



Body Checking Versus Body Contact in No Body Checking Hockey

Part 1: Rule 6.2b, Boarding and Body Checking

Here is the rule about body checking from Hockey Canada: *"In divisions of Pee Wee and below and Female Hockey (and any Bantam/Midget A2 or A3 in Hockey Winnipeg), a Minor penalty for Body Checking or, at the discretion of the Referee, a Major penalty and a Game Misconduct penalty shall be assessed any player who, in the opinion of the Referee, **intentionally body checks, bumps, shoves or pushes any opposing player**. If a player is injured, a Major penalty and a Game Misconduct penalty must be assessed. When the offensive player is skating towards the defensive player, the defending player may not hit the offensive player by going in the opposite direction to that player. The body contact must be as a result of the movement of the offensive player. There must be no action where the offensive player is pushed, checked or shoved into the boards. **Where, in the opinion of the Referee, accidental contact has taken place, no penalty shall be assessed.** A Match Penalty could also be assessed under this rule."*

There is a second way of thinking about body checking versus body contact that can simplify the above paragraph. Ultimately, the decision of the referee is to assess (or not assess) a penalty. There are two criteria that should be considered. If one of the two is confirmed with a "yes" then a penalty may be warranted or may not. If both questions are confirmed with a "yes" then a penalty should be called. The two questions are:

1. **Did the offending player use excess force beyond what is expected for this situation considering the skill level of hockey and for this specific play**
 - a. **What referees should watch for:** Watch for a player to use more force than what would naturally occur as part of that play whether through use of her hands or body.
 - b. **What to tell players:** Find a way to gain body position. Get to the puck rather than through the other player.
2. **Was the offending player initially and intentionally targeting the other player's body?**
 - a. **What referees should watch for:** Watch the "offending" player's stick or skate to be trying to play the puck. Making a body check and playing the puck are not actions that can happen at the same time therefore, if an effort is made to play the puck then a body check is less likely.
 - b. **What to tell players:** Find a way to get your stick or skate to the puck.

Part 2: Applying the two questions

Note: these examples are with minimal context and cannot be looked at as all encompassing examples. Use them to understand the two questions above.

1. Defense A3 is beaten around the outside by B5. A3's stick is to the middle of the ice when she rubs B5 into the boards with enough force for her to fall down and lose the puck. (Penalty as A3 used excessive force than was natural for the play and her stick was not engaging the puck)
2. Defense B7 and Offense A8 are battling for a puck in the corner. B9 comes in and battles for the puck. B7 then takes a step back to disengage then gives A8 a strong shove. (Penalty. B7 initially engaged on the puck but once B7 stepped back she was no longer puck engaged which was confirmed when she shoved A8 with force that was greater than expected).
3. Offence B6 is one-on-one with A11. A11 is steering B6 towards the boards with A11 having her stick towards the middle of the ice. As B6 and A11 run out of room they both engage on the puck with their sticks at the boards with incidental body contact. (No penalty even though A11's stick was initially away from the play as she brought her stick in. There was not excessive force from either player during the steering to the boards or the battle for the puck).
4. A7 pushes B8 after the whistle. (Penalty. There is no focus on the puck and the push is not part of the natural force expected for that situation. It should be noted that even in body checking leagues, this should be called).
5. Two players A9 and B2 see a loose puck and both go for the puck; neither is aware of the other player.
 - a. Both players go to play the puck and violently collide. (No penalty. Both players were playing the puck so #2 is a "Not intentional". The collision was a lot of force but was not outside of what you would expect to see from two players who are not paying attention to their surroundings).
 - b. At a moment before the collision A9 realizes the collision is about to happen and stands up; the collision still occurs. The referee feels she had time to stop or turn away from the collision but chose to follow through (Penalty to A9 as more force was applied than what was expected from that play).
 - c. At a moment before collision A9 realizes...in opinion of referee she tries to turn away but the collision happens (No penalty as the act was accidental. A9 was no longer trying to play the puck first, but the accidental nature means no penalty).

Part 3: Is No-Body Checking hockey a physical game?

The answer is a yes. Although less so than body contact leagues.

1. Players battle for body position along the boards all the time in the no-body checking league. So long as the focus is on the puck and gaining body position then the play is physical but legal.
2. All body contact is not a penalty. For body contact to become body checking, the two questions above need to be applied.
3. There are 10 players and 2 goaltenders on the ice. Rule 6.2b is designed to refocus the players on the puck so referees need to keep the game safe from a focus on body checking. Players will bump each other in pursuit of the puck.