



## 2020-21 SEASON POINTS OF FOCUS (August 24, 2020)

*Version 5*

As hockey returns to Canada for the 2020-21 season, the game is facing many unknowns and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 environment. Officials as always are expected to enforce a rules standard in our game that will continue to allow for improved skill development and positive hockey experiences.

Through the work of the Return to Hockey Officiating Task Team there was a detailed review of the current playing rules. Consideration was given to whether any new rules should be adopted as a result of the challenges associated with the COVID-19 environment.

Although there are no formal “new” playing rules related to COVID-19, Hockey Canada has identified the following “**Points of Focus**” for the game as we enter the 2020-21 season.

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### **Scrum and Altercations**

A common occurrence in any game is player gatherings during and after the play that may result in scrums and altercations. It is important, that when possible, that we promote physical distancing of players. Although not completely avoidable, officials are encouraged to eliminate and control scrums and altercations to the best of their ability. Players and team officials have a responsibility to show resilience and composure in such situations.

#### *Direction for Coaches and Players*

- Coaches are asked to teach and communicate the importance of physical distancing once the whistle is blown to stop play. Players are expected to immediately leave the area and physically distance on the ice where possible.
- Coaches support of the officials in these situations is required to prevent continued scrums and altercations from occurring.
- Players are encouraged not to continue the battle for the puck once the whistle has been blown and are asked to immediately leave the area after the stoppage of play.
- Although this should be the protocol at any time play is stopped, it becomes especially important during stoppages along the boards and in front of the nets / goaltenders.

### *Direction for Officials*

- Officials are encouraged to utilize their whistle to stop play earlier to potentially prevent unnecessary gatherings / scrums.
  - Quicker whistles may be required when the puck is being trapped along the boards to avoid the gathering of players.
  - Quicker whistles on net plays may be required to assist in preventing tempers to rise resulting in scrums and/or altercations.
- Officials are encouraged to assess appropriate penalties to players causing scrums or altercations rather than verbal warnings if those players have not appropriately abided by the whistle and direction from the official to leave the area.
  - Strict enforcement of Unsportsmanlike Conduct under Rule 9.2(a) will be required by all officials to assist in limiting these situations.
  - Officials are encouraged to escalate to Misconducts where players are continuing to engage or where teams after receiving penalties continue to cause such scrums.

It is important that officials communicate with players and team officials regarding a high standard for scrums and altercations. It is important that team officials assist in educating and promoting respect amongst players to prevent scrums and altercations that may escalate.

Officials are required to employ zero tolerance to discourage players from “Face Washing” other players and shall, if warranted, assess a double minor penalty for Head Contact in Minor and Female hockey. In Junior Hockey and above, officials are to assess a minor penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct (9.2a) and escalate to a misconduct should the behaviour continue.

### **Spitting**

The act of spitting directly at any player, team official or on-ice official is currently addressed under Rule 9.7 in which a Match penalty is applied. In the current COVID-19 environment, Hockey Canada encourages coaches to promote that participants refrain from spitting at any time during any on-ice activities. This would include spitting water on the ice or in the bench area.

The act of spitting may increase the possibility of propelling moisture droplets into the air and potentially expose other players, team officials and on-ice officials to a potential virus.

Aside from the current Rule 9.7 (match penalty) Hockey Canada is not instituting a “new” penalty for spitting by participants. However, we do strongly encourage that all participants and team officials promote and educate players about proper hygiene and refrain from the act of spitting.

Officials are asked to adhere to the following protocols when it comes to spitting on the ice:

- If an official sees a player spit or spits water onto the ice surface, they shall notify the head coach of the offending players team at the next available stoppage of play. Coaches will be advised to address such instances with their team and that it is not acceptable.

- If a team has been notified two (2) times within a game and a third occurrence occurs, officials are asked to adhere to the following escalation.
  - Assess the offending player an unsportsmanlike penalty under 9.2(a)
  - After informing the coach once again, state any further instances by any player(s) will now be assessed as misconduct penalties and reported to the league on the game report or incident report.

### **Respect**

Under the current environment of COVID-19, Hockey Canada's primary objective is to provide a safe playing environment for all participants as the game returns for the 2020-21 season. It is imperative that all participants respect the rules of the game and any measures that may be adopted by Hockey Canada and/or Members to create a safe environment.

Officials are directed to utilize appropriate playing rules / penalties that may be required to address any issues of disrespect that may occur during the course of a game.

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### **We ALL play a role in supporting and educating safety in our game.**

All members of Hockey Canada must demonstrate awareness and support for the application, spirit and the respect of the playing rules. Under the current environment of COVID-19, it is vital that all Members recognize the importance of a safe playing environment. We must continue to promote and educate respect and safety in the game for all participants.

If you have any questions regarding the standard of play or Points of Focus for this season, please contact your Member Referee-in-Chief for further clarification.