

RULES CHANGE GUIDANCE

In late 2014, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) announced some changes to the Rules of Hockey. These changes included the incorporation of the previous FIH Tournament Regulations that related to: a) breaking early at a penalty corner; b) the two-minute green card; and c) the use of the stick above the shoulder. All the changes are outlined on pages 5-7 of the [FIH Rules Book](#).

The changes came into effect at International level from 1st January 2015 and were implemented in the National Leagues on 31st January 2015. With effect from 1st July 2015, **all** of the new rules will be played **throughout** the 11-a-side game in England, at all age groups.

The new rules have proved to be both successful and popular at international and national league level. They improve the flow of the game, as they result in fewer interruptions, and they help umpires with game management. It is also very good news that the game of hockey across the country will be played to the same rules.

The notes below represent guidance on the new rules, but please recognise that they are **guidance** and not a set of hard and fast principles that must be adhered to at all times. Finally, be aware that sometimes, when new rules are introduced, umpires, players and coaches get over-concerned by all the possible implications of the changes, which can, on occasion, lead to loss of focus and, perhaps, missing other things relating to the unchanged rules that are more important.

BREAKING AT A PENALTY CORNER

New Rule:

- If the attacker taking the penalty corner injection feints at playing the ball they should be sent beyond the centre-line and should be replaced by another attacker.
- If a defender, other than the GK, crosses the line before the injector has played the ball then they must go beyond the centre-line and cannot be replaced by another defender.
- If the GK, or player with GK privileges (a "kicking back"), crosses the line before the injector has played the ball then the defending team must defend the PC with one fewer player.
- If an attacker enters the circle before the injector has played the ball then they should be sent beyond the centre-line.

Rationale for the change: The new rule has proved to be hugely successful in prompting a significant reduction in the number of early breaks, by both attackers and defenders.

Guidance for umpires:

1. Having awarded a penalty corner, umpires should allow the injection only after the attackers are all outside the circle and the defenders are either beyond the centre-line or behind the back-line.
2. If an attacker or defender then enters the circle before the ball is injected, umpires should blow their whistle and signal a reset penalty corner.
3. Umpires should send the offending player to the centre-line, unless it is the goalkeeper or "kicking back" that steps out early. In that case, the **team** should choose a defender to go to the centre-line.
4. An attacker at the top of the circle who infringes and is sent to the centre-line may be replaced.
5. If the injector 'dummies' and that causes defenders to step out early, then the injector must be sent to the centre-line and another attacker must then inject.
6. If, during the playing of a penalty corner, another penalty corner results (without the ball having travelled more than 5 metres outside the circle) any player originally sent to the centre-line must remain there for the retaken penalty corner.
7. If a defender steps out early at the retaken penalty corner, then that defender must be sent to the centre-line (reducing the number of defenders on the backline by an additional player).
8. If, during the playing of a penalty corner, another penalty corner results (with the ball having travelled more than 5 metres outside the circle) any player originally sent to the centre-line may return for the newly awarded penalty corner.
9. A penalty corner is considered as re-taken until any of the conditions for its completion are met, which are detailed in Rule 13.5 (for penalty corners in normal time) and Rule 13.6 (for penalty corners at half-time and full-time).
10. Players may therefore return from the centre-line when: a) the ball goes more than 5 metres from the circle; or b) the ball goes out of play, unless it is deliberately played over the backline by a defender; or c) a penalty, other than a penalty corner, is awarded.

Please visit [this section](#) of the England Hockey Rules education site to see videos of this rule in practice.

TWO-MINUTE GREEN CARD

New Rule: When an offending player is awarded a green card, he/she will be required to leave the field of play for a period of two minutes.

Rationale for the change: The introduction of the two-minute green card provides an additional management aid to umpires, which has proved very effective in offering an intermediate penalty between a verbal caution and a yellow card.

Guidance for umpires:

1. A green card should still be awarded for any offence for which it would have been awarded under the previous rules i.e. a green card should not now be reserved for more serious offences just because it carries with it a two-minute suspension.
2. A verbal warning can still be given for those offences that an umpire feels require some intervention but not a temporary suspension.
3. An offence that was deserving of a yellow card under the previous rules should still be penalised with a yellow card under the new rules. A yellow card should **not** be replaced by a green card now that the latter carries a suspension.
4. Umpires should blow their whistle and stop time before awarding a green card. Umpires should then record the time of the suspension and the number of the offending player.
5. The game should not be restarted until such time as the offending player has left the pitch, unless the regulations of the competition in which the game is being played **specifically** allow for the game to be restarted earlier. This will usually be where there is a technical table to assist with managing the carded players.
6. After two minutes of **playing time**, the offending player may be invited back onto the pitch. There does not have to be a stoppage in play before this can happen, nor does the player have to be returned at **exactly** two minutes, a delay of a few seconds is acceptable. The player must **not** be returned during a penalty corner - i.e. from its award until such time as the penalty corner is complete, as per either rule 13.5 (for penalty corners in normal time) or rule 13.6 (for penalty corners at half-time or full-time).
7. If the player being returned is a GK, this must be done at a break in play, though the clock need not necessarily be stopped.
8. Unlike with a yellow card, umpires cannot increase the period of suspension for a green card beyond two minutes. If a suspended player commits any further offence between the award of the green card and the end of the suspension, s/he will need to be awarded a yellow card to extend the period of suspension. (NB. The player must also be suspended for five minutes from the point at which the yellow card is shown in that situation, not for five minutes from when the original green card was shown.)
9. This process is identical to that used previously when a yellow card was shown, in every respect other than the inability to increase length of the suspension.

USE OF THE STICK ABOVE THE SHOULDER

New Rule: Players can play the ball when the ball is above shoulder height, provided that they do so in a controlled manner and in a way that does not create or lead to danger.

Rationale for the change: To add another dimension and set of skills to the game, and to remove the need for umpires to make marginal judgements about the height of the stick with sometimes far-reaching consequences.

Guidance for umpires:

1. This rule does **not** give players 'carte blanche' to swing wildly at the ball when it is in the air. Any attempt to play the ball must be safe and must not potentially endanger other players.
2. When an aerial pass has been made, umpires should focus on the 'landing area'. Player movement should give umpires an indication of where the ball should fall so there is no need to watch its flight.
3. If a player makes a successful attempt to play a raised ball while it is in the air, then that player's opponents must stay clear and allow that player 5m in which to receive the ball, and control it on the ground.
4. If the sticks of two opposing players are raised close together to receive an aerial pass, then umpires should blow their whistle and award a free hit to the team whose player did not raise the ball.
5. If the sticks of two opposing players are raised (but some metres apart), then the receiver is the player the ball will reach first. In this case, opposing players must let the ball be controlled on the ground before any approach is made.

Please visit [this section](#) of the England Hockey Rules education site to see videos of this rule in practice.

FREE HITS AWARDED WITHIN 5M OF THE EDGE OF THE CIRCLE

New Rule: A free hit awarded within 5 metres of the edge of the circle can be taken from the point of the offence. The ball still has to travel at least 5 metres before it can be played into the circle, or alternatively has to be touched by another player of either team, other than by the player taking the free hit.

Rationale for the change: Previously having to take the ball back to the 5m dotted line was seen as a real disadvantage to the attacking team (as it allowed the defence to re-organise) and it disrupted the flow of the game.

Guidance to umpires:

1. Free hits can now be taken from the point of infringement, even if that is within 5m of the circle (the dotted line). However, the ball must travel 5m, or be touched by another player, before it can enter the circle.
2. Just as anywhere else in the 23, the free hit may be taken immediately, even though other players are not 5m away. Those players must not interfere with play.
3. Defenders who are not 5m away, but inside the circle, are not required to retreat 5m - the attacker who self passes is not entitled to dribble into the circle (until the ball has gone 5m), and so they are not interfering with play. Defenders may also shadow around the inside of the circle a player who takes a self-pass, provided that they do not play or attempt to play the ball or influence play until it has either travelled at least 5m or alternatively has been touched by another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball.
4. However, defenders who are more than 5m away may not encroach in an attempt to form a sort of “defensive wall”.
5. Umpires should be aware that, if the ball is touched, another player can then dribble into the circle, in which case a set defender inside the circle **could**, depending upon their subsequent actions, be interfering with play.
6. Other than indicated above, any playing of the ball, attempting to play the ball or interference by a defender or an attacker who was not 5m from the ball, should be penalised accordingly. In such circumstances, the correct penalty will usually be a PC to the attacking team.

Please visit [this section](#) of the England Hockey Rules education site to see a video of this rule in practice.

RE-START AFTER THE BALL HAS BEEN UNINTENTIONALLY PLAYED OVER THE BACK-LINE BY A DEFENDER (AND NO GOAL IS SCORED)

New Rule: Play will be re-started by the attacking team with the ball on the 23 metres line and in line with where it crossed the back-line.

Rationale for the change: To open up angles and options for the attacking team and to prevent the ball getting ‘stuck’ in the corner amongst a crowd of players.

Guidance for umpires:

1. The re-start must be taken from on the 23m line. This means that the re-start is within the 23 and therefore may not be played directly into the circle until it has travelled 5m or been touched by another player.
2. Players may ‘try it on’ by taking the hit just outside the 23. If the ball is not placed exactly on the 23m line, umpires should make it clear to players that play must continue as if the ball were **inside** the 23.
3. Umpires should be flexible and only penalise if the ‘wrong spot’ for the ‘corner’ is chosen either to gain an unfair advantage or for reasons that go against the aim and spirit of the rule.
4. The signal for the new restart remains unchanged – i.e. the umpire should point to the corner mark. A secondary signal can then be used to show the location of the restart on the 23m line if necessary. *NB: You will find that players quickly become familiar with the new rule and thus a secondary signal becomes unnecessary, unless the player is obviously preparing to take the restart from the wrong place.*

Please visit [this section](#) of the England Hockey Rules education site to see videos of this rule in practice.

‘UP 10’ RULE

Please note that the rule that allowed an umpire to progress a free hit by up to 10 metres has been deleted. The rule is now redundant owing to the new free hit rules and the ability to self-pass, while any other misconduct can be managed using other rules or personal penalties.