Secondary Schools Competition Manual

Competition Overview

The Otago Water Polo Secondary Schools Competition provides a structured, competitive, and development-focused environment for secondary school athletes. The competition prioritises fair play, appropriate grading, player development, and clear progression pathways.

- **Competition duration:** 8 weeks
- **Dates:** Thursday 15 October – Thursday 3 December
- **Cancellations:** No known cancellations due to Holidays
- **Weekly fixtures:** As scheduled by Otago Water Polo (OWP)

Important Dates

- **Registration deadline:** Monday, 28 September
- **Schedule conflicts due/Player registration:** Monday, 5 October
- **Draw release:** Friday, 9 October
- **First games:** Thursday, 15 October

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2. Competition Grades

The following grades will be offered:

1. **Championship Grade**
2. **Open Grade**

2.1 Championship Grade

- Intended for school teams with established water polo programmes and higher competitive experience.
- Teams are expected to have a good understanding of tactics, spacing, and game management.
- Championship Grade teams will NOT compete for placings in Term 4.

2.2 Open Grade

- The Open Grade is **competitive in nature**, not introductory or social, but is intended for teams still developing their game understanding and skill.
- Teams will NOT compete for placings in Term 4.
- **Promotion expectation:**
    - The winner of the Open Grade will be **expected to compete in the Championship Grade in the following term**, subject to OWP confirmation.
    - This ensures clear progression and maintains competitive balance across grades.

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3. Mixed Teams (Open Grade Only)

- Mixed teams are permitted **only within the Open Grade**. **individual player exceptions may be allowed with prior approval**
- **All players** included in a mixed team must receive **prior approval from OWP**.
- Approval will be based on maintaining a **level playing field**, considering:
    - Player experience
    - Physical maturity (boys in a girls division)
    - Competitive balance
- OWP reserves the right to:
    - Decline approval
    - Require player movement
    - Regrade a team if competitive balance cannot be maintained

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4. Combined School Teams

- Combined school teams are permitted **only where a school is unable to field a full team independently**.
- All combined teams require **prior approval from OWP**.
- Combined teams are eligible to:
    - Compete fully in either competition
    - Progress to placing, semi-final, and finals matches

4.1 Minimum Player Requirement

- If a school can field **at least 7 players**, they are required to enter a team under their own school.
- In this case:
    - Players from another school may compete **under dispensation**
    - The team will be classified under the **main school's name**

4.2 Dispensation Players

- Dispensation players must be approved by OWP prior to participation.
- Approval will consider:
    - Player safety
    - Competitive balance
    - Long-term development outcomes

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5. Team Lists and Player Eligibility

- All teams must submit a **full team list by the advertised cut-off date**.
- All players listed must be registered through OWP
- All players must attend a secondary school in the Dunedin area - unless an exception is obtained (ie intermediate players, playing up).
- All players must only play on one team.

5.1 Changes After Cut-Off

- Any changes after the cut-off date require **prior approval from OWP**.
- This includes:
    - Adding or removing players
    - Player movement between grades
- This process ensures:
    - Players compete in appropriate grades
    - Competition integrity is protected
    - Score sheets can be **pre-populated** prior to weekly fixtures

OWP reserves the right to deny requests that compromise fairness or competition structure.

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6. National Tournament Alignment

- It is **highly encouraged** that all teams competing in the **Championship Grade** attend a recognised **National Secondary Schools Tournament**, either:
    - Division 1, or
    - Division 2
- Teams competing in **Division 1 or 2** tournaments ensure their players remain **eligible for New Zealand representative teams**.
- This expectation supports athlete pathways and alignment with national standards.

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7. Game Structure and Rules

7.1 Championship Grade – Game Structure

- **4 × 5-minute quarters**
- **Stop clock**
- **Shot clock in use**
- **1 minutes between quarters**
- **2 minutes between halves**
- **Time-outs:**
    - No time-outs in regular rounds
    - 1 time-out per team in semi-finals and finals
    - Time-out duration: **1 minute**
- **Players:**
    - 7 players in the water (1 goalkeeper, 6 field players)
    - Squad limits:
        - Maximum of **14 players** if 2 goalkeepers are named
        - Otherwise, **12 field players + 1 goalkeeper**
- **Rules:**
    - World Aquatics rules apply where appropriate and where they fit the available pool and field of play.
    - Referees or game officials reserve the right to amend these rules to accommodate pool size, or time restrictions. All changes must be communicated prior to the start of a match and agreed to by both competing teams.

7.2 Open Grade – Game Structure

- **4 × 5-minute quarters**
- **Running clock**
- **1 minutes between quarters**
- **2 minutes between halves**
- **Time-outs:**
    - No time-outs in regular rounds
    - 1 time-out per team in semi-finals and finals
    - Time-out duration: **1 minute**
- **Players:**
    - 7 players in the water (1 goalkeeper, 6 field players)
    - Maximum of 11 players per team

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8. Table Duties

- White team to provide duty during their game (ie.parents, teachers in charge)
- OWP will duty the first games of each day.

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9. Player of the Game (New Addition)

- Each match will include **Player of the Game (POTG)** awards.
- The POTG will be **voted on and awarded by the opposing team**.
- This results in:
    - **Two Player of the Game awards per match** (one per team)
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- This initiative aims to:
    - Encourage sportsmanship
    - Promote respect for opponents
    - Recognise impact beyond goals scored

10. Administration and Discretion

Otago Water Polo retains the right to:

- Approve or deny:
    - Mixed teams
    - Combined teams
    - Dispensation players
    - Late team list changes
- Regrade teams where competitive balance is not being achieved
- Act in the best interests of:
    - Player safety
    - Fair competition
    - Long-term athlete development

Disciplinary Procedures - see OWP main competition manual

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.