



ACCHL Points-of-Emphasis & Emerging Issues

Posted: September 2026

Description: This is the first points-of-emphasis posting for the 2026-27 season. This is an NCAA rule change year. An additional section will be added to this month's bulletin with a list of these changes. Each change listed will include a basic description of the rule change with its rule number for reference. Each official is required to review the updated version of the NCAA Hockey Ice Rules Book prior to skating a game this season. The "Points-of-Emphasis" bullets in this version are primarily carryovers from last season, with some minor updates in situations where a rule change applies.

Rule Changes:

1. **Rule 7.2** - Delayed penalty structure change for starting lineup challenges. If a team challenges the starting lineup after a goal in the first play of the game, the goal will nullify the penalty.
2. **Rule 9.4** - Helmet and face mask rule change regarding deliberate helmet removal.
 - a. Please also see PoE on helmet removal.
3. **Rule 9.7** - Added cut-resistant equipment mandates and recommendations. The ACHA has not elected to mandate this season.
4. **Rule 19** - With less than 5 minutes remaining in regulation or anytime in overtime, if a major is called on one team and a minor/double minor is called on the other in the same stoppage, the time differential is served first. The penalty will be placed on the clock as a 3-minute or 1-minute penalty as applicable.
5. **Rule 20.4** - 2nd major penalty now requires automatic game misconduct.
6. **Rule 28.2** - Goalkeeper no longer serves major or misconduct penalties. For both major and misconduct penalties, a player on the ice at the time of the infraction must serve the goalkeeper's penalty.
7. **Rule 28.6** - Awarded goal if goalkeeper intentionally leaves obstacles at or near net when pulled.
8. **Rule 48.1** - Updates to fighting or punching rule language. Now defines a fight as multiple punches or an altercation that is not easily separated.
 - a. Please see PoE on fighting.
9. **Rule 49** - Updated language to specify head-butting rule application. Penalty options updated for an attempt vs. a forcible contact vs. an egregious contact.
10. **Rule 50** - Changes to checking from behind rule language. Removed open ice hit language.
11. **Rule 53** - Added language to roughing rule clarifying its application vs. other physical fouls. Language changes primarily reference punching or slamming motions. Language added regarding a "Sucker Punch", now penalized as a major penalty in women's games only. Removed hitting after the whistle language however, this infraction should continue to be penalized as roughing.
 - a. Please see PoE on fighting.

12. **Rule 55** – Changed penalty for throwing equipment out of playing surface to game misconduct.
13. **Rule 59.1** - Added language under the interference rule, any member of the defending team, including the Coach or any non-playing person, throws or shoots any part of a stick or any other object or piece of equipment at the puck or puck carrier in his defending zone, a penalty shot shall be awarded.
14. **Rule 67.5** - Added language, if the goalkeeper or a player deliberately displaces the net, or removes their helmet during a breakaway, it is now an awarded goal.
15. **Rule 67.6** - Added language regarding the goalkeeper freezing the puck during an icing scenario. Play is now stopped, face-off occurs in the goalkeeper's zone, change of players by defending team is not allowed.
16. **Rule 79.3** - Changed rule definition to include all offensive language rather than just ethnic/racial slurs. All offensive language now penalized as major plus DQ.
17. **Rule 79.5** - Spitting now a major plus DQ.
18. **Rule 81.1** - The full blade of the stick must be placed on the ice in their designated white spots for a face-off. At the center ice dot, the away team places their stick first. At the other 8 dots, the defending team places their stick first.
19. **Rule 84.2** - Hand pass now allowed when a hand pass is started and completed in the defensive zone.
20. **Rule 84.3** - Updates to face-off location for a hand pass violation. The face-off is now placed in the closest spot with no territorial advantage. When occurring in the offensive zone, face-off is at the closest neutral zone face-off spot.
21. **Rule 84.4** - Added language to clarify faceoff location for high stick. A change of players is now allowed for infractions occurring in the defensive zone.
22. **Rule 86.1** - Added language regarding puck possession when making an off-side judgement. For a play to be onside, the puck carrier must be in possession and control. The puck carrier may cross the line ahead of the puck, provided they have possession and control of the puck with their stick prior to both skates completely crossing the leading edge of the blue line.
23. **Rule 92.1** - Language added regarding when time-outs should be granted. This will not apply in most regular season games.
24. **Rule 92.2** - The rule allowing an additional time-out following the completion of regulation has been removed. Now each team only gets one timeout.
25. **Rule 94.2** - Added clarifying language for applying body contact vs body checking in women's games. Penalty options and how to decide severity of a penalty when an infraction occurs.
26. **Appendix B** – All eligible players other than those serving a misconduct, game misconduct, or DQ may participate in the shootout. A player who is serving a misconduct for a goalkeeper is also ineligible.

Points-of-Emphasis:

1. **Rule 9.4** - Helmet and Face Mask:

- Focusing on language referring to all players and goalkeepers wearing helmets on the bench. In the interest in the safety of all student athletes, this rule must be strictly enforced. Please follow the appropriate penalty succession per this rule.
- Please review updated rule 9.4. Language added regarding intentional helmet removal. Except for situations where there may be a face-masking violation, a minor penalty for roughing must be called for deliberate removal of a player's own or an opponent's helmet during play. Please continue to reference rule 47, in situations where a player grabs, pushes, or washes an opponent's face mask.
- Please continue to follow the special interpretation in the PoE for rule 45 below if a helmet is deliberately removed during an altercation.

2. Rule 40 – Abuse of Officials:

- Officials are being asked to be mindful of inappropriate conduct towards officials. This includes both physical and verbal abuse from coaches, players, and team staff. Please review rules 40 and 41 and apply as required.
- This topic unfortunately continues to be an issue in the league. With strict enforcement and better communication from the organization, its directors, and its officials, we can help keep this behavior to a minimum.
- Officials should immediately report abuse incidents to their scheduler and the board of directors for review.

3. Rule 45 – Contact to the Head:

- 30 head-contact penalties were reported last season on 131 game reports. This figure does not include minor penalties not requiring a game report; therefore, the actual total is likely much higher when minor penalties are included. Please continue strict enforcement of this rule; dangerous hits have no place in the game. If you are deciding whether a minor or major penalty is warranted, we request that you lean toward a major penalty in most situations and allow the supplemental discipline process to make the final decision.
- For the purposes of ACCHL games, the act of a player deliberately removing an opponent's helmet during an altercation, when not falling under rule 47 “Face-Masks” should be penalized under this rule using the provisions for direct, intentional, and/or reckless head contact. As such, at the referee's discretion, a major + GM penalty or major + DQ should be assessed at the referee's discretion; the minor penalty option is not available.

4. Rule 48 – Fighting & Rule 53 - Roughing:

- 53 fighting majors were reported last season on 131 game reports.
- Regardless of the rule changes this year, the ACCHL remains a “one-punch” league. A major + DQ penalty is required for any offense under this rule, particularly if that punch is hard and makes contact with the head of the opposing player. See further notes below.
- Please review language adjustments regarding altercations where, regardless of whether or not punches were thrown, may still be called fighting. Specifically, where an altercation

occurs where the linespersons are having an unreasonable amount of difficulty separating the involved players.

- This year's rule updates added language allowing a roughing penalty in lieu of a fighting penalty for minor offenses. When determining whether to assess a fighting penalty or a roughing penalty during an altercation, please consider the following:
 - If a punch is thrown, did it make contact, and where?
 - Can a reasonable individual argue that an injury could have occurred as a result of any action during the altercation?
 - Did the involved players separate after the linespersons intervened, or did the altercation continue for an extended period of time?
 - Was the altercation two-sided? Was there a primary aggressor with an unsuspecting or unengaged opponent?
- Please use good judgment when determining which penalties to assess during an altercation. The ACCHL will continue to encourage officials to lean toward the most severe penalty and allow the supplemental discipline process to make a determination.

5. Rule 53 (Cont.) subsec. 53.2 - Excessive Roughness:

- Any deliberate action, regardless of the result, which may cause an injury to any party in the game must be penalized as a major + DQ under this rule or the most applicable rule with a major + DQ option. It is crucial to the safety and well-being of all those involved in the game that this rule be strictly enforced during all events.

Emerging Issues and Other Updates:

1. Please check updated organization policies. www.acchlrefs.com/hr.
2. Game Reports:
 - Game reports must be filed for the following:
 - i. Major Penalties
 - ii. Game Misconduct Penalties
 - iii. Disqualification Penalties
 - iv. Spectator Misconduct
 - v. Any Event Causing Significant Delay (Supplemental/Other Report)
 - Game reports are to be filed through the officials resource center on our website. www.acchlrefs.com/reporting
 - A new policy on game reports has been added to the game reporting system page. This new policy aims to add direction and clarify expectations on game reports. Please review this policy.
3. Please review the new travel accommodation request page and policy for information on travel requests. www.acchlrefs.com/travel.

Summary of Changes

- Added rule change summary from the 2026-2028 rule book.
- Modified PoE on rule 9.4 to add information on rule changes.
- Combined PoE on rules 47 and 53 due to rule changes creating a link between these rules. Added new language on how to decide penalty severity.
- Changed rule references where required.
- Updated EI on game reports with language pertaining to the new GRS 2.0.
- Removed EI on shootout procedure and punctuality of officials; please reference the “Game Day Protocol” guide.
- Removed other old EI from last season.