



NCAA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY

2016-17 STANDARD OF PLAY

Background

In the summer of 2004, the NCAA Ice Hockey Rules Committee developed a directive to “reclaim the rulebook” and, in particular, address the obstruction and restraining fouls that were plaguing the game at that time. In an attempt to define a new standard of play, a simple guideline was articulated: Players who use illegal tactics to take away a legally-gained advantage from an opponent must be penalized.

Since that time, player safety issues, particularly with contact to the head and hitting from behind, have rightfully taken the spotlight. Officials and coaches have stepped up and a significant change in player behavior has occurred.

As a result, however, some impeding actions have crept back into the game. The Rules Committee approved the enforcement of the Standard of Play as a Point of Emphasis this year.

Target Areas

We have a general target: allowing all players the right to meet their offensive and defensive responsibilities without being held, hooked, or otherwise obstructed. While we hope to see increased offensive opportunities from this initiative, there is evidence that attacking players are also frequent offenders in the area of obstruction (e.g., face-off picks).

The committee has identified four specific target areas:

- Offensive players moving through the neutral or offensive zones being unfairly/illegally held-up while they make a legitimate attempt to get or remain open for a pass from a puck-controlling teammate.
- Offensive players moving through the neutral or offensive zones being unfairly/illegally held-up while they attempt the legitimate pursuit of a loose puck.
- Players along the boards, on or away from the puck, being unfairly/illegally restrained.
- Puck carriers being impeded or losing legitimate opportunities by the illegal use of sticks on hands, arms, hips or other areas that compromise their ability to control the puck and create offense. *(Note: The loss of possession is not required for a penalty to be called.)*

Defining the Standard

All of the areas above include restraining as a central theme. Restraining is the action of a player who does not have body position, but instead uses illegal tactics (e.g., hook with stick, hold with hands, tripping, etc.) to impede an opponent, with or without the puck. Illegal tactics are acts which allow a player or goalkeeper to establish, maintain or restore body position other than through skating/hustle.

If a player is deprived of that advantage by an illegal act (e.g., hook, hold, interference, etc.), the appropriate penalty must be called. Likewise, the puck carrier shall not have opportunities compromised by an illegal action, regardless of how slight or, for example, if the puck carrier was able to take a shot on goal. If the puck carrier was compromised, the call must be made.

Heightened Awareness

The illegal acts which will be given a heightened awareness this season include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Using a free or open hand or arm to restrain an opponent, along the boards (pinning) or in open ice;
- Using a free or open hand to grab any part of an opponent's uniform (tugging), equipment, or stick;
- Tying up an opponent by illegal use of hands, arms or stick, rather than by body position;
- Picking or screening a player who does not have possession of the puck, and, in the process, preventing the player from moving to open or unoccupied ice in any zone; and
- Placing the stick between an opponent's legs, preventing his or her right to participate in the play.

Obstruction and Play along boards

A player may press and release along the boards with use of the free hand but, may not hold, wrap, or impede in any manner (i.e. leg, hip, arm, etc.) an opposing player's progress. (Coaches and players sometimes refer to these plays as a crowbar, can opener, lasso or other terms.) This includes players with or without the puck along the boards.

Puck Carrier Protection

The puck carrier has been identified by the committee as a player that deserves protection and additional attention from game officials. The items below are provided as guidelines to help with the understanding of this increased emphasis.

- The player with the puck must be allowed to stickhandle without having the hands or arms or any body part impeded, without regard to change of possession.
- The player with the puck is NOT required to "fight through" impeding actions. Give examples – e.g. slashing the hands, pressing the hands, hooking the hands, etc.
- A parallel stick does NOT automatically equal a penalty; however, an official's attention must be heightened when a defending player puts the stick in this position.
- Any impeding action that affects the puck carrier's body and puck control must be considered.
- Scoring chances negated or altered by impeding on the arms and hands must be called without exception.

Helpful Definitions

Free Hand: When a free hand is used to hold, pull, tug, grab or physically restrain an opponent from moving freely, this must be penalized as holding. The free hand may be used by a player to "fend off" an opponent or his stick, but may not be used to hold an opponent's stick or body.

Illegal Use of Stick: A player who does not have body position on his opponent, who uses his stick (either the blade or the shaft, including the butt-end of the shaft) to impede or prevent his opponent from moving freely on the ice shall be assessed a hooking penalty.

Body Position: Body position shall be determined as the player skating in front of or beside his opponent, traveling in the same direction. A player who is behind an opponent, who does not have

the puck, may not use his stick, body or free hand in order to restrain his opponent, but must skate in order to gain or reestablish his proper position in order to make a check.

Potential Result -- Embellishment

The group recognizes that embellishment is a continuing tactic used to take advantage of stricter enforcement and urges coaches and conferences to address this issue if possible. Additionally, the NCAA standard of enforcement will continue to focus on simplifying the understanding of the standard and encourage a consistent, strict level of enforcement relating to impeding and obstruction fouls that take away a gained advantage.

Officiating Guidance

To be clear as possible, this is not a directive to simply call more penalties. This is a directive meant to raise officials' awareness to certain tactics in areas where the standard may have slipped as outlined previously in this document.

Essentially, the committee is instructing officials to sharpen their focus on these types of plays. As play develops, the officials' radar should be more sensitive to the tactics described. For example, when a puck carrier is cycling the puck and a defender reaches with the stick above the ice, a red flag should go up for officials. If contact occurs on the hands/arms of the puck carrier – that meets the standard for a penalty.