

Jack's Pledge RULE #13

Due to the significant increase in injuries sustained at all levels of hockey age 4-18, and the devastating injury sustained by our former player and great friend, Jack Jablonski, our team/associations Hockey Committee /Coach is immediately issuing the following policy across the entire Program:

Our Beliefs:

- First and foremost, our purpose is to create a safe and fun environment for all hockey players on our teams and opponents alike.
- We are witnessing an increase in dangerous contact in hockey.
- The injuries, while often the result of a contact between players for which a penalty is called, are commonly due to aggressive contact between players with one or both of them coming into contact with the boards.
- While these incidents are typically accidental, they occur because of aggressive physical play near the boards.
- Hockey is a physical game, but if the USA Hockey Rules were enforced more assertively, checking directly into the boards without intention of playing the puck would be called as Boarding penalties. They typically are not.
- By calling Boarding penalties as written in the USA Hockey Rules, we will assure the long-term reduction of dangerous body checks.
- We fully support and embrace the elimination of body checking from competitive play at the Pee wee and younger levels. We also believe that the elimination of checking at the Pee wee level still allows for physical contact in the pursuit of the puck and delivers a natural step-progression toward Jack's Way of playing hockey -- by the rules, safe, smart and skillful. If, however, physical contact in the pursuit of the puck results in a violent collision in the board (regardless of intent), then a Boarding penalty must be called.
- We further support and embrace the directive to begin coaching and teaching proper body contact at both the Pee wee and Squirt levels, as a means to foster proper habits for safe play in later years.
- We support body checking at the Bantam level, but want to clarify the purpose of body checking, which is to separate the player from the puck, or to impede the player's forward progress. A body check should never be directly delivered into the boards; body checking should be avoided if there is potential for injury to the player. Stick checking is a natural skill to directly play the puck.
- While referees are not perfect, they are the main judge and authority of the game, and we will support their calls of penalties against our teams.
- The issuance of penalties serves to remind all players of an action that was against the rules. We feel that most penalties are unintentional actions as part of the game. Penalties remind the player of the significance of the rules and deter future infractions by the individual and the team.
- Our long-term development focus is to teach and reinforce positive behavior, in thoughts and actions of our players and to assure clarity about the USA Hockey Rules.

Our Action:

Due to the significant danger of injury caused by certain types of penalties -- check from behind, boarding, cross-checking, late hits (often called as roughing or charging penalties) and head contact -- we are committed to both improving our coaching in practices and in games and will hold our teams to the highest standards.

We are implementing the following for our teams, as well as making the following recommendations to all affiliates and teams playing hockey.

- We support referees strict interpretation of the boarding penalty and wish to see it enforced.
- We support the approach to enforcing boarding as described by hockey authority Jack Blatherwick, PhD, in his Jan. 5 article published in Let's Play Hockey:
 - What does the USA Hockey rulebook say about BOARDING? *A minor or major penalty shall be assessed to any player who commits any action that causes an opponent to be thrown violently into the boards. "Rolling" an opponent along the boards where he is attempting to go through too small an opening is not considered boarding.*
 - *The purpose of a body check is to separate the opponent from the puck. Any time a player delivers a check for the purpose of intimidating or punishing the opponent, and therefore causes the opponent to be driven excessively into the boards, a boarding penalty must be assessed.*
- We believe hockey is about playing the puck, not intimidation. It's about skill, not violence. It's about body position -- one of the most important skills in the game. It's about a safe, creative sport, especially for children and high school players.
- We are committed to teaching mental and physical habits and hockey skills that will lead to minimizing the potential for injury to players. We also recognize the need to eliminate what the current hockey culture has already engrained in our players' minds -- to use body checking as an intimidation tactic. To reinforce this commitment, deter from inappropriate dangerous play and foster skillful, safe habits under Jack's Pledge we are requiring the following:
 - Players that receives the following potentially dangerous penalties -- checking from behind, boarding, cross-checking (into the boards), late hit (often called as roughing or charging penalties) and head contact -- will receive additional bench time from his/her coach equal to the amount of time served in the penalty box.
 - The individual player will serve the additional penalty on our bench. The team is not additionally penalized while the player serves time on the bench.
- Because of the added danger related to checking from behind penalties, these additional requirements are put into force:
 - All checking from behind penalties will be reported, and tracked, by our association. This action applies to all teams Squirt/10U and older.
 - A player receiving a second check from behind penalty will receive, from our Association, a game misconduct and must sit out all hockey activity including practices until the next game is complete. This additional time is added to the penalty assessed by the referee (if the referee assesses a game misconduct or a match penalty, the player will sit out the additional time as assessed by the Association after his/her time is served from the original penalty).

- A player with a third checking from behind penalty will sit out three games including all hockey activity through the third (missed) game. This is in addition to all penalty time assessed by the referee (if the referee assesses a game misconduct or a match penalty, the player will sit out the additional as assessed by the Association). In addition, a disciplinary meeting will be held including the player, player's parents, coaches and association leadership in order to determine the next phase of participation for the player.
- Upon the fourth checking from behind penalty, the player will be dismissed for the season.
- If there is not enough time in the current season to serve the Association-assessed penalty, then the remaining penalty time carries over into the next season.
- All players dismissed for the season must be pre-approved by the Executive Hockey Committee in order to play in the following season within our association. Additional stipulations may apply.
- Protests of Association-imposed penalties will not be considered.
- As well, we are asking our coaches to appropriately judge their players' actions. When a coach observes a player acting in a dangerous, reckless or violent manner, and a penalty was NOT called by the referee, we encourage the coach to deliver Association-assessed bench time accordingly.
- We will teach specific body checking techniques such as "rubbing-out while playing the puck" vs. "hit," which is a vague and violent command to "take out" a player. We will teach our players to react to the player with the puck and never attempt to directly hit a player into the boards. We will teach that all body checks should be at an angle with proper body position, and if there is any doubt, the defensive player should use caution -- "when in doubt, steer clear." Coaches will not discipline players who choose to "steer clear." These methods will engrain in the players' minds the desired outcome to use body checking for its proper purpose, as stated above.
- We will also teach our players to be prepared to avoid checks and to be aware that other teams may not embrace Jacks Pledge.
- We ask all parents and spectators to support Rule 13 and refrain from criticizing referees for a strict interpretation of the Rules and the penalties they call.

Because Rule 13 is meant to influence our players and we wish to assure the safety of all hockey players, we recommending teams and associations embrace Rule 13 per the above.