



**USA UNDERWATER RUGBY
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RULEBOOK – 2026 EDITION**

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1. Definition and Purpose

1.1 The United States Underwater Rugby National Championship (“UWR Nationals”) is the official national championship tournament for Underwater Rugby held within the United States.

1.2 The purpose of UWR Nationals is to promote, develop, and grow the sport through organized competition among registered club teams.

1.3 These rules are adopted and enforced by the USOA Underwater Rugby Committee.

2. Championship Season

2.1 The UWR National Championship season follows the USOA fiscal year, running from October 1 through September 30.

2.2 UWR Nationals consists of one (1) championship event held annually between May and July.

2.3 These rules apply to all divisions offered at UWR Nationals, including Men’s and Women’s divisions. Division-specific roster composition requirements may be adjusted annually by the UWR Committee to support competitive balance and participation growth. As the official United States National Championship tournament, UWR Nationals is governed by the USOA Standardized Rules of Competition. International player eligibility and residency requirements apply to all divisions and are not subject to modification.

3. Tournament Format

3.1 The official game schedule shall be determined based on the number of participating teams, available pool time, and match duration.

3.2 Teams shall be divided into tiers based on the number of participating teams and groups required.

3.3 Teams shall be assigned to groups by random draw within each tier.

3.4 The official tournament schedule shall be published no later than seven (7) days prior to the start of the event.

4. Team Registration

4.1 Teams must complete player registration and pay all required fees no later than forty-five (45) days prior to the tournament.

4.2 Teams must submit a complete roster, including full player names and cap numbers, no later than twenty (20) days prior to the tournament.

4.3 International club teams are not permitted to compete.

4.4 USA National Teams and U21 National Teams are not permitted to compete.

4.5 Orphan or combined teams may compete; however, teams including two (2) or more guest players shall not be eligible for final ranking.

4.6 Each team is permitted one (1) guest player.

5. Team Rosters and Player Eligibility

5.1 General Eligibility

5.1.1 All players must meet organizer requirements, including payment of fees and submission of required waivers.

5.1.2 A player may compete for only one (1) team per division and may not switch teams during the tournament.

5.1.3 A player may compete in both Women's and Mixed/Open divisions, if offered.

5.1.4 All players must be current USOA members and properly registered with the team they represent.

5.1.5 Any player not in good standing with USOA at the time of the tournament shall not be permitted to compete.

5.2 Guest Players

5.2.1 Each team may register one (1) guest player.

5.2.2 Guest players include changing players and non-resident / international players.

5.2.3 Guest players must be declared at the time of roster registration.

5.2.4 All guest players must be properly registered with USOA. Non-resident / international players must be registered under the USOA Foreign Player Registration category at the time of roster submission. Failure to do so results in ineligibility.

5.2.5 Teams exceeding the one (1) guest player limit may participate but shall not be eligible for ranking or final placement.

5.2.1 Changing Players

5.2.1.1 A changing player is a US-based player competing for a team other than the one with which the player is registered during USOA registration.

5.2.1.2 Changing players are considered guest players and count toward the one (1) guest player limit.

5.2.1.3 All changing players must be declared at the time of roster registration.

5.2.2 Non-Resident / International Players

5.2.2.1 Non-resident / international players are considered guest players and count toward the one (1) guest player limit.

5.2.2.2 A non-resident / international player is any player who does not meet the residency requirements defined in this section.

5.2.2.3 A resident player is a current USOA member who is a United States citizen, permanent resident (green card holder), or has resided continuously in the United States for at least six (6) months up to the date of the tournament. Residency is determined at the time of roster registration based on the player's declared address and any required supporting documentation, if requested by the Committee.

5.2.2.4 To be classified as a resident player, teams may be required to provide documentation demonstrating six (6) continuous months of residence in the United States as of the date of the tournament. Acceptable documentation may include, but is not limited to:

- U.S. driver's license or driver permit
- Utility bill in the player's name
- Work permit or employment authorization
- Student visa or official enrollment documentation

Any alternative documentation must be official, verifiable, and issued by a recognized institution, employer, educational institution, or government entity. Residency determinations shall be based solely on whether the submitted documentation demonstrates continuous U.S. residence in accordance with these rules.

5.2.2.5 Players who have competed within the six (6) months prior to the tournament in a foreign national championship tournament or national elite league are classified as non-resident / international players, except for United States citizens or permanent residents (green card holders). If a team registers a player under this exception, the team must disclose the player's recent foreign participation at the time of roster registration. The Committee may request documentation in accordance with Section 5.2.2.4 to verify the player's citizenship or permanent resident status.

5.2.2.6 All requested documentation must be submitted directly to the UWR Director, UWR Competitive Director, UWR Secretary, or their designated representative and shall not be distributed to the full Committee. Eligibility determinations under this section are administrative and are not subject to review by the full Committee.

5.2.2.7 Any residency questions or concerns must be addressed prior to roster registration directly with the UWR Director, UWR Competitive Director, UWR Secretary, or their designated representative.

6. Referees

6.1 The official language of competition shall be English.

6.2 All referees must attend the official referee meeting prior to the start of the tournament.

6.3 Teams shall provide referees as assigned unless full-time officials are designated by the organizer.

6.4 Official game protocols must be signed following each match.

7. Protest Committee

7.1 Establishment

7.1.1 Prior to the start of competition, each participating team shall designate one (1) representative to serve in the Protest Committee Pool. An alternate may also be designated. Team

captains, coaches, and members of the UWR Committee or event organizing committee may not serve in the Protest Committee Pool.

7.1.2 Each team shall submit the names of its designated representative and alternate, if any, to the Nationals Competition Director and Head Referee at the Captains Briefing prior to the start of competition.

7.1.3 The Protest Committee for each protest shall consist of three (3) individuals selected from the Protest Committee Pool.

7.1.4 For each protest, the Tournament Referee, in consultation with the Nationals Competition Director, shall appoint three (3) eligible representatives from the Protest Committee Pool. No representative may serve on a protest involving their own team or where a conflict of interest exists. If fewer than three (3) eligible representatives are available, the Nationals Competition Director or Tournament Referee may appoint temporary neutral members to complete the Committee.

7.2 Scope of Protest

7.2.1 Protests may only be filed regarding misapplication of a written rule, player eligibility, roster violations, or administrative, scoring, timing, or equipment errors.

7.2.2 Referee judgment decisions made during play are not subject to protest.

7.2.3 Protests concerning player eligibility or roster composition must be submitted no later than two (2) hours prior to the start of the affected match and will not be accepted after the match has been completed.

7.2.4 For additional clarification and examples regarding the protest process, teams may refer to the official [UWR Protest Guidelines document](#).

7.3 Filing a Protest

7.3.1 All protests must be submitted in writing to the Nationals Competition Director, Tournament Referee, or Head Official.

7.3.2 The protest must be signed by the team captain or designated team representative and must identify the rule alleged to have been misapplied.

7.3.3 A one hundred dollar (\$100.00 USD) protest fee must accompany the protest.

7.3.4 The protest fee shall be refunded if the protest is upheld. Fees not refunded shall be submitted to the USOA Treasurer within fifteen (15) days following the end of the competition.

7.3.5 Protests must be filed within one (1) hour of the incident or within one (1) hour following completion of the affected match. Protests regarding player eligibility or roster composition must be filed no later than two (2) hours prior to the start of the affected match.

7.3.6 Each party may be accompanied by no more than two (2) individuals during the hearing.

7.4 Protest Review Process

7.4.1 Upon receipt of a valid protest, the Tournament Referee or Nationals Competition Director shall convene the Protest Committee.

7.4.2 The Protest Committee shall review relevant reports and available evidence and deliberate.

7.4.3 Each member shall have one (1) vote. A majority vote shall determine the decision.

7.4.4 Decisions shall be rendered as soon as reasonably possible and, when applicable, prior to the start of any affected match or event.

7.4.5 The Protest Committee may correct administrative, scoring, timing, or rule misapplication errors but may not overturn referee judgment decisions.

7.4.6 All protest decisions are final for the purposes of the competition

8. Game Rules

8.1 CMAS Underwater Rugby rules shall apply unless modified herein.

8.2 Match duration and timing shall be defined by the official tournament schedule.

8.3 Matches shall normally use running time; the referee may stop time for significant incidents.

8.4 Effective time and time-outs may be used when defined by the tournament format.

8.5 Each team may receive one (1) time-out when effective time is used.

8.6 Scoring Limits and Forfeits

8.6.1 The maximum recorded goal differential shall be ten (10) goals.

8.6.2 Goals exceeding a ten (10) goal differential shall not count toward standings or individual statistics.

8.6.3 A forfeit shall result in a 0-10 loss and three (3) points awarded to the opposing team.

9. Champion, Standings, and Ranking

9.1 The National Champion is the team that finishes in first place at UWR Nationals.

9.2 Final rankings shall be based on match results. If teams are tied in the standings, the tie shall be resolved using the applicable tie-breaking criteria listed below, as determined by the tournament format.

- Penalty shootout (when applicable).
- Head-to-head result.
- Goal difference among tied teams.
- Overall goal difference.
- Total goals scored.
- Coin toss.

9.3 If a club participates with more than one team, only the highest-ranking team receives the appropriate points for the club ranking