

2020-2021 SEASON: OFFICIATING POINTS OF FOCUS

As hockey returns to Canada for the 2020-21 season, the game is facing many unknowns and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 environment. Officials will be expected to enforce a rules standard in our game that will continue to allow for skill development and positive experiences.

“**Points of Focus**” have been identified for the 2020-21 season to support ‘Return to Play’ guidelines established by Hockey Canada, [viaSport](#) and the BC Provincial Government. Below are pre-game, in-game and post-game protocols to be aware of:

Officials’ Equipment: These are additions to existing officiating equipment requirements:

1. CSA certified helmet & half visor or helmet & **CSA full-face guard w/ splash guard (optional)**
2. **Electronic whistle, at official’s discretion. (required if full-face guard in #1 is used)**
3. **Individual water bottle (officials are not to share water bottles with each other or players)**
4. **Hand sanitizer (officials should carry this with them or have it accessible during a game)**
5. Referee pad and pencil (**all officials should carry their own personal writing tools**)
6. **Mask or Face covering will be mandatory for Linespersons and recommended for Referees.**

Washing Guidelines: Some equipment, particularly external equipment (e.g. jersey and pants etc.) should be washed and disinfected after each day of assignments. Furthermore, equipment (e.g. whistles helmets and visors) are recommended for cleaning after each period or game if possible.

All pre-game, in-game and post-game duties below are in addition to or in lieu of existing duties.

Pre-Game

1. Some facilities may have restrictions regarding the time of access to their arena(s) prior to any scheduled ice session. Therefore, officials should be prepared to arrive as dressed as possible for game activity, in situations where such limitations are in place.
2. Access to officiating change room(s) may vary with each facility or may not be available.
3. Officials will be required to maintain physical distance (2 metres) from all participants including fellow officials before the game and in change room(s).
4. Officials should be prepared to wear a mask / face covering upon arrival at the arena.
5. The ‘Fair Play Initiative’ will be conducted prior to the game in a manner where officials maintain 2 metres physical distance from all participants and **no handshake will occur.**

In-Game

1. Officials must maintain 2 metres distance from all participants during the game.
2. In the 3 and 4-official system, Linespeople will conduct all face-offs.
3. The Linesperson that retrieves the puck will drop the puck, there will be no handoffs.
4. Officials will no longer retrieve broken sticks or lost equipment. Upon a stoppage of play a member of the team that has lost or broken a piece of equipment shall retrieve it.

Post-Game / End of Period

1. REMINDER: In accordance with Rule 9.5 (i), all players must remain on their respective players’ or penalty bench until directed off the ice by the Referee following the end of a period or game. The Visiting Team shall leave the ice first, unless otherwise directed by the Referee. A Game Misconduct penalty shall be assessed to the coach of any team that fails to comply at the end of a game when an altercation occurs resulting in penalties.
2. No post-game handshakes will occur. Teams may develop physical distanced alternatives.
3. Facilities may require participants to vacate the arena immediately after a game.

Focus #1: Altercations

A common occurrence in any game is player gatherings during and after the play that may result in altercations. It is important that we promote physical distancing (2-metres) between players after the whistle. Officials are encouraged to eliminate and control altercations to the best of their ability and **Officials will not be permitted to physically intervene in altercations** as they must maintain physical distance (2 metres) from all participants during a game. Therefore, players must follow verbal direction from the officials during stoppages. Players and team officials have a responsibility to show resilience and composure in such situations.

Should opposing players not immediately physically distance (2-metres) from their opponent(s) upon a stoppage of play and attempt to continue a battle or make contact with each other after the whistle, this will be deemed an 'altercation' and Referees are expected to assess the appropriate penalty or penalties, with an enhanced focus on the initiating player.

Direction for Coaches and Players

1. During play, players are permitted to make physical contact (e.g. puck battles and legal body contact or body checking) as regularly prescribed within the playing rules.
2. Coaches must communicate the importance of physical distance (2-metres) after the whistle.
3. Upon a stoppage of play, when no altercation has occurred, Players are expected to immediately physically distance from opponents & proceed to one of the following locations:
 - a) **proceed immediately to the ensuing face-off location or**
 - b) **proceed immediately to their players' bench.**
4. When an altercation has occurred, all players not involved must:
 - a) **proceed immediately to their players' bench.**
 - b) If the altercation occurs in front of the players' bench, the players must immediately proceed to their **defending zone.**
5. Should any player not comply to proceeding to their players' bench during an altercation (as outlined in #4 above), the Referee shall:
 - a) Deliver a single warning to the coach that subsequent violations will result in a misconduct.
 - b) If the altercation is deemed to be a fight, no warning will be issued and a Misconduct will be assessed immediately [Rule 6.7 (f)].
6. Should a goal be scored, players will be permitted to celebrate briefly granted there is no altercation, before proceeding to the players' bench or centre ice (ensuing face-off).

Direction for Officials

1. Officials must immediately identify the face-off location upon a stoppage of play. This should be initiated by the official blowing the whistle and communicating with a point of their arm to the face-off location. All other officials should assist in directing the players.
 - a) Quicker whistles may be required when the puck is being trapped along the boards (battle) to avoid a gathering of players or escalating contact.
 - b) Quicker whistles on plays around the net may be required to assist in preventing unnecessary contact with the goaltender, which may result in altercations.
2. Referees must use a secondary whistle to indicate that an altercation has occurred and all officials will direct players to move immediately to their players' bench.
3. Referees must focus upon assessing appropriate penalties to players causing/initiating altercations, rather than verbal warnings. Rule 6.4 (c) and (d) shall be used as the standard to establish penalty differentials in situations where an altercation has occurred.

4. Linespersons should assist in directing players appropriately after the whistle. If an altercation occurs, the **front Linesperson** should direct the **attacking players** to their players' bench while the **back Linesperson** directs the **defending players** to their player's bench. Meanwhile, the Referee will monitor the altercation.

NOTE: If an altercation occurs in the neutral zone, the Linespersons will direct players to their respective defending zones.

Officials are required to employ **ZERO TOLERANCE** for contact after the whistle:

1. Officials must immediately identify the face-off location upon a stoppage of play.
2. Direct contact with an opponent's head or face after the whistle (including "Face Washing") will result in an automatic **double minor for Head Contact in Minor and Female**.
(In Junior and Senior this will be assessed as a minor & misconduct for Head Contact)
3. Any contact with an opponent after the whistle where the head is accidentally contacted or the secondary point of contact will result in a **minor penalty for Head Contact**.
(In Junior and Senior this will be assessed as a minor for roughing after the whistle)
4. All other contact with an opponent after the whistle (not covered in #2 or #3 above) will result in a '**roughing after the whistle**' **minor penalty** or the appropriate **stick infraction**.
5. Referees are must establish a penalty differential ('power play') on stoppages where an altercation has occurred and players from each team are penalized, resulting the initiating team will be shorthanded.

NOTE: Officials are explicitly instructed to not physically intervene at any time during a game. Officials may only be permitted to physically intervene in an altercation under dire circumstances where a player is unwillingly involved, clearly vulnerable to serious injury or unable to defend themselves. If this occurs, the official(s) will don their mask / face covering over their nose and mouth before entering the altercation and sanitize / wash their hands before and any piece of equipment that has been unnecessarily exposed before play resumes. Referees will seriously consider assessing a Match penalty (Rule 6.1) for Deliberate Attempt to injure, in such situations to the aggressing player. There is an expectation that these situations will be extremely rare throughout the course of a season and officials should not enter any altercation even if these conditions exist, if there is any concern for their personal health or safety.

Focus #2: Interference / Protection of the Goaltender

With an understanding that many altercations occur on stoppages at the net, there will be a heightened emphasis on protection of the during and after the play.

Hockey Canada Rule 7.3 (b) enhancements:

Unless the puck is **already** in the goal crease area, a player of the attacking **team** may not stand in the goal crease. **For a violation of this aspect of the rule the Referee shall stop play unless the defending team is in possession and the ensuing face-off will take place in the neutral zone for a 'crease violation'.** It is important that the Referee immediately signal the violation by pointing to the offending player and then to the neutral zone to identify the face-off location. If the puck should enter the net while such conditions prevail the goal shall not be allowed.

~~However, if an attacking player is in the goal crease but does not interfere with the goaltender and another attacking player (who is outside the goal crease) scores, the goal shall be allowed provided that the player who is in the goal crease does not attempt to play the puck, interfere with the play, obstruct the goaltender's view or his movements.~~

~~The ensuing face-off shall be taken in the neutral zone, at the face-off spot nearest the attacking zone of the offending team.~~

If a player of the attacking team has been physically interfered with by the actions of any defending player so as to cause them to be in the goal crease and the puck should enter the net while the player so interfered with is still in the goal crease, the goal shall be allowed. **Under these circumstances when a goal is not scored but a defending player causes an attacking player to enter the goal crease, the attacking player will be provided a reasonable opportunity to vacate the crease without an immediate stoppage in play. At the discretion of the Referee, upon a reasonable opportunity for the attacking player to vacate the crease, should that attacking player not do so then the Referee shall stop play and the ensuing face-off will take place in the neutral zone.**

Upon a stoppage of play, should any attacking player enter the goal crease on their own accord, the Referee must warn the team that subsequent violation(s) will result in a minor penalty (USC). Upon the above warning, the ensuing face-off for this first violation will take place in the neutral zone. Should subsequent violation(s) occur, a minor penalty (USC) shall be assessed. In this case that a penalty is assessed the face-off shall take place according to Rule 4.13 (a).

Focus #3: Face-off Procedure

Face-offs are an important duty that a Linesperson have during a game. This season additional precautions will be taken to minimize official proximity to participants during the face-offs.

1. Officials must immediately identify the face-off location upon a stoppage of play.
2. Linespeople will drop the puck for all face-offs, Referees will no longer drop the puck.
3. The Linesperson that retrieves the puck will drop the puck. There will be no hand-offs.
4. Should the goaltender freeze the puck for a stoppage, the goaltender shall place the puck on the ice just outside the goal crease (to allow for 2-metres physical distance).
5. Should a goal be scored, the goaltender may temporarily leave their crease to allow the official to retrieve the puck or place the puck just outside the crease.
6. A Linesperson must position themselves halfway between the hash marks and the face-off restraining lines prior to the whistle to end the line change procedure. It is from this position that they must don their mask / face covering, covering their nose and mouth prior to approaching the face-off dot.
7. The Referee will now be responsible for blowing the whistle and pointing to the Linesperson dropping the puck at the end of the line change procedure.
8. Once the whistle has blown the centers must set in a stationary manner for the face-off.
9. Face-off ejections will be signaled by an arm signal by the front Linesperson, not a whistle. The back Linesperson may use their whistle to signal an ejection for violations.
10. Officials must avoid a significant crouch or presenting the puck. They should stay upright with a slight knee bend, while keeping as safe a distance from the centres as possible.
11. Upon dropping the puck, the Linesperson should immediately move to a position that reestablishes 2 metres physical distance from all participants. In the case of the end zone, they should exit as soon as it is safe to do so. The Linesperson may remove their mask / face covering to blow the whistle or once they have fully established a safe position.

Focus # 4: Spitting

The act of spitting directly at any participant is addressed under Rule 9.7 in which a Match penalty is applied. In the current COVID-19 environment, Hockey Canada encourages coaches to promote that participants refrain from spitting at any time during activity. This would also include spitting water on the ice or within the bench area. The act of spitting may increase the possibility of propelling droplets into the air and potentially exposes participants to a potential virus.

Officials are asked to adhere to the following progression when it comes to spitting on the ice:

1. If an official sees a player spit or spit water onto the ice surface, they shall notify that player's head coach at the next stoppage of play. Coaches will be advised to address such instances with their entire team immediately, this will be considered a 'warning'.
2. If a team is notified a second time within a game (2nd 'warning') and a there is a third (3rd) occurrence, officials are asked to adhere to the following penalty progression.
 - a) Occurrence 1 & 2 are warnings to the head coach
 - b) 3rd occurrences result in a USC penalty under Rule 9.2 (a)
 - c) Further occurrences (4th or subsequent) result in a Misconduct & report to the league.

Focus #5: Respect

Under the current environment of COVID-19, Hockey Canada's primary objective is to provide a safe playing environment for all participants as the game returns for the 2020-21 season. It is imperative that all participants respect the rules of the game and any measures that may be adopted by Hockey Canada and/or Members (e.g. BC Hockey) to create a safe environment.

Officials are directed to utilize appropriate playing rules / penalties that may be required to address any issues of disrespect that may occur during the course of a game (Rule 9.2).

Focus #6: Player Safety and Standard of Play

Above and beyond the focuses already outlined in this document, officials are expected to maintain previously established standards of play in many areas of play, particularly:

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|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Head Contact | 4. Stick Infractions |
| 2. Checking from Behind | 5. Harassment of Officials |
| 3. Restraining Fouls | |

We ALL play a role in supporting and educating safety in our game.

All members of Hockey Canada must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the playing rules. Under the current environment of COVID-19, it is vital that all Members recognize the importance of a safe playing environment. We must continue to promote and educate respect and safety in the game for all participants.

If you have any questions regarding the standard of play or Points of Focus for the 2020-21 season, please contact your Member (e.g. MHA) Referee-in-Chief or the BC Hockey Referee-in-Chief sraphael@bchockey.net. @BCHockey_Refs #morethandroppingpucks