



Body Checking Versus Body Contact in No Body Checking Hockey

Part 1: Rule 7.3 Body Checking

Here is the rule about body checking from Hockey Canada: *“This rule applies only in divisions of U13 and below, in female hockey, and any other divisions approved by a Member of Hockey Canada. Body contact is incidental contact of two opposing players in pursuit of the puck on the ice in the same direction. If, in the opinion of the Referee, incidental contact has occurred, no penalty will be assessed. Bodychecking is an attempt by a player to gain an advantage on their opponent with the deliberate use of the body. Body-checking results when a player makes deliberate contact with an opposing player with opposite-directional force, when a player leaves their skating lane to make contact, or when a player extends an arm, shoulder, or hip after angling an opponent.”*

There is a second way of thinking about body checking versus body contact that can simplify the referee’s professional reasoning. There are two questions that can be asked to determine if something is body checking or contact.

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. If both are “no” then there is definitely no penalty.

The two questions are:

1. Did the offending player use excess force beyond what is expected from any given play to make physical contact with the other player?
 - 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 the 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 generally cannot happen unless the offending player stops playing the puck.
 - 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 they rubs B5 into the boards with enough force for them to fall down and lose the puck. (Penalty as A3 used excessive force than was natural for the play and the 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 was initially engaged on the puck but once B7 took a step back they was no longer focused on the puck which was confirmed when they shoved A8 with force that was greater than expected for that play).
3. Offence B6 is one-on-one with A11. A11 is steering B6 towards the boards with A11 having their stick towards the middle of the ice. As B6 and A11 run out of room they both engage on the puck at the boards with incidental body contact. (No penalty even though A11's stick was initially away from the play. There was not excessive force from either player during the steering to the boards or the battle for the puck).
4. A7 putheys 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).
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 "No". 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 the happen and stands up; the collision still occurs. The referee feels they 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 they 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 of 5c means no penalty).

Part 3: Is NBC hockey a physical game without body checking?

The answer is a yes.

1. Players battle for body position along the boards all the time in the NBC game. 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 7.3 is designed to refocus the players on the puck and controlled body contact during puck battles.

