

## Misconduct

by

**J M GAWLEY**

English Hockey Association

Level 3 Umpire Coach

Umpires must learn to differentiate clearly between breaches of the Rules, for which penalties are optional, and Misconduct, which must NEVER go unpenalised and be dealt with firmly and at the first available opportunity.

A breach of the Rules can be penalised by a Free Hit outdoors or Free Push indoors, a Penalty Corner, a Penalty Stroke, by reversing a penalty already awarded or, in the case of an awarded Free Hit by advancing the ball up to 10 metres, or 5 metres in the case of a Free Push for indoor hockey. These are the only penalties available. None is mandatory, as penalties for breaches are entirely dependent on application of Advantage i.e. if the offender does not disadvantage the opponents, or if to blow the whistle to stop the game would increase the advantage already gained by the offender, then the penalty shall not be applied. Breaches of the Rules include improper use of feet, intentionally playing the ball at an opponent's body, obstruction, breaking the 5 metre clearance rule at Free Hits.

Misconduct includes such offences as tripping, barging, stick hitting and hooking, pushing in the back (as in a reverse-side tackle), dropping the shoulder into an oncoming opponent, wasting time, verbal abuse of opponents and umpires both by players on the pitch and by their substitutes, etc. Such offences may be accidental, through carelessness or ignorance, or intentional. They usually occur coincident with a breach of the Rules. Misconduct MUST always be penalised; there is no excuse for an umpire's failing to do so. Furthermore, Advantage cannot be applied to Misconduct, but only to the breach of the Rules that accompanies it.

The penalties for Misconduct range from the umpire's "shouting" with the whistle when applying the penalty for a Breach, to indicate displeasure, through giving a verbal caution concerning the bad conduct to the use of the Green Card for a public warning, the Yellow to suspend temporarily and, ultimately, the Red Card to dismiss the player or substitute permanently from the field. It should be remembered that no player may receive the same-coloured card for the same offence, e.g. a second green card should instead be a yellow.

Because Misconduct usually occurs as part of a breach of the Rules (not necessarily by the same player) it may be valid for the breach not to be penalised if Advantage applies. Clearly, however, the Misconduct remains to be dealt with, and should be as soon as convenient, usually at the next stoppage of play. There should seldom be difficulty in an umpire's remembering which player was involved, especially if players' shirts are numbered.

A classic example of the application of Advantage when Misconduct occurs is the one-to-one tackle in which a player in possession, having been obstructed, takes the stick over and dangerously close to the opponent's head, then makes off with the ball. This player is permitted to retain possession by virtue of not having been disadvantaged by being obstructed, but the umpire must seize the next opportunity at least to caution concerning the dangerous use of the stick. Alternatively, if the obstructing player wins the tackle, or is actually injured by the overhead stick, then the umpire can award a free hit to the opponent and simultaneously award a caution, warning or suspension for dangerous use of the stick.

A further example of Misconduct is the vexed business of stick hitting, usually by tackling too early from behind on the right. Quite often, the player with the ball retains possession, despite the assault, and is able to make effective use of the ball whilst also retaining self-control. The umpire must bear down on the problem, however, and deal with the stick-hitter as early as possible. It is easy when the stick hit or hook gains a positive advantage for the offender, because then a penalty can be awarded and the offender's Misconduct dealt with at the time, but less easy in a game where stick interference is prevalent but puts the opponents at little or no disadvantage - a common problem with unskilled and/or inexperienced players. In that situation, probably the most effective benefit to the game as a whole is to stop the game and seek the co-operation of the captains. If that still does not work, then the umpire may need to abandon the application of advantage and deal instantly with the misconduct associated with such bad tackles, for this may be the only way to ensure a SAFE game.

With very few exceptions, there is no advantage in danger. If danger is caused, it is Misconduct, whether unintentional or intentional, and should normally be dealt with immediately.

When misconduct has taken place such that a player is hurt, the player's pain will be just the same whether the offence was intentional or not. The only differences so far as the umpire is concerned are the severity of the penalty for the breach if within the circle or 23-metres area if intentionally by a defender, and the colour of the card or length of suspension for the danger caused. It should be noted that a suspension for such conduct will normally be longer than that for non-physical offences such as dissent, and no suspension should be for less than 5 minutes.

Verbal abuse can have a serious effect on the performance of people at whom it is aimed, especially umpires. It can come both from players on the pitch and from their substitutes and demands firm and early action from the umpires. Furthermore, the language in which it is expressed need not necessarily be understood by its targets; body and face language are frequently more than enough to support the verbal expression. It should be noted that, where a substitute has been suspended for misconduct, a player of the same team must then be removed from the pitch for the duration of the suspension, though may then be available as a substitute for those remaining on the pitch.

A further irritating form of Misconduct is the failure of opponents to move 5 metres clear of Free Hits, Hits-in and Corners and for such hits to move at least 1 metre before being played by a player of the same side. Approaching closer than 5m is prevalent among both attackers and defenders at free hits awarded to attackers within 5m of the circle, and should be dealt with firmly, EARLY and EVERY TIME. Umpires should try to apply the 5-metres rule BEFORE a hit is taken. The penalty of advancing by 10m a Free Hit (but NOT a Hit-in/Corner) should be applied judiciously in the outfield and raising the penalty to a penalty corner if the defenders offend for the hit within 5m of the circle but, again, after the umpire has attempted to get the players 5m clear. For opponents closer than 5m to the Hit-in and Corner, a Free Hit should be awarded and consideration given to awarding a personal penalty to the player(s) concerned for repeated offences. And remember - if the team taking a free hit or penalty corner commits misconduct, the penalty can be reversed.

---

## SUMMARY

- Note the difference between a breach of the Rules and Misconduct, and the different penalties applicable to each.
- The penalty for a breach need not be applied if Advantage accrues, but the personal penalty for Misconduct must ALWAYS be applied, albeit not necessarily at the time.
- Deal with danger instantly.
- Make life easier for everyone by being strict about the requirement for the 5 metre clearance at Free Hits, Hits-in and Corner, and be particularly watchful for Free Hits to the attack within 5 metres of the circle.