

**SWIM
IRELAND**

Water Polo

**2026/27
SEASON PACK**

SWIM IRELAND WATER POLO 2026-2027 SEASON GUIDE

Welcome to the 2026-2027 Water Polo Season

Within this guide, you will find all the essential information your club needs to plan, prepare for, and enjoy this season's National Leagues and National Cup competitions.

While much of the information will be familiar, there are also several important updates and exciting developments for the season ahead. We encourage all club committees, coaches, and team managers to take the time to read through this guide and familiarise themselves with the changes.

We are delighted to see an increase in the number of teams entering our National Leagues and National Cup competitions this season. While this growth is a positive reflection of the continued development of the sport, it has also increased the demand for pool access across our key venues.

The Water Polo office has invested a significant amount of time and effort in developing the fixture schedule. While no schedule is ever perfect, we have worked hard to create a balanced programme that supports clubs and maximises available facility access.

A total of **322 matches** has been scheduled across a **36-week season**. Wherever possible, fixtures have been grouped to provide clubs with multiple games at the same venue on the same day, reducing travel demands and creating a more supportive environment for players, team staff, and families.

We have also sought to minimise travel wherever possible. U16 teams have been allocated two fixtures on the same day where schedules and venue availability allow. Due to facility constraints, however, not every team will be able to play all home fixtures at their designated home venue.

This season's competition calendar is extremely busy, and with a tightly scheduled programme there will be limited scope for postponements. We therefore ask for your cooperation, flexibility, and early communication should any issues arise, that may affect the fulfilment of fixtures.

This guide also contains all key deadlines relating to National Cup competitions. We strongly encourage club committees to review these dates carefully and **add them to their calendars** as early as possible. This season, the Competition Committee **will not be accepting** late entry confirmation for National Cup Competitions or Blitz's. Please be mindful of the deadlines.

On behalf of the Competitions Committee, Swim Ireland and Swim ulster, we thank you for your continued support and wish all clubs, players, coaches, officials, and volunteers a successful and enjoyable 2026-2027 season.

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What's New for 2026-2027

Following a review of the 2025-2026 season, several improvements and developments have been introduced for the upcoming season, including:

- Introduction of a Fixture Change Policy
- Revised and updated Water Polo Rule Book
- Formalisation of a Referees Committee/Working Group
- Creation of a U16 Girls Division 2
- Introduction of Cup Qualifiers for U14 and U16 competitions
- New competition rules for U14 Cup and Blitz events

There have also been changes to the Competitions Committee, with new members joining the group and a renewed focus on governance, accountability, and reporting structures between the Competitions Committee and the National Water Polo Committee.

Supported by the Swim Ireland and Swim Ulster office staff, the Competitions Committee will have two primary functions during the 2026-2027 season:

1. Lead in the management and operation of all National League and National Cup competitions.
2. Review the effectiveness of competitions throughout the season and make recommendations for improvement for the 2027-2028 season, subject to National Water Polo Committee approval.

Competitions Committee Members

Position	Member
NWPC Representative	Oonagh Garry
Swim Ireland Lead	Alex Malone
Swim Ulster Lead	Phil Kelly
Referee Controller	Karl Wilkes
Leinster Representative	Eoin Bridgeman
Connacht Representative	Eamon Caulfield
Ulster Representative	Brian Morrissey

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National Leagues

- ❖ National League - Division One Men & Women
- ❖ National League – Division Two Men & Women
- ❖ Pathway League – Male
- ❖ Under 16 League – Division One Boys & Girls
- ❖ Under 16 League – Division Two Boys & Girls
- ❖ Under 14 Blitz Series

National Cups

- ❖ Irish Senior Cup
- ❖ National League Division One Cup
- ❖ National League Division Two Cup
- ❖ Under 19 Cup
- ❖ Under 16 Cup
- ❖ Under 14 Cup
- ❖ Under 12 Mixed Cup
- ❖ Under 18, Under 16 & Under 14 Inter Provincial Events

Key Contacts

Information relating to the National Leagues and National Cups can be found here:

- Ireland Water Polo Website - [Click Here](#)

The “Swim Ireland Water Polo” app can be downloaded here:

- Apple – [Click Here](#)
- Android – [Click Here](#)

General enquires relating to the National Leagues, League Fixtures and National Cup Competitions can be directed to:

- waterpolo@swimireland.ie

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League Format

National League - Division One Men & Women

	MNLD1	WNLD1
No. of Teams	7	7
Format	2 Rounds Home & Away	2 Rounds Home & Away
Duration	4 X 8 mins	4 X 8 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4

National League - Division Two Men & Women

	MNLD2	WNLD2
No. of Teams	6	8
Format	2 Rounds Home & Away	2 Rounds Home & Away
Duration	4 X 7 mins	4 X 7 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4

Pathway League – Male

	PWL
No. of Teams	6
Format	2 Rounds Home & Away
Duration	4 X 7 mins
Timeouts	2
Ball Size	5

Under 16 League – Division One Boys & Girls

	BU16D1 Born 2011 and younger	GU16D1 Born 2011 and younger
No. of Teams	6	5
Format	2 Rounds Home & Away	2 Rounds Home & Away
Duration	4 X 7 mins	4 X 7 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4

Under 16 League – Division Two Boys & Girls

	BU16D2 Born 2011 and younger	GU16D2 Born 2011 and younger
No. of Teams	7	6
Format	2 Rounds Home & Away	2 Rounds Home & Away
Duration	4 X 5 mins	4 X 5 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4

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Points System

For National League Division One Men & Women, all matches will have a declared winner. If a match is tied at the end of full time, then a penalty shootout (PSO) will be used to determine the winner. Points will be awarded as follows:

- ❖ Win in regular time - 3 Points
- ❖ Win after PSO – 2 Points
- ❖ Loss after PSO – 1 Point
- ❖ Loss in regular time - 0 Points

For all other National Leagues and underage leagues, the points will be awarded as follows:

- ❖ Win - 3 Points
- ❖ Draw - 1 Point
- ❖ Loss - 0 Points

Where teams are tied with the same number of points in the final points table and where a decision must be reached in relation to final positions, it shall be decided under rule 3.6 in Section 3 of the Ireland Water Polo rule book.

Match Fees

League	Match Fee
National League Division 1 Men & women	€120 €150 for matches set up in international pitches NAC, UL and Bangor
National League Division 2 Men & women	€120
Pathway League Male	€120
Under 16 Division 1 Boys & Girls	€95
Under 16 Division 2 Boys & Girls	€90

U14 Blitz Events

Please note that further information and dates for under 14 Blitz events will be published later in the season

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Fixture Listings & Fixture Change Policy

The full season fixture schedule is available through the [Ireland Water Polo app](#) and [Website](#).

For the 2026-2027 season, a new Fixture Change Policy has been introduced. This policy establishes a clear, fair, and transparent process for how fixture change requests are handled, while ensuring that all requests are dealt with in an appropriate timeframe.

Clubs should note that, except in exceptional circumstances, requests to change scheduled fixture dates will not be approved by the Competitions Committee.

The Fixture Change Request form can be found [here](#), and the full Fixture Change Policy is located on the Ireland Water Polo website [here](#).

Match Scheduling

Where multiple matches are scheduled at the same venue, fixtures shall commence immediately following the conclusion of the preceding match or at the designated start time, whichever is later.

Where a preceding fixture is awarded as a walkover, the next scheduled match shall begin at its designated start time unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed by both teams and the appointed match officials.

The National Fixtures Secretary or Water Polo office reserves the right to amend fixture start times within a four-hour window on any scheduled match day for administrative or operational purposes. Where possible, clubs will be provided with a minimum of seven days' notice of any such change.

Walkovers

A walkover shall be deemed to have occurred where:

1. A team does not have the minimum number of eligible players required to participate in the competition at the time the referee signals the start of the match
2. A team fields an unregistered player
3. A team fails to fulfil a scheduled fixture in any competition

A walkover shall be recorded as a **4-0 victory** in favour of the opposing team and will incur the applicable fine outlined within this guide.

Any team that records **three walkovers during a season** will be removed from the league competition.

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Notification of Walkovers

It is the responsibility of each club to notify the Water Polo office as soon as possible if it becomes aware that it will be unable to fulfil a scheduled fixture. **Office opening hours are Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00.**

The Competitions Committee recognises that unforeseen circumstances may arise outside of office hours, particularly at weekends. In such instances, the club concerned must notify the opposing club at the earliest opportunity that they will be unable to fulfil the fixture.

Unregistered Players

All players participating in National League and National Cup competitions must be registered as Competitive Members and hold a valid Water Polo Licence.

Players who are not correctly registered will not be covered by Swim Ireland's insurance arrangements.

A club playing an unlicensed player shall concede a walkover in that match and all subsequent matches that the player takes part in while unlicensed and walkover fines will be charged accordingly

Fines & Charges

Offense	Fine
Walkover fee for matches using international pitch set up	€400
Walkover fee for matches 4x8 and 4x7	€300
Walkover fee for matches 4x6 and 4x5	€200
Withdraw from League before season begins	€500

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Digital Match/Team Sheets

Digital match sheets will be used during league and cup matches. For league matches the team sheets will be completed, where possible, by the table officials immediately prior to each match.

Up to 14 players can be listed on a team sheet. When 14 players have been listed, this must include 12 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers. This rule will be applied across all National Division 1, Division 2 and Pathway Leagues, as well as all National Cup Competitions.

As a development and participation measure in U16 leagues, U14 Blitz's, and U12 Mix Cup, up to 15 players can be listed on a team sheet and may include 14 outfield players and 1 goalkeeper.

For the smooth operation of all National Cup competitions, digital team sheets will be completed in advanced by the Swim Ireland office staff. Please ensure that all players and coaches are correctly registered with Swim Ireland and hold a valid Water Polo License in their Just Go account.

Unregistered players and coaches will not be visible in the system and cannot be added to a digital match sheet.

Named Players

For clubs with more than one team across Division 1, Division 2 and the Pathway League, or with two teams in the same league, must nominate (11) named players who can only play in a particular division. Named players must be submit before the first game of season – **Saturday 19th Sept 2026**

There will be no league restrictions for players under 16 + 2 years (YOB 2009, 2010) except if they are a named Division 1 player. Players under this rule can play unlimited Division 1 matches.

Rules

Unless stated in this season guide, all National Leagues and National Cup competitions will be conducted in accordance with the Ireland Water Polo Rule Book which can be found on the Ireland Water Polo website [here](#). *Please remember that the NWPC may update the rule book from time to time. Any updates to the Rule Book will be fully communicated, in advance, to all Water Polo clubs.*

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National Cup Competitions Dates and Venues

Cup Competition	Venue	Date
National League Division One Cup	Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre Belfast	Nov 13 th -15 th 2026
Under 19 Cup	UL Sports Arena Limerick	Nov 27 th - 29 th 2026
Inter Provincial U18 & U16 Event	National Aquatic Centre Dublin	Dec 5 th – 6 th 2026
Under 16 Cup	Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre Belfast	Feb 26 th – 28 th 2027
National League Division Two Cup	Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre Belfast	March 12 th – 14 th 2027
Inter Provincial U14 Event	Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre Belfast	April 10 th 2027
Irish Senior Cup	Bangor Aurora Aquatics Complex Bangor	April 15 th - 17 th 2027
Under 14 Cup	Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre Belfast	May 8 th – 9 th 2027
Under 12 Cup Preliminary	National Aquatic Centre Dublin	June 5 th 2027
Under 12 Cup Finals	National Aquatic Centre – Dublin	June 12 th & 13 th 2027

National Cup Competitions Deadlines

Cup	Entry Confirmation	Entry Fee	Team Sheet Submission	Team Staff Accreditation	Team Leaders Meeting
NLD1	Fri Oct 16 th	Fri Oct 23 rd	Fri Oct 30 th	Fri Nov 6 th	Mon Nov 9 th
U19	Fri Oct 30 th	Fri Nov 6 th	Fri Nov 13 th	Fri Nov 20 th	
U16 Finals	Fri Jan 29 th	Fri Feb 5 th	Fri Feb 12 th	Fri Feb 19 th	Mon Feb 22 nd
NLD2	Fri Feb 12 th	Fri Feb 26 th	Fri Feb 26 th	Fri March 5 th	
ISC Finals	Monday Feb 1 st	Thurs Mar 25 th	Thurs April 1 st	Thurs April 8 th	Thurs April 8 th
U14 Finals	Fri April 9 th	Fri April 16 th	Fri April 23 rd	Fri April 30 th	Tue May 4 th
U12	Fri May 7 th	Fri May 14 th	Fri May 21 st	Fri May 28 th	Mon May 24 th

Please note: Qualification rounds will be used for ISC women

Please note: Qualification rounds will be used for U16 & U14 Cups, where a maximum of 8 teams will progress to the finals

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National Cup Formats

Irish Senior Cup

	Men	Women
YOB	Open	Open
No. of Teams	7	7
Duration	4 X 8 mins	4 X 8 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4
Qualification Rounds Required	No	Yes

National League Division One

	Men	Women
YOB	Open	Open
No. of Teams	6	6
Duration	4 X 8 mins	4 X 8 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4
Qualification Rounds Required	No	No

National League Division Two

	Men	Women
YOB	Open	Open
No. of Teams	4	3
Duration	4 X 7 mins	4 X 7 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4
Qualification Rounds Required	No	No

Please note: For each cup a minimum of 4 participating teams must be confirmed by the entry confirmation deadline, for the cup to proceed

Under 19 Cup

	Men	Women
YOB	2007	2007
No. of Teams	7	8
Duration	4 X 7 mins	4 X 7 mins
Timeouts	2	2
Ball Size	5	4
Qualification Rounds Required	No	No

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Under 16 Cup

	Boys	Girls
YOB	2011	2011
No. of Teams	12	12
Duration	TBC	TBC
Timeouts	TBC	TBC
Ball Size	5	4
Qualification Rounds Required	Yes	Yes

Under 14 Cup

	Boys	Girls
YOB	2013	2013
No. of Teams	14	11
Duration	TBC	TBC
Timeouts	TBC	TBC
Ball Size	4	4
Qualification Rounds Required	Yes	Yes

Under 12 Cup

	Mixed
YOB	2015
No. of Teams	16
Duration	TBC
Timeouts	TBC
Ball Size	3

Please note the following

- ❖ All National Cup Competitions, including qualifiers, all matches will have a declared winner. If a match is tied at the end of full time, then a penalty shootout (PSO) will be used to determine the winner.
- ❖ Qualification rounds for ISC women, U16 Cup and U14 Cup will be used – Details and dates to follow
- ❖ New playing rules will be applied for U14 Cup and U14 Blitz – Details to follow
- ❖ U12 Mixed Cup: Special Rules used in 2026 will apply in 2027.
- ❖ Prior to each National Cup Competition, a detailed tournament guide will be published, which may include updated formats than shown above
- ❖ Please note that deadlines for confirming entries, paying entry fees, submitting team sheets, and applying for team staff accreditations will be enforced, penalties may be applied to clubs not adhering to deadlines

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Accreditation

Please remember it is mandatory that all Team Staff have a valid accreditation for each National Cup competition. Accreditations must be applied for in advance and must always be visible when in any field of play area. An accreditation link for each cup will be included in each tournament pack.

Respect Charter

The values outlined within the Water Polo Respect Charter and Code of Behaviour apply to all those involved in Water Polo which includes all players, coaches, team staff, and officials. The Respect Charter will be visible and enforced across all National Leagues and National Cups.



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RESPECT CHARTER

We understand respect means:

Respect is valuing the feelings, wishes and rights of others; treating everyone equally, kindly and fairly. We accept others on an equal basis.

Understanding that your actions have an impact on others and knowing how to act within the boundaries of the game.

INTEGRITY
We have a right to be respected and enjoy our sport. We are all responsible for creating a safe environment for our players, coaches and officials.

TRUST
Our code of behaviour is a standard for all. We know we can speak up if we need to.

FAIRNESS
We must promote and encourage fair play and behave in a sporting manner.

INCLUSIVITY
We must be kind, encouraging and supportive to everyone. We must lead by example and understand our actions affect others.

PLAY WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME.



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WATER POLO CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

This code of behaviour is for **EVERYONE**.
Our code of behaviour applies at all times: in the water - on and off the ball, on pool deck, in training and at matches/tournaments.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS	UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS
- Be kind - Be fair and transparent - Encourage others - Be supportive - Be friendly - Be inclusive - Play by the rules - Behave in a sporting manner - Explain mistakes - Accept decisions - Know how to raise issues properly - Be calm and considerate - Be courteous - Show equality - Listen to other's views - Have respect and regard for others	We must not be aggressive in our behaviour: - No kicking/ pinching/ punching - Do not encourage aggression in others - Do not intimidate or threaten others - No grabbing others' private parts - No attempting to drown others - Do not unzip or pull other players suits We must not bully others: - No body shaming - No calling people offensive names - No making fun of others We must not take part in rude or insulting behaviour: - No swearing - No shouting - We must not be racist, sexist or show prejudice