



A HISTORY OF THE RULES OF HOCKEY

Introduction

Research into the history of the Rules of Hockey was undertaken to mark the centenary of the formation of the Hockey Rules Board and to recognise the leading part played by the Board in ensuring that hockey players at all levels have been able to enjoy their game under controlled, authoritative, yet user-friendly, world-wide Rules.

This paper is intended to highlight the general changes to Rules and therefore is not a complete list of all changes. It is based on the Rules of hockey produced for men's hockey and therefore does not include details of the Rules for women's hockey before the Rules were combined into one common code in 1975.

A set of Rules was actually drawn up by several clubs in London in January 1876 following the establishment of the first, but short lived, Hockey Association (of England) the year before. (The second, and final, Hockey Association was formed in 1886.) Prior to that date the captains had agreed the Rules under which each game was played, including the number of players per team which varied from eight to eleven. Two of the most interesting Rules, gleaned from the Surbiton Hockey Club minute book, were:

Rule 2: The sticks shall be curved wooden ones approved by the Committee of the Association. The ball shall be an ordinary sized cricket ball.

Rule 7: The ball may be stopped, but not carried or knocked, by any part of the body. No player shall raise his stick above his shoulder. The ball shall be played from right to left, and no left or back-handed play, charging, tripping, collaring, (pulling the shirt) or shinning, (hitting the leg) shall be allowed.

Chronology

1886: The Hockey Association (England) drew up a code of Rules based on those used by clubs in the London area. These included:

- the pitch should be 100 yards long by 55 to 60 yards wide; goals should be 4 yards wide with a cross bar 7 feet from the ground; there would be a striking circle with a radius of 15 yards; flags (not lines) indicated the 25 yards area;
- the game was to be started (and re-started after a goal) by a bully which involved three taps of the stick between two players at the centre spot; a bully would also be taken at 25 yards after the ball had gone over the back-line;

- all non-involved players had to be 5 yards from the ball at free hits, rolls-in and bullies; rolls-in by hand were used to put the ball into play after it had gone over the side-line;
- teams comprised eleven players - five forwards, three half-backs, two full-backs and one goalkeeper; no substitutes were allowed even for injury;
- the game was controlled either by two umpires or one umpire (referee) assisted by two linesmen;
- hockey sticks were made of wood with leather-covered handles;
- balls used were traditional leather-covered cricket balls painted white;
- there was no mention of goalkeepers' equipment;
- the ball was played with one side of the stick (the left hand side) only; the ball could not be played above the shoulder or with the rounded side (back) of the stick;
- it was not permitted to kick, trip, shove, or obstruct an opponent;
- hands and feet could be used to stop the ball but then had to be moved out of the way; feet and legs could not to be used behind the ball to resist opponents;
- goalkeepers could kick the ball but only within their own circles;
- hooking of sticks was allowed but only within striking distance of the ball;
- offside (with less than 3 defenders) was applied from the half-way line;
- a bully was taken in the circle for an offence by defender; free hits were given for other fouls.

1886: The Hockey Association decreed that a stick must pass through a two inch measurement ring; sticks could have a four inch external diameter India rubber ring above the splice to prevent finger injuries.

1894: Reverse stick play was permitted as were shots at goal without first stopping the ball.

1900: The International Rules Board (later the Hockey Rules Board) was formed on 23 April 1900 in London by the men's Hockey Associations of England, Ireland and Wales; the Rules of the Game were decided thereafter by the Board. The first meeting of the International Rules Board was held on the 25 July 1900.

1900: Advantage was recognised; not every offence was to be penalised immediately.

1900: Scotland's Men's Association joined the Board.

1904: Intentional undercutting and raising the ball from a hit was to be penalised. The scoop stroke was permitted.

1905: Each umpire was to take half of the pitch for the whole game without changing ends and to take decisions on rolls-in for the whole of their side-line, but not for corners. Umpires were also

empowered to warn and/or suspend players from the game. A weight limit of 28 ounces was laid down for sticks. The width of the pitch could be up to 66 yards.

1907: Umpires were allowed to apply the Rules without waiting for an appeal. Prior to this time appeals had to be made by players before an umpire could give a decision.

1908: The penalty corner was introduced for offences by defenders in the circle. At a penalty corner, the Rules required the ball to be stopped before a shot at goal but this not umpired rigorously; all defenders were behind the goal-line with attacking players outside the circle. The bully was replaced by a penalty bully for deliberately stopping a certain goal.

1909: The width of the pitch reverted to 55 to 60 yards.

1910: Goalposts were specified as 2 inches deep and not more than 3 inches wide.

1927: Advantage was formally written as Rule. By this time there were routinely two umpires for each match.

1936: Notes and suggestions for umpires were included in the Rules book. Later this became an appendix entitled 'Advice to Umpires'.

1938: Any form of interference with the stick of an opponent, including hooking of sticks, was forbidden as was the use of any part of the body, except the hand, to stop the ball.

1949: Deliberate offences by defenders within the 25 yards area and persistent offences by defenders at corners were penalised by a penalty corner.

1949: The radius of the circle was increased to 16 yards (but this was not incorporated in the women's game until 1968).

1957: The 25 yards bully after a ball had gone over the back line was replaced by a free hit at 16 yards.

1959: Umpires were empowered to suspend players for a temporary period.

1961: At a penalty corner and for corners, a maximum of six defenders were to be behind the back line with the remainder of the defending team at the 25 yards line.

1963: The penalty bully was replaced by a penalty stroke taken from a spot 8 yards from the goal. For a penalty corner, the remainder of the defending team were moved to be behind the centre (and not just the 25 yards) line.

1970: The roll-in from side-line was replaced by a push-in.

1972: Offside was changed from three to two defenders.

1973: Two substitutes were permitted but once substituted a player was not permitted to return.

1974: A penalty stroke was to be awarded for a deliberate offence by a defender in the circle, regardless of whether a goal might have been scored or not.

1975: The first common Rule book for men and women was published. Changes made at this time included:

- at a penalty corner the ball was to be stopped motionless by an attacker before a shot at goal; there was to be no latitude;
- notes on the Rules became 'Guidance for Players and Umpires';
- a code of signals for umpires was published for the first time;
- a temporary suspension for offending player(s) was to be at least 5 minutes;
- the width of the pitch was specified as 60 yards;
- a note to the Rules had previously stated that matches did not necessarily have to be played on grass provided that the surface was suitable; in recognition of the growing use of synthetic surfaces, this was deleted with no mention of particular playing surfaces in the Rules;
- the penalty stroke spot was moved from 8 to 7 yards from the goal-line.

1979: Colour control cards (green, yellow, red) were introduced into the Rules book (although they had been in general use for a number of years). Flags were removed from the 25 yards line.

1983: Various changes included:

- a hit-in replaced the push-in from the side line;
- a pass back replaced the centre bully to start or re-start the game;
- the bully was retained only for accidents or unforeseen events;
- the Rule explicitly limiting the height to which the stick could be raised was deleted; this would in future be dealt with under dangerous play;
- the use of the hand except by a goalkeeper was abolished;
- at free hits only opponents had to be 5 yards from the ball
- no free hits to the attacking team were to be taken within five yards of the circle.

1986: Definitions of 'Hockey Terminology' were included for the first time.

1987: Again, a number of changes:

- the number of defenders behind the back line at penalty corners and corners was reduced from six to five;
- at corners and 16 yard hits only opponents were required to be 5 yards from the ball;
- at penalty corners the first hit at goal should not cross the goal-line higher than 18 inches and if the ball travelled more than 5 yards outside the circle then the penalty corner Rules no longer applied;

- offside applied only in the 25 yards area;
- a deliberately raised ball falling into the circle was to be penalised;
- free hits to defenders could be taken within the circle;
- at free hits to the attacking team within five yards of the circle all players had to be five yards from the ball.

1988: "Technical Interpretations" were published as an appendix to the Rules book.

1989: The maximum number of permitted substitutes was increased from two to three. Goalkeepers were permitted to stop the ball with the stick above the shoulder in their circle.

1992: Substitution ("rolling substitutes") could take place at any time during the game. A team now officially consisted of sixteen players but with only eleven (including a goalkeeper) allowed on the field of play at any one time. Interpretation of obstruction was revised.

1994: Captains were made responsible for their team's behaviour and for substitutions. Goalkeepers were required to wear protective headgear.

1995: The format of the Rule book was revised to make it more user friendly. Also:

- at a free hit the ball was required to move at least 1 yard;
- umpires were empowered to order a free hit to be advanced by 10 yards for dissent or a subsequent offence;
- substitution was allowed at penalty corners and penalty strokes.

1996: Changes included:

- at a penalty corner the ball had to be stopped outside the circle before a shot at goal could be made;
- the pass-back to start or restart the game became a centre pass which could be played in any direction;
- goalkeepers' gauntlets were re-named "hand protectors" with a maximum length of 9 inches and a maximum width of 14 inches.

Mandatory Experimental Rules introduced were:

- no offside;
- players may not intentionally enter their opponents goal, stand on their opponents goal-line or intentionally run behind either goal;
- a corner to be taken on a spot on the side line 5 yards from corner;
- within the 25 yards area all players, except the taker, to be 5 yards from the ball at free hits, hits-in and 16 yards hits.

1997: A mandatory experimental Rule required the prolongation of play to permit the completion of a penalty corner at half-time and full-time.

1998: The 1996 mandatory experimental Rules concerning no offside, players not intentionally entering their opponents goal and a corner taken on the side line were confirmed as Rules. The experiment concerning free hits within the 25 yards area was abandoned. Other changes included:

- substitutions at penalty corners were no longer permitted except for an injured defending goalkeeper but were still permitted at penalty strokes;
- all measurements and distances were now stated in metric form with an imperial-metric conversion table included at the end of the Rules book;
- "Technical Information and Advice" was published as an appendix.

1999: Changes included:

- acknowledgement of a continuing study of the composition of the stick but metal and metallic substances were already banned;
- a mandatory experimental Rule allowing use of the edge (but not the rounded side) of the stick subject to the normal safety considerations;
- clarification of the Rule when a goalkeeper is suspended at a penalty corner; another goalkeeper must be the replacement with the team consequently having to withdraw one field player until the period of suspension is completed;
- the 1997 mandatory experimental Rule to require prolongation of time for completion of a penalty corner at half-time and full-time was confirmed as a Rule.

2000: Changes were:

- more precise specification of the shape, size, weight and material of the stick; it may be made of wood or may contain any other material except metal or metallic components;
- a broken white line to be marked on the pitch 5 metres from and beyond the circle line.

2001: The mandatory experiment allowing the edge of the stick to be used to play the ball entered its third year but it was announced that it would be incorporated as a formal Rules change with effect from 2002.

Changes were relatively minor and included:

- moving the short distance markings from inside to outside the field of play to avoid undue and uneven wear especially on synthetic pitch surfaces;
- a re-wording of the sticks Rule to make its specifications clearer;
- allowing that a captain can be on the field of play or, at particular times in the game, can be a substitute;

- a new Rule which specifically makes a manufactured foul an offence;
- limiting goalkeepers to playing in their own defending half of the pitch.'

2002: Changes to the Rules were few this year: using the edge of the stick to play the ball was confirmed as a formal Rule and when the penalty corner is completed for substitution purposes was clarified.

The Rules interpretations in the appendix to the Rules were revised. Before this date various formal and informal papers advising umpires on the required interpretations had been published especially at major competitions. The aim was to incorporate these in the Rules Book so that interpretations were more consistent throughout the game.

2003: For the first time in many years a full Rules Book was not published. This was because the FIH had decided to move to a standard date of 1 January annually for implementation of Rules change whereas each set of Rules had in the past taken effect from various dates mid-year. However, two Mandatory Experimental Rules were implemented from 1 January 2003 so a small leaflet was produced to provide details:

- defenders were permitted to use their stick above their shoulder to stop or deflect a shot at goal;
- it was no longer necessary to stop the ball outside the circle before a shot could be taken at a penalty corner but, instead, the ball was only required to travel outside the circle.

This *History of the Rules of Hockey* is based on a *Chronology of the Rules of Hockey* researched and produced on behalf of the Hockey Rules Board by Ernest Wall, Evelyn Raistrick and George Croft in 2000 to mark the centenary of the establishment of the International Rules Board which subsequently became the Hockey Rules Board.

2004: This year saw the publication of a radically revised Rules Book. The Rules had been completely re-written to make them easier to understand. The layout changed so that the Rules were in just two sections:

- Playing the Game
- Umpiring.

Detailed technical specifications of the field, stick, ball and equipment were omitted from the main publication and published separately.

The opportunity was taken to simplify a few Rules without changing any of the fundamental characteristics of the game. The adjustments included:

- simplifying and standardising how a penalty corner is completed for substitution purposes and at the end of half-time and full-time;

- requiring field players who leave the field for injury treatment, refreshment, to change equipment or for some reason other than substitution to re-enter only between the 23 metres areas;
- specifying how the result of a match is decided;
- rationalising procedures for starting and re-starting play so that the procedures for taking a free hit also apply to the centre pass and to putting the ball back into play after it has passed completely over the side-line or back-line;
- retaining the fundamental characteristics of the bully but simplifying it by requiring sticks to touch only once;
- deleting the Rule which specified that a ball must not be raised intentionally so that it lands directly in the circle was deleted;
- simplifying the obstruction Rule by referring in the Rule itself only to the fundamental principle that players must not obstruct an opponent who is attempting to play the ball;
- specifying that players must not tackle unless they are in a position to play the ball without body contact;
- specifying the "advantage Rule" more simply and clearly;
- requiring the player taking a penalty stroke to start by standing behind and within playing distance of the ball and not permitting them to approach either the ball or the goalkeeper after taking the stroke (ie the former limitation of taking only one step forward was deleted);
- specifying that the whistle must be blown to start a penalty stroke when both players are in position (rather than requiring the umpire to confirm that both are ready which can cause confusion in the absence of a common spoken language);
- rationalising how offences at a penalty stroke are dealt with; it was specified that the penalty stroke is taken again if a goalkeeper prevents a goal being scored but leaves the goal-line or moves either foot before the ball was played;
- permitting the intended duration of a temporary suspension to be extended for misconduct by a player while suspended;
- introducing new umpiring signals to indicate dangerous play (placing one forearm diagonally across the chest) and stick obstruction (holding one arm out and downwards in front of the body half-way between vertical and horizontal; touching the forearm with the other hand).

In addition, the two Mandatory Experimental Rules introduced in 2003 continued to apply in 2004. They were:

- permitting a defender to use the stick to stop or deflect a shot at goal at any height.
- not requiring the ball to be stopped before a shot at goal at a penalty corner.

2005: The main change this year was that the two Mandatory Experimental Rules referred to above were incorporated as formal rules of the game.

In addition, the field, stick, ball and equipment specifications were re-incorporated in the main rules publication instead of being published separately as in 2004. Otherwise, there were only minor clarifications of the wording of some rules.

2006: The only change this year was to the maximum bow/rake permitted in the stick. It was reduced from 50mm to 25mm. The reason quoted was a concern about an increase in the power with which some players could flick the ball, especially for shots at goal, using an extremely bowed stick.

2007/8: a significant change was the move to a two-year cycle for the production and publication of the rules of the game. In some ways, a two-year cycle was already in place because significant changes were not introduced in the periods leading to each Olympic Games and Hockey World Cup. By formalising this cycle, the Hockey Rules Board (HRB) was also acknowledging that it is better to allow a slightly longer period between rules changes for any such changes to be evaluated and reviewed.

Specific changes included:

- permitting a team either to have a goalkeeper on the field (with full protective equipment or only with protective headgear) or to play entirely with field players (in which case no player has goalkeeping privileges).
- specifying the face protection which field players are permitted to wear especially in relation to defending a penalty corner.
- prohibiting hitting the ball hard on the forehand with the edge of the stick.
- clarifying that a defender must not be penalised if their stick is not motionless or is travelling towards the ball while attempting to stop or deflect the shot even when the ball is above shoulder height.
- permitting a goalkeeper to use their hands, arms or any other part of their body (and not just their stick, kickers and leg-guards as hitherto) to move the ball away but only as part of a goal saving action and not to propel the ball forcefully so that it travels a long distance.