



Focus on Impact Penalties-Stick Penalties

A General Reminder about Impact Penalties and Non-Calls

The goal of each of these “Focus on Impact Penalties” is to illustrate how officials can use both penalties and non-calls to clearly communicate what is allowed and what is not allowed.

Here are the two questions that defines impact penalties from non-calls:

- 1. Would this penalty send a very clear message to the players, coaches and the entire arena about the type of play that will be permitted?**
- 2. Would this penalty provide teachable information about how the “guilty player” can change their play to avoid a penalty in the future?**

If the answer to both of these is “Yes” then the referee has an opportunity to make an impact penalty call. Ultimately, every penalty should be an impact penalty.

If the answer to both of these questions is “No” then the referee does not call a penalty; if one of the questions is “No” then the referee needs to decide if calling the penalty makes sense (it probably does not make sense if the answer is “No” to either question).

The referee then needs to decide if this is a standard no-call or if it needs to become an impact non-call. Generally, to create an impact non-call, the referee will add a verbal statement that has three goals: (1) draws attention to a non-call (2) is phrased to tell the players what was done to avoid a penalty, and (3) encourage more of this behaviour based on not receiving a penalty and the officials’ praise of the player.

What the Rule Book Says

Rule 8.1-8.5 Highlights:

- There are 5 stick penalties: slashing, spearing, high-sticking, spearing, and butt-ending. When a player receives 3 of these penalties in one game then they are also assessed a Game Ejection penalty (Rule 4.2e).
- Successful butt-ending or spearing is a match penalty, while an attempted butt-end or spear that misses is a double-minor penalty.
- Cross-Checking, slashing, high-sticking result in a minor, major + GM, or match.
- Accidental high-sticking is a penalty as is a high-stick that occurs due to a shot follow-through; a referee cannot decline a high-stick penalty due to an accident.
- The referee may call a slashing penalty whether the slash makes contact or not.

Why It Matters

The stick may be used in two ways: 1) to play the puck or 2) play the other player’s stick with a safe amount of force to make a play on the puck. All other ways to use a stick is as a weapon; which should be penalized. Remember, the decision to not penalize stick work will lead to escalation and unsafe game play.

Examples of an Impact Call and Non-Call

- 1) No Call: B7 has the puck. A76 strikes B7's stick with enough force to move B7's stick off the puck but not enough force to put B7 in danger. A76 steals the puck after a good stick check. No Penalty.
- 2) Impact Penalty: A6 shoots the puck and catches B8 in the face with her stick. A6 is responsible for her stick even when shooting. Penalty for high sticking.
- 3) Impact Penalty: B7 has the puck and A17 is chasing B7 down the ice. A17 winds-up his stick and brings it down on B7's stick as though he is chopping down a tree. Penalty for slashing.
- 4) Impact Penalty: B66 is checking A2 (who has the puck) and is legally tapping A2's stick then makes contacts with A2's gloves. Penalty for slashing once the stick hits the gloves.
- 5) Impact Penalty: B5 is playing defence in front of her net. She has good body position to A89. Her stick is horizontal to the ice...then she starts giving A89 shots in the back with her stick. Call a penalty for cross-checking.
- 6) No Call: A77 taps B9's stick several times trying to make B9 lose control of the puck. The force used is not enough to put B9 in danger. No penalty.

How to make this an impact penalty

Set clear boundaries about when legal stick play becomes illegal.

- 1) Butt-Ending: As soon as a player drops her top hand down the shaft and uses the shaft to either stab or hook a player then call a penalty. If the stick-use is violent then apply a butt-ending penalty (8.1)...if the stick-use is obstructive then call butt-end-hooking (7.2). Regardless, penalize the using the butt-of-the-stick for anything other than holding the stick.
- 2) Cross-Checking: Players will set their sticks against the backs of other players; do not call a penalty just for holding one's stick horizontal to the ice. Instead, call a cross-checking penalty as soon as the player extends his hands/stick in a cross-check motion.
- 3) High-Sticking: Players may not make contact with another player's head with the stick nor may they hold their sticks high to threaten another player. Call a penalty when a player makes contact with another player's head or threatens to.
- 4) Slashing: There are two questions for determining a slashing impact penalty. If the answer is yes to both of these then a slashing penalty is required. If the answer to one of these is yes, then the official needs to read the game and determine if a penalty would send the message that needs to be sent.
 - a. Did the guilty player make contact with any part of an opponent other than the stick?
 - b. Was the force used by the guilty player enough to hurt the other player?
- 5) Spearing: Call spearing if one player uses the blade of the stick to poke another.

How to make a non-call, an impact non-call

High-Sticking, Spearing, and Butt-Ending are black & white; there is no grey-area to create an impact non-call. However, slashing and cross-checking do have grey-areas.

Here are examples of what a referee may say when no penalty is being called:

- 1) Cross-Checking→“No Cross-Check there...good body position black...” or “nothing there...no extension of the arms”
- 2) Slashing→“nothing there guys, stick on stick...move on”