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NFHS Ice Hockey Weekly Rule Interpretations

Welcome to week 5 of the 2025-26 NFHS Ice Hockey Weekly Rules Interpretations! 2 years ago language was added to the rules book defining possession of the puck along with control of the puck. This week is clarifying the language a bit to better understand the difference between the two. The language is as follows:

Rule 9-4-5: Control of the puck is the act of propelling the puck with the stick, hand, or feet. Control of the puck is not lost when contact with the puck is made by an opponent, the boards or the net, provided the player in control of the puck continues propelling the puck.

Rule 9-4-6: The last player to physically touch the puck with the stick or body shall be considered in possession of the puck. NOTE: A player can have possession of the puck without control, but cannot have control of the puck without possession.

The situations below are simple examples of explaining the differences between possession and control:

Situation 1: Player B1 has the puck in the corner in a position to make a move to the front of the net in the offensive zone. The referee's arm is up as there is a delayed penalty against Team A.

RULING: Play continues until Team A controls the puck, then play shall be stopped and Team A shall be assessed the penalty (unless Team B scores).

Comment: Team A can deflect or tip the puck, but until they have control, play shall continue. Control is essentially having the puck in a position to be able to do something purposeful with it.



Situation 2: Player A is stickhandling through the neutral zone. The skate of Player A enters the offensive zone (cross the blue line) before the puck. See "Image 1."

RULING: Play is onside and shall continue.

Comment: Because Player A is in control of the puck (stickhandling), Player A may precede the puck over the blue line. Reference Rule 9-6-1.