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NFHS Field Hockey Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule References: 10-3, 10-2-11, 10-3 PENALTIES

Penalty Corners—Early Entry by Defenders

Purpose

The purpose of this interpretation is to explain what happens when a defender enters the circle or crosses the goal line too early during a penalty corner. Defenders have a difficult job on a penalty corner, but they must still wait for the ball to be inserted before they leave their required position. If a defender moves too soon, that defender has gained an unfair head start toward the ball or toward the attacker. In simple terms, the defender cannot leave early to beat the play. The rule creates a clear penalty so officials, coaches and players know exactly what must happen next.

Rule Language

When a defender enters early during a penalty corner, the penalty corner must be retaken since the criteria for the completion of a Penalty Corner in Rule 10-3-1 has not occurred.

Any player entering the circle before the ball is struck shall be sent to the center line. If it is the defensive player, other than the goalkeeper the offending player shall be required to go beyond the center line and cannot be replaced. (10-3 PENALTY 1)

If the goalkeeper is the defensive player that enters the circle before the ball is struck, the team defends the penalty corner with one fewer player, having sent a defender to the center line. (10-3-PENALTY 2)

When multiple defensive players break into the circle prior to the insertion, one and only one player entered the circle first. The official must decide and send only one player, the player who entered the circle first, to the center line. (10-3 PENALTIES 6)

The defending team then defends the retaken penalty corner with one fewer player. Any player required to go beyond the center line because of an early entry violation may not return for a retaken penalty corner. If a subsequent penalty corner is awarded because one of the following criteria for completion of a Penalty Corner has occurred: ie.

- a. A goal is scored.
- b. A free hit is awarded to the defending team.
- c. A penalty stroke is awarded. The game shall be prolonged to permit the completion of the penalty.

- d. The ball travels more than 5 yards from the circle. (Ball crosses broken circle line)
- e. The ball is played over the end line and the penalty corner is not awarded. (16-yard hit awarded)
- f. A defender commits a foul which does not result in another penalty corner. Example: Ball travels to 18-yard line (outside circle, but within broken circle line) and defense fouls. Free hit at the 18- yard line for the offense. (10-3-1 a-f),

The subsequent penalty corner may be defended by no more than 5 players. (10-3--1, 10-3 PENALTIES)

Interpretation

The official's job is to identify the player who entered early and apply the penalty to that player. The defending team may not replace the offending player on the retaken penalty corner. This is important because the penalty is meant to remove the advantage gained by leaving early. If the team could simply replace the player, there would be very little consequences for the violation. Coaches should understand that an early-entry violation by a defender can cause the team to defend the next retaken penalty corner with fewer players. Officials should be clear and direct: identify the defender, send the defender beyond the center line and make sure no replacement enters for the retaken Penalty Corner.

Game Scenario

Team A is awarded a penalty corner. Four defenders and the goalkeeper are positioned for Team B. The official blows their whistle. Before the ball is inserted, B2 leaves the goal line early and enters the circle. The official stops play and orders the penalty corner to be retaken. **RULING:** B2 must go beyond the center line and may not be replaced for the retaken penalty corner. **COMMENT:** Team B must now defend the retaken penalty corner with one fewer defender. This is because B2, entered the circle prior to the ball being struck by the insertor. The penalty applies to the player who committed the violation. If the goalkeeper enters the circle early, a player is sent to the center line, never the goalkeeper.

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches.

Officials should use strong preventive officiating by checking that defenders are properly positioned before the penalty corner begins. A clear whistle, clear eye contact and clear body language helps everyone understand when the ball may be inserted. Coaches should train defenders to wait for the ball to be struck by the insertor and not enter the circle early on the blowing of the whistle by the official. Players should understand the simple rule: if a defender leaves early, the corner is retaken and that defender goes beyond the center line and the team plays short on the retaken penalty corner. Officials should also remember the difference between a retaken penalty corner and a subsequent penalty corner, because that determines whether the player must return to the center line or whether the defending team may defend with no more than 5 players.