



SHF 2025 Briefing Notes to Teams & Umpires

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Rules of Hockey – Review and Rules Trial 2025

Rules Review

Following the review of the Rules that has taken place immediately after the completion of the Paris2024 Olympic Games, a change to rule 9.10 regarding aerial balls will be trialled in the upcoming Pro League Season that will start at the end of this month. If successful, it will be considered for adoption globally next year.

This decision is in line with the results of the National and Continental Federation consultation that took place after the Paris2024 Olympics, in which the Aerial Ball situation was signalled as the highest priority in rules review.

There will not be any rule changes other than the trial that is explained in point 2. Nevertheless, the FIH Rules Committee and the FIH Umpiring Committee are reviewing the FIH Umpiring briefing with the aim to improve some of the interpretations. NA and CF will be informed once a new version is available.

Rule 9.10 being trialed at FIH Pro League (highlighted in bold)

“Players must not approach within 5 metres of an opponent receiving a falling raised ball until it has been **touched by the receiver**. The ball may be intercepted within 5 metres but outside of playing distance provided it is done safely.

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.”

The principles that guide the new rule are:

- Prioritise athlete safety and reduce dangerous match situations
- Generate an exciting and entertaining sport for players and spectators
- Encourage attacking play and the scoring of goals
- Reward athleticism, speed, and skill of athletes
- Create a fair contest between attack and defence
- Can be applied at all age and skill levels of the game

The rationale behind this new rule is:

Previously the wording read “...received, controlled and is on the ground.” So, the need for the ball to be under control and on the ground is no longer required. As soon as the receiver touches the ball, the opponent can then engage within the 5m.

This change is to allow defenders to close down a receiver and compete for the ball once they have touched the ball, even inside the circle, rather than the current situation, in particular within the circle, which stops defenders being able to do anything about a shot at goal with a second touch if the ball is not yet on the ground. The initial 5m will still have to be respected in order to allow safe initial control of the ball, but once touched by the receiver the contest will be allowed.

FIH will monitor and ask teams, coaches, and umpires for their feedback during the Pro League season before making a decision on whether to implement this rule globally next year.

Invitation to NA's and CF's to trial Rule 9.10 in the competitions they organise

FIH National Association and Continental Federation members are invited to trial this rule, but only if they wish to.

If they wish to trial this rule, all they need to do is to reply to this email and express their interest. FIH will then ask them for feedback at the end of the trial.

Rule 9.10 Aerial Ball

This rule was changed to allow for the playing of what are commonly designated as Aerial Balls. This covers the possibility for players to safely intercept a falling ball, which is now seen as both legitimate and positive to the development of the game. Aerial Balls will continue to be closely monitored by all stakeholders so that player safety can be maintained. An aerial ball interception must be in one movement **which takes or moves the ball away** from the direction of the initial receiver. An interception must be done out-with playing distance of the initial receiver but can be done inside 5m of them. Interceptions done from behind or in-front are more likely to be dangerous, whereas those from the side are less likely to be dangerous.

Breakdown inside 23 from restart outside - reminder

Rule 12.3c A penalty corner is awarded: for an intentional offence by a defender outside the circle but within the 23 metres area they are defending.

Rule 13.2.b opponents must be at least 5 metres from the ball.

If an opponent is within 5 metres of the ball, they must not interfere with the taking of the free hit or must not play or attempt to play the ball. If this player is not playing the ball, attempting to play the ball, or influencing play, the free hit need not be delayed.

Defending players who influence or interfere with play inside the defending 23m area, when play was restarted outside the 23m area, and therefore **INTENTIONALLY breach Rule 13.2.b** will be penalised with a PC and **MAY** receive a personal penalty.

Game Preparation

Punctuality

- Umpires are reminded to arrive early at the venue and specifically **20 minutes before each game**; however, be there as early as possible to prepare fully for the game.

Pre-Match Preparation

- Umpires, including a reserve if appointed, must have a **pre-match discussion** and warm up together.
- Prior to the start of the game ensure that there is no equipment in the goal and PC protective equipment is behind the goal.

Attire

- Umpires must be properly attired with shirts tucked into black pants / skirt. Male umpires must wear a belt, and female umpires have their socks rolled up to just below the knees.

Start and Restart Procedures

Free Hits / Self-Pass

- **Players must show an attempt to stop the ball before taking a free hit / self-pass**
- To encourage flowing hockey, free hits in the middle areas of the pitch should be **taken close to the spot** where the offence occurred, but **with no significant advantage gained**.
- Free hits inside the 23m areas should be **taken where the offence occurred**
- **Umpires should** manage these situations quickly and **be proactive to avoid unnecessary resetting of free hits**
- For free hits awarded to the attacking team inside the 23m area, **all players must be 5m away** from the ball. However, if the free hit is taken immediately defenders who are standing in the circle who were within 5 metres of where the offence took place need not move. These players who are standing within 5 metres and in the circle may shadow the player who has taken the self-pass but cannot play or attempt to play the ball or to influence play until the ball has travelled 5 metres or has been touched by another defending player (who can legitimately play the ball). If the defenders infringe, then a Penalty Corner should be awarded. If this is repeated a personal penalty **may** also be appropriate.
- **If time is stopped or play is delayed** for any circumstance, then all players except the player taking the hit must be 5 metres away from the ball. Umpires should manage the setup when there is such a stoppage.
- The **ball must travel 5m** or be touched by a player of the **defending team** (who can legitimately play the ball) before being played into the circle.
- It is permitted to play the ball high over the circle so that it lands outside the circle provide that there is no danger.

Procedures for Taking Penalties

Free hits in the circle

- A defending team may take a free hit awarded in the circle **anywhere inside the circle**.
- If they choose to take it to 15m, it must be inline with where the infringement took place and parallel to the sideline.

Long Corner

Where the ball is hit directly into the circle from a Long Corner, the free hit is taken from outside the Circle and not on the 23m line.

Penalty Corner

- Time is stopped between the award of and taking of a penalty corner. Rule 13.3 of the Rules of Hockey states that it is re-started when teams are ready.
- Only 40 seconds is allowed for both teams to be ready, umpires should encourage players to get ready when defending / attacking a Penalty Corner and where possible remind them when there are 10 seconds to go.
- A PC can be played out within 40 seconds **if both teams are set and ready to play**.
- The player injecting the ball for the penalty corner must have at least one foot outside the Circle and must inject the ball immediately after the whistle is blown.
- **If an attacker enters the circle before the ball is injected into play, the injector is sent beyond the half-line and is replaced by another player. The original injector can only return for a new PC not a re-taken PC.**
- **Consider a green card** for defenders who are making no effort to take position quickly. Only **40 seconds** should be allowed for teams to be ready, so umpires should be proactive and remind players to be ready.
- Differentiate between a **re-award** of a penalty corner and an award of a **new penalty corner**. Read Rule 13.5 of the Rules of Hockey on when a penalty corner is over. If a penalty corner is not over any award of a penalty corner is a re-award. This is important when a defender(s) have been sent to the half line for breaking the line. In a re-award the defending team must still defend with the same number of defenders.
- The ball **must travel outside the attacking circle** before a goal can be scored. **It is not an infringement** to take a shot at goal if the ball has not travelled outside the circle, if the ball goes into the goal, then it is a 15m restart to the defence.

- If protective gear is dropped in the circle and is hit by the ball, then a penalty corner is awarded.
- If protective equipment is dropped elsewhere than the circle and is hit by the ball, then a free hit is awarded to the attacking team.
- Players should endeavor to remove protective headgear as soon as the penalty corner is over, but under no circumstances is it to be worn outside the 23m area. If the protective headgear is worn outside the 23m area, it is to be penalized with a free hit to the attacking team to be taken just outside the 23m area.
- A penalty corner is over only when the scenarios described in Rule 13.5 occur.

Penalty Strokes

- It is not necessary to ask the goalkeeper and the striker if they are ready so long as they are both in position, the striker is within playing distance of the ball and the goalkeeper is standing on the line.
- Umpires should blow the whistle for the attacker to shoot.
- The ball must only be pushed, scooped, or flicked from the spot.
- Umpires should take a position which allows them to be out of the view of both players but are still able to see if the ball is dragged from the spot which is not allowed, and if the ball crosses the goal-line
- If the goalkeeper prevents a goal being scored by moving off the goal-line before the stroke is taken, then the stroke must be re-taken. If this is repeated the goalkeeper **may** be suspended for this offence.
- If the goalkeeper remains on the same spot or moves the feet on that same spot and subsequently saves the stroke, there is no infringement and there is then a free hit out to the defence.
- If the attacker takes the shot before the whistle is blown, and the ball goes in the goal, the PS is taken again. If the ball is saved, a free hit is awarded to the defence

Umpiring Objectives and Playing the Game

Communication with players

- **Umpires are encouraged to get into the habit** of communicating with players **when it is necessary** to clarify a decision. This is not to say that an umpire should be talking to players throughout a game or engage in a lengthy discussion for every decision taken.
- We understand and speak to our umpiring team that communicating with players builds a relationship with players, helping them to understand what you want from them and are aware of what are and are not acceptable.

Flow and Advantage

- Umpires have been encouraged to play as much advantage as possible and allow the game to flow.
- **Communicate to the players** that you are playing advantage.
 - Use hand signal for this and tell them
 - By calling “play on”

Tackling

- The tackler should only be trying to play the ball (not the opponent)
- Differentiate between ‘in position to play’ versus ‘body shielding’
- Not all stick tackles are fouls or intentional. Umpires have been briefed to carefully observe where the foul occurred instead of listening to the sound of stick coming together. **A good indicator is the direction the ball runs after the tackle.**
- **Physical contest for the ball is allowed.** However, “**playing the opponent**” should not be tolerated and penalized with a team and personal penalty. An example of “playing the opponent” would be pushing the opponent so the player falls to the ground. (Please however be mindful of “simulations”)
- **Body checks and sliding tackles which “take out” a player** may cause serious injury and are to be **dealt with severely** with a personal penalty (yellow card and at least 10-minute suspension).
- If a player slides in and takes the ball **but** also takes out the player, then it should be a yellow card to the player who has slid in.
- Consider the intention of the tackling player. Ask these questions: Was the player able to tackle? Did the tackling player bring the opponent to the ground? Is the tackle dangerous to the opponent?

Obstruction including Stick Shielding

- Look to see if the player is preventing the opponent from playing the ball. This can be done in many ways e.g., by using the leg, using the body, or using the stick. (A trend spotted are attacking players 'crab-crawling' along the base line towards goal by using their legs to block / prevent a legitimate tackle from the defenders.)
- Backing into an opponent and shielding the ball from a legitimate tackle is obstruction. Pay attention to players attempting the reverse stick hit. If they shield the ball from a defender, it is obstruction.
- For stick shielding
 - Use your eyes not your ears
 - Watch for the stick held away from the ball
 - **Do not watch the ball!!**

Ariel Ball and Ball off the Ground

- It is now permissible for an interception to be made during an aerial ball pass. So long as it is not dangerous, an opponent can safely intercept a pass within a 5-metre radius of the initial receiving player, **but not within playing distance**.
- Where the ball is lifted into a crowd (at least two players, one from each team) the penalty is against the team which caused the ball to be raised. The rule of thumb is to look to see if players are **within playing distance of each other (further guidance in FIH Umpires Briefing)**.
 - Consider if the ball was raised safely
 - **Do not watch the flight of the ball**
 - Quickly look to see where the ball is going to land to see who is standing / moving to where the ball is going to land
 - This initial receiver should be allowed to receive the ball
 - If two players are within playing distance of each other a free hit should be awarded against the team that caused the ball to be raised
 - Opponents should not encroach within 5m and try to tackle until the ball is brought down and under control (**subject to SHF adopting the trial rule**)
- Generally, the inclination is to award the free hit to the defender. However, if the forward is the one who had moved safely to the ball first and the defender was trailing, then it is the defender who has caused the danger, and the free hit should be awarded to the forward

- A lofted ball to an attacker inside the circle can result in a penalty corner being awarded if a defender and / or the goalkeeper encroaches within 5-metres and prevents the attacker from playing the ball.
- If a player is within 5 metres of the initial receiver receiving a lofted ball, but he/she is **behind/beside with no intention to influence the initial receiver**, there may be no need to penalize the play. If the receiving player mis-traps the ball through poor skill and it falls to an opponent, umpires should play on.
- A raised ball (no matter from a hit or aerial flick) in the shooting circle where there are players of both teams within playing distance of each other, must be penalized **immediately** (do not wait for the ball to drop) with a free hit to the defence (if ball raised by an attacker) or penalty corner (if ball raised by defence).
- Otherwise, where the ball is raised to a height **below the knee**, it is generally not considered to be dangerous and there is no need to penalize. If the ball hits a player below the knee, the general award is a free hit against that player for use of feet. If it is unintentional and no significant advantage is gained when a ball rolls onto a foot, then there is no need to penalize and play on. This interpretation will depend solely on the playing distance of the other team's player whether he/she is able to reach and contest for the ball. If he or she can, then a penalty should be awarded against the team using the feet to gain an advantage or lack of skill to control the ball.
- **Be aware of 3D skills which raise the ball on the stick to above knee height. If this happens within playing distance of an opponent a free hit should be awarded against the team raising the ball.**

Dangerous Play

- Players must not lift their stick over the head of other players. Penalise these offences early with a verbal caution and upgrade to a personal suspension if it is repeated.
- Players must not play the ball dangerously or in a way which leads to dangerous play. **A ball is considered dangerous when it causes legitimate evasive action by players.**

Stick over shoulder

- Playing of the ball over the shoulder is **allowed in all divisions**. This should be decided on the element of danger which is caused by such action.
- Umpires will judge the playing of the ball above the shoulder solely on the danger that it presents.
- This rule is **NOT** permitted in schools' tournaments.

Conduct of Play – Players including Goalkeepers

Captains

- The Rules of Hockey are clear on this. Every team must have a captain, and the captain **must wear an arm band or some similar distinctive article.**
- Arm bands and ribbons and pins are provided in the bag. Ensure that the team captains use them. Make it a point to check this before the start of the game and get the captains to collect the armband or ribbon from the reserve umpire or technical delegate.
- Please be reminded that Captains are responsible for the conduct of all players and their management and coaching staff. Captains can be cautioned for misbehavior of players from their team, themselves, or any member on the team bench, which includes the team manager, coaches and even physiotherapy. **If a captain is suspended, then the arm band or ribbon must be passed to the person who is replacing as captain until the suspension is over.**
- A captain does not need to be replaced if they have been substituted, however they are still responsible for the players on the pitch
- Players are reminded that they are not allowed to run directly into an opponent with or without the ball, even if the opponent is less than 5m away, and is either moving or standing still. A free hit must be awarded against players who do this.

Appeal, Dissent & Verbal Abuse

- Umpires will not accept or tolerate any verbal abuse directed at them, their colleague, or opponents.
- Umpires are briefed to deal with verbal abuse **early and promptly** as misconduct.
- Use the coloured cards or a verbal warning. It is possible to upgrade a free hit to a penalty corner or to reverse an award of a free hit for excessive appealing or dissent.
- If a PC is awarded and an attacking player causes dissent **do not reverse the PC** but apply a personal penalty to the player.
- If the coach, managers, or any members of the team is giving problems on the bench area and the reserve or the technical officer is not able to control him/her, then **the captain can be cautioned and sent off for failure to carry out his duty to control his/her team.**

Team Penalty v Personal Penalty

- Team penalty is the award of a free hit or penalty corner or penalty stroke, it affects the team as they must defend this.
- Personal penalty is a caution either verbal or with a card.
- Personal penalties are for deliberate/intentional actions and therefore if these happen in the defending 23m area, a Penalty Corner **must** also be awarded.
- A poor tackle in the 23m area need not give rise to an award of a penalty corner (team penalty) and a card (personal penalty), so long as you judge this poor tackle to be unintentional.

Crowding of Umpire

- Only the captain / or solely 1 player of the team should be querying the umpire.
- If more than one player crowds the umpire, then the captain or the player encroaching towards the umpire will be sent off.
- If the crowding is repeated constantly then the captain would be given a yellow card for failure to control his/her team.

Use of Cards

- Cards are not only personal penalties but also signals to all players on both teams & to spectators
- If players are misbehaving, and Umpires have used your other management control tool then cards will be shown.
- The **maximum** period of suspension for a green card is 2 minutes.
- The **minimum** period of suspension for a yellow card is 5 minutes. This can be increased if the player continues to misbehave in the “sin bin”.
- Suspended players are allowed to **return to play immediately their suspension time is over, and this includes after the award of a penalty corner**. However, should this player be substituted after their suspension is over, their substitute team-mate **cannot enter the field until the conditions are met under the substitution rule with regards to penalty corners**.

Technical Area

Duties of Reserve Umpire & Technical Delegate

- Only registered players may play in a match. If a team manager inserts names into the Team List by writing such names, the Reserve Umpire/Technical Official is to remind the manager that if the player is not registered under the Tournament Rules, there may be penalties imposed under the Tournament Rules.
- The two sets of team substitutes must be stationed at the pitch level on either side of the technical table. Players or officials must be seated on the team bench and **on the team bench side of the perimeter fence of the pitch.**
- Players should only be allowed to cross beyond the perimeter fence if they are substituting. After substituting they should return to the bench. **Coaches and Managers should not be allowed to stand outside the perimeter fence,** this can lead to interference with the umpires and must be controlled.
- The reserve umpire or technical officer is empowered under the Tournament Rules to caution and/or suspend a player, or official on the team bench. The reserve must assist the two umpires on the pitch by maintaining the discipline of the team benches.
- If there are serious cases of misconduct with respect to the officials will submit a report to the Tournament Committee for further disciplinary action to be taken. (This is in addition to the caution or suspension that you have given for that match)
- A set of bibs and socks are available for use if there is a colour clash and the home team is unable to change. The bibs and/or socks are to be collected back after use.

Substitutions and 12 players on the pitch

- All substitutions are to take place within 5 metres of the centre line.
- If there are 12 players on the pitch for a significant time, the player who came on should be removed and the captain sent off with a yellow card for 5 minutes. The team will then play with 10 players. A free hit is awarded to the opponents and is taken on the centre line near the substitution sideline.
- If a goal has been scored and it is subsequently discovered that there were 12 players on the pitch, the goal cannot be disallowed if the game has been re-started. If the game has not been re-started, then the goal can be disallowed.
- The same will apply to the award of penalty corners and penalty strokes.