



HOCKEY CANADA OFFICIATING PROGRAM

CHANGES TO PUBLISHED OFFICIATING PROCEDURES



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INTRODUCTION

Normally, changes to Hockey Canada's officiating procedures take a long time to develop and publish. During the summer of 2010, Hockey Canada elected a new national Referee-in-Chief and officially recognized the Two Referee-One Linesman officiating system. These events were the catalyst for a departure from the normal way of instituting change.

Dozens of technical experts representing every Branch in Hockey Canada convened in Ottawa in July 2010 with the objective of establishing officiating procedures that were practical and, to the maximum extent possible, consistently applied in every recognized officiating system. The work of the technical experts was reviewed by the Branch referee-in-chiefs within days and shortly thereafter, on 11 August 2010, an official announcement of officiating procedure changes was released by Hockey Canada. The changes were effective at the start of the 2010-2011 season.

The purpose of this article is to present, explain and rationalize the officiating procedure changes so that all officials, supervisors of officials and HCOP instructors can fully understand and correctly implement them immediately after studying this document. Where there is a discrepancy between what is published in the Hockey Canada Officiating Manual and this article, the procedure stated in this article takes precedence.

OFFICIATING SYSTEMS

There are now five recognized officiating systems. They are the:

1. Traditional Three Officials System (one referee – two linesmen)
2. Two Officials System (two persons perform the duties of a referee and linesmen)
3. Four Officials System (two referees & two linesmen)
4. One Referee-One Linesman System (considered to be used in emergency situations only)
5. Two Referee-One Linesman System (officially recognized in May 2010)

PUCK RETRIEVAL

This section discusses the puck retrieval procedure used in the traditional *Three Officials System*. The purpose of changes to the previous procedure is to increase the amount of time that at least one linesman is physically engaged in using "presence" to control player behaviour during stoppages and to bring HCOP procedures more in line with those practiced by the IIHF.

As play is stopped linesmen must not concern themselves with retrieving the puck until the real risk of a gathering or incident occurring subsides. When it is time to retrieve the puck, one linesman will get the puck while the other monitors the players on the ice and uses "intelligent positioning" and "presence" to influence their behaviour.

The standard puck retrieval procedure is:

- **If play is stopped by the Referee:** The linesman responsible for the end of the rink in which the puck is located when play is stopped will normally retrieve the puck (see Figure 1 on next page), and
- **If play is stopped by a Linesman:** The linesman that blows the whistle to stop play will normally retrieve the puck (see Figure 2 on the next page).

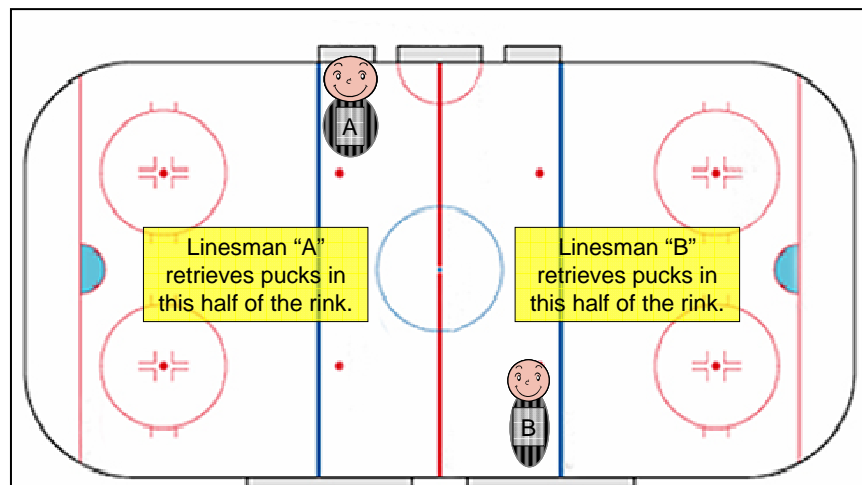


FIGURE 1 PUCK RETRIEVAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN REFEREE STOPS PLAY

In all cases, if the puck is far from the linesman designated to retrieve the puck yet very near the other linesman it is acceptable and an example of good teamwork if the officials switch roles immediately. Any change in responsibilities must be communicated clearly and quickly to avoid confusion.

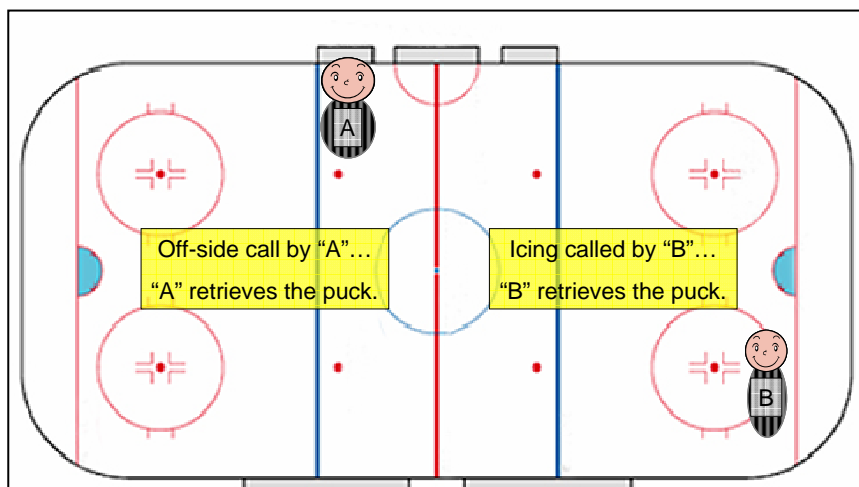


FIGURE 2 PUCK RETRIEVAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN LINESMEN STOP PLAY

When the *Two Officials System* is used the official that stops play is normally the one who retrieves the puck. Exceptions to this procedure are when a penalty is called and when a goal is scored.

The puck retrieval procedure almost completely eliminates the practice of having an official waiting at a face-off spot while a partner retrieves and hands-off the puck. Players must understand that although an official may not be physically at the location of the next face-off, they must head towards it and line-up without undue delay. Therefore, when play is stopped it is very important that the on-ice officials immediately determine then clearly communicate the location of the ensuing face-off to the players using a combination of signals,



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gestures and voice. All officials can help minimize delays by directing players to the face-off location when necessary.

FACE-OFFS

In the traditional *Three Officials System* the standard procedure is that face-offs not conducted by the Referee shall normally be conducted by the linesman who actually retrieved the puck. "**Fetch and face-off**" is a catchy phrase that summarizes the standard procedure. This "**Fetch & Face-Off**" procedure eliminates the need for linesmen to hand off the puck to each other and will often result in the officials swapping "ends". For this reason there is no requirement for linesmen to change ends at the first penalty-free stoppage of play past the half-way point in a game.

For face-offs in the neutral zone the linesmen should be positioned directly across the ice from each other. When the puck drops, the **free** linesman (i.e., the linesman NOT conducting the face-off) will cover the nearest blue line until the linesman dropping the puck accepts responsibility for that line using the standard release signal (which involves eye contact and a head nod). If the play breaks towards the far blue line the free linesman will move with the play and take responsibility for that blue line and that end of the rink until the next stoppage of play.

For face-offs in the end zone the **back** linesman should be positioned just outside the blue line. When the puck drops, the linesman dropping the puck will normally reposition just outside the near blue line and will accept responsibility for that line from the other linesman using the standard "release" signal. When release occurs the **back** linesman will move away from the blue line to a location half way between the blue line and the centre red line. If, however, the play exits the end zone and heads towards the far blue line, the linesman in the neutral zone (the same official we labeled as the **back** linesman) will automatically go with the play.

When the *Two Officials System* is in use, the official that retrieved the puck will conduct the face-off. For neutral zone face-offs, the officials should be positioned directly across the ice from each other. When the puck is dropped, the **free official goes** with the play.

The stance used while dropping the puck has not changed. The expectation is that officials will stand erect with feet shoulder width apart, hold the puck near the body at waist height, and drop the puck using an out-then-down motion. Officials should not crouch, lean into the face-off or "present" the puck by holding it away from the body prior to the drop.

LINE CHANGE PROCEDURE

Officials will commence this procedure as soon as it is safe to do so. There is no change to the allowable times and there is no change to who performs the line change procedure when the traditional *Three Officials System* is used. However, when the *Two Officials System* is used the line change procedure will be done by the official not dropping the puck - This is a significant change in practice.

It is important that officials establish a clear sightline to the coaches while conducting the line change procedure. To aid team officials in locating the official responsible for conducting the line change procedure two general areas have been designated as the place where officials will position themselves to conduct the line change procedure.

When the *Three Officials System* is used and the face-off is in the end zone, the Referee will conduct the line change procedure while standing within the end zone face-off circle across the rink from the actual face-off location. When the line change procedure is complete the Referee then repositions to *Half Piston* for the face-off. For neutral zone face-offs in the *Three Officials System* the Referee will conduct the line change

procedure while located within the designated neutral zone area shown in Figure 3. The Referee's actual position within this area will be influenced by the location of the player's benches and the location of the ensuing face-off. When the line change procedure is complete the Referee repositions to the standard position about 1.5 metres (5 feet) inside the end zone and 1.5 – 3 metres (5-10 feet) out from the boards.

When the *Two Officials System* is used the line change procedure is always conducted by the official not retrieving/dropping the puck and this official will conduct the procedure while standing in the designated neutral zone area shown in Figure 3.

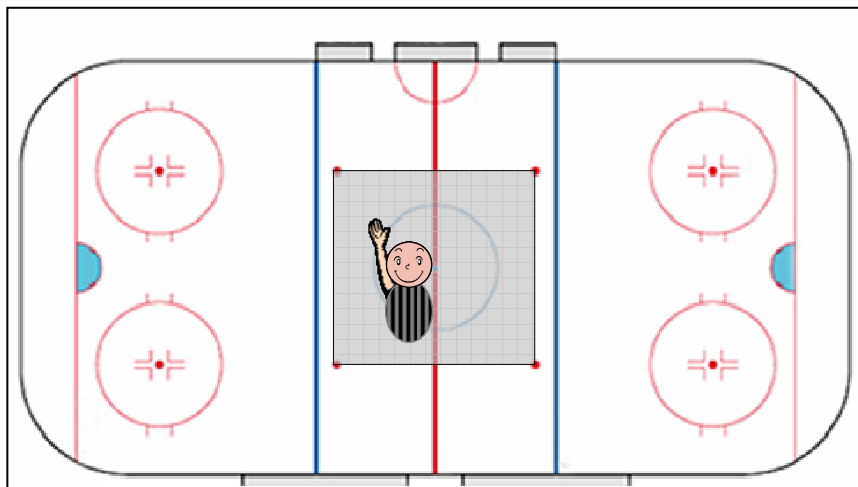


FIGURE 3. NEUTRAL ZONE POSITIONING WHILE CONDUCTING THE LINE CHANGE PROCEDURE

ICING PROCEDURE

One small but significant change to the icing procedure has been adopted. This change brings the icing procedure in line with that used by the IIHF. It also works well in the new *Two Referee - One Linesman System*, where the front referee is the official actually making the icing call.

When a potential icing situation exists the back linesman (or back official if the *Two Officials System* is in use) shall signal this by raising either arm vertically in the air. In the event that icing occurs, the front linesman (or front official in the *Two Officials System*) will blow his whistle immediately, pause for a second then point back towards the next face-off location.

The front linesman/official will NOT raise their arm to indicate icing. Linesmen/officials making an icing call must also use good verbal communication to ensure the call is understood and to assist the players and other officials determine the location of the ensuing face-off.

PENALTY CALLING PROCEDURE

The currently published penalty calling procedure has been modified only slightly. There is no change to the initial part of the procedure during which the penalty is assessed to the player.

While enroute to and from the penalty box, officials must adjust their route and timing to keep all players in view and to avoid merging with penalized players. Skating backwards is not mandatory – Keeping players in sight is the primary objective.

Stopping near the penalty box to report penalties is now the routine. Notwithstanding this change, it is still imperative that the Referee avoid merging with penalized players. This will require excellent anticipation and timing throughout the penalty calling procedure. Additionally, if the Timekeeper is extremely competent and the penalty situation is simple, it is permissible to report penalties without stopping. Officials reporting penalties without stopping are expected to at least “tag” the edge of the referee’s crease.

END ZONE POSITIONING

The **Piston System** has been modified to expand the manoeuvring boundaries to allow officials to react more appropriately to “cycling” systems now commonly in use. The three landmarks (**Home Base**, **Half Piston** and **At-The-Net**) and their location on the rink are unchanged. The requirement to move between those landmarks using a piston-like action in response to the location of the play/puck remains in effect. Officials will still **Bump** when required and will use a **Pivot Turn** to return to *Home Base*.

The end zone manoeuvring area is now described as the **End Zone Cone** (see the shaded area in Figure 4). The **End Zone Cone** simply establishes the limits to which an official may **Bump** before performing a **Pivot Turn** to return to *Home Base*. The bump limits are the hash marks along the side boards, and the point where the corner and the end boards meet behind the goal line. Officials should bump away from *Home Base* as necessary to avoid interfering with the play but and reposition to *Home Base* as using a pivot turn as soon as the area at *Home Base* is clear. Officials must not “post up” or stand still near the edges of the **End Zone Cone**.

Abandoning the *Piston System* and exiting the **End Zone Cone** to cross behind the goal to the other side of the rink while play is in progress is not normal and should not occur except in the most unusual of circumstances.

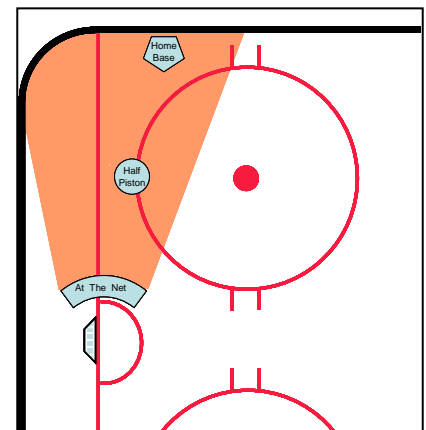


FIGURE 4. PISTON SYSTEM LANDMARKS AND THE **END ZONE CONE**

MISCELLANEOUS

Officials are to check the nets to ensure they are properly moored and in good repair, and to ensure that there are no loose objects (such as pucks!) in them at beginning of each period. The ice around the goal is also checked to ensure that it is in good condition and free of snow which could interfere with the puck.

During a penalty shot, the back Linesman (and back Referee if applicable) is to remain in place in the neutral zone and shall not follow the shooter into the end zone.



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SUMMARY

1. Many changes to Hockey Canada officiating procedures were approved in the summer of 2010.
2. Officials are to implement these changes immediately.
3. Puck Retrieval Procedure:
 - a. In the traditional *Three Officials System*:
 - i. If play is stopped by the Referee: The linesman responsible for the end of the rink in which the puck is located will normally retrieve the puck,
 - ii. If play is stopped by a linesman: The linesman that blows the whistle to stop play will normally retrieve the puck,
 - iii. The linesman not retrieving the puck uses intelligent positioning and physical (and verbal) presence to influence player behaviour during stoppages,
 - iv. *“Fetch and Face-Off”*: The linesman that retrieves the puck will normally conduct the face-off,
 - v. Puck retrieval and “presence” responsibilities can be switched if it makes sense to do so and the switch can be made swiftly without confusion,
 - vi. Linesmen dropping the puck in the end zone will normally take control of the adjacent blue line using the standard “release” signals, and
 - vii. Swapping of “ends” by the linesmen is normal and will occur continuously.
 - b. In the *Two Officials System*:
 - i. *“Fetch and Face-Off”*: The official that stops the play will normally retrieve the puck and conduct the face-off, and
 - ii. The line change procedure is always performed in the neutral zone by the official not dropping the puck.
4. Face-off stance: As per HCOP officiating manual – Stand erect. Do not crouch; do not “present” the puck.
5. The back linesman signals potential icing using either arm. The front linesman does not put his arm up after blowing the whistle when calling icing.
6. Skating backwards towards the penalty box to report penalties is not mandatory. Stopping to report penalties is the routine. If a stop is not made, “tag” the referee’s crease while skating past the timekeeper.
7. The end zone positioning landmarks and the piston action required in relation to the play remain unchanged. The *“End Zone Cone”* describes a new bump limit and offers officials more room to manoeuvre. Officials are expected to return to Home Base as soon as possible. Crossing behind the goal to the other side of the ice is not a normal reaction to the play in the end zone and it should occur rarely, if ever.

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