



PENALTY STANDARDS



Written by Steve Wallace

Technical Director of Officiating - Greater Toronto Hockey League

Director – Canadian School of Hockey Officiating

Governing bodies at all levels of Hockey Canada are responsible for developing certain guidelines that determine the way the game of hockey is played within their jurisdiction. A specific penalty standard for the fouls or events listed below has evolved over the past decade. This article will clarify those standards.

- Checking from Behind
- Checking to the Head
- Slashing & Cross-Checking
- Interference and Restraining Fouls: Hooking, Holding, Interference and Tripping
- Roughing and Roughing after the Whistle
- Goaltender Interference
- Improperly fastened chinstraps
- Removing helmet to fight
- Improper wearing of protective equipment
- Harassment of officials
- Delay of game
 - Face-offs
 - Goaltender handling the puck
 - (GTHL 3 minute warm-up rule violation)
- Players not retiring to players bench (or designated neutral area) during a Fight
- Player's leaving benches before directed to do so by the Referee at the end of a period or game
- Non-starters not going directly to players' bench at the start of 2nd & 3rd period

Goals and Objectives of Published Penalty Standards

The intent of published penalty standards is to eliminate violence and unnecessary risk of injury through the elimination of intimidation and unsportsmanlike conduct. Specifically, the objective of written penalty standards is to promote one or more of the following:

1. Personal Safety
2. Fair Play and Sportsmanship
3. Control of the Game
4. Interesting Play
5. Best Use of Limited Ice Time

Visit these internet links to view more information about published Hockey Canada penalty standards:

<http://members.hockeycanada.ca/bulletins/public/bulletins.asp?ID=568>

<http://members.hockeycanada.ca/bulletins/public/bulletins.asp?ID=514>



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Referee's Discretion

Each written penalty standard indicates how much discretion officials may use in applying the rules. Many penalty standard directives do not allow referees to use discretion at all. In such cases, when the foul or event occurs referees are expected to always apply the rule "by the book". Such is the case, for example, when a checking from behind or checking to the head foul occurs.

It is implied, however, that when a penalty standard has NOT been published that referees are permitted, in consideration of "flow" and participant expectations, to use their discretion when applying the rules to promote fair and interesting play. For example, use of discretion is permitted when the following occur:

- Delay of Game (net off, puck out of bounds, puck out of sight)
- Most "technical" calls (too many players, premature substitution, etc.)

Notwithstanding all of the above, referees are expected to apply all penalty standards consistently, within each game and from game to game – No matter the score, the time of game, the number of players on the ice, or the division or the age of the players.

Roughing and Roughing After the Whistle

- Roughing:
 - Roughing Defined: "Unnecessary rough play."
 - May include punches, head locks, shoves, and body checking too hard
 - **Consistent & strict application of this rule is expected**
 - "Penalize disrespect, not intensity"
- Roughing After The Whistle:
 - RAW Defined: Deliberate physical contact after the whistle
 - **Consistent & strict application of this rule is expected**
 - "Penalize disrespect, not intensity"
 - The team that starts it, pays! A penalty differential should result

Checking from Behind

- The objective is to prevent serious neck, back and spinal cord injuries
- The standard is: ***"Thou shalt see it and call it!"***
- This rule is to be strictly applied – Send a message!
- Do not substitute with a less severe penalty!
- "Borderline" fouls to be called - "Marginal" calls that result are supported by the GTHL Board of Directors
- CFB defined: High-sticking, cross-checking, body-checking, pushing, hitting, propelling an opponent from behind
- CFB is not just a solid body-check to the "numbers"
- Includes any contact behind imaginary "spikes" protruding from the sides of the shoulders, ribs and hips
- Intensity of impact affects only the type of penalty assessed. Minimal force may still result in a CFB foul
- "Turning" to create a CFB situation does not negate the foul
- Fouls involving minimal force = Minor + GM, or Match penalty
- Fouls involving greater than minimal force = Major + GM, or Match penalty
- Tips for Coaches & Players
 - Teach / use an angling approach
 - Teach / show respect for one's opponent. Pass up on a hit to avoid CFB if necessary
 - The aim must be to separate the puck from the puck carrier...Not to punish or intimidate the puck carrier!



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Checking to the Head

- The objective is to reduce head injuries by eliminating illegal contact with an opponent's head
- The standard is: ***"Thou shalt see it and call it!"***
- This rule is to be strictly applied – Send a message!
- Do not substitute with less severe penalty
- Any contact to the head of an opponent (with stick or body) that is avoidable or unnecessary is "illegal" contact to the head
- Penalties are determined by "degree of violence of the impact", the offender's intent and the presence of injury
- A Match penalty is assessed if attempt to injure or deliberate Injury occurs
- "Degree of violence" relates to the amount of force applied to the head
- The actual *degree of violence* involved illegal contact to the head is described as either **Minimal**, **Moderate** or **Severe**
- **Minimal Degree of Violence:**
 - Typically a glancing blow or a half-hearted shove or rub to the helmet or facial protector
 - There is little concern that the degree of force applied will affect the physical health of the player that is fouled because the force of the blow is fully absorbed by the helmet
 - Minor penalty assessed under appropriate rule other than CTTH (i.e., EL, HS, RO, RAW, CC)
- **Moderate Degree of Violence:**
 - Interpreted to be a blow to the head of some consequence or concern because the force of the blow is not fully absorbed by the protective equipment
 - If NO Injury: Minor + Misconduct
 - If Injury: Major + GM
- **Severe Degree of Violence:**
 - Interpreted to be a blow to the head involving significant force or that results in extreme concern about the recipient's health
 - Major + GM or, at Ref's discretion, Match

Stick Fouls - Cross-Checking & Slashing

The basic principle on which Hockey Canada's stick foul penalty standards are based is that the stick must not be used as a weapon.

Cross-Checking

This rule is to be enforced strictly. Striking an opponent or "raking" an opponent's body or arm with the portion of the stick held between the hands shall result in a cross-checking penalty. As per the rules, any cross-check that contacts an opponent above the normal height of their shoulders shall result in an automatic Major penalty plus a Game Misconduct penalty. Using the stick to angle off or steer an opponent is permitted provide that the stick is simply placed on the opponents body and no striking action occurs.

Slashing

This rule is intended to be strictly enforced. Players that swing their stick with excessive force or swing (or threaten to swing) their stick for the purpose of intimidating an opponent shall be penalized. Slashing type stick contact with any degree of force with an opponent's glove, forearm or torso is not an honest attempt to play the puck and shall be penalized. Additionally, consequential or forceful stick contact with a goaltender who is attempting to freeze the puck shall result in a penalty.



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The following are **slashing fouls that must be called when they occur:**

- Swing of the stick **intended to intimidate** opponent, with or without contact
- Swing of the stick towards an opponent involving any **significant degree of force**, with or without contact
- Swing of the stick towards an opponent involving a **baseball or golf type grip**, with or without contact
- Swing of the stick that results in **contact to unprotected or vulnerable areas** (arms, wrist, hands, knee, hamstring, calves, ankle, foot, back, ribs, genitals, groin) of an opponent, regardless of the degree of violence or force
- Swing of the stick that results in **contact to an opponent's glove or elbow pad**, regardless of the degree of violence or force
- Swing of the stick that results in **contact to the shaft of an opponent's stick, near the hands**, regardless of the degree of violence or force
- **Aggressive use of the stick** that is **not a true attempt to play the puck** (e.g. chopping at an opponent's stick, knocking an opponent's stick from their hands)
- **Reckless use of the stick that results in contact with the body**, even if attempting to play the puck (i.e., last ditch one-armed stick swing, golf swing, etc.)
- **Aggressive or consequential stick contact with a goaltender** while attempting to play a puck just covered by that goaltender

The following describe situations when a **slashing penalty should not** be called:

- Non-aggressive or inconsequential stick contact with a goaltender while attempting to play a puck just covered by that goaltender
- "Love" taps (a light and inconsequential slap with the blade of the stick produced by rolling the wrists – No actual swinging of the stick occurs) to a protected area below an opponent's waist)
- Honest attempt to play the puck involving a low degree of violence or force
- Non-aggressive contact with the stick resulting from an attempt to establish and maintain body position or to play the puck

Interference and Restraining Fouls - Hooking, Holding, Interference & Tripping

The basic principles on which Hockey Canada's restraining foul penalty standards are based are:

- The stick must not be used as a restraining device, and
- Restraining and interference type fouls will be penalized.

These four rules will be strictly applied throughout the entire game, no matter the score, the time of game or the on-ice strength of the teams. Specifically, a penalty shall be called if a player is interfered with, or the stick or free hand/arm is used to restrain an opponent and, as a **consequence** of such action the...

- Balance of an opponent is adversely affected to any degree,
- Progress of an opponent is impeded or hindered to any degree,
- Ability of an opponent to propel (stickhandle, pass or shoot) the puck, or to receive a pass is hindered to any degree, or
- Positional advantage achieved by an opponent is reduced or lost.

Tactics & Situational Examples

A review of the application of the restraining foul and stick foul penalty standards on selected tactics and situations follows:

1. Hook, Tug or Poke with the Stick: Generally, such actions are not permitted as the *consequence* is typically one or more of the adverse effects which now trigger a penalty call.



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2. Locking On: Defined as the act of placing a stick and/or arm across an opponent's torso to restrict the opponent's ability to move freely. "Locking on" is not permitted and will result in a penalty.
3. Sling Shot: Hooking, grabbing or pulling on an opponent or the opponent's stick for the purpose of catching up with and/or accelerating ahead of an opponent is prohibited and will result in a penalty.
4. Wrap: Using one or both hands/arms to corral or steer a player (typically towards or along the boards) will result in a penalty in every event.
5. Use of the Free Hand/Arm:
 - Using the free hand or free arm to clutch, grab, restrain or push an opponent aside is prohibited
 - A defending player may push the puck-carrier to the outside lane using the free hand
 - A player may push an opponent using the free hand during a mutual battle for body position or for possession of the puck with a non-puck carrying opponent provided no clutching, grabbing or restraining action occurs
 - The puck carrier is permitted to use the free arm to "ward off" an opponent.
6. "Tying up" an Opponent's Stick: Tying up the stick of the puck-carrier is permitted as long as it is part of the battle for the puck, is not overly aggressive and does not involve a hooking, holding or slashing action. Tying up the stick of a non-puck-carrier effectively hinders the opponent's ability to receive a pass and is, therefore, not permitted; any such action will result in a penalty.
7. Slashing the Stick:
 - Stick on stick contact where the intent is to play the puck is permitted provided that the force is not overly excessive and that the contact occurs low on the stick
 - Slashing an opponent's stick out of their hands will result in a penalty
 - Slashing an opponent's stick for the purpose of intimidating the opponent will result in a penalty
 - Slashing an opponent's stick close to the hands is not a true attempt to play the puck and such action will result in a penalty if, considering the degree of force and point of contact, the act is deemed violent or intimidating by the Referee.
8. Stick Checks:
 - *Lift Check* (a type of stick check where one temporarily lifts or knocks an opponent's stick upwards with one's own stick followed immediately by an attempt to steal the puck): *Lift checks* are legal provided that the opponent is the puck-carrier, the act is not violent, the lift is not prolonged and no hooking or tugging action is involved.
 - *Press Check*:
 - A *Press Check* is a type of stick check used to stop or control the movement of an opponent's stick by placing stick pressure over top of the opponent's stick
 - *Press Checks* are permitted against the puck-carrier only provided they do not involve excessive force or a slashing action
 - A properly applied (i.e., no excessive force or chopping/slashing action is involved) *Press Check* that results in the puck-carrier losing their stick will not result in a penalty
 - *Press Checks* applied against a player not in control of the puck are prohibited because they one's impede progress and hinder one's ability to receive a pass.
9. Can-Opener/Corkscrew: Placing or moving a stick between an opponent's legs is not permitted if it causes the opponent to stumble or fall, actually hinders an opponent's ability to move freely, or hinders the opponent's ability to propel, pass or shoot the puck, or to receive a pass.



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10. Pick or Block: Intentionally changing direction or location to block the projected route of a non-puck carrying opponent is prohibited and will result in a penalty.
11. Holding Up a Fore-Checker: Hooking or holding an opponent, or changing direction (i.e., turning into or zigzagging) to block the projected route of an opponent that is in pursuit of the puck or puck-carrier will result in a penalty.
12. Battles: "Battles" are mutual struggles for a place on the ice or for possession of the puck that pit opponents' strength and balance against each other. Battles are permitted provided no hooking, holding, elbowing, roughing or tripping action or illegal stick-work is involved. Players may (mutually) push against each other during a battle using their body, hands or stick. Stumbles or falls that result from a battle will not be penalized. Tripping, impeding or knocking down an opponent that has disengaged from a battle is not permitted. The free hand may not be used to push an opponent that has disengaged from a battle.
13. Clearing Out the Front of the Net: Defending players may attempt to push an opponent front of the net (with or without the assistance of their stick) to challenge for position. This initial contact is simply the precursor to a "battle". However, when this initial challenge results in the attacking player losing his balance, or if the action becomes exaggerated or prolonged and/or if the attacking player is prevented from "rolling off" the push, this is interference - A penalty must be called.
14. Face-Off Interference:
 - Players are not permitted to use their stick or free-arm/hand to impede or block the progress of an opponent or to push aside an opponent after the puck is dropped
 - Players are not permitted to impede an opponent that is in pursuit of the puck or puck-carrier by turning into the opponent or by setting a "pick"
 - Players may "battle" for position as their paths merge if both are in pursuit of the puck
 - Centres may not block or impede the opposing centre by moving forward, or by spinning around and backing up
 - Centres may not block or impede the opposing centre by moving laterally unless this movement is a direct and honest attempt to pursue the puck.
15. Pinning against the Boards:
 - A player may body check and "pin" the puck-carrier against the boards by pushing against and/or locking with a leg but may only apply the "pin" while the opponent has control of the puck. A penalty will be called if a player does not immediately release a "pin" when the opponent loses the ability to propel (stickhandle, pass or shoot) the puck with stick, skate or glove
 - A penalty will be called if one uses the free arm, free hand or stick to restrict an opponent's ability to move freely or to propel the puck during a "pin"
 - "Pinning" an opponent who is not the puck-carrier is not permitted and will result in a penalty
16. Finishing a Check:
 - Legal body contact with the puck-carrier is always allowed
 - When a puck-carrier dumps, shoots or passes the puck away in advance of being hit, any opponent intending to body check that player may legally do so if at the instant the puck is released the space between the players is less than or equal to the extended stick length (i.e., arm-length + stick-length) of the player contemplating the check AND the check is completed without undue delay after the puck is released. A penalty will result if the body check is completed by a player located further than an extended stick length away from the opponent at the instant the puck is released OR if the hit is delayed much beyond the time of puck release.



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Recognizing "The Danger Zone"

Certain actions have been identified that typically precede violations of the restraining foul and stick foul penalty standards. Specifically, players enter the "danger zone" when they:

- Raise their stick at or above the horizontal and place it on an opponent
- Place a stick between the legs of an opponent
- Take a hand off their stick and place the free hand on an opponent
- "Pin" an opponent against the boards
- Continue to "close the gap" on an opponent who has passed or shot the puck away
- Change direction towards the projected route of an opponent who is in pursuit of the puck or puck-carrier

Game officials must watch the play closely when a player enters the "danger zone" so that infractions can be detected if they occur.

Improperly Fastened Chinstraps

- The objective is to enhance player safety
- Two issues:
 - Chinstrap **not tight enough**:
 - Maximum of 1" (1 finger maximum) of slack below a clenched jaw allowed
 - **Violators shall be sent off the ice at the first stoppage**
 - **Team's may be penalized after 1 warning**
 - Chinstrap **undone!**
 - Chinstraps must be "securely fastened" while on the ice
 - The onus is on players to replace worn fasteners
 - Players cannot participate with chinstrap undone:
 - **The Referee has no discretion** - No warnings are given for this foul – The Referee **must assess a Minor if a player participates in the play while the chinstrap is undone**
- Note: Playing with 1 facial protector side strap undone shall not be penalized

Non-Starters Loitering On the Ice at the Start of the 2nd or 3rd Period

- At the start of a period, only the players taking part in the actual face-off shall be allowed on the ice. All other players must go directly to their bench

Rule to be strictly applied – Officials have no discretion

Goaltender Interference

- The objective is to protect the Goaltender from injury and to prevent violence & retaliatory fouls
- **A penalty shall be assessed when the goaltender is intentionally bumped or deliberately prevented from moving**
- Consistent & strict application of this rule is expected
- If retaliation cannot be overlooked, the team that "starts it", pays. A penalty differential should result when penalties result to both teams on the play

Improper Wearing of Helmets, Facial Protectors and Neck Protectors

- The objective is to enhance player safety
- Helmets, facial protectors and neck protectors must be worn as intended
- A penalty is assessed for all such fouls - No warnings are given for these specific fouls
- **Referee's have no discretion – They must make the call when these fouls occur**



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Removal of Helmet

- The objective is to enhance player safety
- Any player that deliberately removes the helmet of an opponent during a fight, altercation, gathering or confrontation **shall** be assessed a Gross Misconduct for removing a helmet
- Any player that removes his or her own helmet in anticipation of or during a fight, altercation, gathering or confrontation **shall** be assessed a Gross Misconduct for removing a helmet
- Referee's have no discretion – Treat as a “**must call**” **infraction** - If it happens, call it!
- This rule does not apply if a helmet comes off because of a body check
- Whether play is in progress or not is not a factor
- Interpret actions such as grabbing, pushing, pulling and shoving as evidence of a deliberate act
- GRM 62 penalty code applies
- GTHL rule is more strict than Hockey Canada rule
- Other penalties may also apply (e.g. Minor for simply grabbing face-mask, Match for grabbing facemask in a manner that inflicts punishment, etc.)

Harassment of Officials

- Definition: Act of a player or team official verbally or by way of gesture:
 - Seeking to **intimidate** an official
 - **Challenge** the authority or competence of an official
 - **Incite** harassment or disrespect of an official
 - **Embarrass** an official
 - Show **disrespect** for an official
- Referees have no discretion when such fouls occur - **Referees shall penalize all fouls** - No warnings are to be given

Reduce Length of Stoppages

- Quality of face-offs not to be compromised
- Any encroachment or lining up off-side **shall** result in the ejection of the player taking the face-off
- False start, encroachment on face-off restraining lines or improper stick positioning by the player taking the face-off **shall** result in the ejection from the face-off

Players Not Retreating to Bench (or Designated Neutral Area) During a Fight

- The objective is to ensure safety / maintain control of the game
- **Rule to be strictly applied – Officials have no discretion**
- Misconduct issued to worst offender(s), not necessarily to all offenders

Goaltender Falling on the Puck

- Goaltenders cannot delay the game unnecessarily by falling on the puck
- **Rule to be applied “by the book”** – Officials have no discretion
- Warnings are provided formally to teams
- Verbal commands to “play it” are not necessary and are not considered a warning

Players Leaving Player's or Penalty Bench at the End of Period/Game Before Directed to do so by the Referee

- At the end of each period, all players must remain on their respective players' or penalty bench until directed off by the Referee. The objective is to ensure safety / maintain control of the game
- **Rule to be strictly applied – Officials have no discretion**
- Foul occurs when 1st player steps onto the ice from the players' or penalty bench without clearance



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GTHL 3 Minute Warm-Up Rule

- Note: This unique rule applies only to competitive division hockey managed by GTHL Hockey Operations
- Start with 3 minutes (5 for Juvenile) on clock
- Clock starts when officials on the ice **AND** both nets are secure
- At one minute to go - Referee blows whistle
- At 0:00 the horn sounds (ensure that timekeepers let the time run out!) - If one or more teams are “not ready”, the team that is “least” ready **shall** be assessed a Bench Minor for Delay of Game
- **Refs have NO discretion – They must make the call**
- Coincidental penalties must not occur
- A team is considered “not ready” if...
 - Too many players on the ice
 - Any player offside or centre not “set”
 - Goalie: Mask not on and / or glove not on
 - Practice pucks on the ice
 - Player’s bench gate not closed

Summary

Standards for the fouls and events mentioned in this article have been established by hockey’s governing bodies to help provide players with a safe, sportsmanlike environment in which to enjoy the great game of hockey. Officials play an important part in achieving this goal. On-ice officials in the GTHL officiating program are expected to consistently apply the standards mentioned in this article in every game - No matter the age of the participants, the score, the time of game or the manpower situation on the ice.

To comment on this article, send an email to Steve at tdo@gthlcanada.com.