



RETURN to HOCKEY

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Officiating Points of Focus

VERSION 2

Revised July 26, 2021



Officiating Points of Focus

As hockey returns across Canada for the 2021-22 season, the game is facing a number of unknowns and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, officials are expected to enforce a rules standard in our game that will continue to allow for improved skill development and positive hockey experiences.

Through the work of the Return to Hockey Officiating Task Team, there was a detailed review of the current playing rules. Consideration was given to whether any new rules should be adopted as a result of the challenges associated with hockey in the COVID-19 environment.

Although there are no formal “new” playing rules related to COVID-19, Hockey Canada has identified the following **“Points of Focus”** as it enters the 2021-22 season.

Scrum & Altercations

A common occurrence in any game is gatherings during and after the play that may result in scrums and altercations. It is important that, when possible, we promote physical distancing of players. Although it is not completely avoidable, officials are encouraged to eliminate and control scrums and altercations to the best of their ability. Players and team officials have a responsibility to show resilience and composure in such situations.

Direction for coaches and players:

- Coaches are asked to teach and communicate the importance of physical distancing once the whistle is blown to stop play. Players are expected to immediately leave the area and physically distance on the ice where possible.
- Support of the officials in these situations is required to prevent continued scrums and altercations from occurring.
- Players are encouraged not to continue the battle for the puck once the whistle has been blown and are asked to immediately leave the area after the stoppage of play.
- Although this should be the protocol at any time play is stopped, it becomes especially important during stoppages near the players' bench and in front of the net.

Direction for officials:

- Officials are encouraged to utilize their whistle to stop play earlier and potentially prevent unnecessary scrums and altercations.
 - Quicker whistles may be required when the puck is being trapped along the boards to avoid the gathering of players.
 - Quicker whistles on net plays may be required to assist in preventing tempers to rise, resulting in scrums and altercations.
- Officials are encouraged to assess appropriate penalties to players causing scrums or altercations rather than verbal warnings, if those players have not appropriately abided by the whistle and direction from the officials to leave the area.
 - Strict enforcement of Unsportsmanlike Conduct minor penalties under Rule 11.1 may be utilized by officials to assist in limiting these situations.
 - Officials are encouraged to escalate to misconducts where players are continuing to engage or where teams after receiving penalties continue to cause scrums and altercations.

It is important that officials communicate with players and team officials regarding a high standard for scrums and altercations. Team officials must assist in educating and promoting respect amongst players to prevent situations that may escalate.

Officials are required to employ zero tolerance to discourage players from “face washing” other players and shall, if warranted, assess a double minor penalty for Head Contact in minor and female hockey. In Junior Hockey and above, officials may assess a minor penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct under Rule 11.1 and escalate to a misconduct should such behaviour continue.

Spitting

The act of spitting directly at any player, team official or on-ice official is currently addressed under Rule 11.3, 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 any on-ice activities. This would also include spitting water on the ice or in the bench area.

The act of spitting may increase the possibility of propelling moisture droplets into the air and potentially expose other players, team officials and on-ice officials to a potential virus.

Aside from the current Rule 11.3 (match penalty), Hockey Canada is not instituting a “new” penalty for spitting by participants. However, it does strongly encourage all participants and team officials to promote and educate players about proper hygiene and refraining from the act of spitting.

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

- If an official sees a player spit or spit water onto the ice surface, they shall notify the head coach of the offending player’s team at the next available stoppage of play. Coaches will be advised to address such instances with their team and reinforce that it is not acceptable.
- If a team has been notified two times within a game and a third occurrence occurs, officials are asked to adhere to the following escalation.
 - Assess the offending player an Unsportsmanlike Conduct minor penalty under Rule 11.1.
 - After informing the coach once again, state any further instances by any player will now be assessed as misconduct penalties and reported to the league on the game report or incident report.

Masks

Any team official who alters the position of their face mask while challenging/disputing the ruling or any communication with an official regardless of whether physical distancing is being maintained, shall be given a warning. This warning applies to all team officials of that team. If any team official alters the position of their mask for any of the above actions, after that team has received a warning, they shall be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty under Rule 11.1. A team official after receiving an unsportsmanlike conduct minor penalty will receive a Game Misconduct if their actions continue or if there is a subsequent violation.

The directive above does not extend past the scope of communication between team official(s) and officials.

This directive would only apply in Public Health Authority jurisdictions and/or facilities that mandate the wearing of cloth masks for team officials while on the bench.

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 2021-22 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 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 a game.

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. In the current COVID-19 environment, 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 this season, please contact your Member referee-in-chief for further clarification.

