



ULTIMATE HOCKEY GAME MANUAL

SMALL ICE

Small Ice games, simply defined are technical and game-like competitive drills that use a playing surface that has been reduced in size and allows players to practice their hockey skills.

Small Ice Hockey has been around for as long as the game has been played. When players played on a pond did they use an ice surface 60 × 30 meters? No, they played in a small area that developed and sharpened their skills without the rules of off-sides, icing, penalties, face-offs, etc. Somehow coaches have moved away from this idea of practicing and playing in an environment with little control or structure, to one with greater control.

Many of the greatest hockey players to ever play the game will attribute their success to growing up playing on the ponds and not in highly controlled practices!

When the playing surface is reduced in size, young players are being correctly prepared for the speed and quickness they will encounter as they grow older. Can you imagine a child eight and under playing basketball using a ten-foot basket? Small Ice develops a positive environment, increases puck handling, and teaches puck protection by forcing players to play in smaller, confined areas.



SMALL ICE

This Game Manual outlines mandatory operational responsibilities and procedures for the 2026 ULTIMATE HOCKEY competitions implemented by our Member National Associations.

It focuses on how national ULTIMATE HOCKEY events shall be organized in each venue and contains information regarding the principles behind the ULTIMATE HOCKEY Sport and Event Regulations, the facilities requirements, the marketing implications and the working procedures for all games.

This manual is also designed for future leagues, clubs, organizers and teams participating in an ULTIMATE HOCKEY event on a national level to guarantee a common understanding on the implementation of the sport.

No part of this manual shall be reproduced or transmitted without the prior written permission of the IIHF 3x3 Office. Please direct any questions about the use of this ULTIMATE HOCKEY Game Manual to the IIHF 3x3 Office.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

GAME FORMAT

PLAYING FIELD

RULES 3X3 SPECIFIC

GAME OFFICIALS



GAME FORMAT





GAME TIME

- The total active game time is set to be 24min.
- The game time is divided into 2 halftimes of 12 minutes each.
- Between the first and the second halftime a 3-minute intermission will be carried out with dry cleaning by the snow team. Teams keep their sides – no changes for indoor games. For outdoor games, a side change is mandatory.
- At 00:15 seconds left; teams line up for face-off.

TEAM COMPOSITION

The teams consist of a maximum of;

- **Twelve** (12) skaters
- **Two** (2) goalkeepers
- **Four** (4) team officials
- And with a minimum of **nine** (9) skaters, **one** (1) goalkeeper and **two** (2) team officials to be able to start the game.



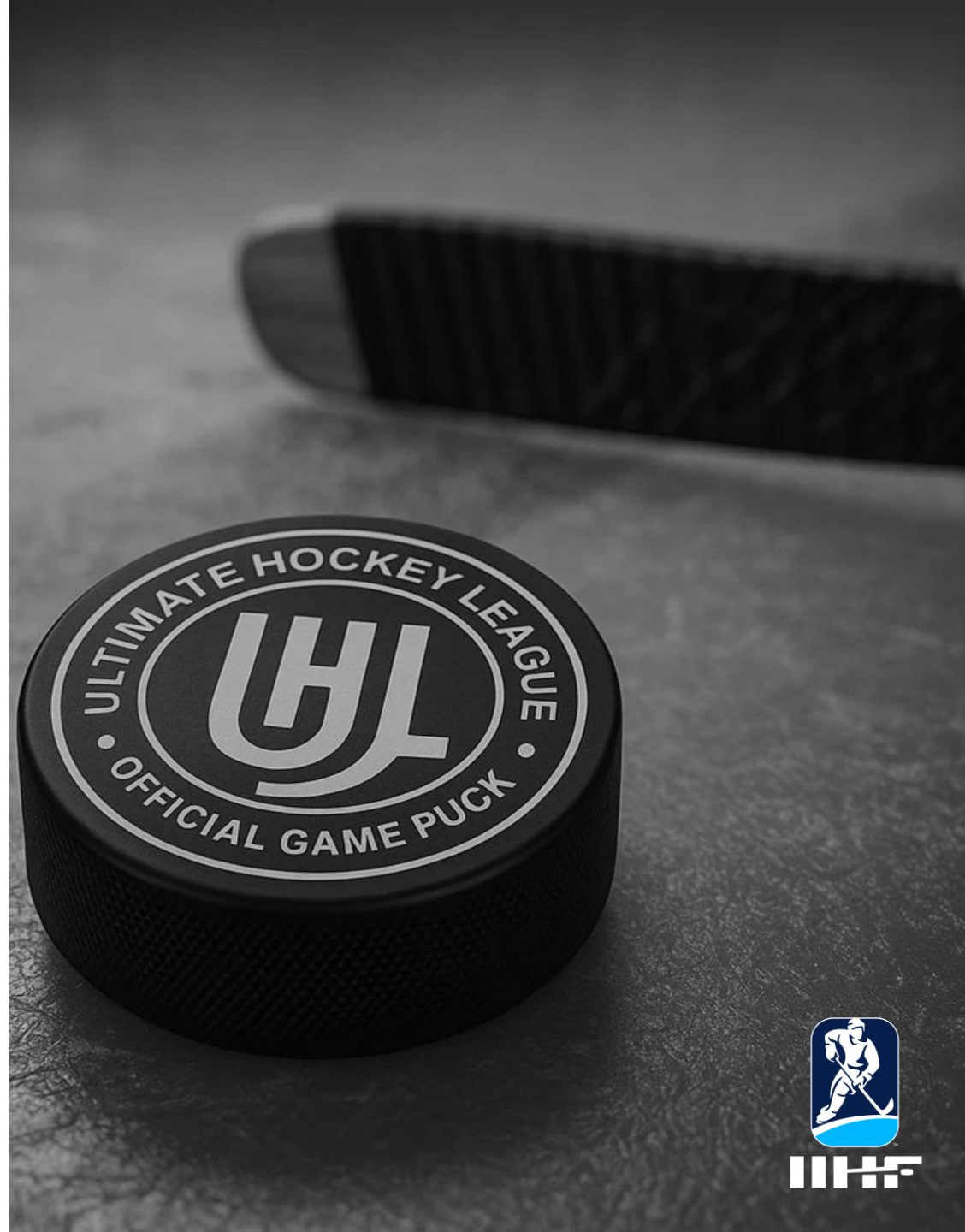
PLAYING FIELD



PLAYING FIELD & EQUIPMENT

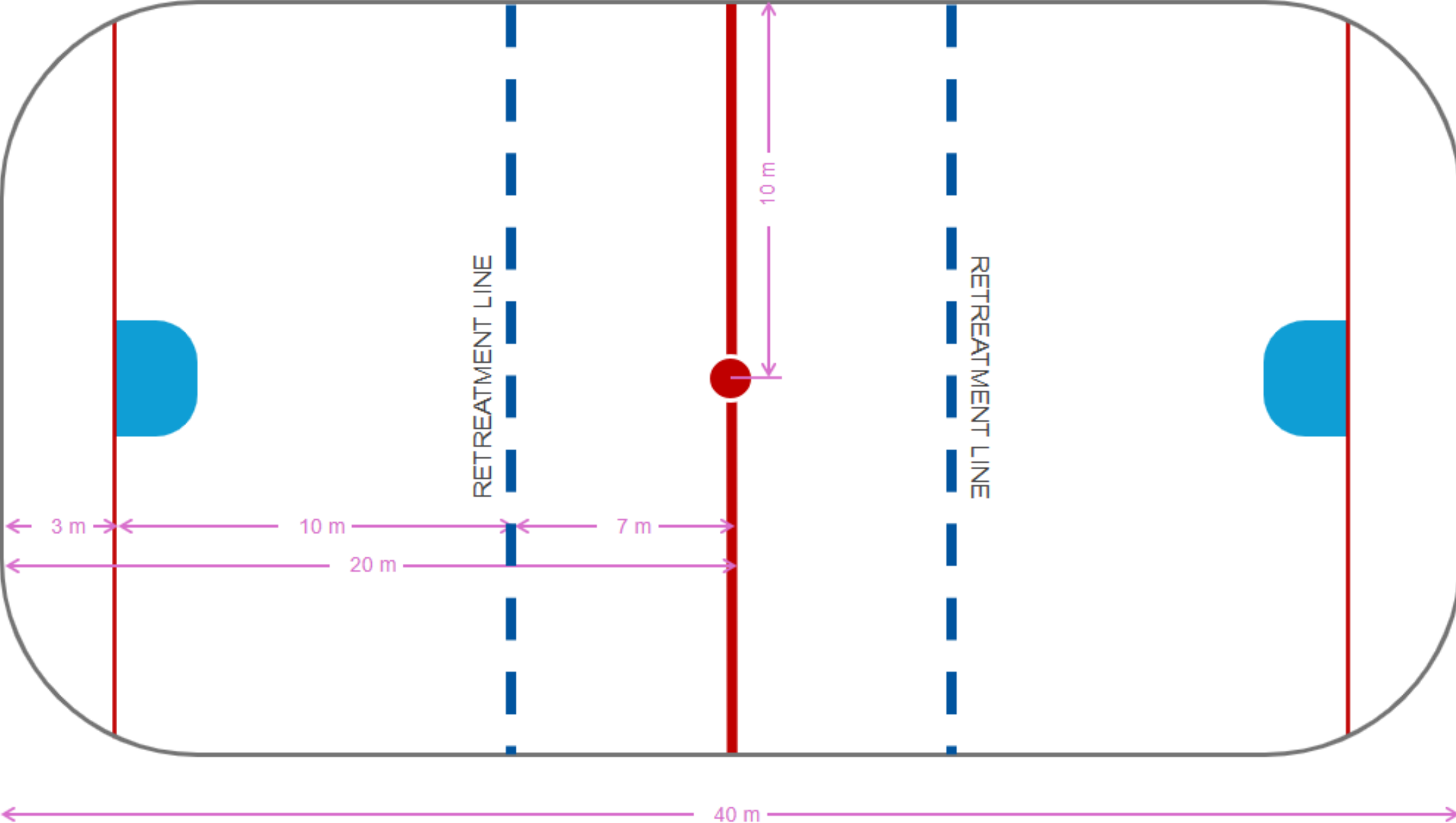
The playing field is consisting of two (2) endzones, two (2) retreatment lines, one (1) face-off center circle and has the minimum dimensions of 17x34 meter or up to a maximum of 25x45 meter.

The Goal nets being used is of IIHF standard and will have a painted goal crease to be used as per IIHF playing rules.



IIHF

SMALL ICE 40x20m



RULES – 3X3 SPECIFIC





BODY CONTACT

Physical contact, so called open-ice hits and hits along the boards are not allowed. However, competitive contact to win the puck is allowed between the players.



FACE-OFFS

Only applies when,

- at the beginning of a halftime;
- if the puck is out of the field of play; and
- if another extraordinary reason forces the game official to stop the game.



FACE-OFFS

Opening face-offs are conducted at the center ice face-off spot.

Players are allowed to freely choose where they position themselves but must be outside of the center ice face-off spot.

Players participating in the face-off shall follow the outlined procedure for participating in the face-off according to the IIHF Rule Book.

Any violation of the playing rule concerning the face-off procedure will give the team a warning followed by a bench minor penalty if repeated in the same situation.



GOALKEEPER FREEZING THE PUCK

If a goalkeeper freezes the puck, the game official shall blow the whistle if the goalkeeper is not immediately starting the play.

The attacking team must retreat, meaning that all attacking players must be in a motion, with reasonable effort to cross the retreatment line and remain in the neutral zone becoming the defending team. The goalkeeper then must immediately release the puck and move it to a team member.

Goalkeeper are allowed to stop and play the puck in its own zone but limited until the retreatment line within the own zone.



GOALKEEPER FREEZING THE PUCK

The attacking players can forecheck:

- when a skater of the opponent is in possession of the puck;
- if the goalkeeper initiates a pass, allowing an interception; or
- in case the goalkeeper is moving forward, stickhandling the puck.

If the goalkeeper is not putting enough reasonable effort to promptly put the puck back to play, a minor penalty is called. If for a reason the goalkeeper cannot get out the puck by itself, the game officials must help accordingly and in a fast manner placing the puck in the goal crease.



OFFSIDE AND ICING

- The offside rule is not applicable throughout all events.
- Intentional icing is a penalty and results in a penalty shot. In other words, an attempt at a real hockey play that misses are accepted.
- Hybrid icing rule is applicable.



NO RETURN RULE

- If a player from the offensive team skates out of the offensive zone with the puck, passes or play the puck across the center ice red line without any interference from the other team, that is a turnover, and the respective team must immediately consign the puck to the other team and are able to attack once the puck is in full possession and in control of the puck by the opposing team.
- This rule also applies to any attacking player within playing distance of the puck who deliberately refrains from playing it and chose to allow the puck to exit the offensive zone.



PENALTIES – CALLING A PENALTY

- As the game officials identifies infractions according the IIHF Rulebook, they will blow the whistle immediately, or after the imminent scoring chance has ended, point at the fouling player and show the official infraction signal.
- Each penalty should be booked on the player conducting the foul.
- The player does not serve any time for the penalty being called. Instead, a penalty shot is given to the non-offending team.



PENALTIES – CALLING A PENALTY

- The game official must **stop the play immediately, or after imminent scoring chance has ended**, and collect the puck when a penalty has occurred regardless of who is having possession of the puck.
- The game clock stops once the game official has stopped the play and will be activated again once the game official releases the penalty shot attempt.
- The game official should position the puck on the center ice face-off spot, and the penalty shot is taken by the fouled player if the player is not deemed injured.
- The Penalty shoot follows the outlined procedure rule 6.6.3 (IIHF Rule Book).



MINOR PENALTY

For infractions falling under the category of the Minor penalty in the IIHF Rule Book, the game official will reward the non-offending team a penalty shot. The game time will be stopped for an infraction of a minor penalty.

If several minor penalties are committed in the same situation by the same team, then the team shall be awarded the number of penalty shots equal to the number of minor penalties.

If, in one situation, the same number of minor penalties are called on both teams, then the game officials should remove the same number of penalties against each other.



MINOR PENALTY

EXAMPLE 1

A player is tripping an opponent, and the GO is blowing the whistle to stop the play. As the GO is blowing the whistle a teammate in the same team is slashing an opponent.

In this situation will the non fouling team be awarded 2 penalty shoots. After the conclusion of the first shoot, the GO will retrieve the puck and put it back on the center ice before the second penalty shoot is concluded according to rule 6.6.3.



MINOR PENALTY

EXAMPLE 2

A player is slashing the opponent over the hands and the GO is blowing the whistle to indicate a penalty. As the GO pick-ups the puck the opponent uses the glove to punch the opponent. The GO blows the whistle and indicates a penalty on the other player.

No penalty shoot is conducted and a face off is made on the center face off spot.



MAJOR PENALTY

When a major penalty is called in accordance with the IIHF Rule Book the following process is taking place;

1. The game flow stops immediately, and with that also the game clock.
2. The penalized player must leave the ice and go to the dressing room.
3. The non-offending team is awarded with three (3) consecutive penalty shots and can score up to three (3) goals. If no goal is scored or if the opposing team takes away the puck in a fair way, the attempt is invalid, and the procedure continues with the next try.



PENALTY SHOT PROCEDURE

Penalty shots are to be conducted as per the IIHF Rule Book for any infraction that is deemed worthy of a penalty as presented under minor and major penalty section.

Exception:

1. All players that will start up the game after the conclusion of the penalty shot will be positioned behind the goal line of the team who got awarded with the penalty shot. The goalkeeper of the awarded team must remain within the goal crease.



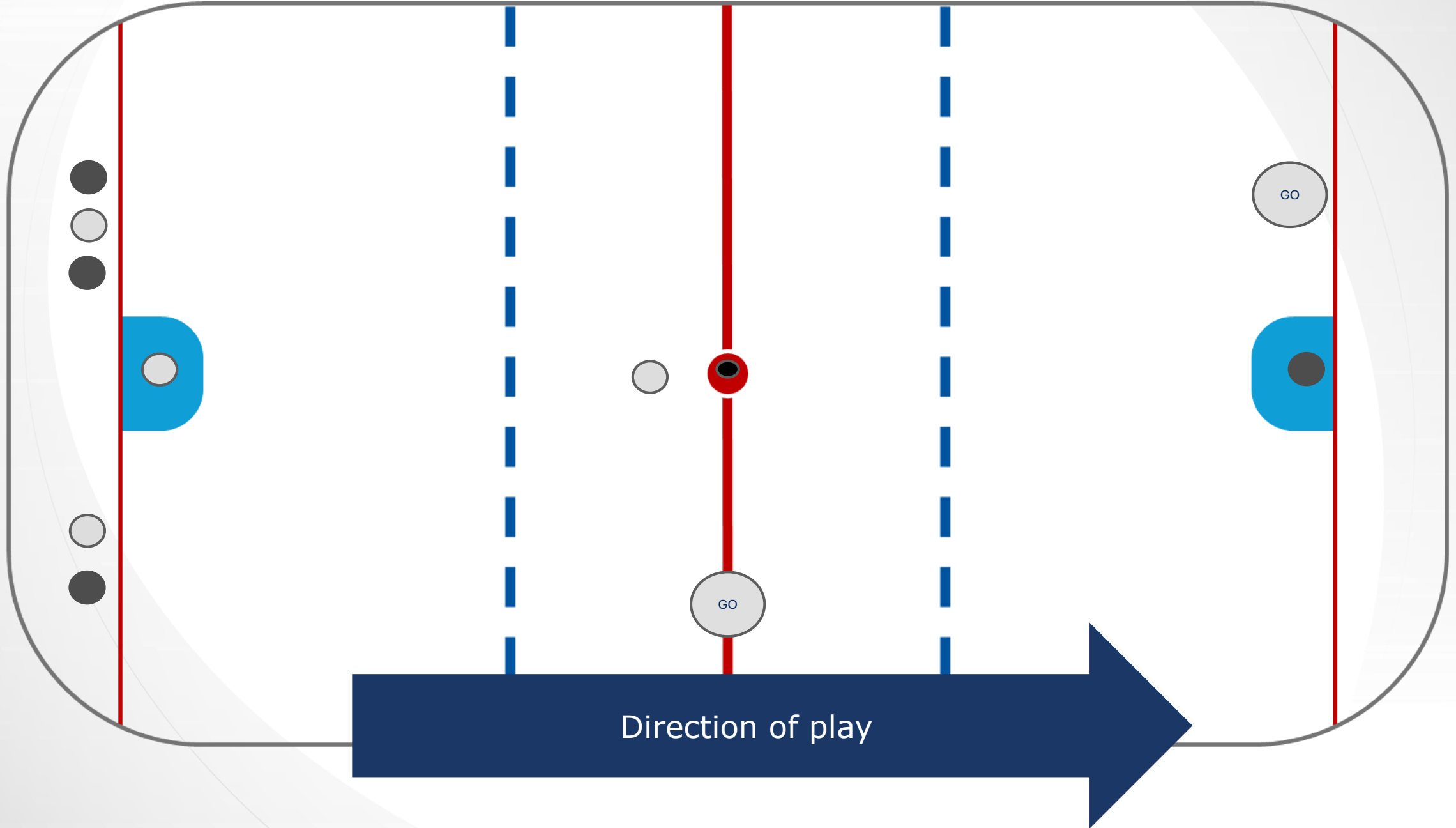
PENALTY SHOT PROCEDURE

Exception:

2. The penalty shot is started once the game official has blown the whistle. Skaters from both teams can follow the skater taking the penalty shot.
3. The following skaters are allowed to overtake and engage in any physical contact by stick or body with the player taking the penalty shot but in compliance with the IIHF Rule Book.
4. A skater taking the penalty can pass the puck to a teammate during the penalty shot.

PENALTY SHOT PROCEDURE

SHOT CLOCK



SHOT CLOCK



PENALTY SHOT PROCEDURE

- After the game has been stopped for a minor or major penalty infraction, no line changes are allowed, and players must line up as quickly as possible for the penalty shot procedure. Teams are allowed to change an injured player at the discretion of the referee or replace a player who has received a major penalty.
- If the skater scores a goal, the goalkeeper must release the puck as explained under *Goalkeeper freezing the puck* and the game continues.
- If the skater cannot score on the penalty shot, the game continues immediately.
- A skater taking the penalty shot can pass the puck to a teammate during the penalty shot.
- The free zone attempt is valid for this rule.





END OF THE GAME

POINT SYSTEM

The final team ranking is determined by points per halftime on the following basis (one-point system):

- **1 point** for the team who wins the halftime by the score;
- **1 point** for both teams if the score per halftime is tied;
- **1 point** for the team who wins the game;
- **1 point** for both teams in case of a tie after regular time;
- **3 points** maximum to win for both teams per game



OT & SHOOTOUT

OVERTIME

Only applicable after a tied game during Semi-Final and Medal Games.

A five (5) minute OT with three (3) skaters each will be played.

OT starts right after a one (1) minute break.

Ice will not be re-surfaced.

Teams remain on their sides and do not change end.



OT & SHOOTOUT

PENALTY-SHOT SHOOT-OUT

- Only applicable if OT is still tied.
- Procedure conducted as per the IIHF Rule Book.
- Three (3) skaters from each team will begin taking alternate shots.
- Players do not need to be named beforehand.
- Every player and goalkeeper eligible.
- If still tied, the procedure shall continue with a tiebreak shoot-out, using the same or new players.
- Ice will not be re-surfaced.



AWARDS

Fair Play Award

If a team receives no minor or major penalty during the game, such team will be awarded with an extra penalty shot at the end of the game. If both teams received no penalty, both teams will be awarded with an extra penalty shot.

Teams do not line up at the goal line for chasing the allocated player while performing.

The free zone attempt is valid for this rule.

If a tie or a win by scoring a penalty shot cannot be reached by a team, then the fair play penalty shot will not be executed.

If the attempt does not lead to a goal, then the game stops immediately.

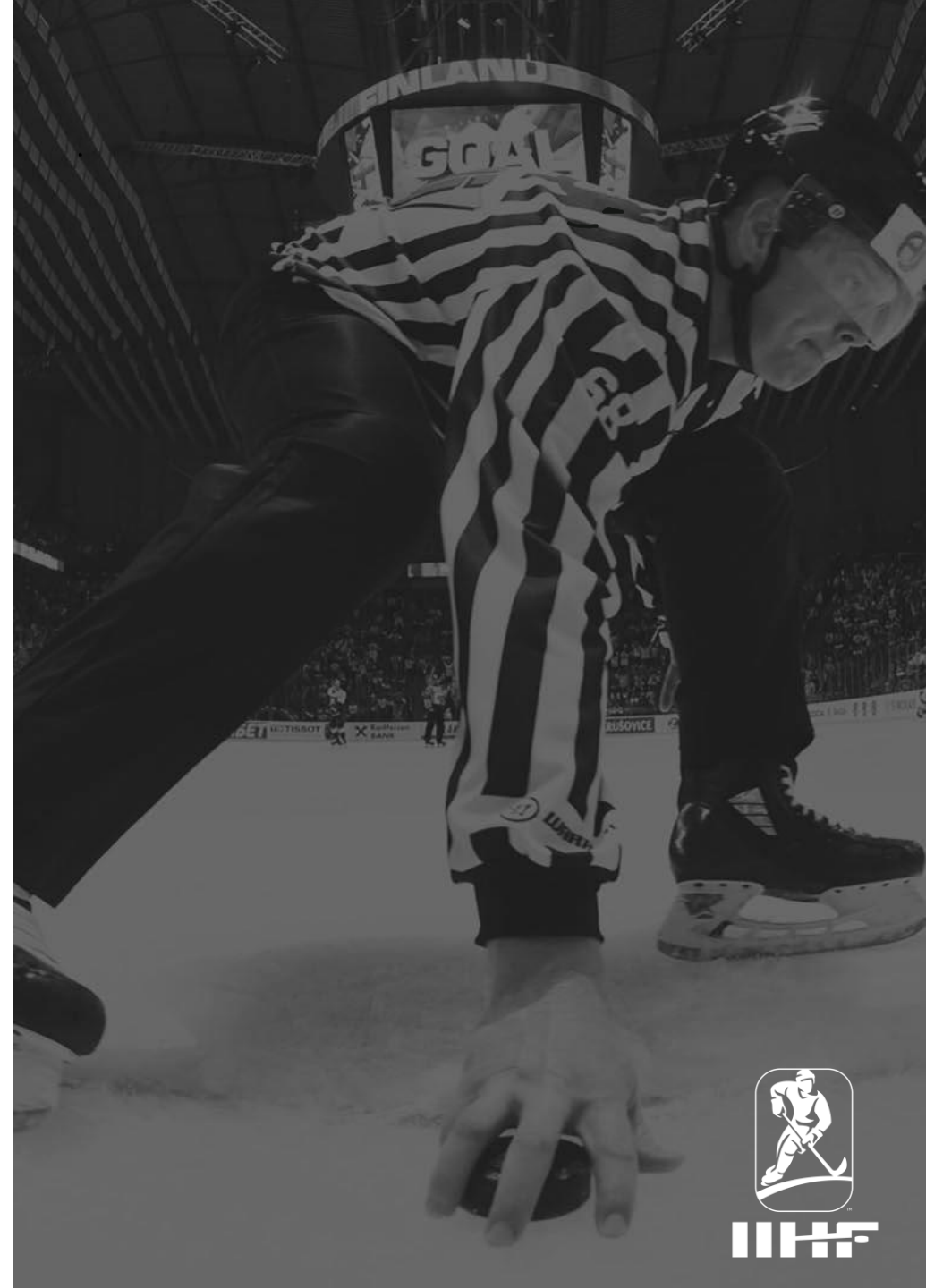
GAME OFFICIALS



GAME OFFICIALS

There are two (2) game officials in each game with equal responsibilities and duties to identify infractions or other rule related matters and following the outlined procedures. This is not limited to controlling the assessment of penalty calls, line changes and face-offs.

The game official determines when the puck has entered the goal in a legal way but is not reporting assists or goal scorer to the off-ice official. The official scorer and assist is determined by the off-ice statistics crew.



LET'S PLAY!



© 2025 International Ice Hockey Federation. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form or by any means including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or any other method without the prior written consent of the International Ice Hockey Federation. Unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this publication is prohibited and may constitute a violation of copyright law.

