

2024 MSLax Rules Clarifications

Updated 2/9/2024

Useful Links

[MSLax 2024 Summary of Rules by Age Level](#)

[USA Lacrosse Girls 2024 Rule Changes](#)

[USA Lacrosse Girls' Lacrosse Youth Guidebook](#)

2024 Points of Emphasis

(USAL Girls' Lacrosse Youth Guidebook p.6)

SPORTSMANSHIP

Coaches, players, officials, administrators, and spectators in the interscholastic environment have an expectation to demonstrate behavior that creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere.

STICK TO BODY CONTACT

Players must not initiate stick-to-body contact by using the stick to hit, push or displace an opponent. Officials must recognize, call, and penalize illegal stick-to-body contact as required by the rules.

DANGEROUS PLAY IN THE 8-METER ARC

Players can play safely in this area by maintaining control of their stick and body, avoiding stick-to-body contact, shooting safely, and not pushing opponents.

PROFESSIONALISM

USA Lacrosse continues to encourage all coaches, players, officials, and administrators to conduct themselves in a professional manner before, during, and immediately following all contests.

USAL Philosophy of Lacrosse by Age Level

With respect to the competition at each age level, coaches, parents, and officials should emphasize the following:

8U: FUN, following simple rules of play, and good sportsmanship

10U: FUN, good sportsmanship, trying new skills in a team setting, learning and exploring overall play of the game

12U & 14U: Fun, using technical skills in game situation, exploring and applying new tactical skills, sportsmanship

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STICK CONTACT

“Empty Stick Check [Minor Foul]: check or impede an opponent’s crosse when the player’s crosse is not in contact with the ball... Incidental contact while making a play for the ball is not a check.”

When two or more players are attempting to gain possession of the ball, whether it is on the ground or in the air, their sticks may have *incidental contact* with each other. This is a natural part of play, and it is allowed. No call should be made for incidental contact.

If a player stops going for the ball and instead goes for another player’s stick, this is no longer considered incidental contact.

- 8U and 10U (no checking is allowed): any purposeful contact with another player’s stick should be called as a major foul for checking.
- 12U (modified checking): any purposeful contact with another player’s stick where any part of the ball carrier’s stick is above the shoulders should be called as a major foul for checking.
- *Empty stick check* does not apply at 8U or 10U because either the stick contact was incidental (no foul), or there was a check (major foul).
- If a defender is holding her stick in legal defensive position and the ball carrier’s follow-through on a pass makes contact with the defender’s stick, this is incidental contact and no foul should be called on the defender. Consideration should still be made for possible Dangerous Follow-Through by the ball carrier.

STICK-TO-BODY CONTACT

It is never legal for a player’s stick to come in contact with another player’s body.

Illegal Stick to Body Contact is a major foul, and should always be called.

- It is never legal to “*use the shaft of the crosse to hit, push, or displace an opponent, whether or not the stick is horizontal.*”
- Attempting to detain a player’s progress with one’s stick is a *Holding* foul.

Situation: Blue player is running down the midfield with the ball. White player is running alongside defending the transition. White player begins jabbing the butt of her stick into the elbow/hip/ribs of the blue player. **Ruling:** *Illegal Stick to Body Contact*. Official calls a major foul and white player must move 4m behind the ball carrier.

Situation: Blue player with the ball is being defended by white player in the midfield. As blue player makes a pass her follow-through hits white player on the shoulder. **Ruling:** *Dangerous Follow-Through (MANDATORY CARD)*. Official issues a yellow card to blue player, brings the ball back to the spot of the foul and awards possession to white player. Play resumes with a whistle start.

BODY-TO-BODY CONTACT

Some incidental body-to-body contact is allowed when two or more players are making a play on the ball or attempting to score. Body-to-body contact becomes illegal when a player is being displaced from their established position by another player's hands, shoulders, hips, etc.

"Body to body contact may be called charging, blocking, or no call (incidental contact). Body to body contact made in an effort to change the direction of the opponent (such as shouldering, leaning, or using elbows and knees outside of the frame of the body to make contact) should be called."

- Correct body defense is less about pushing the player out of position (a *Pushing* foul), and more about occupying the position she wants to be in before she can get there.
- If a player wants to play legal on-body defense, it is recommended that she keep both hands together on her stick and use her fists/forearms to maintain her "tree trunk."
- Note: When playing on-body defense and holding one's stick vertically, the defender's stick will likely be in the ball carrier's sphere. To avoid a *Crosse in the Sphere* foul, the defender can angle her stick toward her own shoulder.

Situation: Blue player and white player are attempting to gain possession of a ground ball. They arrive at the spot of the ball at the same time and neither are able to make a clean scoop. Both players begin heavily leaning into each other and jockeying for better position to scoop the ball. The official calls offsetting fouls on both players for pushing and administers alternate possession. **Ruling:** Correct. Once players stop playing the ball and focus only on displacing another player, what may have started as incidental contact becomes a pushing foul.

Situation: Blue player has the ball in the 8m arc and white player is marked up goal-side. Blue player turns her body to protect her stick from a *3 Seconds Good Defense* turnover. Blue player begins backing up into white defender in an attempt to get closer to the goal for a shot, displacing white defender from her established position. **Ruling:** *Charging* foul called against blue player. White player awarded possession with blue player 4m behind and may self-start.

MINIMUM PASS RULES (does not apply at 14U)

- Any attempted or completed pass must follow a true lacrosse move to be counted. Tipping the ball directly from one player's stick to another's is not a true lacrosse move and will not be counted. Examples of true lacrosse moves: overhand, sidearm, pop passes.
- When a pass must be made "inside the offensive zone" both the passer and the receiver must be inside the offensive zone. The *offensive zone* is determined by the *restraining line* for 12U and by the half field line/cones for 10U.
- Once a team becomes "hot" (they have met the minimum pass rule), they remain hot until the ball leaves their offensive zone.

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4&8 RULE (does not apply to 14U)

If a team is trailing by 4+ goals, they have the option to have indirect free position (IFP) on the draw.

- The trailing team may waive this option if they want to continue practicing the draw
- *Indirect* means that the ball has to be *played* before a shot is taken (passed, fouled, checked if allowed at that level)
- The minimum pass rule does not change

If a team is ahead by 8+ goals, they must achieve 3 consecutive completed passes before attempting to shoot on goal. At least one of those passes must occur within the offensive zone.

- If a turnover occurs before the team becomes “hot,”, the minimum pass count restarts from zero.

- The trailing team still has the option for IFP on the draw
- The original minimum pass rule remains the same for the trailing team

Situation: 12U blue team is 8 goals ahead. They run the ball into the offensive zone and complete a pass, then complete a second pass across the restraining line outside of the offensive zone, then run the ball back across the restraining line and complete a third pass inside the offensive zone.

Ruling: Blue team is hot, because they made 3 completed consecutive passes and at least one of them was completely within the offensive zone. **Note:** Once they are hot, if blue team then makes another pass across the restraining line or carries the ball out of the offensive zone, they would then become “cold.” (See Minimum Pass Rule above)

3 SECONDS CLOSELY GUARDED (does not apply to 14U)

Player with the ball may not hold the ball for more than three seconds *when all of the following are true:*

- a) Closely guarded (within a stick's length)
 - b) The defense has both hands on their stick
 - c) The defense is in a position to legally check if checking were allowed
- If the offensive player moves the ball/stick out of checkable position (by switching hands, turning her body, etc), the count ends/restarts.
 - If the offensive player is cradling, but the motion does not actually remove the stick from checkable position, the count continues (ex: when a player is wiggling her stick but does not actually move it to the other side of her body)
 - Sometimes a defender will have great defensive positioning, but not be able to draw the 3 seconds closely guarded foul because the offense is keeping the ball out of checkable position. This is good learning for the higher levels of play.

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1v1 MIDFIELD DEFENSE (8U and 10U)

There can be a maximum of 1 defender marking the ball carrier in the midfield.

- Officials should signal advantage and use their voice to encourage the second defender to find another mark ("Only 1 v 1 defense is allowed in the midfield – find another player"). If the double team affects the quality possession of the ball carrier, the call should be made and both defenders should be positioned 4m away (minor foul).
- More than one player can defend the ball in the critical scoring area.

Special Situations

- *IFP and shooting space*: If an attack player has indirect free position, defenders should not be called for shooting space violation until the attack player has passed or the ball has been otherwise "played."

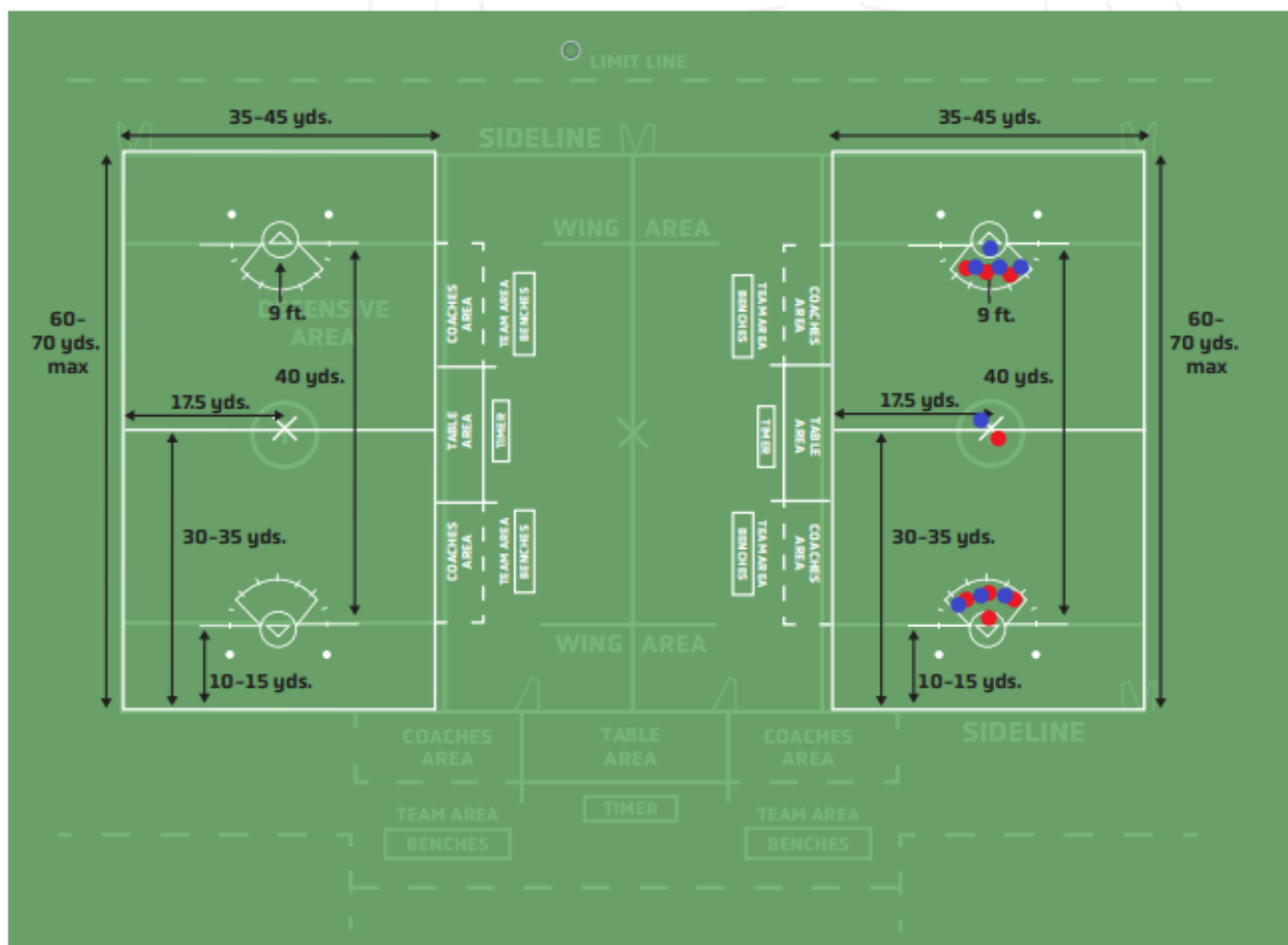
- *Time runs out at end of game while setting up an 8m Penalty Shot*: Official(s) should complete the administration of the 8m free position and instruct the player to "step and shoot," allowing 3 seconds to take the shot. If the ball is released within 3 seconds and crosses the goal line, the goal will count. If the shot is not taken within 3 seconds, the official will whistle to stop play and complete the game. Players may defend the shot as they normally would.

- *Offsides when Team is playing short due to number of players (not cards)*: If a team is playing with only 11 players due to available number of players, they may play with a full 7 players in their offensive end and 8 players (including goalie) in defensive end, keeping only 3 players behind the restraining line.

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Small field (8U and 10U) field diagram:



10U Draw Setup:

One player from each team at the center to take the draw. All other players must remain in 8m Arc until the official signals that possession has been attained or the ball crosses the painted line into the 8m Arc (see diagram above).

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Tips for Officials

- Review the USAL Philosophy of Lacrosse at the top of this document, and remember that youth lacrosse is a time for learning – not just the rules of lacrosse, but how to use one’s body, how to interact with peers, and other important life lessons. Please be gentle and encouraging with our youth players, and explain what they did wrong and how they can avoid repeating that foul again. The officials are often the most experienced people on the field, and we have a great opportunity to enhance everyone’s understanding of lacrosse while maintaining an environment of fun, learning, and collaboration.
- Call the youth game tight. The youth level is where players (and many coaches) are learning the sport of lacrosse. What might be acceptable at high school level is not always acceptable at youth. These kids have not yet refined their skills or grown into the mental and physical control that can be expected at higher levels of play. Officials need to maintain safety on the field as the highest priority.
- Remember that **Sportsmanship** is once again a point of emphasis this year. Be confident in using your cards early for unsportsmanlike behavior by the players/coaches/spectators. Remain calm, professional, and “demonstrate behavior that creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere.”
- For counting the minimum passes when 4&8 rule is in effect, it is recommended to use your fingers held in the air to be visible for all players and coaches. If there are two refs on the field, any discrepancy in pass count will default to the lead ref’s count. When a team is required to make 3 consecutive completed passes, and a pass is dropped, it is recommended to make an “O” shape with fingers and thumb to and vocalize that the pass count has reset to zero.
- To distinguish between the 3 passes and the 3 seconds closely guarded count, it is recommended to use the following language:
 - “One pass... two pass... three, you’re hot!”
 - “Check one, check two, *tweet*” On check one and check two, signal with your arm as you would when counting the 10 seconds for clearing from the goal circle. Blow the whistle on the 3rd count.
- When a team is *not* hot, but appears to be driving to goal, the recommended language is “You need a pass!” or “You’re cold!” (since saying “not hot” can sound too similar to “hot”)
- When signaling advantage in the midfield, verbalize “Advantage,” so that players realize that you have seen the foul and are not just ignoring it. This can help keep tensions more relaxed. At the younger levels, consider calling midfield fouls right away instead of signaling advantage, because this way the players will better learn what is legal/illegal play. (If advantage is signaled and the call is never made, the fouling player may be totally oblivious to the advantage signal and may then infer that what they are doing is legal when really it isn’t).
- Review the Summary of Rules by Age Level document before each youth game, especially when switching to a new level.
- Visit the spectator sideline before the game to answer any questions they may have about rules, signals, fouls, etc. If they don’t ask questions, provide some basic instruction about common fouls at that age level. Consider explaining the top three things you’ll be watching for that game, what the signals look like, and how to play legally to avoid those fouls. Let the spectators know that you’ll be back at halftime, so if they see something that doesn’t make sense to them in the first half, they know that you’ll be able to answer their questions soon.

Want more clarification? Email your suggestions to rules@mslax.net !