



Field Hockey Canada

FIH Rules Update and Clarification

2026

These new rules and interpretations
should be implemented at the start
of the season or tournament, not
introduced mid-season

2.1 A maximum of eleven players from each team take part in play at any particular time during the match.

FIH Update

Rule 2.1 – Too many players on the field:

A yellow card is now required where the situation materially affects the match (previously, only a “personal penalty” was mentioned, which could include a green card).

What Does This Mean?

- Stop time to fix it.
- If it affects the game, the captain gets a **yellow card**.
- If it does not affect play, umpire decides if a card is needed – could be a **green card**.

5.1 A match consists of four quarters of 15 minutes, an interval of 2 minutes between quarters 1 and 2 and between quarters 3 and 4, and a half-time interval of 10 minutes between quarters 2 and 3.

8.2 Time and play are stopped after a goal is awarded and re-started when the teams are ready

FIH Update

Rule 5.1 / Rule 8.2 – Half-time interval and time stoppages:

The half-time interval is now fixed at 10 minutes (instead of 5). Time is stopped after a goal, aligning the Rules with international tournament practice and many national leagues. However, National Associations may adopt different provisions in their domestic competitions. This flexibility ensures that National Associations can adapt match/interval duration and time-stoppage procedures to local circumstances, for example for youth matches and when pitch availability is limited or scheduling constraints require shorter intervals.

What Does This Mean?

- Half time is now 10 minutes.
- Time is stopped after a goal.
- Teams may agree not to stop time after goals or penalty corners (unless competition rules say otherwise).
- **Please follow local league and tournament regulations.**

9.10 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.

FIH Update

Rule 9.10 – Aerial balls (Rule Trial now adopted):

The rule successfully trialled during the 2024/25 Pro League season and other competitions has now been formally incorporated. Defenders may approach once the receiver has touched the ball (previously only once the receiver controlled the ball and brought it to the ground), provided the initial 5 metres of safe space were respected. The previous rule often prevented a fair challenge after the first touch and created inconsistencies in second-phase situations. The new approach maintains safety while enabling a legitimate contest.

What Does This Mean?

- Previously: Defenders had to stay 5m away until the ball was fully controlled.
- Now: Once the receiver touches the ball, defenders may approach.
- The first 5m of space must still be respected.
- Safety is still the priority.

For videos and explanations, please download the FIH Umpire Briefing <https://www.fih.hockey/about-fih/official-documents/fih-umpires-and-umpire-managers>

Refer to slides 22 to 32

10.2 When the ball is inside the circle that goalkeepers are defending and they have their stick in their hand, goalkeepers are permitted to use their stick and body to deflect the ball over the back-line or to play the ball in any other direction.

FIH Update

Rule 10.2 has been updated to explicitly state the conditions under which goalkeepers may use their body to play the ball. The new wording clarifies that when the ball is inside the circle a goalkeeper is defending and they have their stick in their hand; they are permitted to use their stick and their body to deflect the ball over the back-line or to play it in any other direction. Earlier editions contained a separate provision allowing goalkeepers wearing full protective equipment, and players with goalkeeping privileges, to use their arms, hands and other parts of their body to push the ball away – but only as part of a goal-saving action, or to move the ball away from the possibility of a goal-scoring action by opponents. They were not permitted to propel the ball forcefully with arms, hands or body so that it travelled a long distance. When this provision was later removed, it unintentionally created uncertainty as to whether goalkeepers were still allowed to use their arms and hands in general play.

What Does This Mean?

- Inside the circle, goalkeepers may use:
 - Stick
 - Body
- They can **deflect** the ball in any direction – including the endline. This is different than propelling it off the endline.
- This clears up past confusion.

11.8 If the ball hits an umpire or unauthorised person on the field, play shall continue unless the contact results in an advantage to one team. In such cases, the match shall be re-started with a bully.

9.16 Players must not throw any object or piece of equipment onto the field, at the ball, or at another player, umpire or person.

FIH Update

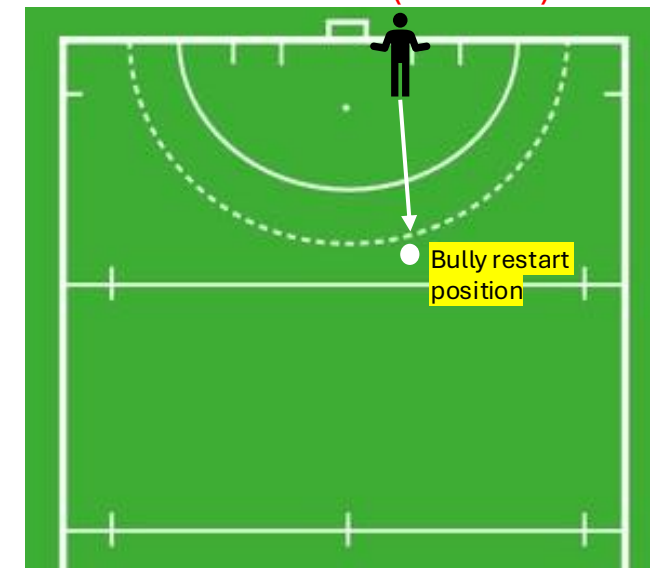
Rule 11.8 – Ball hitting an umpire:

Restart with a bully if the ball touches an umpire and this creates an unfair advantage. Previously, play always continued.

What Does This Mean?

- If the ball hits an umpire:
 - Play continues unless one team gains an advantage.
 - If advantage occurs → restart with a bully.
- This prevents unfair outcomes.

If a goal is scored. It restarts with a bully. A bully is taken close to the location of the ball when play was stopped but not within 15 metres of the back-line and not within 5 metres of the circle (rule 6.5)



13.5 The penalty corner is completed when:

a. a goal is scored

b. a free hit is awarded to the defending team

c. the ball travels more than 5 metres from the circle

d. the ball is played over the back-line and a penalty corner is not awarded

e. a defender commits an offence which does not result in another penalty corner

f. a penalty stroke is awarded

FIH Update

The previous Rule 13.3 (n), which stated that "the penalty corner Rules no longer apply if the ball travels more than 5 metres from the circle", has been removed as redundant, since the completion of a penalty corner is already fully covered by Rule 13.5.

What Does This Mean?

- A Penalty Corner is only over when one of those events occur

13.3 (n) field players should remove their penalty corner equipment safely and as soon as they are able to do so after the penalty corner is completed.

FIH Update

Rule 13.3 (n) – Penalty corner protective equipment:

Established practice, so far reflected only in Umpire Briefings, has been integrated to be formally included in the Rules themselves: defenders may pass the ball while still wearing PC equipment, but may not take a self-pass when a free hit to the defence is awarded within the 23m area. The same applies to restarts from the side-line or back-line. (For clarity: This change only ensures the Rules include and fully and accurately describe how this is already being umpired. In principle, when a free hit is awarded, the penalty corner is completed, and all defenders MUST take off their protective equipment. The only exception is to allow a masked defender to play a quick pass out/forward to set up a counterattack in order to exceptionally allow for a play that is interesting and attractive to watch. A self-pass by a masked defender, or a pass to another masked defender, is not allowed because in that case, there is time to set up the re-start, and defenders are expected to first take off any protective equipment, then proceed with a self-pass or pass to another defender.)

New guidance also covers dangerous or negligent throwing of PC equipment: a yellow card is mandatory when an opponent or umpire is hit on or above the knee; the team penalty depends on the location of the ball. This guidance is preventative in nature and encourages the safe removal of equipment.

What Does This Mean?

- Defenders must remove PC gear safely and quickly after the PC ends.
- They can play the ball immediately but:
 - Cannot take a self-pass while still wearing PC gear.
- If protective gear is thrown dangerously:
 - **Yellow card minimum**
 - Could be **red** if deliberate.
- Restart depends on where the ball was.

Field and Equipment Specifications Section

4.1 Hand protectors:

a. each have a maximum width of 228 mm and length of 365 mm when laid flat, palm upwards

b. must not have any additions to retain the stick when the stick is not held in the hand.

4.2 Leg guards: each have a maximum width of 300 mm when on the leg of the goalkeeper. The dimensions of goalkeeper's hand protectors and leg guards are measured using gauges with the relevant internal dimensions.

FIH Update

Field and Equipment Specifications – Goalkeeper Equipment:

The maximum permitted length of the goalkeeper's hand protector has been increased from 355 mm to 365 mm for compliance with relevant standards and increased safety.

What Does This Mean?

- Maximum glove length increased from **355mm** to **365mm**.
- This aligns with safety standards.



If you have any further questions
please email the FHC Officials
Committee at:

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