

3x3 Ultimate Hockey

Rule Book

01/07/2026



3x3 Ice Hockey

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.

3x3 Ice Hockey

This Game Manual outlines mandatory operational responsibilities and procedures for the 2026 3x3 Ultimate Hockey competitions implemented by our Member National Associations, Leagues, Clubs and third parties.

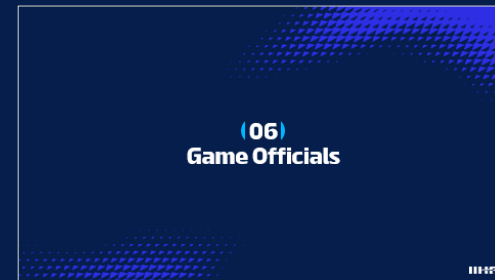
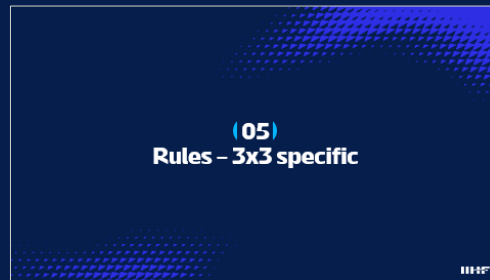
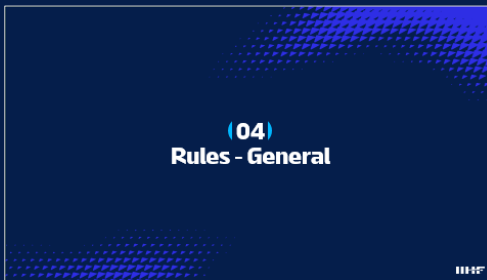
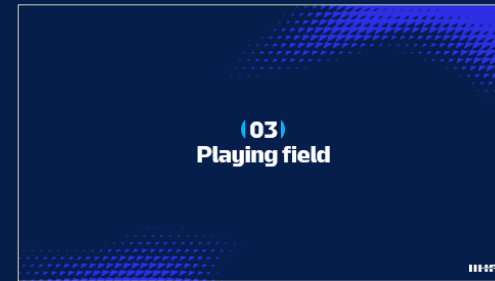
It focuses on how national 3x3 Ultimate Hockey events shall be organized in each venue and contains information regarding the principles behind the 3x3 Ultimate Hockey sport and eligibility regulations for all games.

This manual is also designed for future leagues, clubs, organizers and teams participating in an 3x3 Ultimate Hockey event on a national or international 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 Ultimate Hockey Office.

Please direct any questions about the use of this 3x3 Ultimate Hockey Game Manual to the Ultimate Hockey Office.

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Eligibility and MPS

Eligibility and MPS

Two basic requirements apply:

- Players must hold a valid passport of the country they wish to represent, issued by the competent authorities. Holding multiple passports does not affect eligibility.
- Players cannot have previously competed for another country's 3x3 team in an official UHL competition.

Although there are no further eligibility restrictions, the IIHF strongly recommends that Member National Associations focus on selecting players who have been developed locally. This approach aligns with the IIHF's broader goal of promoting the growth of the sport at the grassroots level and fostering the development of homegrown talent within each country. Encouraging local player development will contribute to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of 3x3 Ultimate Hockey competitions.



Eligibility and MPS

Player and Team Selection

The responsibility for selecting the players or teams that will represent each respective country in the UHL competitions lies with the IIHF Member National Associations. National Associations have full discretion in determining how their teams and how many teams will be selected and are free to decide on the criteria they wish to apply for player or team selection. However, the player grade for your team representation[s] should be at the professional and/or semi-professional level.

This gives each national association the flexibility to choose the best approach for selecting their representatives, ensuring the process reflects their unique priorities, player development programs, and competition structures. The IIHF encourages national associations to focus on fostering local player development and providing opportunities for a diverse range of participants.



Eligibility and MPS

Inclusion of Non-Licensed Players

Non-licensed players, such as those from university teams or other pathways [retirement], can also participate in the UHL competitions, provided they do so under the supervision of their respective MNA. This allows MNAs to engage a broader pool of talent and encourages participation from players who may not be involved in traditional or licensed leagues.

MNAs are allowed integrating publicly well known active or non-active players to act as the team captain / official ambassador for promotional purposes.



Eligibility and MPS

Minimum Age Requirements

The following players meet the minimum age requirements for participation in the UHL competitions taking place in the 2026 season:

- a) Players born on or before 31 December 2008 [no waiver needed].
- b) Players born between 01 January 2009 and 31 December 2010 may participate if they have a signed under-age waiver, as stipulated in Bylaw 10.6.2.



Eligibility and MPS

Maximum Age Requirements

The following players meet the maximum age requirements for participation in the UHL competitions taking place in the 2026 season:

- a) Players born on or after 01 January 2001 are eligible to participate without restrictions.
- b) Players born on or before 31 December 2000 may participate if they are among a maximum of three (3) players per team exceeding this age limit.



Eligibility and MPS

No Minimum Participation Standards (MPS) will be implemented for the 2026 season. This decision is made to allow broad participation, giving all teams the chance to compete and contribute their feedback on the competition format.

While there will be no MPS for the 2026 season, the IIHF will review the outcomes and consider introducing MPS for subsequent seasons. The goal will be to create a framework that promotes growth and ensures fair and competitive opportunities for all teams.





(02)

Game format



Game format

Overview

One game consists of the below procedures and is calculated to take no longer than 75 minutes for Group Stage Games and 90 minute for Playoff Games from the warm-up time in total. The teams and game officials are asked to respect the different aspects and the outlined schedule to keep each time within this time frame.

- Pre-Game
- Game Time
- Post-Game
- Ice Cleaning



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 of 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. Benches remain the same.

At 00:15 seconds left; teams line up for face-off.

Game format

Game clock

The clock runs down from 12:00 to 00:00. The game is played with no stoppage of time, except during the following scenarios:

- A major incident: could be an injury of a player that is not able to leave the ice.
- Minor or major penalty: From the moment the game official blows the whistle for the penalty until the game official blows the whistle to start the penalty shot procedure – or, in case of a major penalty, or after the third penalty shot has begun – the game clock must remain stopped; and
- Other: Puck out of play, broken glass or board or other.

The game shall not be stopped when the goal net comes out of position if the game officials or goalkeeper can place the net back in its original position in a timely manner. If this is not possible the game officials should stop the time, and the net shall be positioned accurately.



Game format

Post game

The post-game procedure is set to five [5] minutes and consists of:

- Players takes a position opposite of each other for a handout of the best player award [optional];
- The teams makes an athlete tribute after the game and shall after that proceed of the ice with the losing team leaving the ice first; and
- Anthem only be played after Gold Medal Game.



Game format

Post game

As the game is concluded through the Post-Game procedure there will be a 15-min. ice cleaning procedure in place.

All players shall leave the ice as the ice resurfacing machine is cleaning the ice in a timely manner for the upcoming game and the start of the Pre-Game procedure.



Game format

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.

(03)
Playing field

Playing field

Playing field and 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.

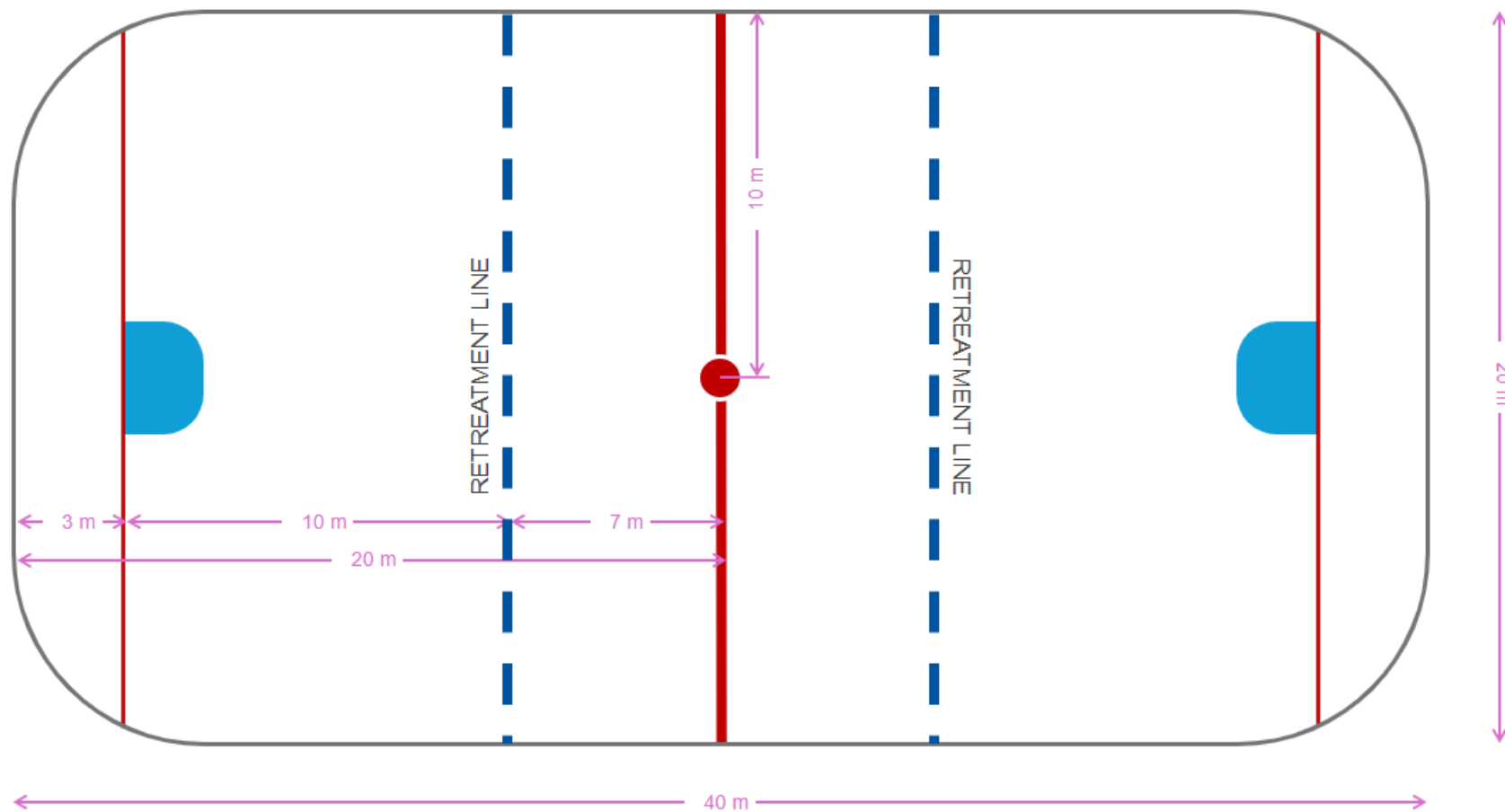
For the purposes of 3x3 hockey and the interpretation of the IIHF Rule Book, the surface shall be divided into two [2] equal halves by the centre red line.

The half of the surface in which a team is defending its own goal shall be considered its defending zone, while the opposite half shall be considered its attacking zone.

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



SMALL ICE 40x20m



Playing field

Player benches

During the games, including intermissions, only assigned team staff (maximum of four members) is allowed on the players' bench.



Playing field

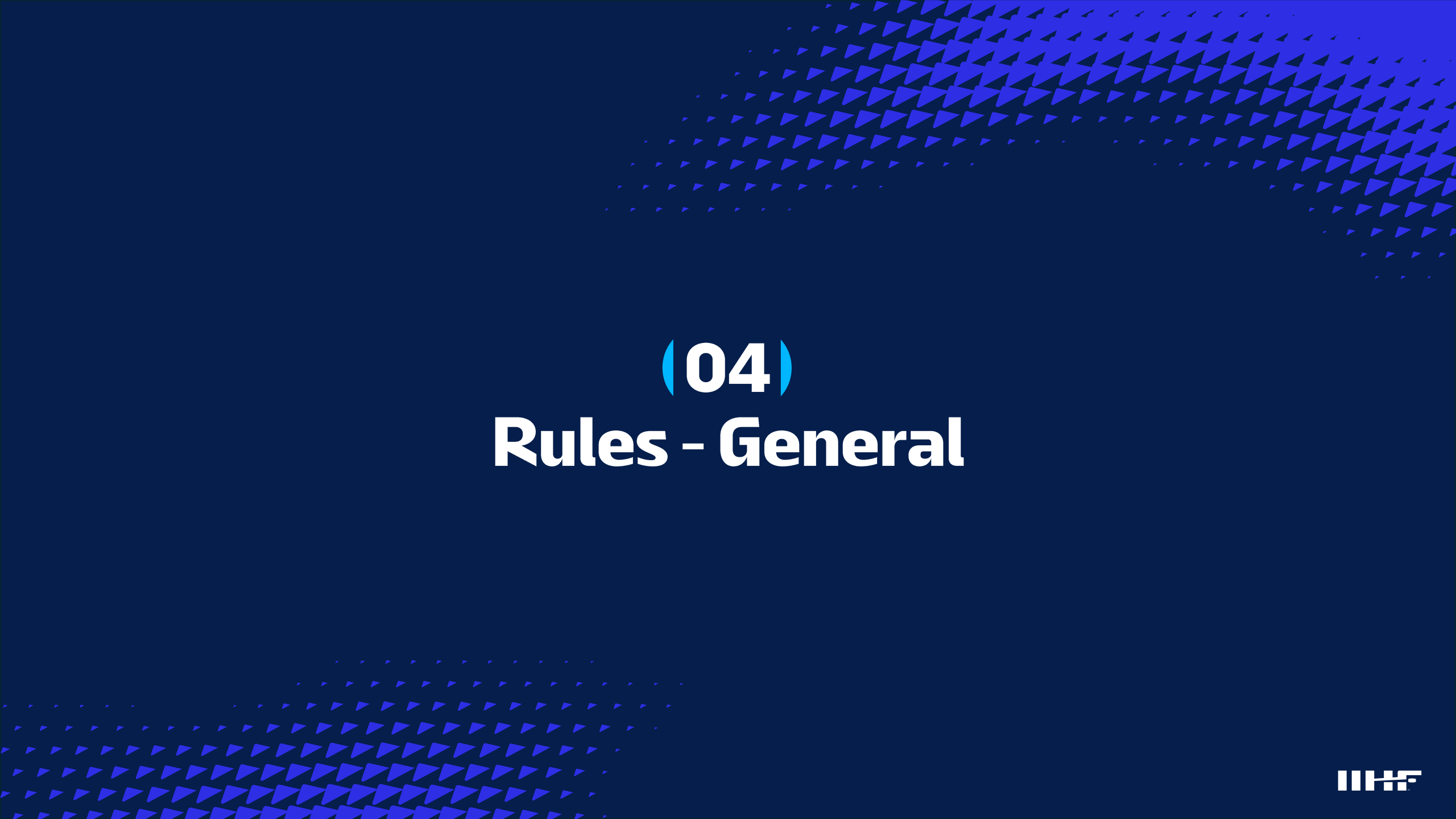
Scorekeeper area

For each game, a timekeeper should be assigned assuring an update of the playing time and the in-game score on the official score clock.

For each game, four [4] off-ice statistics staff should be assigned to collect the following statistics:

- the official score;
- goals and assists;
- shots on goal; and
- called penalties.





(04)

Rules - General



Rules - General

Infractions

The game is played with the full implementation of the IIHF playing rules in the categories of infractions.

Adjustments may be made regarding the implementation of the penalty minutes connected to the specific infractions.



Rules - General

Equipment

All skaters must follow the IIHF outlined playing rules for equipment including neck laceration protector.

U18 Goalkeepers are not allowed to wear a senior category face protector.

(05) Rules – 3x3 specific

Rules – 3x3 specific

Line changes - skaters

The players are free to change at their own discretion during the game.

The player entering the ice must wait until the teammate changing is within 3 meters from the board before the player can enter the changing zone. An infraction to the above-mentioned rules results in a minor penalty call.

In case of a stoppage in play and a face off to be conducted, both teams will have five [5] seconds to conclude the line change before the game officials drop the puck at the center face-off spot.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Goalkeeper change

The goalkeepers can change at any time during the game and being replaced only by another goalkeeper.

The changing zone within 3 meters from the board applies before the new goalie can enter the game.

In these line changes, the goalkeeper is not allowed to play the puck or physically be in contact with an opponent.

Coaches can change goalkeepers at their discretion if a goalkeeper gets injured, the game official will stop the game time, and the goalkeeper shall be replaced by the back-up goalkeeper.

If both goalkeepers of a team are injured during a game, one of the skaters of the team will dress as a goalkeeper and be given sufficient time to dress as a goalkeeper.



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 **along the board or in front of the goal** is allowed between the players.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Face-offs

All 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 are allowed to move around except the two players conducting the face-off.

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Goalkeeper freezing the puck

The attacking players can forecheck, when

- all of the defending players have tagged or are on the defending side of the retreat line at the same time;
- if the goalkeeper initiates a pass, allowing an interception; or
- in case the goalkeeper is moving forward, stickhandling the puck.

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Game flow

- Stoppage of play:
The play shall be deemed stopped when in the judgement of the game official, the goalkeeper has frozen the puck. Such stoppage may be indicated by the sounding of the whistle or when the official determines that the puck is no longer playable.
- Disallowed goals – following stoppage:
No goal shall be allowed if the puck enters the net after play has been deemed stopped by the game official, including instances where the goalkeeper is in the process of attempting to restart play.
- Restart of play:
Play shall be deemed restarted when the goalkeeper or an attacking player has established clear possession and control of the puck.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Delay of the game

If, in the judgment of the game official, a team deliberately delays the game by unnecessarily prolonging the retrieval of the puck from the goal net, or by a goalkeeper failing to play a puck that is reasonably playable, for the purpose of allowing additional time to expire from the game clock, the team shall receive a warning for Delay of Game.

Upon a second such violation by the same team during the game, a Delay of Game penalty shall be assessed.

If such an action occurs during the final one (1) minute of regulation time, no warning shall be issued, and a penalty shot shall immediately be awarded against the offending team.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.

The touch icing applies. Icing shall only be completed when a player of the defending team first touches the puck with their stick after the puck has crossed the goal line. If an attacking player first touches the puck, icing shall be waived off and play shall continue.

If, in the judgment of the game official, there is no possibility for the attacking team to reach the puck first and no competitive race for the puck exists, play shall be stopped immediately once the puck crosses the goal line.

If a goalkeeper makes a clear attempt to pass the puck and the pass is unsuccessful, no penalty shot shall be awarded. Play shall instead resume with possession awarded to the opposing Team.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

High-stick and Handpass

Players are permitted to make a hand pass within their own defending zone.

If a high-sticking the puck or hand pass infraction occurs, the offending team shall immediately lose possession of the puck upon the game official is signalling the infraction.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Penalties – Calling a penalty

As the game officials identify infractions in accordance with the IIHF Rule Book, they shall stop play immediately, or upon the completion of an imminent scoring opportunity, point to the offending player, and display the appropriate official signal for the infraction.

Following the stoppage of play, the game officials shall follow standard IIHF procedures by reporting to the scorekeeper's bench and clearly communicating the offending player, the infraction assessed, and the applicable penalty.

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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 in rule 6.6.3 [IIHF Rule Book].



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Major penalty

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

- The game flow stops immediately, and with that also the game clock;
- The penalized player must leave the ice and go to the dressing room; and
- 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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Major vs minor coincidental

Where coincidental penalties of different severity are assessed at the same stoppage, the higher penalty shall determine the number of penalty shots awarded as follows:

Minor Penalty = one [1] penalty shot

Major Penalty = three [3] penalty shots

In situations where a Major Penalty and a Minor Penalty are assessed coincidentally to opposing teams, the penalties shall cancel each other, and the team assessed the Major Penalty shall be awarded two [2] additional penalty shots.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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:

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.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Penalty Shot procedure

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.

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.

A skater taking the penalty can pass the puck to a teammate during the penalty shot.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.

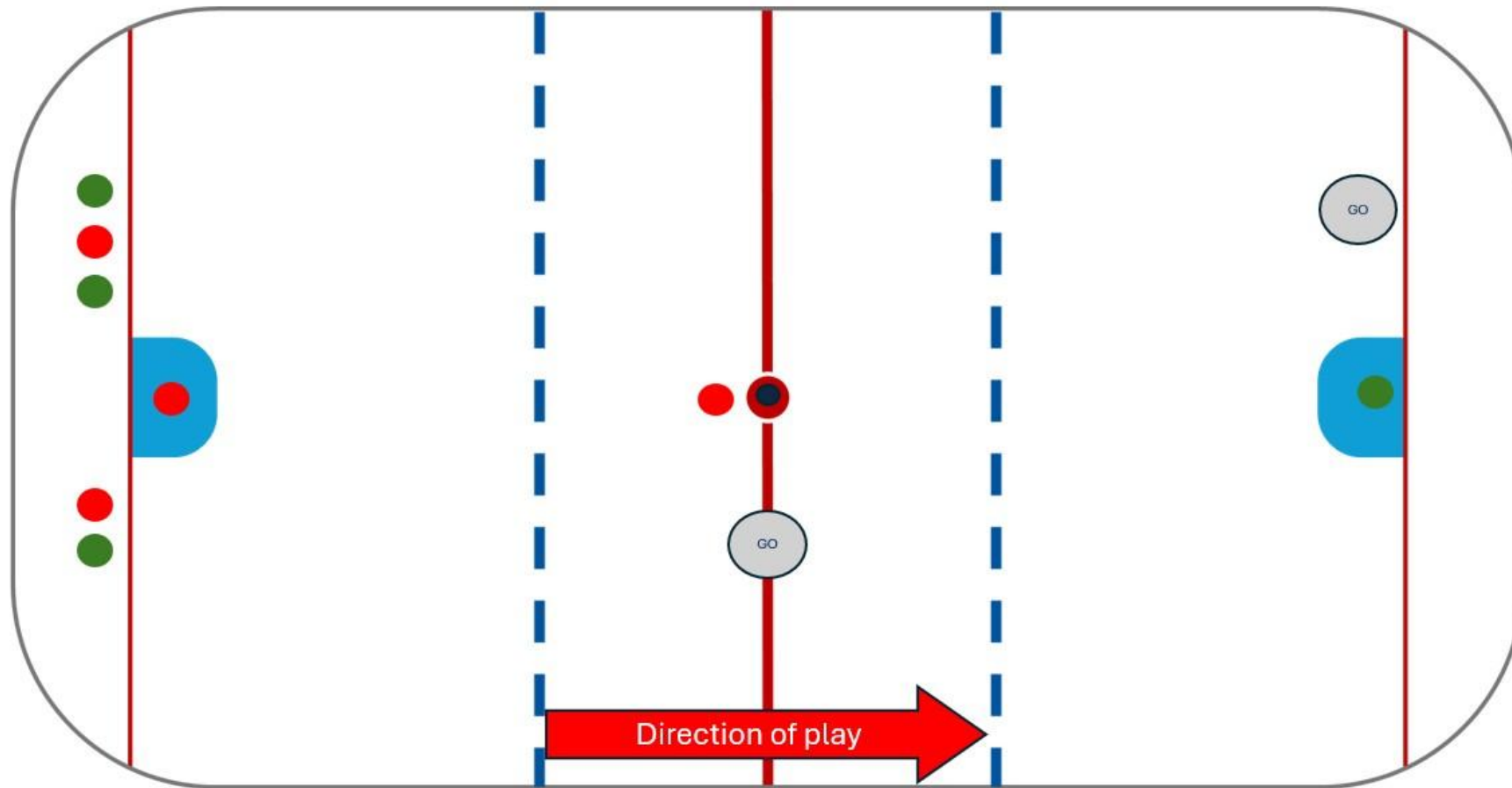
If the skater scores a goal, the goalkeeper must release the puck as explained under *Goalkeeper freezing the puck* and the game continues.

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.



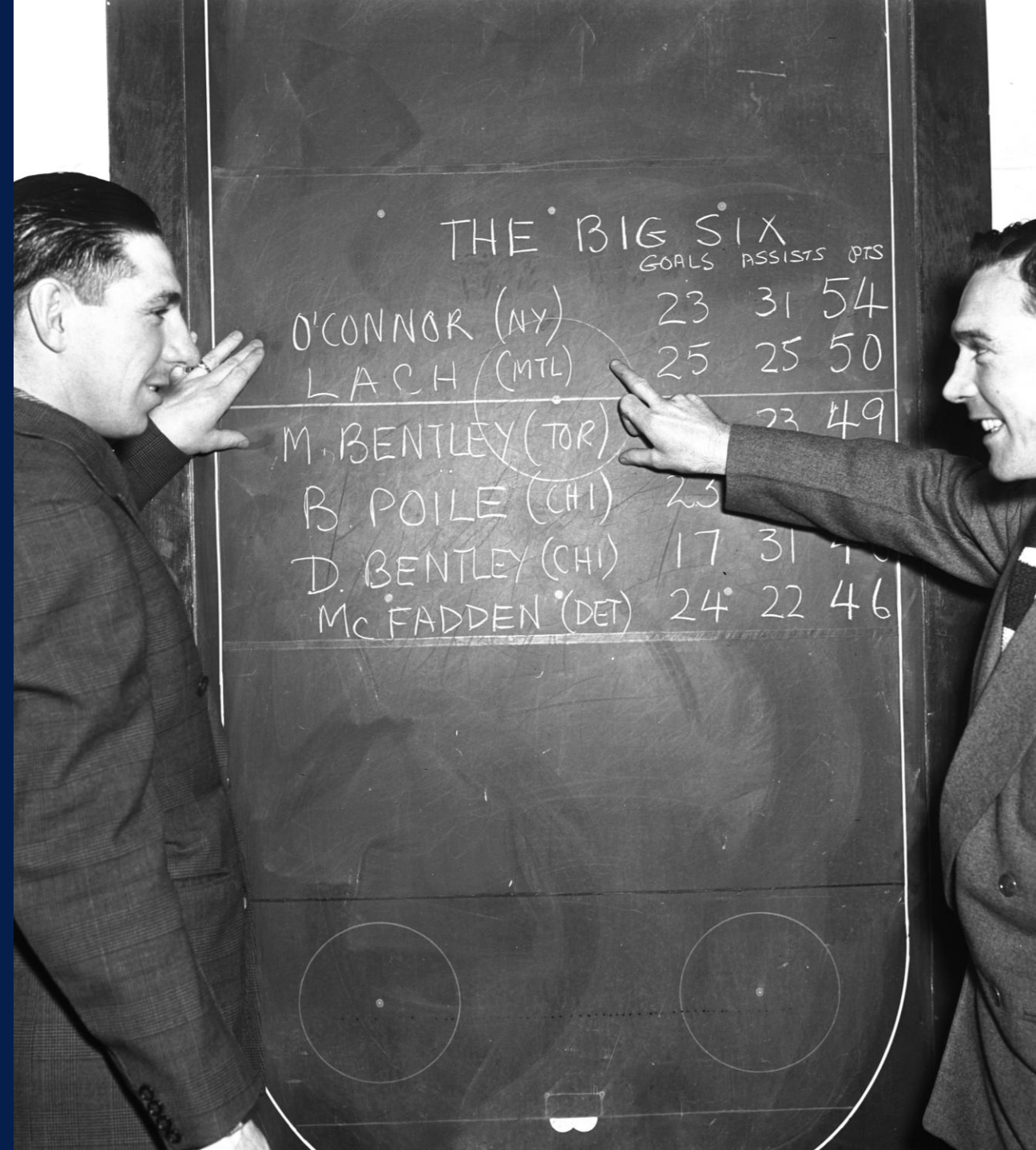


Rules – 3x3 specific

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; and
- 3 points maximum to win for both teams per game



Rules – 3x3 specific

Overtime

Only applicable after a tied game during a Placement, Semi-Final and Medal Games:

- A five [5] minute OT with three [3] skaters and one [1] goalkeeper each will be played;
- OT starts right after a three [3] minute break;
- Ice will not be re-surfaced; and
- Teams remain on their sides and do not change end.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Shootout

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; and
- Ice will not be re-surfaced.



Rules – 3x3 specific

Free Zone Award

If a player scores a goal from or before the red line within their own zone, then this team will be awarded with two [2] goals.



Rules – 3x3 specific

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.
- If there is an advantage due to the weather conditions, goalies can select ends.



(06)
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.

