



Performance Pathway 2025 - 2028

1. Purpose

To increase the performance of the New Zealand National teams on the international stage. To provide a transparent and clear direction for the New Zealand Water Polo community developing athletes from under 15 through to Senior International level.

2. Objective

To provide a transparent and clear direction for the New Zealand Water Polo community developing athletes from under 15 through to Senior International level.

It is critical for New Zealand Water Polo to respond to the current performance gaps and to build consistent international success.

3. Talent identification

We are identifying athletes who will go on to represent New Zealand at World Under 16, 18, 20 and Senior Level. The purpose of on an established pathway is to provide a long-term strategy into individual development of an athlete and increase the depth of High-Performance athletes in New Zealand. This will include the 6 basic elements of the total performance picture to lay out a repeatable, clear system that will lead to a structural health for Water Polo for the 2020s and beyond. These key components include physical, technical, tactical, wellbeing, belonging and emotional. It is important to acknowledge that athlete development is fluid at a young age and the selection of an athlete into a squad can happen at any time following the set selection criteria by appointed selectors and coaches. The talent identification matrix will be used to identify athletes at national tournaments and selection camps.

4. Positional criteria – what are we looking for?

(Please refer to Talent ID Matrix for a more detailed description)

General Desired Attributes	Centre Back	Centre Forward	Right Wing	Left Wing	Goalkeeper
Good Attitude	Ability to read the game (attack and defence)	Ability to control opposition and take position on 2m	Ability to play counterattack	Ability to play counterattack	Ability to pass accurately
Understanding of plays	Ability to maintain a press defence	Ability to control the ball	Ability to distribute	Ability to play in isolation (As a CF or as an outside player moving with the iso)	Ability to communicate with players in offence (counting clock, cover etc)
Adaptable to circumstance	Ability to know when to step into zone	Ability to execute a range of shots	Ability to finish - shot selection vs zones	Ability to finish - shot selection	Ability to move in press
Coachable	Ability to counterattack	Good shot selection	Ability to enter ball to CF	Ability to enter ball to CF	Ability to move in zone
Good base level swim fitness	Ability to communicate with defence and follow tactical instructions	Ability to earn exclusions	Ability to release	Ability to drive and move	Ability to move in 5v6 in relation to defenders
Strength of legs	Good shot selection	Ability to hold position and turn into space	Ability to finish in pressure situations	Ability to follow tactics (Game Knowledge)	Ability to communicate change in defences
Aggressive, determined	Ability to shoot under pressure	Ability to cover and participate in team defence.	Ability to hold ball under pressure	Ability to release	Ability to block fast and outside shots
Work for the team	Ability to shoot around blockers		Ability to cover counterattack	Ability to finish in pressure situations	Positioning in the goal on various
Team first attitude	Ability to score from different positions/angles		Ability to move in zone		
Communication in a positive manner with teammates			Ability to block		
Adaptable					

	<p>Ability to create a passing option (releasing)</p> <p>Ability to assist a teammate/ good pass selection</p> <p>Ability to play a range of defence movement patterns – Press, Zones</p>	Tactical ability and ability to read plays	<p>Ability to defend drive</p> <p>Ability to move over legs</p> <p>Ability to switch zone positions - moving from press to zone into M Zone as an example</p> <p>Ability to play post up defence</p>	<p>Ability to cover counterattack</p> <p>Ability to move in zone</p> <p>Ability to block</p> <p>Ability to defend drive</p> <p>Ability to move over legs</p> <p>Ability to switch zone positions - moving from press to zone into M Zone as an example</p> <p>Ability to draw exclusions</p>	<p>plays – holding position in relation to blockers</p> <p>Ability to maintain high body positioning – leg strengths</p>
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

A World Under 16s campaign will be over a 2-year cycle. After 2 years a reselection will be made and the Under 16 aged athletes will transition into a 2 year Under 18 Program. A Under 18 World Campaign will be over a 2-year cycle (following on from a 2 year Under 16 campaign). Post the Under 18 campaign the athletes will transition into a 1 year Under 20s campaign.

5. Junior development definition

A Junior Development athlete is defined as someone born in an odd year—such as 2007, 2009, or 2011. World Aquatics hosts three age group World Championships: Under 16, Under 18, and Under 20. In these events, athletes born in even years are the oldest in the Under 16 and Under 18 categories, while athletes born in odd years are the oldest in the Under 20 category. This can create the perception that more opportunities are available for even-born athletes. However, an athlete born in an odd year can still be selected for an even-aged team. For instance, an athlete born in 2007 can be chosen for the 2006 World Under 18 Championships team. To address concerns that odd-year athletes might miss out on opportunities at a younger age, we have created a Junior Development Pathway. This pathway is part of the World Championships Under 20 four-year plan and includes Junior Development Squads, which often combine two odd age group. To note that any athletes involved in the Under 18 or Under 16 programs will not be eligible for Junior Development opportunities until they are no longer part of the Under 18 and Under 16 Campaigns.

World Under 16 Championships 4 Year Plan (Born 2010-2012)												
Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2025		Selection Camp (2010)			Selection Camp (2010)		Selection Camp Aus State Champs (2010)		Aus State Champs U15 /17			Camp (2010)
2026		Reduction Camp (2010)		Selection Camp Worlds Team (2010)		World Under 16 Championships (2010)						Talent ID U14 Nationals (2012)
2027		Selection Camp (2012)			Selection Camp (2012)		Selection Camp Aus State Champs (2012)		Aus State Champs U15 / 17 (2012)			Camp (2012)
2028		Reduction Camp (2012)		Selection Camp Worlds Team (World Under 16 Championships (2012)						Talent ID U14 Nationals (2014)

World Under 16 campaign last 2 years. After 2 years a reselection will be made and the Under 16 aged athletes will transition into a 2 year Under 18 Program.

World Under 18 Championships 4 Year Plan (Born 2008-2010)												
Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2025		Selection Camp (2008)			Camp				Reduction Camp	Selection Camp – Team Selection for Aus Cup (2008) & Squad Reduction		Australia Cup Tour & Nations Series
2026		Reduction Camp (2008)				Premier League Aussie Tour (2008)		World Under 18 Champs (2008)		Talent ID Under 16 (2010) Nationals		
2027		Selection Camp (2010)			Camp – European Tour Selection (2010)		European Tour (2010)			Camp (2010)		Camp with U20 Squad (2010)
2028		Reduction Camp (2010)				Premier League Aussie Tour (2010)		World Under 18 Champs (2010)		Talent ID Under 16 (2012) Nationals		

The Under 18 World Campaign will be over a 2-year cycle (following on from a 2 year Under 16 campaign). Post the Under 18 campaign the athletes will transition into a 1 year Under 20 campaigns.

World Under 20 Championships 3 Year Plan (Born 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011)

Year	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2025	Junior Development Camp (2007,2009)		Camp – European Tour Selection (2005)		Talent ID Under 18 (2007) Nationals – Junior Development Squad	World U20 Championships (2005)	Aus State Championships (2009 – U17)	Talent ID Junior Development Squad (Born 2009) to train alongside Under 16 Squad (2010)	WPNSW Super League	Talent ID Under 14 (2011) Nationals – Junior Development Squad Junior Development Camp (2007 with 2008 ,2009 with 2010)
2026	Junior Development Camp (2007 with 2008s,2009 with 2010s, 2011)			Junior Development Camp (2007 with 2008s,2009 with 2010s, 2011)	Junior Development Team Selection Aussie State Champs (2009 U17,2011 U15)	Youth Commonwealth Squad (Born 2009 and later) U20 Squad named (Post U18 World Championships)	Aus State Championships (2009 – U17) (2011 – U15)	U20 Squad Camp (2007) Youth Commonwealth Squad Camp (2009) Camp	WPNSW Super League	U20 Squad International Camp (2007) Youth Commonwealth Squad International Camp Junior Development Camp (2011)
2027	U20 Squad Camp (2007) Youth Commonwealth Squad Camp Junior Development Camp (2011)		U20 Squad International Camp (2007) Youth Commonwealth Squad International Camp Junior Development Camp (2011)		Youth Commonwealth Games (2009) Junior Development Camp (2011)	World U20 Championships (2007)	Aus State Championships (2011 – U17)	Talent ID Junior Development Squad (Born 2011) to train alongside Under 16 Squad (2012)	WPNSW Super League	Talent ID Under 14 (2013) Nationals – Junior Development Squad Junior Development Camp (2009 with 2010 ,2011 with 2012)

To note that any athletes involved in the Under 18 or Under 16 programs will not be eligible for Junior Development opportunities until they are no longer part of the Under 18 and Under 16 campaigns.

The Junior Development Squad Born 2009 becomes the Youth Commonwealth Squad post U16 Nationals in August 2026.

The Junior Development Squad 2007 becomes the Under 20 National Squad post Under 18 Nationals in August 2026.

Senior Women Campaign Plan

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2025						Premier League				Sydney Super League (Senior Development)	White Caps and Senior Development Squad announcements	Domestic Senior Camp
2026	Domestic Senior Camp		Sydney Super League (Senior Development)	World Cup Division 2		Premier League	World Cup Finals Senior Development International Tour	Pan-Pacific Championships			White Caps and Senior Development Squad announcements	Domestic Senior Camp
2027	Domestic Senior Camp			World Cup Division 2		Premier League World Cup Finals	World Championships World University Games	Oceania Olympic Qualifiers	Senior Centralised Training	Senior Centralised Training	White Caps and Senior Development Squad announcements	Senior Centralised Training
2028	Senior Centralised Training	Senior Centralised Training	Olympic Qualifiers - World	Senior International Camp	Senior International Camp	Senior International Camp	Olympic Games Senior Development International Tour	Review				