International Tours

Player Eligibility, Selection Criteria and Selection Procedures

Selection Policy — U16, U17 and U18 Boys and U18 Girls

Purpose

Schools Water Polo South Africa (SWPSA) is committed to selecting competitive, well-balanced Boys and Girls teams to represent South African schools water polo at various international tournaments during 2027

Participation in these tournaments, provides an opportunity for talented young water polo players to compete internationally, develop their technical and tactical abilities, gain valuable experience against international opposition, and represent SWPSA with pride.

The selection process will be conducted in a fair, transparent and consistent manner, with the objective of identifying players who demonstrate the ability, commitment, attitude and potential to contribute positively to the team's performance and development.

Selection will be based on individual performance, the requirements of the team, and the player's ability to perform effectively within a competitive international environment.

Selection for 2027 teams is not an automatic entitlement arising from previous provincial, national or international representation. All eligible players will be assessed on their current abilities and suitability for the team.

The following criteria and procedures will apply equally to the U18 Boys and U18 Girls selection processes.

Mandatory Participation in the 2026 IPT

The 2026 SWPSA Inter-Provincial Tournament will serve as the primary selection event for the 2027 U18 Australian Youth Championships teams as well as the U17 EU Nations teams

Players wishing to be considered for selection must:

- Have participated in the 2026 IPT in Cape Town as a registered member of a recognised provincial team.
- Have competed in the appropriate age-group division, as determined by SWPSA's published eligibility requirements.
- Have participated in a minimum of 50% of their team's matches at the tournament, unless a medical exemption has been received and approved.

- Have demonstrated a level of performance appropriate for consideration for international competition.

The 50% match participation requirement is intended to ensure that selectors have sufficient opportunity to assess players under competitive match conditions.

Requirement	Selection criteria
Age eligibility for U18	Players born in 2009 or 2010
Age eligibility for U17	Players born in 2010 or 2011
Age eligibility for U16	Players born in 2011
SWPSA registration	Players must be registered with SWPSA and be members in good standing.
School eligibility	Players must meet the SWPSA eligibility requirements for representing Schools Water Polo South Africa by being enrolled at school for the 2027 academic year. **No player already in possession of a National Senior Certificate or similar Matriculation Certificate or enrolled as a "Post Matriculant" will be eligible for selection.**
IPT participation	Players must have participated in the 2026 SWPSA Inter-Provincial Tournament in Cape Town, subject to the exemptions outlined below.
Selection availability	Players must be available for all training camps and tournaments and the full tour period.
Conduct	Players must comply with the SWPSA Code of Conduct and all applicable safeguarding policies.

Participation in the IPT does not guarantee selection

Medical exemptions and exceptional circumstances

SWPSA may consider a request for exemption from the IPT participation requirement in the following circumstances:

- An injury or medical condition that prevented the player from participating.
- A documented medical condition that limited the player's participation to fewer than 50% of matches.
- Exceptional circumstances outside the player's control, where supported by appropriate documentation.

Applications must be submitted in writing to the SWPSA General Secretary (info@swpsa.co.za) prior to the start of the IPT, and by no later than Friday, 4th December 2026.

The selection committee will review each application individually and determine whether sufficient alternative evidence of the player's performance is available.

An approved exemption permits the player to be considered for selection but does not guarantee a place in the final team.

Selection Philosophy and Objectives

The selection process will focus on identifying players capable of competing effectively against strong international opposition.

Selectors must consider both the individual abilities of each player and their potential contribution to the overall team.

The following principles will guide the process:

- **Merit-based selection:** Players will be selected according to their demonstrated ability, performance and suitability for international competition.
- **Team balance:** Selection will take account of positional requirements, playing combinations and the overall composition of the team.
- **Fair and consistent assessment:** All eligible players will be assessed against the same published criteria, using a structured selection process.
- **Development and potential:** Selectors will consider the player's ability to develop, adapt and improve through the preparation programme and international competition.
- **Integrity and accountability:** Selection decisions must be supported by documented assessments and managed in accordance with SWPSA's conflict-of-interest and confidentiality policies.

Technical Ability and Individual Skills

Technical ability will be a primary consideration in the selection process.

Players must demonstrate the skills required to compete at a high level and execute effectively under pressure.

The following technical competencies will be assessed:

Technical competency	Assessment criteria
Ball handling	Ability to receive, control and distribute the ball accurately under pressure.
Passing	Accuracy, timing, speed of release and the ability to execute different passing techniques.
Shooting	Shot selection, accuracy, power, variation and execution under defensive pressure.
Swimming	Speed, endurance, acceleration, recovery and effective movement between attacking and defensive phases.
Body positioning	Ability to establish and maintain effective position in offensive and defensive situations.
Ball protection	Ability to retain possession and make effective decisions under physical pressure.
Defensive skills	Blocking, pressing, tackling, interceptions and preventing opponents from creating scoring opportunities.
Transition skills	Ability to move efficiently between attack and defence and respond quickly to changes in possession.
Positional skills	Demonstrated competence in the technical requirements of the player's primary position.

Players must demonstrate that they can execute these skills consistently in competitive match situations rather than solely during isolated drills or training exercises.

Tactical Awareness and Game Intelligence

Selectors will assess each player's understanding of the game and their ability to make effective decisions in different match situations.

This assessment will include:

Attacking awareness

- Recognising and exploiting attacking opportunities.
- Understanding attacking structures and team systems.
- Effective movement and positioning without the ball.
- Creating space for teammates and identifying passing opportunities.
- Making appropriate decisions regarding passing, shooting and retaining possession.
- Understanding numerical advantage situations, including extra-man attack.

Defensive awareness

- Understanding individual and team defensive responsibilities.
- Recognising opposition attacking patterns.
- Maintaining effective defensive positioning.
- Communicating defensive assignments and switches.
- Responding appropriately to counterattacks.
- Understanding numerical disadvantage situations and exclusion defence.

Decision-making under pressure

- Players will be assessed on their ability to make effective decisions when faced with physical pressure, limited time, fatigue and changing match circumstances.
- Selectors will consider whether a player can adapt their decisions to the tactical requirements of the team rather than relying exclusively on individual ability.

Positional Requirements and Team Composition

The final teams will be selected to provide an appropriate balance of players across the required positions. Selection will not necessarily be based on identifying the highest-ranked individual players in isolation.

The selection committee must consider how players complement one another and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the team.

Goalkeepers

Assessment will include shot-stopping, positioning, anticipation, reaction time, communication, distribution, counterattack initiation and the ability to organise the defence.

Centre forwards

Assessment will include positional strength, ability to establish and maintain position, ball retention, finishing, creating exclusion opportunities and effectiveness under physical defensive pressure.

Centre backs

Assessment will include defensive positioning, physical strength, anticipation, ability to defend the centre-forward position, discipline and effectiveness in initiating attacking transitions.

Perimeter and utility players

Assessment will include passing, shooting, movement, defensive effectiveness, tactical awareness, counterattacking ability and contribution to offensive and defensive systems.

Positional versatility

Players who demonstrate the ability to perform effectively in more than one position may offer additional value to the team.

However, positional versatility is not a mandatory requirement, and a player who demonstrates exceptional ability in a specialist position will not be disadvantaged solely because they are less versatile.

Physical Conditioning and Athletic Ability

The Australian Youth Water Polo Championships require players to compete in multiple matches over a relatively short period.

Players must demonstrate the physical ability to sustain a high level of performance throughout the tournament.

The following attributes will be considered:

- Swimming speed, acceleration and recovery.
- Aerobic and anaerobic endurance.
- Strength, power and stability in the water.
- Ability to maintain effective body position during physical contact.
- Agility and reaction time.
- Ability to sustain technical and tactical performance under fatigue.
- Recovery between matches and training sessions.

Match Performance and Consistency

Selectors will assess players' performances during the 2026 IPT.

Consideration will be given to performance against strong opposition and the ability to contribute effectively during important match situations.

The following factors will be assessed:

Performance area	Selection considerations
Consistency	Ability to maintain a reliable standard of performance across multiple matches.
Effectiveness	Contribution to the team's offensive and defensive performance.
Performance under pressure	Ability to execute effectively during demanding match situations.
Discipline	Avoidance of unnecessary exclusions, penalties and actions that disadvantage the team.
Adaptability	Ability to respond to changes in opposition tactics and match circumstances.
Team contribution	Ability to support teammates and contribute positively to the team's performance.

Performance area	Selection considerations
Competitive resilience	Ability to respond constructively to mistakes, setbacks and challenging opposition.

Match statistics may be used to support assessments, including goals scored, assists, shooting efficiency, exclusions earned, defensive contributions, saves and turnovers.

Statistics must not be considered in isolation. The player's position, playing time, opposition, tactical responsibilities and overall contribution must be considered.

Teamwork, Communication and Coachability

SWPSA recognises that international team success depends on more than individual technical ability. Players must demonstrate the ability to function effectively within a team environment. Selectors will assess:

Teamwork

- Willingness to place the team's interests above individual recognition.
- Ability to work effectively with players from different schools and provinces.
- Support for teammates during training and competition.
- Willingness to fulfil assigned roles and responsibilities.

Communication

- Clear and constructive communication in the water.
- Effective communication with coaches and teammates.
- Ability to communicate appropriately during pressure situations.
- Willingness to contribute to a positive team environment.

Coachability

- Willingness to receive and implement coaching feedback.
- Ability to adapt to new tactical systems and playing structures.
- Responsiveness to instruction.
- Demonstrated improvement during the selection and preparation process.

Players who demonstrate strong individual ability but consistently struggle to work within the team's structures may be considered less suitable for the final team.

Character, Conduct and Sportsmanship

Players selected to represent SWPSA must demonstrate behaviour consistent with the responsibilities of representing Schools Water Polo South Africa internationally.

Selection assessments will consider:

- Respect for teammates, coaches, officials, opponents and tournament organisers.
- Adherence to the SWPSA Code of Conduct.
- Appropriate behaviour during matches, training sessions, travel and accommodation.
- Positive interaction with players from different schools, provinces and backgrounds.
- Personal accountability and responsibility.
- Ability to manage emotions and respond appropriately to challenging situations.
- Respect for team rules, instructions and established procedures.

Documented disciplinary findings may be considered where they are relevant to the player's suitability for international representation.

Any disciplinary matter must be considered fairly, with the player and parent or guardian given an appropriate opportunity to respond.

Unsubstantiated allegations or personal opinions must not be treated as established facts during the selection process.

Previous Representative Experience

Previous provincial, national or international representation may provide useful evidence of a player's ability to perform at a competitive level.

However, previous selection does not guarantee future selection.

Players who represented SWPSA at the 2026 Australian Youth Water Polo Championships, EU Nations or other international competitions will be assessed against the same published criteria as all other eligible players.

Selectors may consider documented previous performances where relevant, but current performance, suitability for the team and the player's development since their previous representation must remain central to the selection decision.

Players who have not previously represented SWPSA internationally must be afforded a fair opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for selection.

Selection Process and Assessment Stages

The selection process will consist of the following stages.

Stage 1: Identification at the 2026 IPT

The appointed selectors will observe eligible players during the 2026 IPT in Cape Town. Assessments will focus on technical ability, tactical awareness, positional performance, match consistency and suitability for international competition. Selectors should observe players across multiple matches wherever practicable.

Stage 2: Final team selection

The selection committee will review all relevant assessment information and determine the final team composition. The committee will consider individual performance, positional requirements, tactical balance, player combinations and the overall suitability of the selected players for international competition.

Stage 3: Final approval and announcement

The proposed final teams will be submitted to the designated SWPSA authority for confirmation that the selection process has been followed correctly.

Once approved, the final teams and any non-travelling reserves will be formally announced.

Selection Committee and Governance

SWPSA will appoint a selection committee for each team.

The committee should include the appointed team coaches and suitably qualified independent selectors with appropriate experience in competitive water polo.

Responsibilities of the selection committee

The selection committee will be responsible for:

- Applying the published selection criteria consistently.
- Conducting and documenting player assessments.
- Identifying the positional requirements of the team.
- Evaluating players across the relevant selection activities.
- Recommending the final team and non-travelling reserves.
- Maintaining confidentiality throughout the selection process.

Conflict of interest

All selectors must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest before participating in the selection process.

This includes relationships with players that could reasonably call a selector's impartiality into question.

Where a conflict exists, SWPSA must determine and document the appropriate management measures. A conflict does not automatically disqualify a selector, but it must be managed in accordance with SWPSA's conflict-of-interest policy.

Selection records

The selection committee must maintain appropriate records of the selection process, including assessment results, attendance, relevant performance observations and the rationale for final selection decisions.

These records will remain confidential and may be reviewed by the designated SWPSA authority if a formal selection query or appeal is received.

Proposed Player Assessment Framework

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To promote consistency and transparency, SWPSA may adopt a structured assessment framework. The following weighted model is proposed for consideration and approval before the selection process begins.

Assessment category	Proposed weighting
Technical ability	25%
Tactical awareness and decision-making	25%
Match performance and consistency	15%
Physical conditioning	15%
Teamwork, communication and coachability	10%
Character, conduct and commitment	10%

Assessment methodology

Each selector should independently assess players using a standardised assessment form.

The following five-point assessment scale may be used:

1. Significantly below the standard required for the assessed competency.
2. Developing towards the required standard.
3. Meets the expected standard for the assessed competency.
4. Consistently performs above the expected standard.
5. Demonstrates an exceptional level of performance in the assessed competency.

The committee should review the individual assessments collectively before determining the final team. Where there are significant differences between selectors' assessments, the committee should discuss the relevant evidence and document the reasons for its final decision.

The weighted assessment provides a structured basis for comparison but must not be used as an automatic ranking or selection mechanism.

The committee must retain the ability to consider positional requirements, specialist abilities, tactical combinations and overall team balance. A player with a higher overall assessment score is therefore not automatically entitled to selection ahead of another player whose specialist skills are required to achieve an effective team composition.

Team Size and Non-Travelling Reserves

Each team will have 14 players, 2 of which will be goalkeepers, the rest outfield players.

SWPSA may appoint non-travelling reserves for each team. Reserves will be selected according to the same criteria as travelling players and may be called upon if a selected player becomes unavailable. The appointment of a reserve does not guarantee subsequent inclusion in the travelling team.

Where a replacement is required, the selection committee will consider the positional requirements of the team and the suitability of the available reserves.

Non-travelling reserves will not be required to attend team preparation camps unless specifically requested by SWPSA.

Only confirmed travelling team members will be eligible to participate in the team's capping ceremony and receive official team apparel.

Player Commitment and Tour Availability

Players who accept selection must commit to the full preparation programme and tour requirements. This includes:

- Attendance at all compulsory training camps and team preparation activities.
- Participation in designated preparation tournaments, where applicable.
- Availability for the full duration of the Australian tour, including travel days.
- Compliance with team training programmes and reasonable conditioning requirements.
- Timely completion of all required documentation.
- Compliance with the SWPSA Code of Conduct and team rules.

SWPSA recognises that players may have school, examination and other commitments. However, players and parents are responsible for ensuring that the player can fulfil the requirements of the tour.

SWPSA cannot guarantee that schools will accommodate requests for examination changes, academic concessions or alternative assessment arrangements.

Where a player is unable to fulfil a compulsory requirement, the matter must be communicated to SWPSA as soon as possible.

Medical Fitness and Player Welfare

Selected players must be medically fit to participate safely in the preparation programme and tournament.

Players and parents must disclose relevant medical information to the designated medical or safeguarding personnel where necessary for safe participation.

Where an injury or medical condition affects a player's availability, SWPSA may request appropriate medical clearance before the player resumes training or competition.

Medical information must be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable privacy and safeguarding requirements.

A player must not be required to compete while medically unfit.

Where a selected player becomes unable to participate safely in the tour, SWPSA may consider replacing that player in accordance with the published replacement procedures.

Financial Commitment and Administrative Requirements

Participation in the Australian Youth Water Polo Championships will involve a financial commitment by the player and their family.

The estimated tour cost, payment schedule and applicable cancellation conditions will be communicated separately.

Selection will be based on sporting merit and the published eligibility criteria.

Once selected, players and parents must confirm their acceptance of the tour conditions and meet the published administrative and financial requirements. These may include:

- Payment of the required deposit and subsequent tour instalments.
- Submission of a valid passport and any required travel documentation.
- Completion of parental consent and medical information forms.
- Completion of the required SWPSA registration and tour documentation.
- Acceptance of the applicable tour terms and conditions.

Any player who is unable to meet the requirements must notify SWPSA within the prescribed period. SWPSA may consider reasonable requests for alternative arrangements, but such arrangements must be approved in writing.

Safeguarding and Code of Conduct

All selected players and accompanying staff must comply with SWPSA's safeguarding policies and Code of Conduct.

The tour will operate under the supervision of the appointed coaching and management staff.

Players must adhere to all applicable rules relating to accommodation, transport, curfews, team activities, personal conduct and the use of social media.

The possession or consumption of alcohol, recreational drugs or other prohibited substances by players will not be permitted during the tour.

All players must comply with applicable anti-doping requirements.

Any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct will be addressed through the appropriate disciplinary procedures, considering the seriousness of the alleged conduct and the rights and welfare of the player.

Withdrawal, Replacement and Deselection

Following the announcement of the final teams, a player's position may be reconsidered in the following circumstances:

- Voluntary withdrawal.
- Injury or illness that prevents safe participation.
- Failure to meet compulsory preparation or tour requirements without an approved exemption.
- Failure to complete required administrative or financial commitments within the prescribed period.
- A substantiated serious breach of the SWPSA Code of Conduct.
- Loss of eligibility under the applicable tournament or SWPSA regulations.

Any proposed deselection must follow a fair and documented process.

The player and their parent or guardian must be informed of the relevant concerns and given an appropriate opportunity to respond before a final decision is made, except where immediate action is necessary to protect player safety.

The selection committee will recommend a suitable replacement, considering the team's positional requirements and the available reserves.

Final approval of any replacement or deselection must be obtained from the designated SWPSA authority.

Communication of Selection Decisions

SWPSA will communicate the outcome of the selection process through its designated official communication channels. The following information will be provided to players and parents:

- The final travelling teams.

- The names of any non-travelling reserves.
- The relevant tour preparation and administrative requirements.

SWPSA will not disclose the confidential assessments or selection information of other players.

Selection Queries and Appeals

SWPSA is committed to maintaining a fair and transparent selection process.

A player or parent who believes that the published selection procedures were not followed may submit a formal written query or appeal. An appeal may be considered where there is evidence of:

- A material failure to apply the published selection criteria.
- A procedural irregularity that may have affected the selection outcome.
- An unmanaged conflict of interest.
- A material factual error in the information relied upon by the selection committee.
- Discrimination or another breach of an applicable SWPSA policy.

An appeal should not be based solely on disagreement with a selector's sporting assessment or a preference for one player over another. Appeals must be submitted by no later than Friday, 18 December 2026 to the SWPSA General Secretary – info@swpsa.co.za and must include the grounds for the appeal and any relevant supporting evidence.

The appeal must be reviewed by an appropriately appointed person or panel that was not directly responsible for the disputed selection decision. The appeal body may confirm the original decision or refer the matter for reconsideration where a material procedural or factual issue is established. The appeal body should not substitute its own sporting assessment for that of the selection committee unless specifically authorised to do so under the applicable SWPSA appeals policy.

Final Selection Principles

The following principles will apply to all final selection decisions:

SWPSA's objective is to select U18 Boys and U18 Girls teams that are technically proficient, tactically disciplined, physically prepared and capable of representing Schools Water Polo South Africa with distinction at the 2027 Australian Youth Water Polo Championships.

Appendix A: Selection and Tour Timeline

The following timeline sets out the key dates in the selection process and tour for the 2027 Australian Youth Water Polo Championships and 2027 Eu Nations.. All training activities are compulsory.

Date	Milestone
Friday, 30 October 2026	Coach and manager applications close – deadline for applications.
Tuesday, 10 November 2026	Coaches announced – SWPSA Executive completes its review of applications and announces appointments.
Saturday, 5 December to Wednesday, 9 December 2026	Inter-Provincial Tournament (IPT), Cape Town – primary selection event.
Wednesday, 16 December 2026	U18 team announced.
Friday, 8 January	U17 team and squad announced
Friday, 12 February to Sunday, 14 February 2027 - Durban	Training camp
Friday, 19 March to Monday, 22 March 2027	Gauteng Invitational – final tour preparation event.