

2026 PAHL PLAYOFFS TEAM GUIDE



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Mission

- Have fun and make the postseason experience a positive one for all of our players!
- The best way to make the playoffs enjoyable is to come with a positive attitude and put forth your best effort.
- It is always rewarding – win or lose – to be a part of a collective effort toward our goal of being a great league.

Sportsmanship

- Sportsmanship is everyone's responsibility.
 - When we succeed at this task, we succeed as a league.
 - If we fail at this task, we fail as a community.
- The behaviors of the adults directly influence the behaviors of the minors, on and off the ice.
 - Coaches must set the right example and be the first to address their unruly players.
 - Spectators must create an enthusiastic, supportive environment.
 - Referees do not dictate a team's ability (or inability) to advance in the playoffs; only the teams do.
- Competition, intensity, and losing is not an excuse for anyone to discard maturity, respect, and decency.
 - Respect for the game can never be sacrificed due to the desire to win.
 - Our champions must win with dignity; all other teams must lose with grace.
 - True character is best displayed in adverse situations; the "heat of the moment" is not an excuse.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Travel & Arrival

- Only the PAHL League Office has the authority to postpone/delay a playoff game for any reason, including adverse weather conditions and force majeure.
 - An affected team must immediately contact the PAHL League Office at the first opportunity regarding any issue that may affect the start, resumption, or completion of a playoff game.
- There will be no player check-in this season at any playoff game.
 - With GameSheet setting the rosters of eligible players and serving as the scoresheet for the game, the check-in procedure used in previous seasons is no longer needed.

Payment Per Game

- Each PAHL member association will be billed by the PAHL League Office for each playoff game in which one of its teams participates.
 - Games with a minimum of 85-minute ice slots = \$350 per team, per game
 - Games with a minimum of 65-minute ice slots = \$300 per team, per game
- Payments are not to be made by the participating team to any entity at the playoff game.
 - Please do not give a check to the host association, host rink, or site coordinator.
 - Please check with your association treasurer on making a payment to your association for your team's playoff games.
- The PAHL League Office will provide full reimbursement payments for all hosted playoff games to the host associations after the season.

Spectators

- The USA Hockey Zero Tolerance Policy shall be strictly enforced at all games.
 - Spectators who are ejected from a playoff game are automatically banned from all subsequent PAHL playoff games, in addition to consequences henceforth applied by the applicable association's Spectator Conduct Policy.
 - Security staff will be present at all PAHL Championship Games and could be assigned to any other playoff game by the host entity.
- Spectators who enter restricted areas -- namely, locker room hallways -- will be ejected from the premises.
 - Restricted areas must remain clear of unauthorized individuals for the safety of our athletes.
 - If a parent is needed to assist an injured player in a locker room, the Medic (and only the Medic) will authorize that parent(s) to enter the locker room.
- Photography is permitted during playoff games but must be done from outside the playing area.
 - Photographers are not to be on benches nor in boxes at any time or for any reason.
 - Spectators are reminded that they are not to enter the ice surface during the championship presentation.

OPERATIONS INFORMATION

GameSheet

- PAHL Playoff games shall continue to use the GameSheet application on iPads as the official scoresheet.
 - The host entity is to provide iPads to use for all playoff games and must ensure the iPads are sufficiently charged before and between uses.
 - Due to teams advancing to additional playoff games within the same day or on the next day, the GameSheet schedule cannot be entered in advance for most playoff games. Therefore, the game must be loaded on to the iPad when the teams arrive for the game (about 90 minutes prior or less).
- The host entity will provide the scorekeeper to enter the scoring on the iPad during the game.
 - The host entity must ensure that the GameSheet data is uploaded after the conclusion of each game. An internet connection is needed, and the upload is expected to occur within 20 minutes after the game.
 - If the game still appears on the “Active Games” list on the main menu after the game, click on the blue cloud icon next to the game to initiate the upload.
 - Final scores do not need to be reported to the PAHL League Office in any other manner.
- The schedule/brackets on the PAHL website will be updated routinely throughout each day of playoff games.
 - Divisional pages for playoff results can be found at www.pahockey.com/playoffs2026

Player Rosters

- Only eligible players may participate in PAHL Playoff games, in accordance with PAHL playoff rules.
 - A player who did not meet the minimum game requirement (50% of regular season games) is not eligible to participate in a playoff game, and the team (not League) carries the burden to ensure compliance.
 - Players who did not participate in 50% of games will be moved by the PAHL League Office to the “Affiliated Players” section of the team’s GameSheet roster.
 - Players who follow the procedure for a Playoff Eligibility Waiver will receive explicit approval by the PAHL League Office for playoff participation and will be restored to the team’s primary GameSheet roster.
 - Secondary Goalies are not eligible for use in a PAHL playoff game without explicit approval from the PAHL League Office. Without approval, the SG will remain in the “Affiliated Players” section of the team roster.
 - Use of an ineligible/unapproved player in a game shall be ruled a forfeit win for the non-offending team. If the use of an ineligible player is discovered during a game, the League Office shall order the game to be stopped immediately, granting a forfeit win to the non-offending team.
- Each participating team must set its game roster prior to the game in GameSheet.
 - Standard procedures from the regular season apply, with rosters completed by each team prior to the start of the game’s warm-up period and each head coach providing sign-off on the team’s game roster in GameSheet prior to the start of the game.
 - There is a strict limit of 4 coaches (“team officials”) per game, which must be reflected in the Staff section of the team’s GameSheet roster prior to the game.
 - Players who are listed in the “Affiliated Players” section of the team’s roster are not eligible for participation in a PAHL Playoff game.
 - Players who are suspended for a playoff game must be marked in GameSheet with a “Suspended” status.

Game Equipment

- Teams are to use only the locker room to which it is assigned and leave that room cleaner than it was found.
 - Each team is responsible for providing a Locker Room Monitor for each playoff game.
- Each team is responsible for providing its own warm-up pucks, water bottles, and other game/bench supplies.
- The host association shall ensure a continuous supply of pucks suitable for game play.
 - It is recommended that game pucks be kept in the scorer's box inside a container of ice/snow or placed on a cold surface until needed for use.

Game Personnel

- The host association shall arrange for all Game Personnel for all playoff games.
 - The host entity and/or host venue may arrange, at their discretion, for a PA Announcer, Arena DJ, and/or Security Guard at a playoff game(s), as defined within the PAHL Game Manual.
 - Individuals from participating teams are not entitled to assume a role as Game Personnel (except for Penalty Box Attendant) nor to have someone present in the scorer's box to monitor game operations.
- Each participating team shall provide one adult to serve as its Penalty Box Attendant for its playoff game(s).
 - Such individuals must remain impartial and undistruptive to the operations of the game.
 - A Penalty Box Attendant shall not be performing any other duties, and a coach who temporarily moves from the team bench into the penalty box must cease all coaching activity and act only as the Attendant.
- All playoff games shall utilize a 2-official system, as arranged by the host entity.
 - At no time shall play start or resume at any other level of play without at least 2 certified officials on the ice. The game shall be stopped in all such instances until the matter is resolved through the League Office.
- The on-ice officials are always the authority on the game, as a representation of the rulebooks.
 - Off-Ice Officials, league personnel, nor the site coordinator shall intervene with nor overrule the on-ice officials pertaining to matters of penalties and on-ice play.
 - Those individuals are authorized to consult with the On-Ice Officials on matters related to PAHL-specific playoff procedures and game operations.

Championship Celebrations

- A traditional postgame handshake shall be conducted between the teams after the championship game.
- The losing team is not required to stay on the ice beyond the handshake.
 - There is no shame in leaving the ice if done so respectfully.
- After the handshake, an on-ice presentation will be made by the PAHL to honor the winning team.
 - The team's players and coaches are granted this time together on the ice to celebrate their win as a team.
 - The winning team will have a team photo taken by the PAHL photographer before departing the ice.
- No spectators are permitted to enter the ice surface during the postgame celebration, with no exceptions.
 - The winning team will be asked to clear the ice immediately if spectators or other unauthorized individuals enter the playing area (ice, benches, boxes) during this time (including for pictures), and any unauthorized person entering the playing area will be removed from the premises immediately.
 - A dedicated area away from the ice surface shall be provided to the winning team after the game for photographs with family and friends. Spectators are asked to use this area and honor the policy of remaining off of the ice surface.

COMPETITION INFORMATION

Game Schedule

- The game schedule is set and locked, as posted on the PAHL website.
 - Start times cannot be altered due to requests or other conflicts.
 - All teams must be ready to enter the ice at the scheduled start time.
- A game can start early if the ice becomes available due to the previous game ending early.
 - Both the referees and head coaches must agree to the earlier start.
 - All game personnel must be present for the earlier start time.
 - Refer to Section 8.1.B of the PAHL Game Manual.
- If a previous game runs long (OT/SO), the next game will start immediately upon the ice being resurfaced.
 - The start of a game should not be otherwise delayed for any reason (such as players/coaches coming from another game); contact the PAHL League Office if an unexpected delay is encountered.

Rules & Rulebooks

- All games shall be played according to the USA Hockey rulebooks and the PAHL Game Manual.
 - The PAHL Game Manual shall take precedence when a conflict arises between the two sets of rules.
- The host association shall provide accessibility to the USA Hockey Rulebook and the PAHL Game Manual upon the request of the On-Ice Officials during each game.
 - All playing rules are accessible on the PAHL website at www.pahockey.com/rules

Suspensions and Discipline

- All unserved suspensions accrued during the regular season shall carryover into the playoffs.
 - A scrimmage/exhibition game cannot be added prior to the playoffs to serve a suspension.
 - All suspensions and disciplinary actions received during the playoffs shall apply to subsequent rounds for winning teams, including State/National tournaments, where applicable.
 - Suspensions and disciplinary actions for players/coaches on losing teams shall fall under the guidance of PAHL policies on Carryover Suspensions and USAH rules on serving suspensions.
 - All rulings regarding suspensions shall be directed to the PAHL Discipline Director only; no other entity shall be authorized to provide an official statement on suspensions.
- No protests shall be permitted during playoff games; all disputes shall be resolved by the PAHL League Office.
- A ruling on a Match Penalty issued in a playoff game will not be provided prior to a team's next playoff game.

Time of Play

- Period lengths and penalty lengths shall match those of the regular season, per division.
 - The applicable period lengths and penalty times can be found at www.pahockey.com/gameformats.
- There shall be no curfew – and therefore no curfew rules – applied to any playoff game.
 - The PAHL running-clock and mercy policies remain in effect for playoff games.
- Each team is granted a timeout of 1 minute in duration during regulation time.

Playoff Overtime

- All playoff games with a tied score at the end of regulation time shall continue into sudden-victory overtime.
- The overtime period shall be 10 minutes of sudden-victory, stop-time play.
 - There shall be a rest period of 1 minute prior to the start of the overtime period.
- The on-ice manpower for the overtime periods shall be based on 4-on-4 play, minus applicable penalties.
 - Penalty time(s) not completed during regulation play shall carryover into the overtime period.
 - Multiple penalties to a team during overtime shall never reduce a team to less than 3 skaters on the ice.
 - The On-Ice Officials shall make all determinations regarding the application of penalties and subsequent on-ice manpower, including any adjustments required at a stoppage in play.
- Teams shall switch ends between the end of the third period and the start of overtime, and teams shall defend that end for the duration of overtime.
- No timeouts are permitted in overtime, even if a team did not use its timeout during regulation time.

Playoff Shootouts

- All playoff games with a tied score at the end of the overtime period shall conduct a shootout.
- There shall be a rest period of 1 minute prior to the start of the shootout.
- Teams shall defend the net closest to its bench for the duration of the shootout.
- A player who has uncompleted penalty time at the conclusion of overtime is not eligible to participate in the shootout, and any player who has been removed from the game at the direction of the Medic due to injury or illness is not eligible to participate in the shootout.
- All shots shall be conducted under the provisions of the USA Hockey rule for Penalty Shots.
 - All players must remain fully inside the team bench during each shot attempt, except for the goaltender of each team who is participating in the shootout and the skater who is attempting the current shot.
 - No timeout nor warm-up activity of any kind shall be granted once the shootout begins.
- The shootout shall consist of 5 rounds unless, at any point, one team holds a lead greater than the number of shooters remaining for the opponent.
 - Teams must use 5 eligible shooters in the order of their choice.
 - Coaches do not need to report shooters prior to the shootout; a game official shall track which players from each team have attempted shots.
 - The home team shall have the option of shooting first or defending first, which shall then apply to all rounds of the shootout.
- If the shootout score is tied after 5 rounds, an additional tiebreaker round shall be sequentially added, as needed, to determine a winner.
 - Any eligible shooter may be used by a team during any necessary tiebreaker rounds, regardless of the number of previous shot attempts by any player.
 - Each team will attempt an equal number of shots in the tiebreaker round(s) until a winner is declared.
- The final score of the game at the end of a shootout shall be established by awarding 1 additional goal to the team that wins the shootout, regardless of how many goals were scored during the shootout.