



The Point of View – The Handshake Line.

Shaking hands at the conclusion of a game can be a positive and heart-warming display of sportsmanship. And in most instances, it marks an uneventful conclusion to the game.

However, every once in a while, the handshake line can spark an incident that is both dangerous and disturbing. For that reason, it requires officials to be vigilant at all times during handshakes.

Let's look at the end-of-game handshake from a number of Point of Views.

The Exit Strategy

When the final buzzer sounds, the linespeople gather at centre ice with the head referee. This is where the officiating crew decides on the handshake strategy – specifically which team leaves first and what path will that team take to get off the ice. Who does what, and what factors do we take into consideration in coming up with our final plan?

1. The Referee: The first thing I do is take note of the location of the benches, the direction the teams are skating in the handshake line and the location of gates the players are going to use to leave the ice surface. I need to make a quick decision, and identify the team that leaves first, and the team that will wait by its bench. I direct the linespeople clearly on the plan: "White skates to bench, and Black goes straight off." I then stay at centre ice, well back from the handshake line to see as much of the line as possible, as my linespeople head to opposite sides to watch the players. As the White team finishes its handshakes, I remind them to curl back and remain at their bench until the Black team has left the ice.
2. The Linespeople: After the referee has outlined the exit strategy, the first thing I do is quickly decide with the other linesperson which side of the handshake line we will occupy. I take up my position about half way between the red line and the blue line; my partner is in exactly the same position on the opposite side closer to the far blue line. As the players proceed through the line, my head is on a swivel to watch as many players as I can as they shake hands. As the players finish their handshakes, I begin directing traffic: "White to your bench; Black straight off the ice." I make sure each team is taking the most direct route to the bench or the gate. As soon as the Black team is finished, I follow the last player and the coaches to the gate and make sure they are clear before signaling for the White team to leave the ice.

Special Circumstances

Even the best-laid plans can come undone in some scenarios. Here are a few additional situations you should anticipate when managing the handshake.

When there are only two of you: If you are working a two-official system, you and your partner assume the roles of the linespeople in the three-official system. You jointly decide which team leaves first and the path that team will take to exit the ice surface.

When you are distracted by a well-meaning coach or player: Often, a player/coach wants to demonstrate good sportsmanship and shake an official's hand at the end of the game. It's okay to reciprocate *if it is practical to do so*. Remember, you must ensure players finish their handshakes and leave the ice safely and without incident. Do not get distracted by interactions with players or coaches. Have your head on a swivel...be aware of everything.

When players ignore the exit strategy: Sometimes, even after giving clear instructions about where both teams are supposed to go after shaking hands, players can turn the wrong way. This can create a "hot spot" where both teams have to pass by each other again. The referees (in a two-official system) or the linesperson (in the three-official system) should go to the potential hotspot right away to direct traffic.

When the benches are on opposite sides of the rink: Have the teams curl back towards their own bench. Direct the team closest to the exit gate to leave the ice surface first.