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**From:** "USAH Information" <USAHInfo@usahockey.org>  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 25, 2006 5:42 PM  
**Attach:** 2006SOPInterpretations.pdf  
**Subject:** Officiating Information - Standard of Play

Dear Official,

The season is well under way in most areas of the country and the early indications suggest our officiating team has met the challenge of implementing the Standard of Play and Rules Enforcement Initiative. We know that this transition period is difficult and will require a lot of patience and perseverance. Some areas have already reported a positive response with the games played at a faster pace, with fewer penalties and more physical play and without the illegal use of the stick or arm to gain a competitive advantage. Keep up the great work and please understand that you have the full support of the entire USA Hockey family in maintaining this standard.

The District Referees-in-Chief would also like to take this opportunity to clarify a few things as it relates to the Standard of Play and make sure every official is on the same page. Attached, please find interpretations for four areas that appear to have caused the most confusion to players, coaches, parents and officials. Please review these interpretations, along with the Standard of Play Video on USAHockey.com, on a regular basis in order to keep them fresh in your mind.

In addition, it is also important to make sure that we do not over react to situations and call infractions that are simply not penalties. To help you respond accordingly, keep in mind that a "competitive advantage" needs to be gained as the result of an "illegal action" in order for a penalty to be assessed. Whereas we want to reward skilled play such as skating, balance, strength, puck handling, body position/checking and anticipation, the defensive player also possesses some of these skills and we do not want them penalized for good play, either. Let's also not forget to call the other infractions that may not be specifically covered under the Standard of Play.

As always, if you have any questions regarding enforcement of the rules or the Officiating Program as a whole, do not hesitate to contact your District Referee-in-Chief. Your efforts and commitment to the sport of hockey and the "art of officiating" are greatly appreciated.

Best wishes for a successful season!

USA Hockey District Referees-in-Chief



## **USA Hockey Standard of Play and Rule Emphasis Interpretations**

### **Battling in Front of Goal**

With the standard of play initiative, players are still legally able to battle for position in front of the goal and in the corners. This may include considerable body contact. A player using their size, strength and balance to establish a favorable body position is an effective play and rewards players who use this skill to gain a competitive advantage. The use of the stick in this process to steer the opponent is also allowed as long as it remains close to the body and the arms are not extended in a manner that cross-checks the opponent. An example of an illegal tactic would include the extension or use of the arm(s) to push off in an effort to create distance between the player and the opponent or prevent them from legally playing the puck.

### **Free Hand Used By Offensive Player**

A player who is in possession and control of the puck and has established body position may use their free hand to maintain that body position. In this situation, both players are skating shoulder-to-shoulder, or the defensive player is slightly behind, and the attacking player uses the free arm to fend off the defensive player and simply maintain their already established body position, as long as they do not grab the stick, sweater or arm of the opponent.

However, a player who uses a free arm to push off of an opponent and create space, or uses the free arm to originally establish body position by impeding the progress of the opponent, will be penalized for holding or interference.

### **Lifting an Opponent Stick and Stick Presses**

The use of the stick to lift an opponent's stick and gain possession of the puck, or prevent them from gaining possession of the puck, is considered a good defensive play that should not be penalized. Lifting a non-puck carrier's stick in a manner that does not impede their progress is also allowable under the rules. In addition, the use of the stick to check an opponent's stick, or press the opponent's stick to the ice or boards, is a good defensive play as long as it is done on the lower portion of the stick shaft and the intended purpose is to dislodge the puck or prevent the opponent from playing the puck.

Turning the stick blade over on top of the stick of an opponent for the purpose of pressing the stick and preventing the opponent from playing the puck is also allowable. If done, it must be on the lower portion of the stick and for the sole purpose of preventing the opponent from playing the puck. However, if done in a manner that impedes the progress of an opponent, or contact is made higher up on the stick, a penalty for hooking should be assessed.

### **Diving**

One area that has gotten more attention as a result of the Standard of Play is diving. Although there is no indication this is a significant problem at the youth level, the action does exist and everyone will need to be on the same page in handling those rare situations.

First off, it is important to recognize that under the new standard, there is no inherent advantage to embellishing an action by the opponent. A player no longer has to fall down to have a penalty called, so the end result is a player will essentially be taking himself or herself completely out of the play by doing so. It is also important to establish that even the most obvious dive does not excuse the illegal action of the opponent.

Since USA Hockey's current rules do not specifically identify diving as an infraction, we are somewhat limited in how officials can react to this type of action. When an obvious dive occurs, the recommendation is to have the official skate over and request to speak to the coach of the offending team. In doing so, they are acknowledging the fact a dive occurred and are asking the coach to address this action with their team. A friendly reminder that a diving action will have no effect on a penalty being called or not would also be warranted.