Competition Manual

1. Purpose of this Manual

- This Competition Manual provides a consistent, transparent framework for all Otago Water Polo (OWP) competitions.
- It ensures fair, competitive, and meaningful games, supports athlete development, and provides clarity for players, coaches, schools, clubs, and parents.
- This manual applies to all OWP-run competitions. Tournament-specific requirements will be outlined in separate event documentation.

2. Guiding Principles

All OWP competitions are structured around the following principles:

- Competitive Balance – ensuring meaningful and evenly matched games
- Development Pathway – supporting long-term athlete, coach, and official development
- Clarity and Consistency – clear rules and expectations applied consistently
- Flexibility – formats and grades may adjust based on numbers and performance
- Respect and Inclusion – all participants contribute to a positive environment

3. Definitions

- **OWP (Otago Water Polo):** the regional governing body.
- **NZWP (New Zealand Water Polo):** the national governing body.

- **Competition:** Any league, tournament, festival, or event delivered by OWP.
- **Championship Grade:** A grade for teams competing under full competition rules.
- **Open Grade:** A grade for developing teams, with modifications where appropriate.
- **Participant:** Any player, coach, official, staff member, or volunteer.
- **Sanctioned Event:** A competition formally recognised by NZWP.
- **Officials:** Referees, table officials, and appointed match officials.

4. Competition Structure Overview

OWP competitions may include seeding, graded competition, casual competition (such as drafts) and finals phases.

The structure used will depend on participant numbers, age group, and event objectives.

5. Grades

OWP competitions use Championship and Open Grades for all competitive competitions.

- Grades are used to group teams to ensure competitive balance and quality games.
- Grades may be adjusted during a competition to maintain competition integrity.

6. Rules and Modifications

Unless otherwise specified, competitions follow NZWP and World Aquatics rules.

OWP may apply rule modifications to promote safety, development, and competitive balance.

Tie-breaking procedures follow standard competition conventions used nationally, unless otherwise stated.

7. Player Eligibility

All participants in any Otago Water Polo competition or event must be registered with Otago Water Polo.

For NZWP-sanctioned events, all participants must also be registered with NZWP.

OWP reserves the right to verify eligibility and enforce registration requirements.

8. Coaching Expectations

Coaches are expected to act in accordance with OWP values and codes of conduct.

Coaches must prioritise athlete welfare, development, and respect for officials.

9. Behaviour and Conduct

OWP competitions operate under a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, harassment, and unsportsmanlike behaviour.

All participants are expected to uphold the values of Otago Water Polo.

10. Discipline and Sanctions

OWP has the authority to manage disciplinary matters arising from its competitions.

Sanctions may include warnings, suspensions, removal from competition, or referral where required.

Disciplinary decisions prioritise safety, integrity, and long-term sport development.

11. Officials

Officials are integral to competition delivery.

All officials must be treated with respect at all times.

12. Administration and Communication

OWP manages all official competition communication, including draws and updates.

Queries should be directed through the appropriate OWP contact.

13. A Disciplinary Procedures

Otago Water Polo is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and competitive environment for all participants. All players, coaches, team officials, and support personnel are expected to act in accordance with the spirit of fair play and the rules of the game at all times.

13.1 Misconduct

- All serious misconduct, including but not limited to:
    - **Red cards**

    - **Violent Action expulsions**

- Will be referred to an **appointed, impartial disciplinary committee** for review.

The committee will determine appropriate disciplinary action based on the nature and severity of the incident.

13.2 Violent Action – Automatic Sanction

- **All Violent Action expulsions will result in an automatic one (1) game suspension**, regardless of competition stage.

- In addition:

    - The individual's name will be **lodged with New Zealand Water Polo (NZWP)**.

    - The individual will receive **disciplinary point deductions** under their name in accordance with NZWP processes.

This automatic suspension will apply **immediately** and is not delayed by any appeal.

13.3 Further Disciplinary Action

The disciplinary committee may impose additional sanctions where deemed appropriate, including but not limited to:

- Additional game suspensions

- Suspension for the remainder of the competition

- **Expulsion from the competition**

In determining outcomes, the committee may consider:

- Player or official safety

- Severity and intent of the action

- Previous disciplinary history

- Impact on the integrity of the competition

13.4 Appeals Process

- Individuals subject to disciplinary action will have the **right to lodge an appeal**.
- Appeals must be submitted in accordance with instructions provided by Otago Water Polo.

Appeal Hearing

- An appeal hearing will be scheduled **within three (3) days of the conclusion of the match** in which the incident occurred.
- Appeals must be presented **in person** to the appointed disciplinary committee.

Attendance Requirements

The individual lodging the appeal must attend with:

- **A school representative**, and
- **One support person**, who must be an adult

Failure to meet these attendance requirements may result in the appeal not being heard.

Appeal Scope

- Appeals may address:
    - Factual accuracy
    - Severity of sanction
- Appeals **do not stay** automatic sanctions unless explicitly advised by Otago Water Polo.

13.5 Coach and Team Official Misconduct

- Coaches, team officials, and bench personnel are subject to the **same disciplinary standards and processes as players**.
- Misconduct by a coach or team official, including red cards or Violent Action, will:
    - Be referred to the appointed disciplinary committee
    - Carry the same automatic and potential additional sanctions

    - Be subject to the same appeals process outlined above

Otago Water Polo reserves the right to impose sanctions that reflect the responsibility and influence of coaching and support roles.

13.6 Final Authority

- All disciplinary decisions made by the appointed disciplinary committee are **final**, subject only to the appeals process outlined above.
- Otago Water Polo retains ultimate discretion to act in the best interests of:
    - Player welfare
    - Competition integrity
    - The broader water polo community

14. Amendments

Otago Water Polo reserves the right to amend this Competition Manual as required.

The most current version of this manual shall apply.