Wow… October is already upon us. Tournament Draw/Seeding takes place this weekend and our State Qualifying Tournament begins on October 17th. As we near the end of the season, we, as officials need to be on top of our games and performing our duties effectively and efficiently. To that end, here are a couple of questions/situations to consider. As always, please continue to send me real game situations that have arisen as those continue to generate some excellent discussion about our game.

MISCONDUCT

Field Hockey Question #1: In a recent game, I had a brain freeze when I witnessed a player on the field with earrings. I appropriately waited until a stoppage of play, awarded the free hit for the foul and then called time out to issue a card. However, I awarded the green card to the player and sent her off for two minutes. I’m not sure that was correct…

   Ruling: You were on the right track, but missed being spot-on. Rule 1.9.1.a (page 23) states that “Head coaches are responsible for ensuring that their players are properly attired and legally equipped.” The jewelry rule (1.5.5 on page 19) is a violation of improper attire; the coach rather than the player is guilty of the misconduct. The coach, rather than the player, should have been issued the green card. Rule 1.5 PENALTIES on page 19 states: “A field player wearing an illegal uniform shall be removed from the game at the first stoppage of play following the discovery of the violation. The removed player may re-enter if she has complied with the rules, or she may be replaced, in a manner consistent with the substitution rules. Misconduct penalties will be assessed to the head coach, using the card progression.

   Reminder: The card progression for coaches and for players is somewhat different regarding penalties. When a player is carded, she must leave the field (and the team plays short) and sit at the scorer’s table for the duration of the suspension (2 minutes for green, 5 or 10 minutes for yellow) after which time, the scorer should release the player back to her team bench area. The coach has option of re-entering that player or a teammate (Rule 8.2. PENALTIES on pp. 44-45). When a coach is carded for a misconduct, the team only plays short on a yellow or a red card (The team does not have to play short for a green card on the coach.) When a red or yellow card is issued to a coach, the coach must have any player sit at the scorer’s table while they play short.
A selected player is not required to remain at the scorer’s table as the coach has the option of alternating players as long as they continue to play short for the duration of the suspension.

DELAY OF GAME:
Field Hockey Question #2: How long does a team have to "discuss" what corner they are going to do - clock is running - think the clock stops in college so that isn't an issue. Teams can kill the clock when huddled at the top of the circle. When is it considered a delay of game?

Ruling: This is a really good question; one that, unfortunately, may not have a popular answer. It is a judgement call, just like most violations... Our Rule Book (Rule 8.2.1.e on page 43-43) states “Misconduct includes any player or team action which an official deems to be unsportsmanlike including but not limited to... unnecessary delay.” The penalty is a misconduct utilizing the penalty card progression. That penalty could be assessed to a player or to a coach if the official determines that the coach is encouraging the delay. (Example: I was informed of a situation earlier in the season where a coach was shouting to her player that she should not take the free hit until instructed by the official to do so… We [officials] don’t do that during the 1st 57 minutes of a game, why would we begin as time wanes in a close game?) There is no specific time limit for calling a play on a penalty corner, taking a side-in, or restarting from a free hit. Officials need to be aware of the game situation as well as the potential of stalling tactics.

Recommended Procedure: Officials need to be aware of the game situation including the amount of time remaining. If players are doing what they are supposed to be doing, they will take the free hit or side-in from the appropriate spot in a timely fashion. Calling a play for a penalty corner usually comes from the team area, so there is generally no need for a team huddle! Officials need to begin by utilizing preventative officiating. If they, in their judgement feel that a team is lolly-gaging, the official needs to stop that inappropriate action. If the attack players hustle to the top of the circle, make a decision and hustle to get to their respective positions, it is probably not a violation. If the defensive goal keeper steps out of the cage and refuses to get herself and teammates ready quickly, they might be delaying the game… Options for officials, after verbally asking them to move quickly, would be to penalize the delay as a misconduct and/or stopping the clock! Please, let’s not permit gamesmanship by coaches or captains to take an inappropriate role in determining the outcome of our game.

CIRCLE PLAY ~ OBSTRUCTION
Field Hockey Issue #3: Several Varsity Head Coaches have communicated questions/concerns about situations where the goal keeper was (or allegedly was) obstructed and therefore prevented from playing the ball. One of these included a video clip which seemed to show an attack player standing directly in front of the goal keeper. As she backs the keeper in toward the goal, the keeper is unable to move into a position to play the ball.

Ruling: Please remember that, like other fouls, obstruction is a judgement call, but one that we may need to do a better job of seeing!

Let’s begin with the definition from Rule 8.1.q (on page 43). “Fouls include the following... Obstruction, which occurs when: 1. A player moves or interposes herself or her stick, keeping an opponent from attempting to play the ball; 2. A player shields the ball with her stick or any part of the body; 3. A third player takes a position between an opponent and the ball so her teammate has an opportunity to play the ball.” Rule 8.1.s adds the verbiage: “Holding, hitting at or
“grabbing another player’s stick or clothing.” to the definition. So obstruction could include touching, positioning, and or blocking a player’s ability to play the ball.

Next, let’s look at what the Officials Guide advises us to do for these “off-ball fouls.”

Trail Official: “Game control mandates the need for the TRAIL official to watch for fouls away from the ball. Fouls to watch for include holding, pushing, tripping, taunting, stick interference, blocking, fighting, etc. When to call: a) if a situation is dangerous or violent, call immediately no matter where the foul occurs. b) Field of Play – Wait for a stoppage of play, call time-out and administer the appropriate card(s). c) Partner’s Circle – Wait for a stoppage of play, call time-out, indicate foul to partner and administer appropriate card(s). Do not prevent a scoring opportunity when a foul occurs off the ball. Unless the foul is the cause of losing a scoring opportunity [sic]” (Page 76, Officials Guide VIII.E).

So in the scenario above, the trail is responsible to watch off the ball, but the lead official is the calling official in this circle. In effect, there should be two sets of eyes on this third-party obstruction. The goalkeeper needs to have space to play the ball (even a step in either direction). This girl's role here isn't to go and play the ball but to screen. She also created contact with the keeper; that is a foul too.

We have to train ourselves, as the "controlling" umpire to see this because the colleague at the top can only see the potential for eventual obstruction, but wouldn't see the space or the player backing into the goalkeeper.

Bottom Line: As indicated in the Official’s Guide (1.C.1 on page 65), “The officials should operate as a team and use every opportunity within the rules to demonstrate you are a team. Example: Eye contact and signals where appropriate.” (This is also a prime opportunity for effective use of wireless communication devices.) As lead officials, let’s try to open our scope of vision to include what is happening in the mouth of the goal as well as the movement of the ball on the ground. – Not an easy task, but something that we might strive to attain.

Keep up the good work!

Rick

RESPECT THE GAME!