

Rules Refresher:

A pre-season bulletin to address FAQs and offer some Club Umpire guidance

Hockey regularly leads the way in innovation and rule adjustments to improve game flow, encourage skill development and ensure safety. The result is often disagreement in interpretation and application of rules amongst players and umpires alike. Here we tackle some regular confusion points and offer a refresher for club umpires.

Key Points Covered:

- 5 metres
- Location of free hit & stationary ball
- Aerials/raised ball
- Use of Cards
- (Quality) Advantage

Also included:

- Rules application notes
- Did you know?

5 Metres:

FIH Rule ref: 13.2:

Outside of the 23m area, opponents must be at least 5m from the ball. (5m is much farther than most think – especially those playing the game when it was in yards!). If within 5m they must not interfere or attempt to play the ball.

*umpires are empowered to decide whether an opponent is interfering – we look for cutting off a pass, active channelling or direct attempt to play the ball. Expect a 2 min suspension if you get this wrong!

Inside the 23m area – all players MUST be 5m. Some umpires will have a more flexible view if not receiving the pass or impacting play – personally I penalise any infringement on 5m as it sets a clear interpretation and there can be no conflict/confusion.

Expect to be penalised with a PC and, where appropriate, a 2 min suspension.

The Feb 2016 adjustment to the tap and hit into circle also clarifies that players inside the circle within 5m are not therefore interfering (as the ball has to travel 5m): HOWEVER – please note: these players can shadow **around the inside** of the circle, and are not allowed to play the ball or engage the ball carrier until the ball has travelled 5m. ALSO: players who were not within 5m at the free hit award, cannot move to within 5m inside the circle and take position on the edge of the circle!

*Umpires do allow someone to yield 5m if too close at the time of a quick self-pass – they must NOT shadow, channel or interfere (even unintentionally) with play whilst yielding

Location of free hit & stationary ball

The location of a free hit needs to be “within playing distance” of where the penalty occurred.

We are much tighter on the accuracy of location within the 23m as it influences play significantly more.

Umpires are regularly reminded by England Hockey and their associations that the ball needs to be stationary, even only very briefly, before a free hit is taken.

Aerials/Raised ball!!

Probably the most regularly confused rule with quite a range of interpretation by umpires.

9.10: The initial receiver has a right to the ball. If it is not clear which player is the initial receiver, the player of the team which raised the ball must allow the opponent to receive it.

If the aerial is clearly intended for a team mate – you get it. If it is unclear, you don't and need to give 5m to defending player.

*When thrown into space: there is therefore no clear receiver – so the 50:50 ball into space becomes the defenders right when two opponents run in to compete for the ball (this right expires when the ball grounds AND becomes safe)

*Free hits are given where the **action that creates danger** occurs. Where whoever needs to give 5m doesn't. If thrown to space, the danger is created when two players run into the grounding area. The free hit is only given from where the ball is thrown if into a crowded area – because this is the action that created the danger.

NB: we penalise raised/lifted ball based on creation of danger. This, as is stated in the rule, is about whether a raised ball caused legitimate evasive action by another player (or if they get hit of course).

Use of cards...

Getting carded in hockey should not be rare. The cards are part of an umpire's toolkit to maintain control over a game and demonstrate clearly what is acceptable and what is not.

Umpires in all leagues are encouraged to make better and more frequent use of their cards, especially early in a game to establish acceptable play. While a more relaxed style is required for lower leagues, the same rules must be applied. Part of an umpire's role is to promote skilful play; we do this by penalising anti-skill play (big agricultural tackles for example) so that it is removed from each game – allowing poor tackles that create danger based on playing ability is unhelpful and gives no motivation for the standard of tackling to improve.

Card escalation: strictly speaking, the same card should not be used to penalise the same offence by one player. Therefore, a green card tackle repeated MUST receive a yellow.

Umpires do not need to escalate to a red on the next one, an extended yellow can be used – but the suspension must be significantly longer than the last.

Umpires sometimes feel that the use of cards “spoils a game”. Suspensions are a natural part of the game now, and the tactical management of playing with fewer players should not spoil a game only add another dimension.

(Quality) Advantage

Advantage is about play developing for the benefit of the team not being penalised.

Maintaining possession is not necessarily an advantage. Umpires should be well positioned on the pitch to read the game ahead of them, and judge play development.

NB: defenders rarely want advantage in their own 23 unless play is opening and they are past the offending player with possession. Giving a defender a 16 (or more) height hit with a minimum of 5m space around the ball is almost always the advantage.

Umpires should bring play back if after a short time after an offence play has not developed in quality.

*Advantage cardinal sin – giving the PC after a shot at goal (it doesn't have to be on target!).

Rules Application:

There are plenty of extra notes throughout the FIH rules; link provided at end of this bulletin. Here are the ones umpires are being encouraged to take extra note of:

“The FIH Rules Committee continues to be concerned that some Rules are not applied consistently.”

Rule 7.4.c: ball intentionally played over the back-line by a defender and no goal is scored. If it is clear that the action is intentional, umpires should not hesitate to award a penalty corner.

Rule 9.12: obstruction. Umpires should penalise shielding the ball with the stick more strictly. They should also look out for a tackling player who by pushing or leaning on an opponent causes them to lose possession of the ball.

Rule 13.2.a: ball stationary at a free hit. Umpires are sometimes not strict enough on requiring the ball to be stationary, albeit very briefly, for a free hit especially if it is taken using a self-pass."

Our Summary:

Look for defenders' **feet positioning and direction of their stick movement** when it's played off the backline. If it's a failed pick/trap or genuine deflection – long corner. Anything else, don't get sold that it's an ability thing. PC!

Stick blocking – many umpires get sold this one all the time, at times giving PCs that severely influence match outcomes. Advice – **don't listen for the stick tackle sound**. Get well positioned to watch for the attacking stick's activity.

Stationary ball – include in pre-match brief to captains. Set the expectation and ensure advantage isn't gained by taking hits more than playing distance away (defenders taking hits below 16 height in line with offence is not a problem, and allow extra leeway if the hit is taken backwards to roll out around the back line).

An umpire specific guidance pack will be distributed to all Club Umpires. We encourage all players to take a keen interest in the rules – this should help you get penalised less, or at least understand why you're being penalised! ☺

Did you know...?

- Field hockey changed to METRES from yards in 1998! Nearly 2 decades later and we still hear about yards.
- The height of the D is just under 15 metres; the dotted line is subsequently just under 20 meters. The 23 line is actually slightly under 23. Use the dotted line (at its height) from 23 line as a guide for 3 metres.
- Substitutes should come on/off no more than 3m either side of the half way line. The penalty for improper subbing is a green card suspension (or yellow if repeat offending). But did you know the card goes to the on pitch captain – not the player subbing on/off incorrectly.
- Keepers aren't exempt from cards – and you do not delay time for anything but a different colour shirt for a kicking back if your GK gets binned.
- A bully should be used to restart play when there's been no offence and ball was in play (i.e. injury etc.). But did you know that each player should face across the pitch with their own goal to their right... (removes immediate advantage of running straight with the ball when won).
- Face masks have to be ditched as soon as possible, including second phase PC defence – and you cannot leave the circle wearing one. It's another PC if you do.
- Stick throw (even off the pitch after a suspension) is a straight to red card offence.
- It's no longer a PC if the ball travels more than 5m out of the circle – so your first strike can be a stinger to the net and it'll stand.
- For some time now, swinging a stick (around an opponent as you move past them) above head height is no longer allowed. But we still see it – hopefully it gets pinged.
- Goalkeepers can only kick/propel the ball with body IF they have their stick in hand. Spot a keeper losing their stick in a slide out – and then play without it – it's an intentional in the circle – P'Stroke!
- Keepers cannot take advantage of being kitted up to act recklessly – any 'clear-out' sliding needs to be done with control and not create danger, regardless of whether they get ball first.

LINKS TO THE RULES:

<http://www.fih.ch/media/807896/fih-rules-of-hockey-2015.pdf>

<http://www.fih.ch/media/10039834/rules-of-hockey-2015-adjustment-to-rule-132-as-at-16-february-2016.pdf>