



WHEELCHAIR RUGBY - SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The following is an outline of the general sequence of events in Wheelchair Rugby from the start of a game to the end.

Before the game

Before the game begins, the two teams enter the field of play. Bench personnel begin to set up while the teams warm up, each on their half of the court. Team benches are determined by mutual agreement of the two coaches. If the coaches cannot agree the highest seeded team shall be given their choice.

While the teams are warming up, the referees will brief the table officials and ensure that everything is in order for the start of the game. The coaches will be provided with the score sheet; they must review their team rosters as listed on the sheet, make any corrections to player's names, numbers, or classifications; and then sign the score sheet to indicate that it is correct.

No later than ten minutes before the game, coaches must indicate their starting line-ups for the game and provide the classification cards for their starting players to the scorekeeper.

Approximately four minutes before the game, teams should return to their benches. The referees may call for the team captains and hold a brief pre-game meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to pass on any pertinent information about the game or the field of play, and to answer questions from the team captains.

Following the meeting, the captains will return to their benches. The referees will confirm that the table officials are ready, and will check the position of the cones on the goal lines.

Starting the game

Approximately one minute before the game begins; the starting players for each team will enter the court. One player from each team will enter the centre circle, taking positions on the same side as their respective team benches. Referee 1 will indicate the direction of play for each team. In the first half of the game, teams defend on same side of the court their bench, and score on the goal line opposite their opponents' bench.

When all players are in position, Referee 1 will blow his whistle. At this point, players may make legal contact with each other. Referee 1 will then enter the centre circle and toss the ball vertically between the two players. After the ball has reached its highest point and begun to fall, they will each try to tip the ball with their hands and direct it to a team mate.

Often, both players will attempt to control the tip-off. Sometimes, teams will send a weaker player in and choose to set up a strong defence to react after the tip-off.

As soon as the ball is touched by one of the two players in the centre circle, Referee 1 will lower his hand and the timekeeper will start the game clock.

If one of the other players takes possession of the ball, the game will continue. Referee 1 will signal to the scorekeeper's table that the first alternating possession will go to the other team; the scorekeeper will position the alternating possession arrow to indicate this.

If the ball goes out of bounds before another player takes possession, the referee will blow his whistle and signal a violation. The game clock will stop. Possession of the ball will be given to the team that did not cause the ball to go out-of-bounds. The other team will be given the first alternating possession.

If one of the two centres takes possession of the ball before it has been touched by another player or before it has touched the floor, the referee will blow his whistle and signal a violation. Possession of the ball will be given to the team whose centre did not take possession of the ball. The other team will be given the first alternating possession.

If the ball touches the floor before it has been touched by one of the two players in the centre circle, Referee 1 will retrieve the ball and the tip-off will be taken again.

Once a player has taken possession of the ball, he and his team will begin their attempt to score while their opponents prepare to defend. The game has begun.

Playing the game

There are numerous strategies employed in wheelchair rugby. Typically, coaches field a team of players with different point values assigned to different roles. A team could play one 3.5 player as the primary ball carrier, a 2.5 player to assist the ball carrier in passing and scoring, and a 1.5 and 0.5 player to block and hold opposing players who are trying to defend.

The two main defensive strategies are the *press* and the *zone*. In a press defence, defending players go man-to-man against the offence, trying to take possession of the ball or force an error. In a zone defence, defenders take up assigned positions in or around their key area; typically three players set up in the key while the fourth player positions himself outside to pursue and pressure the opposing ball carrier.

In a press situation, the attacking team tries to break the press by getting the ball carrier free or by freeing another player to receive a pass. If the press has been broken, the attacking team has a very good chance to score unless the defending team is able to pursue and stop the ball carrier. However, a press can be very effective in preventing a team from in-bounding the ball, or in forcing a twelve second violation in the attacking teams back court.

In a zone situation, the attacking team normally tries to draw one of the defenders out of position and then trap him, creating an opening on the goal line for the ball carrier to score. It can be very difficult to score on a well-run zone defence; however, if the attacking team is in the lead, they can take advantage of a zone defence to run out time on the clock.

The actual combinations of point values and strategies used vary widely from team to team and from game to game. Wheelchair rugby is a fast-moving and fluid game; teams will adapt their strategies as the game situation develops. Possession can go back and forth between teams several times before a

goal is scored. Some teams will play with an aggressive style that scores a lot of goals but that also leaves them open to be scored on. Others will play more conservatively, leaving few openings but not scoring as many goals. Every game is different.

Scoring a goal

The aim of wheelchair rugby is to score goals by carrying the ball across the opposing team's goal line. In order to score a goal, a player must cross the goal line with at least two of the four wheels on his wheelchair, while he has possession of the ball.

Most often, the ball is carried on the player's lap. However, a goal can be scored if the player is holding the ball between his hands or his arms, if he is holding the ball against any part of his wheelchair with an arm or a hand, or even if the ball is sitting on his footrest. When a goal is scored, the referee will signal by blowing his whistle and raising one hand in the air with the index finger pointing straight up. The game clock will stop and one point will be awarded to the scoring team.

A player must establish control of the ball before scoring. A player cannot score a goal if the ball is touching the floor while the player crosses the goal line, if the player is still trying to gain control of the ball after receiving a pass, or if the player receives the ball after one or more of his wheels crosses the goal line.

If a player leaves the court on the goal line but does not score, the referee will signal a violation by blowing his whistle and raising one hand in the air with all fingers extended and the palm flat. He will then wave both arms outward to indicate that there was no goal. The game clock will stop and possession of the ball will be awarded to the other team. This usually occurs when a player crosses the goal line with one wheel and is then stopped and forced back onto the court before a second wheel crosses the line, or when a player strikes one of the cones marking the ends of the goal line before crossing with two wheels.

In-bounding after a goal

After a goal has been scored, the ball will be given to the other team to in-bound. One player from the in-bounding team will take up a position outside the court, anywhere along the end line. The referee will place the ball on the player's lap, raise his hand in the air, and blow his whistle. The ball is now live and contact between players is permitted. The in-bounding player has ten seconds to throw the ball in so that it is touched by a player on the court.

The in-bounder may toss or throw the ball, or bounce it and then bat it onto the court. He may not take possession of the ball after releasing it until it has been touched by a player on the court, and he may not re-enter the court until after he has released the ball. He is permitted to move along the goal line.

When the ball has been touched by a player on the court, the referee will lower his hand and the game clock will start. The in-bounding player will re-enter the court. Opposing players are not permitted to prevent him from entering the court, or to make contact with him until after he has completely entered the court.

If more than ten seconds pass before the ball is touched, or if the in-bounding player commits a violation, the referee will blow his whistle to signal the violation. Possession of the ball will be awarded to the other team.

Violations

There are a number of violations that may be committed by the team that has control of the ball, as detailed in the Rules Summary.

When a violation occurs, the referee will blow his whistle and raise one hand in the air with all fingers extended and the palm flat. The game clock will stop and the referee will then give a hand signal indicating the type of violation. The referee will then point to indicate the direction of play for the next possession; i.e., he will point towards the goal line that the team receiving the ball will be attempting to score on.

The most common violations and their hand signals are:

- Ten Seconds – No Dribble – Dribbling motion with both hands in front of the referee
- Ten Seconds in the Key – Both hands held over the head with all fingers extended
- Twelve Seconds – Both hands held over the head, one with the first clenched and the other with all fingers extended
- Forty Seconds – One hand tapping the shoulder several times.
- Back Court – One hand pointing at the centre line and moving back and forth
- Out of Bounds – No signal; indicate the direction of the next possession

In-bounding after a violation

After a violation, the ball will be given to the other team to in-bound. One player from the in-bounding team will take up a position outside the court along the side line nearest to where the ball was when the violation occurred.

The rules for in-bounding after a violation are the same as for after a goal, except that the in-bounding player is not permitted to move along the side line.

Contact before the whistle

Players are not permitted to make contact during a stoppage in play. Any deliberate or advantageous contact which occurs after the referee blows his whistle to indicate a stoppage in play and before he blows his whistle after giving the ball to the in-bounder may result in a foul.

Teams are given one contact warning in each half of the game. The first time a team commits contact before the whistle in a half, the referee will blow his whistle and signal the foul. He will then inform the

penalty timekeeper that the team has received a contact warning. If the team commits another contact before the whistle during that half of the game, the referee will award a common foul.

Common fouls

There are a number of common fouls that may be committed by either team, as detailed in the Rules Summary.

When a foul is committed, the referee will blow his whistle and raise one hand in the air with the fist clenched. With his other hand he will point to the player who committed the foul. The game clock will stop and the referee will then give a hand signal indicating the type of foul. He will then indicate the sanction for the foul.

- Contact before the whistle – Both arms extended in front of the body, one hand striking the palm of the other hand
- Out-and-In – Palms facing each other – move arms forward and backwards in an arc
- Four in the key – One hand held over the head with four fingers extended
- Holding – One arm extended in front of the body with the other hand gripping it between elbow and wrist
- Pushing – Both hands moving forward and back in front of the body, palms flat and upright in a pushing motion
- Illegal Use of Hands – One arm extended in front of the body with the other hand striking it in a chopping motion between elbow and wrist
- Spinning – Both arms held by the sides and bent at the elbows with clenched hands held out in front of the body, and then rotating the upper body side to side

The sanction for an offensive foul, committed by the team that has possession of the ball, is a loss of possession. The referee will indicate the new direction of play and give the ball to the defending team to in-bound.

The sanction for a defensive foul, committed by the team that does not have possession of the ball, is a one-minute penalty. The referee will lead the player who committed the foul to the penalty box and inform the penalty timekeeper of the player's team, their number, and the foul that was committed. The referee will then return the ball to the offensive team to in-bound.

Serving a penalty

A player that has been given a penalty must remain in the penalty box, opposite his team's bench area, until one minute has elapsed on the game clock or until the other team scores a goal. When the time expires on his penalty, the penalty timekeeper will release him from the box. If a goal is scored, the referee will indicate to the player that he may return to the court.

Penalty goal

If a defensive foul is committed when the offensive team is in an imminent scoring position, the referee may award a penalty goal in lieu of a one-minute penalty. To indicate this, he will blow his whistle and signal the foul. The game clock will stop. The referee will then signal a goal and clearly state "penalty goal." The offensive team will be awarded one point and the ball will be given to the defensive team to in-bound on the goal line.

If a player is serving a penalty when a penalty goal is awarded to the opposing team, he is not released from the penalty box.

Substitutions

Teams are permitted to make substitutions after all stoppages in play. Teams are not permitted to substitute after a goal unless another stoppage in play takes place subsequent to the goal (e.g. a time out) or during an equipment time-out, unless the player requesting the equipment time-out is unable to continue.

Players wishing to substitute in must report to the scorekeeper's table before the stoppage in play. They give the scorekeeper their classification cards and indicate which players they will be replacing. At the next stoppage in play, the timekeeper will signal the referees with a buzzer. The referee will acknowledge the request for substitutions by holding both arms crossed over in front of their chest. He will then instruct the substitutes to enter the court. Once the substitutes are on the court and the players they are replacing have left, the referee will continue with the in-bound.

Players leaving the court after a substitution will report to the scorekeeper's table and collect their classification cards before returning to the bench.

Charged time-out

Each team has four player time-outs during regulation play. When the ball is in play, only a player on the court whose team has possession of the ball may call a time-out. A player on the team must have possession of the ball at the time. A time-out may not be called if the possession of the ball is unclear.

Time-outs are frequently called when a team is in danger of committing a ten, twelve or forty-second violation or a back court violation. Sometimes a player with possession of the ball who is in danger of leaving the court due to contact will call a time-out to stop the play before he is out of bounds. A team that is forced to use up all four time-outs early in the game will be at a disadvantage later.

When a player calls for a time-out, the referee will blow his whistle and the game clock will stop. The referee will signal the time-out by holding one arm with the palm flat and with the index finger of the other hand extended to touch the middle of the palm.

The team that called the time-out may choose to continue play immediately. In that case, the referee will return the ball to them for the in-bound. If they choose to take the time-out, both teams will return to their bench areas. One referee will go to the scorekeeper's table to report the time-out and the other will take the ball to the side line to prepare for the in-bound. When twenty seconds have passed, the time keeper will signal with a buzzer and the referee will instruct the teams to return to the court.

A coach has two one minute time-outs that they can use at any time during the game. The time-out will be awarded when the ball becomes dead.

Referee's time-out

A referee may call a time-out at any time to deal with any situation. Referee time-outs are usually called when a player has fallen or is injured, when a player's wheelchair or other personal equipment is damaged so that the player cannot continue, or to handle problems with timing and scoring equipment. The referee signals the time-out by blowing his whistle and tapping each of his shoulders with the hands on that arm.

If the referee's time-out is called to address a situation that is the responsibility of a team, such as an equipment malfunction, the team is given one minute to resolve the problem. If they cannot resolve the problem, they must either call a time-out or they must make a substitution for the affected player so that play may continue.

If the time-out is called to address a situation that is not the responsibility of a team, such as a malfunctioning game clock, the time-out will continue as long as is necessary for the referee to resolve the problem.

Where a situation creates a safety risk, such as a fallen player who is directly in the path of the play, the referee will stop play immediately. If there is no safety risk the referee will use his judgement to stop the play at an appropriate time. If the team that has possession of the ball is in a position to score, and there is no safety concern, the referee will not normally stop the play until the goal has been scored or the scoring opportunity has passed. For example, if a defending player who is positioned behind the play gets a flat tire, the referee will not stop the play until the offensive team scores or until they stop moving towards the goal.

Held ball

Team control of the ball is determined by the player who has control of the ball. In some situations, players from opposing teams may control the ball at the same time. This results in a held ball. Held balls frequently occur when one player is carrying the ball, usually on the lap, and an opposing player is able to place a hand firmly on the ball, preventing the first player from being able to move it.

A held ball is also called if the ball becomes trapped under a wheelchair or between two wheelchairs.

When a held ball occurs, the referee will blow his whistle and indicate the held ball by raising both arms in the air, fists clenched and thumbs extended upwards. Possession after a held ball is determined according to the alternating process. The referee will consult the scorekeeper's table to determine which direction the alternating possession arrow is pointing. He will then indicate the direction of play for the next possession and give the ball to the appropriate team to in-bound.

Once the ball has become live after a held ball, the scorekeeper will change the direction of the alternating possession arrow.

Ending the quarter

When eight minutes have elapsed on the game clock, the buzzer will sound to signal the end of the quarter. Play stops immediately when the buzzer sounds. Both teams return to their bench for a two-minute break.

Any player in the penalty box at the end of the first or third quarter must remain in the box during the break. Team staff may attend to the player in the penalty box if required.

Starting the quarter

At the end of the two-minute break a buzzer will sound to indicate the start of the next quarter. Teams may make substitutions at this time. The referees will instruct the teams to return to the court. Possession at the start of a quarter is determined according to the alternating process. The referee will consult the scorekeeper's table to determine which direction the alternating possession arrow is pointing. He will then indicate the direction of play for the first possession and give the ball to the appropriate team to in-bound.

Ending the half

At the end of the second quarter of play, the buzzer will sound to signal the end of the half. Play stops immediately and both teams return to their bench for a five-minute break.

Any player in the penalty box at the end of the half may return to his bench area during the break.

Starting the half

At the end of the five-minute break a buzzer will sound to indicate the start of the next half. Teams may make substitutions at this time. The referees will instruct the teams to return to the court. Any players who were serving penalties at the end of the half must return to the penalty box.

Possession at the start of the half is determined according to the alternating process. The referee will consult the scorekeeper's table to determine which direction the alternating possession arrow is pointing. He will then indicate the direction of play for the first possession and give the ball to the appropriate team to in-bound.

At the start of the second half, teams change their direction of play; they now defend opposite their opponents' bench and score on the goal line on the same side of the court as their bench.

Teams are permitted one contact before the whistle warning in the second half. The first time a team is called for contact before the whistle in the half, the referee will blow his whistle and signal the foul. He will then inform the penalty timekeeper that the team has received a contact warning. If the team commits another contact before the whistle during that half of the game, the referee will award a common foul.

Ending the game

Play continues through the third quarter. There is another two-minute break, followed by the fourth quarter.

At the end of the fourth quarter, the buzzer will sound to signal the end of the game. If one team is ahead in points, they are declared the winner. If teams are tied at the end of the fourth quarter, an overtime period will be played.

Overtime

If overtime is required, a two-minute break will follow the end of the fourth quarter. Overtime periods are three minutes in length. Each period of overtime will begin with a tip-off in the centre circle. During the first period of overtime, teams continue in the same direction of play that they followed in the second half. In any subsequent overtime periods the direction of play will alternate.

Teams are given one additional time-out at the start of an overtime period. This is in addition to any time outs that they may have remaining from regulation time.

If one team is ahead in points at the end of an overtime period, they are declared the winner. If teams are tied at the end of an overtime, an additional overtime period will be played. The game will continue, with as many periods of overtime as required, until one team is ahead in points at the end of the period.