANEL	Must be current AWL panel referee who exhibits superior knowledge of the rules and be able to referee the highest standard games before being eligible to advance to Elite on recommendation from WPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Referee Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All State Competitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AWL 	International Exchange	WPA	Advanced Referee
ADVANCED	Must be referee who exhibits expert knowledge of the rules and be able to referee high standard games before being eligible to be selected for AWL Panel upon recommendation from WPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Referee Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All State Competitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All WPA Tournaments 	International Exchange	WPA	Advanced Referee
DEVELOPMENT	Must have completed 50 games at this level and/or 12 months of practical experience as a development level referee before being able to progress to Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Referee Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and local regional matches State Association Champions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified WPA Tournaments – e.g. NSC, AYWPC, East Coast Challenge 	N/A	State Body	Development Referee
COMMUNITY	Must have refereed at a minimum 50 games at this level before being considered ready for a Development Referee or actively refereeing for 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of the Referee Water Polo Hand Signals Rules of the Game Play to your strengths Respond or react – your choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Participation Programs Minimum 12's to 14's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AYWPC Under 13's Development Carnival East Coast Challenge 	N/A	MATO	NIL

- MATO – Modern Approach to Officiating no assessment required - State Body may include some additional requirements specific to their region
- NSC - National State Championships - AYWPC - Australian Youth Water Polo Championships
- Online Learning course maybe updated/changed as required by WPA, Education Framework to be established to support learning

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COMPLIANCE - All individuals will need to comply with the below no matter what level their profile sits at:

- Registered Member with Water Polo Australia (Gold Membership to have access to WPA Learning Centre Content)
- Obtain a Working with Children Check within their home state (check home state for minimum age required for WWCC)
- Adhere to Think Act Play Guidelines
- Undertake Sports Integrity Australia Requirements including but not limited to:
 - » Competition Manipulation & Sports Gambling
 - » Safeguarding Children and Young People Inductions
 - » Decision Making in Sport

WPA will use Ref Book to track the number of games referees have officiated to check they are meeting the on pool learning hours/games required to proceed to the next level.

To advance to Development, Advance to Elite, various practical assessments will be required.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CANDIDATE IS ASSESSED AS UNSATISFACTORY IN ONE OR MORE OF THEIR ATTEMPTS?



CLARIFYING THE ASSESSMENT FLOW

- If a candidate is deemed unsatisfactory in one or more assessments, additional assessment opportunities may be provided, depending on time and game availability at the same tournament.
- Candidates do not automatically start over at the next tournament. Any successful assessments from the current tournament are retained. The candidate would then only need to complete the remaining successful assessments in the future.



FEEDBACK AND REASSESSMENT

- If a learner is unsuccessful in an assessment, the WPA or State-appointed assessor will provide constructive feedback identifying:
 - » Why the assessment was unsuccessful.
 - » Areas for improvement.
 - » Specific elements to focus on before the next assessment.
- The learner may then be appointed to another game and reassessed, if scheduling permits.



ACCESS TO ASSESSMENT RECORDS

- Learners will be provided with copies of their assessment records—via Refbook—if they request them.
- It is expected that learners will be appointed to more than three games during a tournament, providing multiple opportunities for feedback and improvement.



PARTIAL COMPLETION

- If a learner is successful in one or two assessments but not the third, they will only need to complete the remaining assessment(s) at a future WPA event.
- This allows learners to build upon progress, rather than restarting from zero.



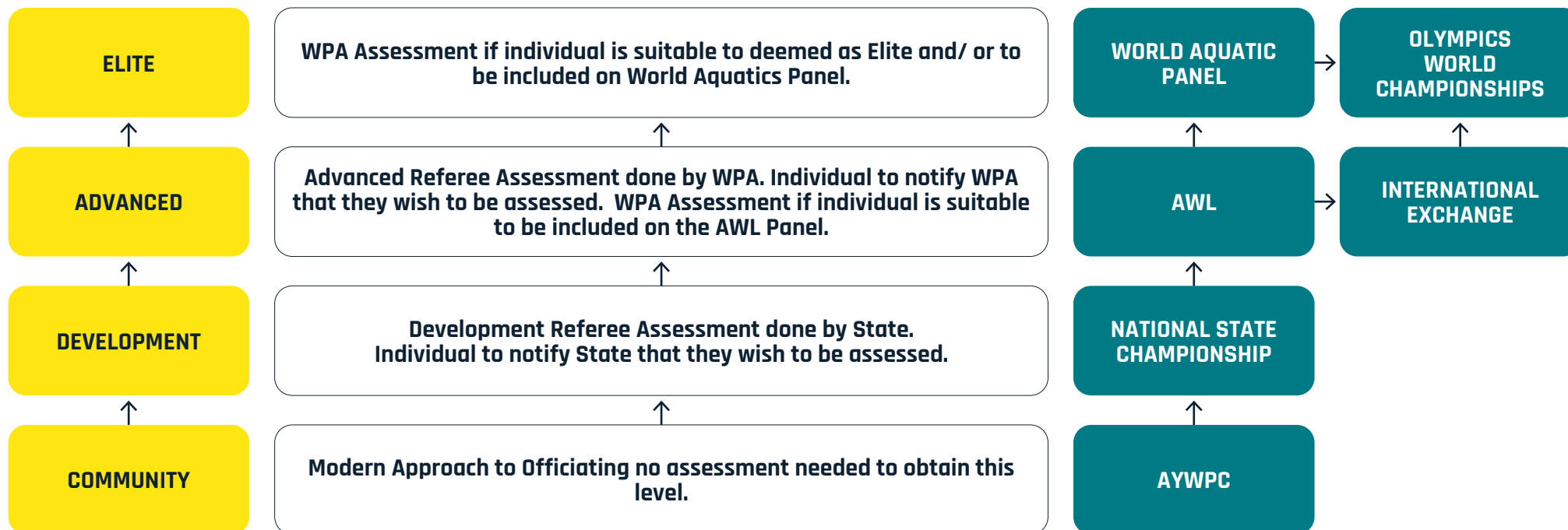
FLEXIBILITY AND COMPASSION

- WPA acknowledges that each learner's journey is different. While there is a clear standard of performance, assessors and administrators are encouraged to apply compassion and flexibility where appropriate.

NOTE: If a learner does not pass assessments, even when multiple assessors are used for independence, it may be advisable for them to pause, reflect, and return to the process at a future event better prepared.

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WHAT MIGHT PROGRESSION LOOK LIKE



CODES OF BEHAVIOUR AND PRESENTATION EXPECTATIONS

ATTIRE

Water Polo officials are expected to present a neat, clean and professional appearance. The following guidelines outline the appropriate dress and presentation for officials while officiating a match:

- **OFFICIAL SHIRT:** The designated Water Polo Australia (WPA) official shirt (or assigned State or Club shirt at State/Club events) must be always worn during officiating duties. The shirt should be clean, ironed, and properly fitted.
- **TROUSERS/SHORTS:** Plain black or white trousers for tournaments are acceptable for Match Officials. Tailored shorts are acceptable for Delegates. These should be neat, appropriate in length, and free from visible branding (unless WPA-approved).
- **FOOTWEAR:** Clean, closed-toe black athletic shoes or court shoes are required when wearing black pants or white shoes with white pants. Flip-flops, sandals, or casual footwear are not permitted.
- **WHISTLE AND EQUIPMENT:** A functional whistle, cards, and any other required officiating tools should be carried and maintained in good condition.
- **HAT:** Unless provide by WPA, hats should be free from visible branding.



CODES OF BEHAVIOUR

As representatives of the sport and Water Polo Australia (WPA), officials are expected to adhere to the following standards of behaviour while on pool deck:

COMMITMENT TO THE ROLE

- Be punctual (arrive 20 min prior to game), prepared, and attentive during all assigned matches.
- Remain focused and alert throughout the match.
- Continuously seek to improve through training, feedback and self - assessment.

INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- Officiate with honesty, consistency and fairness always.
- Do not engage in any behaviour that could be interpreted as biased or prejudicial.
- Display professionalism in all interactions with players, coaches, team staff and spectators and fellow officials.
- Treat all participants with dignity and respect, regardless of gender, age, ability, background, or team affiliation.
- Communicate decisions clearly and respectfully, avoiding inflammatory language or tone.
- Listen and respond appropriately to reasonable questions or concerns, while maintaining authority and control.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCRETION

- Do not disclose confidential information or engage in public commentary regarding officiating decisions or disputes.
- Use social media responsibly and in a way that does not undermine the credibility of the sport or its officials.

COMPLIANCE WITH WPA POLICIES

- Adhere to all policies and procedures outlined by Water Polo Australia, including.
 - » Member Protection Policy
 - » Child Safeguarding Policy
 - » WPA Code of Conduct
 - » WPA Inclusive Uniform Guidelines
 - » Alcohol, Drugs and other Substance Policy
 - » Social Media Policy

MATCH OFFICIAL FRAMEWORK

WATER POLO AUSTRALIA EVENTS



WHAT IS INCLUDED

If an individual is selected to officiate at a Water Polo Australia (WPA) managed event, the following expenses will be covered in accordance with the WPA Travel Policy:

- **FLIGHTS:** The cost of the most economical airfare available will be covered. If the match official prefers an alternative airline or itinerary, they will be responsible for any additional cost incurred.
- **ACCOMMODATION:** Provided for the duration of the event.
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Provided for the duration of the event.
- **MEAL ALLOWANCE:** A daily meal allowance will be provided in accordance with the WPA meal allowance rate.
- **OFFICIAL APPAREL:** One or more official shirts for the event will be supplied. Further items may be supplied dependent on the event. Referee to provide own pants and shoes.
- **HONORARIUM:** Paid according to profile level for tournaments.
- **AWL MATCH PAYMENTS:** Match Official \$80 per game, Delegate \$80 per game

For officials who are not required to travel, only the honorarium, meal allowance and official shirt(s) will be provided.

APPROVED LIST OF EVENTS

- Australian Youth Water Polo Championships
- National State Championships
- Under 13's Development Carnival
- AWL

Any previous documentation that refers to any Match Officials entitlements will no longer be valid.

WPA may add to the approved list of events at any time.

MATCH OFFICIAL FRAMEWORK

ROLE OF THE TECHNICAL DELEGATE

The role of the Technical Delegate is to ensure a game progresses according to the rules of the competition and to provide education/guidance to Match Officials. The role is critical in upholding the integrity, fairness of competitions and the development of Match Officials.

ROLE OF THE TECHNICAL DELEGATE

1. ENSURING COMPLIANCE

- a. Ensure that the game complies with the rules, regulations and standards of the competition.
- b. Oversee disciplinary matters and misconduct in line with the National Sanctioning Policy and/or competition rules.
- c. Sign the scorecard after verifying with the referee.

2. VENUE AND EQUIPMENT CHECKS

- a. Inspect the competition venue and facilities (i.e. pool set up, clocks, goals, cones) to confirm they meet the competition requirements advised by the competition manager.

3. OVERSEEING OFFICIALS

- a. Supervising Match Officials, table officials and other technical staff to ensure consistent and accurate application of the rules.
- b. Liaise between coaches and Match Officials, providing support especially when less experienced match officials are involved.

4. PROBLEM RESOLUTIONS

- a. Handle technical disputes that arise during a match and make final decisions on rule interpretations where necessary.
- b. Be available to team managers during quarter and half time breaks for issue resolutions.

5. REPORTING AND FEEDBACK

- a. Evaluation of Match Officials and provide verbal feedback on their performance to support their development.
- b. Submit written report on Match Official's performance and any additional assessment forms required from WPA or competition manager within the specified time frame.
- c. Provide guidance and sign off on any Game Report (Red Card) submissions or report any incidents of misconduct or violence not covered by standard procedure.
- d. Provide any additional reports required on venue or facilities noncompliance that competition manager may need.

EXPERIENCE NEEDED TO BE A TECHNICAL DELEGATE

1. 10 Years playing and/or coaching experience
2. Refereed at AWL level for a minimum of 5 years
3. Refereed Internationally at World Championships or Olympic Level
4. Good Interpersonal and communication skills
5. Comprehensive knowledge and understanding not only of the rules but also the "spirit" and sense of the rules
6. Knowledge of the latest referee instructions and interpretations
7. Have the ability to teach and instruct
8. A respectful attitude towards the referees and the intention to build up a good working relationship

Individual must satisfy at least one of the criteria listed in points 1 to 3 and demonstrate competency in all of the criteria outlined in points 4 to 8.

HOW TO BECOME A TECHNICAL DELEGATE - COURSES

1. Meet experience criteria
2. Submit enquiry with National Officials Manager
3. Undertake and pass the Technical Delegate Course
 - a. Assessor course
 - b. Effective feedback
 - c. Mentoring
 - d. Ethics & Integrity
 - e. Technical Delegate Roles and Responsibilities

Courses are to be renewed every three years and education/training session to be run by WPA on a yearly basis.

APPENDIX 1 - REFEREE REFLECTION JOURNAL



REFEREE REFLECTION JOURNAL

GOAL

DELEGATE'S INPUT

1.

2.

3.

PERFORMANCE SCORE OUT OF 10:

WHAT DID YOU NEED TO GET THAT SCORE CLOSER TO 10?

MY REFEREEING GOALS FOR NEXT TIME

1.

2.

3.



Water Polo
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