

# British Water Polo League Constitution

(updated June 2024)

## 1 NAME

The League shall be called the "British Water Polo League" (the League). This shall not preclude the use of an alternative name for trading purposes.

## 2 OBJECT

The object of the League is to promote the sport of Water Polo in accordance with Swim England Laws and Regulations.

## 3 HISTORY

3.1 The League was founded in 2010 as a result of a merger between the National Water Polo League and the National Women's Water Polo League.

3.2 The National Water Polo League, originally known as the Premier Invitation Water Polo League, was formed in 1962 by these founder members: Birkenhead SC, Birmingham & District WPL (now the Midland Water Polo League), Cheltenham S & WPC, Otter SC, Polytechnic S & WPC, Sheffield Dolphins SC, Sutton & Cheam SC and Weston-super-Mare SC.

3.3 The National Women's Water Polo League was formed in 1987 by these founder members: City of Coventry SC, Dunfermline WPC, Merseyside SC, Potters Bar SC, City of Sheffield SC, Sirens WPC (Heanor) and Stretford ASC.

## 4 MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Membership of the League shall consist of the following categories:

4.1.1 Playing membership which shall be by invitation and open to clubs affiliated to Swim England, Scottish Swimming, Swim Wales, Swim Ireland and teams representing any of those national associations or British Swimming;

4.1.2 Associate membership which shall be by invitation and open only to clubs which have at some time been founder or playing members of either of the two leagues which merged to form the League;

4.1.3 Life membership which may be bestowed on an individual for outstanding service to the League and water polo.

4.2 Every invitation to become a member shall be at the discretion of the Committee.

4.3 Application procedures for playing or associate membership:

4.3.1 A club wishing to become a playing member or to enter an additional team or a national association wishing to enter a representative team shall apply in writing to the General Secretary by 31 December in the year prior to the start of the competition. The application shall be accompanied by written answers to the League's standard template questions. A representative of the club or association shall, at no cost to the League, also attend the Committee meeting which considers the application, to present its application and answer any questions from the Committee. In either case, the application must be accompanied by the first year's membership subscription which will be refunded only if the application is not accepted.

4.3.2 A member team that fails to qualify for the following season in a competition under Rule 101.8 shall cease to be a playing member of the League and shall apply under Rule 4.3.1 if it wishes to re-enter in future.

4.3.3 A club wishing to become an Associate Member shall apply in writing before 31 January of the

year to which the application refers. The application must be accompanied by the first year's membership subscription which will be refunded only if the application is not accepted.

#### 4.4 Restrictions on withdrawal by playing members:

4.4.1 A club withdrawing a team from playing membership shall notify the General Secretary in writing by 31 January in the final season in which they are playing.

4.4.2 A club which withdraws one or more of its entered teams after the date specified in 4.4.1 shall be liable for the annual subscription(s) for the year for that team or teams and any consequential losses which may result from the withdrawal.

#### 4.5 Conditions of membership

It shall be a condition of affiliation to and membership of the League that clubs and their individual members shall be subject to and bound by:

4.5.1 Swim England Laws, Regulations, Rules or Conditions including, but not being limited to:

4.5.1.1 the Swim England Code of Ethics;

4.5.1.2 the Swim England Regulations relating to Child Protection and those parts of the Swim England Judicial Laws and Regulations necessary for their implementation;

4.5.1.3 whilst engaged in activities under the jurisdiction of Swim England, all the constraints and privileges of the Judicial Laws and Regulations;

4.5.1.4 the Swim England Transgender & Non-binary Competition Policy.

4.5.2 any Rules of British Swimming, which may from time to time apply to them.

4.5.3 League Rules or any procedure or decision taken under any of those Rules which may from time to time apply to them.

#### 5 MEMBERSHIP FEES

5.1 Each playing member club shall pay an annual membership fee for each of its entered teams to the League before 31 July of the year of competition.

5.2 The membership fees for each entered team and Associate Member clubs shall be agreed at the Annual General Meeting.

5.3 A team that does not participate in phase two of the season shall have 50% of their membership fee refunded.

#### 6 RULES

6.1 No addition or alteration to the foregoing or following rules shall be made except at the Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting called for the purpose.

6.2 An amendment to a proposal for a change of Rule shall require a simple majority of those present and voting.

6.3 To be adopted, any proposal for a change of rules, whether amended or not, shall require a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

6.4 Any deviation from any provision of these Constitutional Rules shall not invalidate any procedure

or decision unless that deviation raises a material doubt that the procedure or decision has been so affected by it as to prejudice the good management of the League.

## 7 GENERAL MEETINGS

7.1 The Annual General Meeting shall inter alia:

7.1.1 be held each year on or before 31 May at a virtual meeting set up using any type of video conference software or technology;

7.1.2 elect from time to time a President, who shall be a member of Swim England, Scottish Swimming, Swim Wales or Swim Ireland, to serve for a term of office of three years. The President shall take office immediately election is confirmed at the Annual Meeting and shall remain in office until a successor is elected at the appropriate following Annual Meeting and takes office;

7.1.3 elect annually the following officers who shall be members of Swim England, Scottish Swimming, Swim Wales or Swim Ireland:  
Chair; General Secretary; Treasurer; Match Secretary; Competition Co-ordinator; Officials' Co-ordinator; two Clubs' Representatives; Publicity Officer; up to three additional Committee members without portfolio.

7.1.4 appoint annually an independent financial examiner.

7.2 The date of the Annual General Meeting shall be published at least 60 days in advance and notice of any, proposed addition or alteration to the rules to be considered by it must reach the General Secretary in writing 42 days before the published date of the meeting. The General Secretary shall advise all individuals and members eligible to attend the AGM of the proposals for Rule changes at least 21 days before the published date of the meeting.

7.3 Nominations for election as:

7.3.1 Officers must reach the General Secretary in writing 42 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting;

7.3.2 President must reach the General Secretary in writing 42 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting at which the position is scheduled for election. All nominees shall signify their willingness to stand and be proposed and seconded by persons from different member clubs.

7.4 A Special General Meeting shall be called by the General Secretary within six weeks of a written request by a minimum of ten playing member clubs or following a Committee resolution. The request or resolution shall specify the item(s) for consideration and no other business shall be transacted at such a meeting.

7.4.1 The Special General Meeting shall be a virtual meeting set up using any type of video conference software or technology.

7.5 The Chair at all General Meetings shall be the Chair of the Committee, if present. If unwilling or unable to act, the meeting shall elect a Chair from those present and entitled to vote. The Chair shall have:

7.5.1 unlimited authority upon every question of order and shall be, for the purpose of such meetings, the sole interpreter of the League's rules governing General Meetings;

7.5.2 the right to vote on every motion. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

7.6 Those entitled to vote at any General Meeting shall be the President and the officers as listed in

Rule 7.1.3 and three delegates for every playing member club who must be members of the club they represent. Additional entered teams shall not entitle members to additional delegates. Associate members are not entitled to vote.

7.7 Life Members shall be entitled to attend any General Meeting and may speak but may not vote in their capacity as Life Members.

7.8 The General Secretary shall at least 28 days in advance advise all individuals and members eligible to attend of the date of any General Meeting and the login details for the virtual meeting.

7.9 A quorum at any General Meeting shall be representation from half the number of playing member clubs entitled to attend.

7.10 Any playing member club not represented by a member of that club at any General Meeting shall be fined £200 unless there are extenuating circumstances acceptable to the Committee. Any club shall be deemed represented at a General Meeting if such club has a member in attendance at the virtual meeting.

## 8 MANAGEMENT

8.1 The day to day management of the League shall be the responsibility of the elected Committee. The Committee shall consist of the officers as listed in Rule 7.1.3.

8.2 A quorum at any Committee meeting shall consist of four of the officers, at least one of whom shall be the Chair, General Secretary or Treasurer.

8.3 The Committee shall inter alia:

8.3.1 be the managing body of the League, carry out the standing orders and generally transact all business when not otherwise provided for;

8.3.2 exercise its discretion in respect of any matter not specifically provided for in the rules of the League;

8.3.3 exercise financial control over the affairs of the League;

8.3.4 meet, providing there is sufficient business, at least four times in each year;

8.3.5 select annually those persons (who must be registered as officials with Swim England, Scottish Swimming, Swim Wales or Swim Ireland) to be invited to be members of the League's panel of officials.

8.4 The Committee may inter alia:

8.4.1 co-opt up to three additional members for a specific purpose without the right to vote;

8.4.2 appoint a sub-committee to consider and report on any question;

8.4.3 amend any League Rule which is affected by changes in World Aquatics Rules or Swim England Laws and Regulations. Any such amendment shall be subject to the approval of the next following Annual General Meeting;

8.4.4 arrange for a representative team of the League to be selected and play against teams which it has approved;

8.4.5 promote games it deems to be in the interest of the League, whether for a representative team or otherwise;

8.4.6 finance a representative team in whole or in part from the League's funds;

8.4.7 bestow life membership on an individual for outstanding service to the League and water polo;

8.4.8 promote or support the organisation of competitions/courses that benefit the development of the sport at all levels.

## 9 FINANCE

9.1 The income and property of the League shall be applied solely to the object stated in Rule 2 and no person shall receive payment for their services as an officer or member of the League unless approved in extenuating circumstances by a unanimous decision of the Committee present and voting.

9.2 In the event of dissolution, any income or property remaining shall be devoted to a society or club with similar aims or to a philanthropic or charitable purpose.

9.3 The financial year of the League shall terminate on the last day of March. An independently examined statement of the accounts of the League up to and including this date shall be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

9.4 All fines and/or expenses ordered by the Committee shall be paid to the League's Treasurer who shall then reimburse the benefiting club(s).

9.5 The President and members of the Committee shall be entitled to reimbursement of reasonable expenses arising directly from their activities with the League.

9.6 Each club shall be responsible for its own expenses of travel, accommodation etc. except where the relevant competition rules provide otherwise.

## 10 DISCIPLINARY

10.1 Misbehaviour by a player during a match shall be dealt with by the referee and, if one is appointed, by the Water Polo Delegate under the Laws and Regulations of Swim England.

10.2 When a player, coach or other team official receives an automatic sanction under the Laws and Regulations of Swim England, the sanction shall be served in the next available matches of the League in which the player, coach or official is eligible to participate in that same role in the same team; and that person shall be excluded from any role in that same team until the sanction has been served.

10.3 The Committee may suspend from the activities of the League any club or team which fails to pay within 30 days of notification any fines and/or expenses awarded. Notice of the possible suspension of a club or team shall be placed on the notice convening the Committee meeting and a copy sent to the club or team concerned, who shall be given the opportunity to state a case to the Committee either in writing or in person by their choice. No resolution to suspend a club or team shall be adopted unless carried by a majority of two thirds of the Committee members present and voting.

10.4 The Committee, as defined in Rule 8.1, may impose a fine not exceeding £200, suspend from the activities of the League or take other appropriate action against any club, team or individual whose conduct is deemed by it as contrary to the interests of the League by deliberate infringement of its rules or any action, or lack of action, prejudicial to the League's operation and/or reputation. The Committee shall have the obligation of establishing that the burden of proof for the grounds for their detailed complaint have been established. This rule shall not be used as supplementary or retrospectively to 10.1.

10.4.1 The General Secretary of the Committee shall send the club, team or individual concerned a clearly defined and concisely written description of the complaint being made against them by the Committee and given seven days from receipt of the complaint to respond to it in writing. A hearing must be held to which the defendant must be invited. If requested, an appeal shall be heard in accordance with Swim England Judicial Regulations.

## 11 ASSETS

11.1 All trophies are the property of the League.

11.2 Trophies shall be returned to the General Secretary or other nominated person in good condition at such place and at such time as may be requested after the conclusion of the relevant League competition. A club failing to comply shall be fined £50.

11.3 Clubs shall be responsible for the cost of repairs to trophies and travelling cases which are damaged while in their possession.

## Competition Rules

### 100 APPLICATION

Rules 101 et seq. shall apply, as appropriate, to all competitions played as leagues, Cup and Qualification events held under the jurisdiction of the British Water Polo League.

### 101 COMPETITION

101.1 The competition shall be conducted annually between 1 September and the end of March for the league stages, and the end of May for the Champions Cup (see Rule 110.1). A variation to the playing season may be granted at the discretion of the Chair, General Secretary, Match Secretary and Competition Co-ordinator but shall only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

101.2 The League shall at the start of each season consist of up to five divisions for men and four for women, with a maximum of eight teams in each division.

101.2.1 "Men's divisions" shall permit competitors in the Open category (as defined in Swim England Transgender and Non-Binary Competition Policy).

101.2.2 "Women's divisions" shall permit competitors only in the Female category (as defined in Swim England Transgender and Non-Binary Competition Policy). By competing in the Female category a player confirms that their birth sex is female.

101.3 Where divisions split to form separate competitions midway through the season, results from the first phase of the season shall not be carried through to the second half.

101.4 Where divisions have split to form separate competitions midway through the season, the form the competition takes for teams in the lowest level of the League ladder shall be at the discretion of the Committee.

101.5 In all divisions the teams shall play at shared venues as organised and directed by the Committee.

101.6 When any match is drawn after four periods, the result shall be decided by a penalty shoot-out. Points shall be allocated as follows:

- a) win in regular time = 3 points
- b) win after penalty shootout = 2 points
- c) loss after penalty shootout = 1 point
- d) loss in regular time = 0 points

101.7 If, in any division, either in phase one or phase two of the season, two or more teams have equal points, the placings shall be decided by considering the following factors in order until precedence is established:

101.7.1 the team gaining most points in matches between those teams;

101.7.2 the team with the greatest goal difference in matches between those teams;

101.7.3 the team scoring most goals in matches between those teams;

101.7.4 the team with the greatest goal difference overall;

101.7.5 the team scoring most goals overall.

In the event of continuing equality, the placings shall be decided by lot.

101.8 At the end of the season, positions 7 and 8 in the lowest men's and women's divisions of the League ladder for the following season shall be filled by a competition (if required) between the teams finishing in these positions and any approved new applicants (and in such a manner as the Committee specify) to determine who shall be invited under Rule 4 of the Constitution for the ensuing year. The cost of this competition shall be shared equally by the participating teams.

101.9 If a club has two teams competing in the League, those teams shall not be permitted to compete in the same division in the same year. If, either after phase one of the season or after automatic promotions/relegations have been decided at the end of a season, a situation results which causes a breach or potential breach of Rule 101.9, any of the following actions may be taken to prevent it:

101.9.1 Withdrawal of automatic promotion from the second team and transfer of promotion to the team finishing in second place;

101.9.2 Reallocation of the second team to a lower division, irrespective of its placing, and possible relocation of other teams to restore the balance of numbers;

101.9.3 Withdrawal of the second team's playing membership and possible reallocation of other teams to restore the balance of numbers.

## 102 FIXTURES

102.1 League fixtures for the following season shall be designated by the League and published on or before 1 June. These shall, wherever possible, be so arranged that teams have every second weekend free of matches.

102.2 All games shall be scheduled for a Saturday or a Sunday.

## 103 REGISTRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

103.1 All competing players, coaches and other team officials must be registered with their country's national associations as eligible competitors or as club members in the appropriate category for the club they represent in the league. No person shall be registered with the League as a player for more than one club in that season. For qualification tournament registration details, see 103.8.

103.2 Each team shall by midnight on 31 July submit registrations of players, coaches and other team officials using the League's online Registration System. A player who is registered with one team in a club may also act as coach (or other team official) for all teams in that club. It is the responsibility of the teams to ensure all players are correctly registered with their participating club's national association.

103.3 If a club enters more than one team in the League, each set of players shall be separately registered with the League and, with the exception of the situation described in 103.4, there shall be no interchange between them during the season.

103.4 A player registered with a team may, if the player has not played for that team during the season, transfer to another team, providing application is made to the Match Secretary in accordance with Rule 103.6. This rule shall not apply to a player restricted by Rule 103.8 to playing solely for that team.

103.5 No player registered with the League shall be permitted to coach another team competing in the same division.

103.6 All applications for registration of players, coaches or other team officials after the due date must be made using the League's online registration system, a fee of £5:00 per player, coach or other team official to be charged to the club's account at the end of the season. To be valid for a shared venue event, the application must be entered on the online registration system by midnight of the Wednesday prior to the weekend of the event. A player, coach or other team official may not play for/represent their team until the registration is checked and published as valid on the online registration system.

103.7 If a player or team official participates in a match without a valid League registration for that team, the Committee shall take one of the following actions:

103.7.1 Apply a fine of £5 per non-valid player per match and deduction of two points per match. The offending club shall also forfeit any points gained from such a match. The non-offending club shall retain any points gained from such a match but, where no points are gained, have the option of recording a nil-nil score.

103.7.2 Apply a fine of £25 per non-valid team official per match.

103.7.3 If the player has a valid League registration for another team, the match shall be deemed a non-fulfilment and Rule 108.2 apply.

103.7.4 If the player or team official is not appropriately registered through their participating club's national association, the match shall be deemed a non-fulfilment and Rule 108.2 apply.

103.8 A current or applicant team taking part in a competition under Rule 101.8 may register players who have already played for another team during that season. If a current or applicant team qualifies for the League, each of its participating players shall be restricted to playing solely for that team during the following season. If a team fails to qualify, players participating for that team shall be entitled to register for another team in the following season.

#### 104 EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

104.1 Caps of the appropriate colours shall be provided by each club for its own team. A club failing to provide its own hats may be subject to a fine not exceeding £10.00.

104.2 All matches shall be played in pools with temperatures applying in World Aquatics Rules.

104.3 All matches shall be played in pools with sizes designated in World Aquatics Rules.

104.4 The duration of games shall be for all divisions in accordance with World Aquatics Rules.

#### 105 ORGANISING AGENT

The League shall appoint an event manager for each shared venue event who shall be responsible for



ensuring that the league's rules are complied with and all expenses forwarded to the Treasurer for payment.

## 106 REFEREES

106.1 Sufficient referees from the League's panel shall be appointed by the Officials' Sub Committee to each shared venue event and the appointments published. The Officials' Co-ordinator shall have the authority to appoint referees, where necessary, subsequent to the publication of the list.

106.2 Except where necessary to ensure a game being played, a referee shall not be allocated to a match in a division in which the referee is registered as a player or team official.

106.3 Should one referee fail to appear for a match, the event manager, in liaison with the delegate where relevant, shall appoint another from the League's panel. If this is not possible, the event manager may appoint any other referee or decide that the original referee shall conduct the match alone. No delay to the advertised time of start shall be permitted either to await the arrival of the appointed referee or to await the arrival of a second referee if one referee is present to start the game.

106.4 Should both referees fail to appear for a match, two others shall be appointed by the event manager in liaison with the delegate where relevant, preferably from the League's panel, but, if this is not possible, any referee may be appointed. If only one referee is available, the game shall be conducted with one referee.

106.5 If for any reason a game is started with one referee and a second referee becomes available to officiate in time for the normal commencement of the third period of the game, the last two periods of the game shall be conducted with two referees.

## 107 MATCH RECORDS

107.1 Each team captain or coach shall, at least 30 minutes before a game is due to start, submit on the official League form a list of players (with cap numbers) and team officials for that match, including their relevant national association registration numbers. Players listed with a cap number on the official League form shall be deemed to have participated in that match, whether or not they entered the water.

107.2 At the end of each match, each referee shall check and sign the match record sheet, which the event manager shall then upload to the League website.

107.3 Each team shall within seven days of each match complete the league form assessing the performance of the referees and return it electronically via the League's data management system. A team which fails to comply shall be fined £5 on each occasion.

107.4 A team using the data system to assess a referee as deficient must add an explanation for that grading in the box provided, enabling review by the League's Delegate Group.

## 108 NON-FULFILMENTS

108.1 If a team fails to have seven players available to start a shared venue match at the notified time of start, the match shall be cancelled by the event manager. In the event of such a cancellation, the match shall be treated as a non-fulfilment.

108.2 If a team fails to fulfil any of its engagements, the secretary of each team and the event manager shall within three days submit a written report to the Match Secretary, who shall in turn place the reports before the Committee. The Committee may decide on any course of action it considers appropriate, including, but not being limited to, ordering any of the following:

108.2.1 the rescheduling and playing of the unfulfilled engagement;

108.2.2 the award of the points for the unfulfilled engagement to the non-offending team(s);

108.2.3 the award of a 0 - 0 score;

108.2.4 the payment of a fine by the offending club or team equivalent to the incurred expenses of the non-offending club(s), plus a sum not exceeding £150.00 per match. Any claim for incurred expenses must be sent to the General Secretary within two weeks of the infringement. This may include:

108.2.4.1 the necessarily incurred expenses of the non-offending club; plus

108.2.4.2 a sum not exceeding £400 per match to cover pool costs; plus

108.2.4.3 a sum not exceeding £300 per match to cover any other expenses.

108.2.5 the reimbursement by the league of the necessarily incurred expenses to the non-offending club(s) or team(s).

108.2.6 the deduction of points from the total of the offending team as follows: For the first offence, two points; for the second offence, three points; for the third and any subsequent offence in the same season, four points.

108.2.7 the placing of the offending team at the bottom of its division at the end of the season irrespective of the number of points gained.

## 109 FINANCE

109.1 The League competition shall be so organised that the promotional expenses of each division are financially separate, self-supporting and not a burden on the general funds of the League.

109.2 Promotional expenses shall include the cost of bath hire, officials' expenses and any other expense approved by the Committee. For each shared venue event the promotional expenses shall be allocated to each club pro rata to the games scheduled at that event for that club.

109.3 Each competing club or team shall be required to deposit with the League on or before each shared venue event a sum of money fixed by the Committee sufficient to cover any anticipated costs falling due for payment. This amount shall be paid by 31 July in the year of competition by a lump sum. Alternatively, the amount (plus five per cent) shall be paid monthly by standing order in five equal amounts, commencing on 1 July. By participating in the League, each club guarantees that it will reimburse the League for its share of any outstanding promotional expenses, when required.

109.4 Any club that has not paid its share of the promotional expenses by the due date may be fined a maximum of £50. If the outstanding debt is not paid within two weeks of a subsequent reminder, the club will be liable to a suspension from the League until such time as the expenses have been paid. The club shall remain liable for its share of the promotional expenses whilst suspended.

109.5 A club that fails to qualify for the second phase of the League programme shall be reimbursed the appropriate proportion of monies paid under Rule 109.3.

## 110 CHAMPIONS CUP

110.1 The Cup competition shall be conducted annually, on or before 31 May, at a shared venue as organised and directed by the Committee.

110.2 Teams qualified to take part shall be the top four finishers in the men's and women's Super 5s. If one or more of those teams choose not to participate, the place(s) shall be offered to the next-placed team(s) at the finish of that season's phase 2 competition. No place shall be offered to a second team from the same club.

110.3 The competition shall be organised as follows:

Saturday:

1. Women – Super 5s team 2 v Super 5s team 3.
2. Women – Super 5s team 1 v Super 5s team 4.
3. Men – Super 5s team 2 v Super 5s team 3.
4. Men – Super 5s team 1 v Super 5s team 4.

Sunday:

5. Men – Losers Game 3 v Losers Game 4.
6. Women – Losers Game 1 v Losers Game 2.
7. Women – Winners Game 1 v Winners Game 2.
8. Men – Winners Game 3 v Winners Game 4.

110.4 The competition shall be deemed a part of the immediately preceding BWPL season and BWPL registration rules shall apply (see BWPL Rule 103), with the single exception that clubs with second teams competing in the League shall also be entitled to select players who have been registered and valid for that club's second team during the season. All players taking part in the competition shall be registered and valid to represent their club at the date of the final event of BWPL phase 2, and shall have played for their club in at least one BWPL match during phase 1 or 2 of the season.

110.5 A three-minute interval shall apply between the second and third periods (World Aquatics Rule 4.2).

110.6 In the event of a match being drawn, the winners shall be determined via a penalty shoot-out (World Aquatics Rule 4.3).

110.7 Delegate(s), referees and table officials shall be appointed by the League's Delegate Group and confirmed by the Committee.

110.8 Each club shall be responsible for its own expenses of travel and accommodation.

110.9 Promotional expenses shall include the cost of bath hire, officials' expenses and any other expense approved by the Committee; and be allocated to each competing club pro rata.

110.10 In all other instances, BWPL Rules shall apply.

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