

HaBaWaBa International Festival U11/U09 Rules - 2026 Edition

1. The teams

- 1.1 The teams consist of a maximum of 17 players and a minimum of 9 players, of which 6 players (5 + 1 goalkeeper) will be in the water at any time.
- 1.2 In the **2026 edition**, the following players are eligible to participate:
U11 category: boys and girls born in the year 2015 and following); Three (3) non-quota players U12 are allowed to be used (born 2014)
Category U09: boys and girls born in the year 2017 and following); Two (2) non-quota players U10 are allowed to be used (born 2016).
- 1.3 At both tournaments mixed teams are accepted.

2. Field of Play

- 2.1 The field of play should be 20,00m x 15,00m (maximum) and 20,00m x 10,00m (minimum)
- 2.2 The minimum pool depth to be 1,40m.
- 2.3 The penalty area should be at 5m (green signal)
- 2.4 Offside area to be at 2m (red signal)
- 2.5 The goal dimensions: 2.15m x 0.75m
- 2.6 Ball: Size N°3 (The match balls are provided by the Technical Sponsor of the event.)

3. Game Duration

- 3.1 Each game will last two periods of 11 minutes each continuous playing: 2-minutes interval.
- 3.2 The clock runs continuously and is only stopped in the event of the scoring of a goal, the awarding of a penalty shot, or incidents of sickness, injury or technical failures within the field of play. If the goal difference reaches 10 goals, the clock will continue until the end of the game without interruption.
- 3.3 There is no limit on ball possession during attacking action.
- 3.4 In case of obvious waste of time, the referee may decide that possession of the ball is awarded to the opposing team.

4. Game Rules

- 4.1 During the game with even players, an attacker cannot remain in the line of the opposing goal posts inside the 5 m line for more than 5 seconds without the ball. When the attacker clearly enters the described zone area, the referee will start counting down with his hand raised. At the end of 5 seconds, if the player has not left the area (frontally or laterally), the referee will immediately whistle for an attacking counter-foul and the ball will be awarded to the opposing team.
- 4.2 If the attacker inside the 5-meter line in the opponent's goal line receives the ball, the referee will stop the count and let it continue for a possible goal conclusion. The attacker who, instead of shooting, passes the ball to a teammate outside the 5-meter area, must exit the 5-meter area. If the player, after passing the ball should remain in the 5-meter zone the referee will immediately award a counter foul in attack.
- 4.3 At any moment of the match a player can be replaced and can do so by leaving the pitch play from the return area closest to their goal line. The substitute will be able to enter the field from the same re-entry area as soon as the replaced player has visibly emerged with his head above the surface of water.
- 4.4 The goalkeeper can only be replaced in the following phases of the game:

Presidency and registered office

Bruno Cufino
Via Marco Polo 25
81030Castelvolturmo (CE)

General secretary

Mobile: +39 346 6419340
Info:office@habawaba.com

VAT number 02290640693
www.wpdworld.com
www.habawaba.com

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- a) *after a goal*
 - b) *during the interval between playing times*
 - c) *in case of interruption of play due to injury*
- 4.5 The player replacing the goalkeeper must wear a red cap.
- 4.6 The goalkeeper may move further than half of the field at any time and participate in the attack of his team.

5. Major Fouls

5.1 "Illegal contact" fouls punishable by temporary exclusion

- 5.1.1 A player who holds, pulls back, thrusts, pushes, or leans on his opponent in possession or not in possession of the ball, with the intention of preventing its movement commits a "illegal contact" foul and will be punished with temporary exclusion.
- 5.1.2 The player defending against an opponent in a static position, with or without ball possession, must make both hands visible to the referee above the surface of the water, but without extending them vertically beyond the wrist limit. If he does not make his hands visible, he will commit an "illegal contact" foul and will be punished with temporary exclusion.
- 5.1.3 The player defending against an opponent who swims or attempts to swim may not impede his movement by holding, pulling back, pushing or swimming on his body; he will be allowed to swim with clear movement of the arms to maintain his position, anticipating his movement to control it. Impeding the movement of a swimming player is considered an "illegal contact" foul and the player who commits it will be punished with a temporary exclusion.
- 5.1.4 The player who receives a temporary exclusion must leave the field by entering the ejection area placed under his own bench, and immediately come back-in without lifting the lane.

5.2 Penalty fouls

If a defender commits a "foul of illegal contact" within the 5-m zone, with the clear intent of preventing the scoring of a goal, a 5-m penalty will be awarded against him.

5.3 Illegal Zone foul

- 5.3.1 During the game, with teams with equal numbers, if the attacking team is with all its outfield players beyond the opponent's half of the field, zonal defense is not allowed. The foul resulting from this situation will be called an "illegal zone foul" and will be punished with the exclusion of the player who remains stationary to protect an "area" of the field.
- 5.3.2 An "illegal zone foul" occurs when a defensive player stays more than one meter away from the attacking player, with or without the ball. In the event of a corner, the defender ~~will be able to~~ may initially position himself in zone defense but when the ball is delivered, he will have to immediately swim and reposition himself into a man-to-man defensive mode.

5.4 A player who commits four (4) major fouls cannot return to the game.

5.5 When a defender puts his hand on the attacker with the ball and sinks it, a "ball under" counter-foul will be called. If instead of leaning on the opponent's hand, he hits the hand or slaps the attacker's hand, an "illegal contact" foul is called; if a goalkeeper in possession of the ball is attacked and his hand puts the ball under him, a counter foul is called against his team. If the goalkeeper puts the ball under him with the intention of hiding it or taking it away from the opponent, a penalty foul will be called.

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6. Offensive fouls

When an attacker, with or without possession of the ball, holds, pushes, leans on or pushes away the opponent's body with the aim of gaining an advantage, he commits an attacking foul. This is considered an "illegal contact" foul and is punished with an immediate change of possession and a free throw to the opposing team.

7. Free Throws

7.1 Following an exclusion for an "illegal contact" foul, the foul must be taken in the position of the ball, unless the "illegal contact" was committed by a defending player inside the 2-metre area. In this case the foul must be taken from the 2-metre line.

7.2 When an attacker is fouled by an "illegal contact" foul outside the 5 meters he cannot shoot directly at goal; but he can play the ball, pass, or move in any direction and then shoot at goal.

8. Committing a violent action

The player who commits violent action, disrespect towards opponents or referees, be expelled from the game and will be replaced immediately. The disqualification for the next match will be automatic and irrevocable. The technical commission may decide, based on the severity of the accident, whether to assign further disqualification matches.

9. Points

9.1 The winning team will be awarded 3 points.

9.2 In the case of a tie, 1 point will be awarded to each team.

9.3 The losing team will be awarded 0 points.

9.4 After the conclusion of the first phases (round robin) a draw will not be allowed. If the match ends in a draw, a series of five penalties will be taken. If even at the end of this phase the teams are still tied, each team will alternately take a penalty shot until one of the two misses and the victory is awarded. Players will always shoot in the same order as the first penalty shootout.

9.5 If two or more teams have the same points after the round robin matches, the following criteria will be applied to determine the final ranking of the teams:

- a) *Result in the match between teams with equal points.*
- b) *Goal difference between teams with the same points.*
- c) *Higher number of goals scored between teams with the same points.*
- d) *Goal difference in the group*
- e) *Highest number of goals scored in the group.*
- f) *Draw*

10. Referees and Jury Secretaries

10.1 One referee to officiate each game.

10.2 A secretary: maintains the match protocol, the score, checks any irregular re-entry, the players, the improper entry of substitutes, the exclusion of players, the 4th (fourth) "illegal contact foul" and the fair play score.

10.3 A timekeeper: records the exact times of actual play, the intervals between halves and time-outs (Semi-Finals and finals).

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General secretary

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11. Miscellaneous

- 11.1 Only the coach and a team official can sit on the bench.
- 11.2 Only the coach can give instructions to the team and walk along the edge of the pool to the halfway line. The coach must immediately return to his bench at the end of his team's attack. The technician must not be an obstacle to the referee's movements.
- 11.3 During the tournament, the coach and the team official will be obliged to wear the same clothing.
- 11.4 During each game, players must wear the caps provided by the technical sponsor of the event, properly tied.
- 11.5 The coach or team official expelled for protesting will be automatically and irrevocably disqualified for the next match. The disciplinary commission can decide whether to increase the number of days of disqualification based on the seriousness of the incident.
- 11.6 For any disturbance to the game created by coaches or supporters in the stands, the referee may suspend the game temporarily. In case of continuation of such disturbance, the match will be considered over, and a 5-0 defeat will be awarded to the team whose supporters or coach or companion on the bench have been considered responsible for the incident.
- 11.7 If the disturbance involves both teams or the spectators of both teams, the match will have no winner and a 5 - 0 defeat will be awarded to both.
- 11.8 For anything not provided for in this regulation, the general rules established by World Aquatics and FIN apply.

12. Fair Play Trophy

- 12.1 The HaBaWaBa International Festival is an event based on the ethics and values of mutual respect, social integration and fair play.
- 12.2 Every person involved in this competition (players, coaches, team leaders, parents, supporters) is required to respect these values.
- 12.3 To honor these principles, the WPD has established an award called the "HaBaWaBa fair-play Trophy". The purpose of this award is to praise and encourage good behavior.
- 12.4 The evaluation of each team will be recorded on the match sheet drawn up by the secretary of each match. Rating applies to all teams for all matches in the tournament.
- 12.5 At the end of the Festival, teams will be ranked according to an average rating calculated across all matches of the tournament.
- 12.6 In the event of a tie in the final ranking of the said trophy, both teams will be considered winners or, if there are more than two, all will be considered winners.

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