



2006-07 New Standard of Play and Rules Emphasis

Through the new standard of rules enforcement, our game, much like the National Hockey League, will continue to allow the opportunity for improved skill development and a more positive hockey environment for all participants. The mission of USA Hockey is clear; through this new initiative a greater emphasis will be placed on skating, puck possession and the proper use of the body to establish position and a competitive advantage.

The goal of the enforcement standard is to reduce restraining infractions in the game and not to remove legal body checking or body contact. A hard body check or using body contact/position (non-checking classifications) to gain a competitive advantage over the opponent should not be penalized as long as it is performed within the rules.

The principles of this new enforcement standard include the following:

- The use of the stick will be limited to only playing the puck.
- The stick will not be allowed to in any way impede a player's progress.
- The use of a free hand/arm will not be allowed to grab or impede a player's progress.
- Players who use their physical skills and/or anticipation and have a positional advantage shall not lose that advantage as a result of illegal acts by the opponent.
- Players will be held accountable for acts of an intimidating or dangerous nature.

Enforcement Standard – These penalties are to be called with very strict enforcement

HOOKING

- A player cannot use his/her stick against an opponent's body (puck carrier or non-puck carrier) to gain a positional advantage. Examples include:
 - tugs or pulls on the body, arms or hands of the opponent which allows for the space between the players to diminish
 - placing the stick in front of the opponent's body and locking on – impeding the opponent's progress or causing a loss of balance.
 - stick on the hand/arm that takes away the ability for the opponent to pass or shoot the puck with a normal amount of force

TRIPPING

- A player cannot use his/her stick on the legs or feet of an opponent in a manner that would cause a loss of balance or for them to trip or fall. Examples include:
 - placing the stick in front of the opponent's legs for the purpose of impeding progress, even if on the ice, with

no effort to legally play the puck

- placing the stick between the legs of the opponent (can opener/corkscrew) that causes a loss of balance or impedes the progress of the opponent.

HOLDING

- A player cannot wrap his/her arms around an opponent or use a free hand to clutch, grab or hold the stick, jersey or body on the opponent in a manner that impedes their progress. Examples include:

- wrapping one or both arms around the opponent along the boards in a manner that pins them against the boards and prevents them from playing the puck or skating
- grabbing the opponent's body, stick or sweater with one or both hands
- using a free arm/hand to restrain or impede the opponent's progress

INTERFERENCE

- A player cannot use his/her body ("pick" or "block") to impede the progress of an opponent with no effort to play the puck, maintain normal foot speed or established skating lane. Examples include:

- intentionally playing the body of an opponent who does not have possession or possession and control of the puck.
- using the body to establish a "pick" or "block" that prevents an opponent from being able to chase a puck carrier
- reducing foot speed or changing an established skating lane for the purpose of impeding an opponent from being able to chase a puck carrier

· Allowed Actions

- a player is entitled to the ice he/she occupies as long as they are able to maintain their own foot speed and body position between opponent and puck
- players are allowed to compete for body position using their strength and balance in front of the goal or along the boards

SLASHING

- The use of the stick will be limited to only playing the puck. Any stick contact, as a result of a slashing motion, to the hands/ arms or body of the opponent will be strictly penalized. In addition, hard slashes to the upper portion of the stick (just below the hands) of an opponent, with no attempt to legally play the puck, shall also be penalized.

OTHER INFRACTIONS

- In addition to the above mentioned enforcement standards, all other infractions, including contact to the head, checking from behind, cross checking, high sticking and roughing (including late avoidable checks) shall be penalized to a strict enforcement standard.

CONCLUSION

All members of USA Hockey share an equal responsibility to ensure the integrity of the game is upheld. The onus to incorporate change is not only on the officials, but also on administrators, coaches, parents and players, as well.

Administrators are expected to hold players, coaches, officials and parents accountable for their actions in an effort to promote a safe and positive environment for all participants.

Coaches are expected to teach proper skills and hold their players accountable for illegal and dangerous

actions, regardless as to whether they are properly penalized, or not.

Parents are expected to support the decisions of the officials and support the coaches in teaching the proper skills in a safe and positive environment.

Officials shall enforce a strict penalty standard according to the guidelines that have been established. Players are expected to compete within the playing rules.

All USA Hockey members must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the rules in order for continued improvement in the game of hockey.

On paper this all makes sense, but when we get to the rink there is going to be a major period of adjustment for players, coaches, parents and referees. Imagine bantam games with 45-50 penalties and the game ending on the wall clock with 12 minutes remaining on the third period score clock. This is not a stretch because it happened at the Advanced 15 camp in St. Cloud this summer.

Just as we saw in the NHL this past season as players headed to the penalty box shaking their heads in disbelief, so to will that happen in youth hockey this winter. **It is critical that parents and coaches accept these changes and support the officials and help their players adjust to the new game.**