



Rules of Hockey 2015 – Adjustment to Rule 13.2

Summary: -

The Rules Committee has received feedback from TDs, Coaches and Athletes that the changes in recent years to the Rules are working well, but that the taking of attacking Free Hits within 5 metres of the circle requires some clarification to ensure safety and fair play.

The specific issue relates to Free Hits within 5 metres of the circle edge, where an attacker just touches the ball for another attacker to run onto or alternatively hit the ball hard, and possibly dangerously, into the circle.

The proposed adjustment is not seen as a major variance to the Rule, but a sensible clarification to avoid unfair and potentially dangerous play for all attacking Free Hits within the 23 metres area.

Specifically, the adjustment to the existing Rule and its guidance are as follows: -

- At an attacking Free Hit within the 23 metres area, the ball now cannot be played into the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres or been touched by a defending player i.e. the possibility for the attacker to just touch the free hit for a team mate to run on to and play the ball into the circle is removed
- There is one additional piece of guidance added that *Following a time stoppage after the award of an attacking free hit inside the 23 metres area, upon the re-start all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball*

Other than the above, the Rule and its interpretation remains exactly the same as at present. The opportunity has been taken to incorporate into the Rule the guidance that was previously separately issued in May 2015.

Rule 13.2 is now as follows (all adjustments and guidance additions are indicated by a line in the left hand margin): -

13.2 Procedures for taking a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field :

All parts of this Rule apply as appropriate to a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field.

a the ball must be stationary

b opponents must be at least 5 metres from the ball

If an opponent is within 5 metres of the ball, they must not interfere with the taking of the free hit or must not play or attempt to play the ball. If this player is not playing the ball, attempting to play the ball or influencing play, the free hit need not be delayed.

c when a free hit is awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball, except as specifically indicated below for attacking free hits awarded within 5 metres of the circle

d the ball is moved using a hit, push, flick or scoop

e the ball may be raised immediately using a push, flick or scoop but must not be raised intentionally using a hit

f from a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of the defending team

If the player taking the free hit continues to play the ball (ie no defending player has yet touched it) :

- that player may play the ball any number of times, but*
- the ball must travel at least 5 metres, before*
- that player plays the ball into the circle by hitting or pushing the ball again.*

Alternatively :

- after a defending player has touched the ball, it can be played into the circle by any other player including the player who took the free hit.*

At an attacking free hit awarded within 5 metres of the circle, the ball cannot enter the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres or it has been touched by a defending player. On this basis, defenders who are inside the circle within 5 metres of the free hit are therefore not interfering with play and may also shadow around the inside of the circle a player who takes a self-pass, provided that they do not play or attempt to play the ball or influence play until it has either travelled at least 5 metres or alternatively has been touched by a defending player who can legitimately play the ball.

Players inside or outside the circle who were 5 metres or more from the point of the free hit at its award are not allowed to move to and then remain in a stationary position within 5 metres of the ball as the free hit is taken.

Other than indicated above, any playing of the ball, attempting to play the ball or interference by a defender or an attacker who was not 5 metres from the ball, should be penalised accordingly.

Following a time stoppage after the award of an attacking free hit inside the 23 metres area, upon the re-start all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball.

It is permitted to play the ball high above the attacking circle so that it lands outside the circle subject to Rules related to dangerous play and that the ball is not legitimately playable inside or above the circle by another player during its flight.

Implementation:

The above adjustment to Rule 13.2 and its guidance applies with immediate effect to International Hockey, in particular giving teams who are preparing for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro maximum time to adjust to the change.

As is normal, National Associations are able to decide upon the date for the adoption of this Rule adjustment, according to the dates of their Outdoor seasons.