



SURVEY RESULTS: REFEREES ARE CALLING THE SLEW FOOT PENALTY

Last fall, as thousands of hockey officials from coast to coast recertified for the upcoming season, they discovered that Hockey Canada had a big surprise for them.

This season, there was a special bulletin announcing that new penalties would be assessed for Slew Footing. Under Rule 7.4 (b), any player guilty of a slew foot – tripping a player from behind by either kicking or dragging the skate or leg – would be dealt swift and severe justice.

If the offending player was standing still, officials were asked to assess a 2+2+GM. If the offending player was in motion when he or she kicked an opponent's skates, or there was a deliberate intent to injury or deliberate injury, officials were asked to assess a Match.

In the motion approving the new penalties, Hockey Canada said it was necessary to ensure players' safety, particularly to prevent head injuries. "We must eradicate dangerous and unprovoked gestures from the game," the board of Hockey Canada said in its decision.

Hockey Canada's decision to impose these new penalties makes Slew Footing among the most unique and severe rules in hockey.

Consider that Checking from Behind (CFB), another priority penalty for Hockey Canada, carries a 2+GM, a Major+GM or a Match. It is entirely left up to the official's discretion to determine the severity of the penalty, although any incidence of deliberate attempt to injure or deliberate injury would automatically carry a Match.

However, in Slew Footing, the rulebook now prescribes two distinct situations and the specific penalties to be assessed in each.

Officials may still assess a Match in any instance where a player appears to be trying to injure, or deliberately injures an opponent with a slew foot. However, the act itself does not have to be deliberate in order to receive the Match.

How has the rule been received by Hockey Winnipeg officials? A survey conducted by wpgrefs.com in November and December found that a clear majority sees the penalties as a positive change.

Respondents were asked to rate the new rule from 1 (an overreaction) to 5 (a good rule change). Of 28 responses, 16 officials

Rating From 1 (Overreaction) to 5 (A good Rule)



gave the new Slew Foot penalties a strong positive review (4 or 5). Only three officials ranked it as a total overreaction.

Still, a new rule is only as good as an official's willingness to apply it.

Respondents were also asked if they would assess the new penalties when they see a Slew Foot. An overwhelming majority of respondents (25) said they would apply the new penalties. Only one respondent said they would not apply the new penalties if they witness a Slew Foot; two others said they would "maybe" apply the new penalties.

"I have already called the penalty and I think it's a great change," said one respondent.

"I've seen too many kids seriously concussed and injured because of the slew foot," another commented on the survey.

Several respondents questioned whether enough had been done to inform coaches and players of the new rule. "Do the coaches know this rule?" one official asked. "Cause they sure act surprised when it's called."

Statistics from Hockey Winnipeg collected from September 2016 to the third week of January seem to mirror the survey results, and show that local officials have been diligent in applying the new Slew Foot penalties to all levels of hockey.

During that period, HW recorded a total of 33 slew foot penalties. Other findings from the statistics include:

- 19 calls resulted in 2+2+GM; and 14 involved a Match.
- There were 7 slew foot penalties called at the AAA level, 12 in AA and 14 in A (A1-A3)
- By age, Minor Midget/Midget players (AAA City Midget/AA/A1/A2)) generated the most slew foot penalties (18). Minor Bantam/Bantam1+2 were next, (9) followed by Peewee/Minor Peewee (5). One call was made in female hockey, and none at Atom and below.
- 25 different HW officials assessed slew foot penalties; one referee was responsible for three separate calls; seven other officials assessed two each.

Mike Fedak, Hockey Winnipeg's vice president of officials, said he was encouraged by the survey results, which seem to show that local officials are taking the new penalties seriously and doing their jobs when it comes to applying it in game situations.

"Slew footing is dangerous play and I am encouraged to see that of 28 respondents to this survey, only one stated that they would not call it and two stated they may call it," Fedak said. "The other 25 stated they would call the rule as written. I encourage all officials to continue to consistently call this new rule so that we can discourage this extremely dangerous play."

Fedak added that linesman should be reminded that they can report a Slew Foot to the referee under rule 5.3d, for infraction that calls for a Major or Match penalty or any conduct calling for a bench minor, misconduct, game misconduct, or gross misconduct penalty.