

<b>To:</b>	State and Territory Associations
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Rules of Hockey – 2015</b>
<b>From:</b>	Ben Hartung, General Manager – Hockey, Hockey Australia
<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday 28 January 2015

Dear State and Territory Associations,

### **Background**

On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) introduced changes to the Rules of Hockey designed to enhance the experience of players and spectators. These changes have been available for worldwide adoption and were effective at international level from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

The two rules changes are as follows:

1. The ability to take attacking free hits, awarded within 5 metres of the edge of the circle, from the point of the offence. The change states that the ball still has to travel at least 5 metres before it can be played into the circle, or alternatively has to be touched by another player of either team, other than the player taking the free hit; and
2. The second change concerns the re-start, after the ball has unintentionally been played over the back-line by a defender or deflected by a goalkeeper or player with goalkeeping privileges, and no goal is scored. Play will now be re-started with the ball on the 23 metres line and in line with where it crossed the back-line. Taking the re-start from the 23 metres line will open up the play and give more passing options.

Other rule changes to help improve player safety have also been made, including the rules governing the wearing of facemasks to defend penalty corners which have been amended to increase player safety. A wider range of masks, including metal grill masks, will now be allowed.

The FIH has also aligned the Rules of Hockey with the Tournament Regulations that govern playing conditions wherever possible. The aim of this move is to reduce the number of variations between the Rules of Hockey and the Tournament Regulations, avoiding unnecessary confusion for players and fans alike.



The latest Rules of Hockey will incorporate the following Tournament Regulations:

**1. Green Card – two minute suspension**

**FIH Note:** *The two minute green card will now provide an additional management aid to umpires at all levels.*

**2. Stick above the shoulder**

**FIH Note:** *The skill adds another dimension to the sport and provides excitement for fans and players alike.*

**3. Maximum length of Stick**

**FIH Note:** *The length of stick, as measured from the top of the stick to the bottom of the head, shall not be more than 105cm.*

**4. Breaking of a Penalty Corner**

**FIH Note:** *The breaking at penalty corners Regulation has effected a significant reduction in the number of breaks at Tournaments, by both attackers and defenders.*

In general, all current Tournament Regulations governing playing conditions have now been adopted into the Rules of Hockey with the exception of regulations that require specialist equipment or officials that might not be available at all hockey pitches. These currently include Match Periods (4 x 15 Minute Quarters and time stoppages for the award of Penalty Corners and Goals), the Penalty Corner Countdown Clock and Video Umpire, which will **only** be used at FIH World level Tournaments where the contracted full television coverage and facilities enable a viable system.

FIH CEO Kelly Fairweather explains the approach that has been taken:

*“FIH is taking this action to remove unnecessary confusion for fans, players, coaches and officials. Our ambition is a global game that is relevant to the next generation and to achieve this ambition we must make it as easy as possible for fans to be fans and for players to enjoy playing”.*

To view the FIH Rules of Hockey, please [click here](#).

**Advice for State and Territory Associations and their Member Clubs/Associations**

The Rules of Hockey and FIH Tournament Regulations will apply to all International Hockey. The FIH Executive Board has approved that the same Rules and FIH Tournament Regulations which vary the Rules of Hockey also apply to the **top domestic League level** of National Association Hockey. This will become mandatory at top domestic League level, with effect from 1 September 2015, unless a National Association wishes to opt out of particular Rules or Regulations which vary the Rules of Hockey by applying to FIH to do so.



Hockey Australia's 'top domestic League' is the Australian Hockey League (AHL). It is also noted that each State and Territory Hockey Association has their own 'top domestic League' or competition, for example, Premier League, State League, Capital League, or equivalent, etc. It is our understanding that the FIH interpretation of 'top domestic League' is applicable to both levels of competition.

Following consultation with Hockey Australia's Officiating Advisory Panel, Competitions Committee and National Talent Pathway Manager, I can confirm that it is Hockey Australia's intention to implement the rule changes announced by the FIH at the 2015 Australian Hockey League (AHL) and all Australian Championships (Under 21, Under 18, Under 15, Under 13, Masters and Country) **with the important exception that the stick above the shoulder rule will only be implemented for the Under 18 Australian Championships in April, the Under 21 Australian Championships in July and the AHL in September/October.**

Hockey Australia considers the implementation of the Green Card two minute suspension, maximum length of stick and the breaking of a penalty corner rules to be non-contentious for State and Territory Hockey Associations and their member Clubs and Associations, however we recognise that the stick above the shoulder rule will be a rule that needs to be carefully considered by each State and Territory Association.

It is acknowledged that the Green Card two minute suspension rule will take some time to be implemented effectively at Club and Association level due to the fact that only a minority of games at these levels will have a functioning technical bench where the penalty time that a player serves can be monitored and controlled. It is envisaged that the rule will be managed in exactly the same way as the Yellow Card suspension in that the penalty time will commence as soon as the player has left the field.

It is important to note that the ability to play the ball with the stick above the shoulder has been in top level International Hockey and domestic National Leagues for well over a year. The FIH have observed that the skills of players to be able to control and play the ball above shoulder height have dramatically improved over a short period of time, and adds another dimension and set of skills to the game. The FIH has provided the following advice:

*"Any safety fears at various levels or age groups in competitions below top domestic National League level may be allayed by the possibility for National Associations to opt out of this particular Rule".*

Aerial/overhead skills are on the list of critical skills for developing athletes and Hockey Australia believes it is imperative that we encourage the development of these skills from an athlete, coach and umpiring perspective within our high performance pathway.

Hockey Australia will be applying to the FIH to opt out of the stick above the shoulder rule for our Under 13 and Under 15 Australian Championships, Masters Championships and Country Championships.



Hockey Australia recommends that the stick above the shoulder rule should be implemented for all State and Territory Association top Senior Leagues or competitions and their linked reserve grades (e.g. Premier League & Premier League Reserve, State League & State League Reserve, Capital League, or equivalent) as well as the top Junior (Underage) Leagues or competitions (e.g. Under 16, 17 or 18 depending on the State or Territory).

With the exception of the top Senior League or competition and the top Junior League or competition, Hockey Australia intends to apply to the FIH to opt out of the stick above the shoulder rule for all other State/Territory and Club/Association level competitions to achieve a consistent approach across the nation.

There are many reasons for this approach but in summary the following main concerns have been raised:

- whether players at these levels of competition have the necessary technical and tactical ability to safely execute the skill;
- whether umpires at these levels of competition (who often do not have any umpiring accreditation) have the necessary skills to interpret, adjudicate and manage the skill; and
- whether coaches at these levels of competitions have the technical knowledge and experience to instruct and train the skill.

As the FIH are yet to advise National Associations of the procedure for National Associations to apply to the FIH to opt out of particular Rules or Regulations which vary the Rules of Hockey, we wish to advise that the application of the new rules for all competitions Australia-wide are on hold until further notice.

**It is important to note that only National Associations such as Hockey Australia have the ability to apply to the FIH to opt out of particular Rules or Regulations. We respectfully request that States and Territories or Clubs and Associations do not make representations directly to the FIH.**

Hockey Australia recommends that each State and Territory discusses the new rules in their Officiating and/or Competitions Committees or Advisory Panels and we are seeking your formal feedback on the above recommendations.

Because of the varying levels of competition standard across the States and Territories, we are requesting that each State and Territory Association prepare a submission to Hockey Australia advising us of the levels of competition that you intend to apply the stick above the shoulder rule and the rationale for these decisions. We will collate the feedback received and review our national position before lodging the required documentation with the FIH.

Please direct your feedback to [participation@hockey.org.au](mailto:participation@hockey.org.au)

All submissions are due by the close of business on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015**.

