

WORLD AQUATICS WATER POLO WORLD CUP 2025

Rules and Regulations
Version: December 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. General Concept
2. Participation, Competition Format and Registration
3. Scoring & Prize Money
4. Technical Officials
5. Accommodation & Meals
6. Medical
7. Appendices
 - o Appendix 1 – Qualification & Divisions
 - o Appendix 2-3– World Cup Division 1 and Final Programme
 - o Appendix 4 – Example Ranking and Tie-Breaking Principles
 - o Appendix 5 – Financial Framework and Responsibilities
 - o Appendix 6 – **Rationale for Reducing Division 1 to 8 Teams**

1. GENERAL CONCEPT

The World Aquatics Bureau approves the organisation of the **World Aquatics Water Polo World Cup (“WATER POLO WORLD CUP”)**, an annually staged elite-level competition for national teams.

World Aquatics owns all rights to the WATER POLO WORLD CUP and its Divisions except where rights are granted to the Host as set out in the staging agreement between World Aquatics and the relevant Local Organising Committee (LOC).

The WATER POLO WORLD CUP will consist of **two Divisions (Division 1 and Division 2)** and a **Final Stage**. Events will be held under the recognition of the host National World Aquatics Member Federation on dates approved by World Aquatics.

The WATER POLO WORLD CUP shall be open to all World Aquatics Member Federations (except those suspended). All matches shall be conducted according to the **World Aquatics Water Polo Rules**.

2. PARTICIPATION, COMPETITION FORMAT AND REGISTRATION

Participation

All World Aquatics National Federations (except suspended Federations) are eligible to compete.

- **Division 1:** Top 8 national teams per gender based on the official World Aquatics Rankings as of 30 October of the preceding year, plus the Division 2 winner from the previous edition.
- **Division 2:** Open to all other interested and eligible national teams.

Competition Format

Overview

- Gender Parity: identical format for men and women.
- Each Division includes a preliminary tournament; the top teams qualify for the **World Cup Final Stage**.
- The Host of the Final receives automatic qualification.
- The top 3 placed teams qualify to the World Aquatics Championships 2027.

Division 1 Tournament

- Duration: 6 days.
- Structure: (Group A & B → Group 1 & 2).
 - Day 1-3: Group A and B (two groups of 4 teams).
 - Day 4-6: Group 1 and 2 (first two placed teams in each group form a new group and play a full round robin, same with group 3rds and 4ths)
- Teams participate in both rounds.
- Points are awarded in the preliminary stage but **not carried over** to subsequent rounds.
- The **top 6 teams** qualify for the Final.

Division 2 Tournament

- Duration: 5–6 days.
- Structure: Open-entry format.
- Format is based on the number of teams. Final Classification for each placement.
- The **top 2 teams** qualify for the Final Stage.
- The Winner of Division 2 is entitled to participate at the World Cup 2027 in Division 1.

Final Stage

- Duration: 5 days.
- **8 teams per gender:** 6 from Division 1 and 2 from Division 2.
- The men's and women's tournaments are staged together to enhance visibility, atmosphere, and efficiency.

Schedule of the Finals:

- Day 1 – Women's Quarter Finals
- Day 2 – Men's Quarter Finals
- Day 3 – Women's Semi Finals & Classification
- Day 4 – Men's Semi Finals & Classification
- Day 5 – Finals (Women's and Men's)

Awards ceremonies will be staged following the Final session.

Dates and venues:

Round	Date	Host city
Division 1 Women	1-6 May 2026	TBC
Division 2 Women	21-26 April 2026	Malta
Division 1 Men	6-12 April 2026	Alexandroupoli (GRE)
Division 2 Men	7-12 April 2026	Malta
Finals Women & Men	22-26 July 2026	Sydney (AUS)

Conditions of Entry

- Teams must be entered by their National Federation in the **World Aquatics GMS** (<https://data.worldaquatics.org>) according to the published deadlines.
- Each National Federation must ensure entries are submitted accurately for each Division or Stage they participate in.
- All athletes must be registered in accordance with World Aquatics athlete registration procedures.

Information Bulletin

World Aquatics will provide an **Information Bulletin** for each tournament (including entry forms, official hotel and transport, prize money, competition schedule, venue details, etc.) at least **three months prior** to each event.

Team Leaders Meeting

A **Team Leaders Meeting(s)** shall be held online not later than 10 days prior to the start of competition, led by World Aquatics and the LOC.

3. SCORING & PRIZE MONEY

Scoring System

Matches will be conducted under **World Aquatics Water Polo Rules**.

- Group ranking shall be based on total points accumulated. Each match should have a winner, in case of tie after the regular time, penalty shoot-out must decide on the winner.
 - 3 points for a victory in regular time
 - 2 points for a victory in penalty shoot-out
 - 1 point after losing the penalty shoot-out
 - 0 point after losing in regular time
- In case of ties in the group, ranking shall be determined by:
 - Head-to-head result(s)
 - Goal difference
 - Goals scored
 - Drawing of lots (if still tied)

Prize Money

Prize Money will come from World Aquatics. Exact allocation plan will follow.

4. TECHNICAL OFFICIALS

World Aquatics Delegates

- World Aquatics will appoint the **Technical Delegate(s)** responsible for overseeing rule application, competition management, and officials' evaluation.

Referees and Officials

- The World Aquatics ROC shall nominate one Referee from the current World Aquatics Officials List, subject to World Aquatics approval per each participating team and two neutral referees per tournament.
- The Super Final officials will be also appointed by World Aquatics ROC.

Responsibilities

- The Participating Federations are financially responsible for the appointed referee. The Participating Federation must arrange the registration and pay for the logistics and the per diem. The referees must be booked in the officials' hotel.
- World Aquatics pays the Per Diem for the neutral referees and for the Delegates.
- The Host covers the lodging and local transportation of the delegates and neutral referees.

5. ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

- Travel and accommodation for teams are the responsibility of each National Federation. The teams must book into the hotel(s) provided by the LOC.
- LOC shall provide accommodation and meals for referees, technical delegates, and event staff as agreed in the staging agreement.
- Official hotels must be approved by World Aquatics and provide suitable facilities for meetings, medical services, and team logistics.

6. MEDICAL

The LOC shall ensure appropriate medical coverage during all competition and training sessions, including:

- Appointment of an Event Medical Officer/Doctor
- Free medical service for all competitors and officials at the venue
- First aid facilities at hotels and competition site
- On-site ambulance
- Anti-Doping control station compliant with WADA and World Aquatics standards
- Emergency procedures and hospital information shared with all delegations

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Qualification & Divisions

Division 1: Top 7 ranked national teams + previous Division 2 champion.

Division 2: Open to all other teams registered through World Aquatics.

- **Teams in Division 1 in 2026**

- *The winner of the previous edition in D2 plus the top 7 teams at the World Aquatics Ranking by 30th September*
- **Women: GRE, HUN, NED, ESP, AUS, ITA, USA, JPN**
- **Men: ESP, GRE, HUN, SRB, CRO, ITA, USA, NED**

Automatic qualification is granted to the **Final Host Nation**, which counts toward the 8 total teams per gender in the Final.

Appendix 2 – World Cup Division 1 Programme

Day 1 – Group Phase (A,B)

M1: 1 A1 vs A2
M2: A3 vs A4
M3: B1 vs B2
M4: B3 vs B4

Day 2 – Group Phase (A,B)

M5: A2 vs 2 A3
M6: A4 vs A1
M7: B2 vs B3
M8: B4 vs B1

Day 3 – Group Phase (A,B)

M9: A1 vs A3
M10: A2 vs A4
M11: B1 vs B3
M12: B2 vs B4

Day 4 – Second Round

M13: 3A vs 4B
M14: 3B vs 4A
M15: 1A vs 2B
M16: 1B vs 2A

Day 5 – Second Round

M17: 3B vs 4B
M18: 3A vs 4B
M19: 1A vs 2A
M20: 1B vs 2B

Day 6 – Second Round

M21: 3A vs 3B
M22: 4A vs 4B
M23: 2B vs 2A
M24: 1A vs 1B

Appendix 2 – World Cup Division 2 Programme

DAY1	M1	A1	A2
	M2	A3	A4
	M3	B1	B2
	M4	B3	B4
	M5	C1	C2
	M6	C3	C4
DAY2	M7	A4	A1
	M8	A2	A3
	M9	B4	B1
	M10	B2	B3
	M11	C4	C1
	M12	C2	C3
DAY3	M13	A1	A3
	M14	A4	A2
	M15	B1	B3
	M16	B4	B2
	M17	C1	C3
	M18	C4	C2
DAY4	M19	T9	T12
	M20	T10	T11
	M21	T4	T5
	M22	T3	T6
	M23	T2	T7
	M24	T1	T8
DAY5	M25	T9	T11
	M26	T12	T10
	M27	LM24	LM21
	M28	LM23	LM22
	M29	WM24	WM21
	M30	WM23	WM22
DAY6	M31	T11	T12
	M32	T10	T9
	M33	LM27	LM28
	M34	WM27	WM28
	M35	LM29	LM30
	M36	WM29	WM30

Appendix 3 – World Cup Final Programme

DAY1	WOMEN'S QUARTER FINALS	W1	1 D1	2 D2
		W2	2 D1	1 D2
		W3	3 D1	6 D1
		W4	4 D1	5 D1
DAY2	MEN'S QUARTER FINALS	M1	1 D1	2 D2
		M2	2 D1	1 D2
		M3	3 D1	6 D1
		M4	4 D1	5 D1
DAY3	CLASSIFICATION	W5	LW1	LW4
		W6	LW2	LW3
		M5	LM1	LM4
		M6	LM2	LM3
	WOMEN SEMIS	W7	WW1	WW4
		W8	WW2	WW3
DAY4	CLASSIFICATION	W9	LW5	LW6
		W10	WW5	WW6
		M7	LM5	LM6
		M8	WM5	WM6
	MEN SEMIS	M9	WM1	WM4
		M10	WM2	WM3
DAY5	FINALS	W11	LW7	LW8
		M11	LM7	LM8
		W12	WW7	WW8
		M12	WM7	WM8

Appendix 5 – Financial Framework and Responsibilities

A. Participating Teams

Responsibilities:

- Cover travel to and from tournament locations
- Daily allowances and Insurance for athletes and staff (lodging with full board)
- Daily allowances and Insurance for the appointed referee (lodging with full board)
- Clothing for athletes and staff
- Registration, Anti-doping courses, administration, etc

Support from World Aquatics:

- Prize money and performance incentives
- Per diem for appointed delegates and neutral referees
- Administration, Registration, World Rankin

Appendix 6 - Rationale for Reducing Division 1 to 8 Teams

A. Competitive Integrity

- Reducing Division 1 from 12 to 8 ensures only the highest-performing teams compete at the top level.
- Improves game quality and overall competitiveness—every match matters.

B. Product Value

- More high-stakes, high-quality matches make the competition more attractive to broadcasters, fans, and sponsors.
- Ensures concentrated excellence, similar to elite formats in other professional sports.

C. Avoiding Strategic Withdrawals

- Under a 12-team format, lower-ranked teams may choose to drop to Division 2 intentionally, where qualifying to the Final is perceived as easier.
- An 8-team Division 1 format eliminates this behaviour by aligning incentives: only elite teams remain in Division 1, and promotion must be earned.

D. Operational Efficiency

- Easier calendar planning and cost control.
- Fewer games = better rest and recovery, and higher match intensity.

5. Benefits of the New Format

- Balanced and fair global participation.
- Increased visibility for emerging teams in Division 2.
- Improved commercial and media product.
- Unified men's and women's Final strengthen the brand and fan experience.