



## USA Hockey Blind Hockey Rules

### FORWARD

The para-sport of Blind Ice Hockey is extremely similar to the sport of traditional ice hockey with only a few adaptations to make the game accessible to players who are blind or visually impaired. The biggest adaptation is the puck which makes noise, and is larger and slower than a traditional hockey puck.

The sport of Blind Ice Hockey has been played in the United States since 2014 and the sport is governed by USA Hockey.

USA Hockey hosts two national level events annually. The Blind Hockey Summit and the Disabled Hockey Festival.

The following are the Official Rules for the recreational Sport of Blind Hockey and shall be in effect for all games played at a USA Hockey sanctioned event with the exception of any best-on-best international games played as part of a USA Hockey sanctioned event. Such games shall be played according to the international rules of competitive Blind Hockey.



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## **ELIGIBILITY**

The sport of Blind Hockey is played by athletes who are blind or visually impaired. Interested participants must meet the criteria of one of the three International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) classifications or the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) Recognized Low Vision Classification of B4. The criteria for each classification are below. Any potential participants who are interested but unsure if they meet the criteria should email [usablindhockey@gmail.com](mailto:usablindhockey@gmail.com) to inquire.

### IBSA Visual Classifications

#### Class B1

No light perception in either eye up to light perception, but inability to recognize the shape of a hand at any distance or in any direction.

#### Class B2

From ability to recognize the shape of a hand up to visual acuity of 20/600 and/or a visual field of less than 5 degrees in the best eye with the best practical eye correction.

#### Class B3

From visual acuity above 20/600 and up to visual acuity of 20/200 and/or a visual field of less than 20 degrees and more than 5 degrees in the best eye with the best practical eye correction.

#### USABA Recognized Low Vision Classification

##### Class B4

From visual acuity above 20/200 and up to visual acuity of 20/70 and a visual field larger than 20 degrees in the best eye with the best practical eye correction.

## **ROSTER ELIGIBILITY**

USA Hockey requires that all programs be fully sanctioned with all teams, players, volunteers, coaches and staff, within such programs be fully registered with USA Hockey.

All roster rules and eligibility can be found in the USA Hockey Annual Guide (Rules and Regulation XIV. Disabled Hockey).



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## **ADAPTED RULES OF BLIND HOCKEY**

The playing rules of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) will be in effect, with exceptions which are detailed later.

The following IIHF rules are highlighted:

- Goal creases include the two-inch red line describing an arc with a radius of six feet from the center of the goal line;
- No-touch icing, with play stopped immediately as the entire puck crosses the goal line;
- A player who is assessed a Fighting Penalty shall be assessed a Major Penalty and a Game Misconduct Penalty;
- If players are changed during a stoppage in play, the visiting team must change first. Only one change of players per team is allowed.

## **SPECIAL BLIND HOCKEY RULES APPLICABLE**

- A - Adapted Equipment
- B - Adapted Rules
- C - Adapted Procedures

### **A – Adapted Equipment**

#### **A-1 ADAPTED PUCK**

An adaptive puck which creates special sounds and is larger than a regulation hockey puck will be used. The official puck shall be approved by USA Hockey. As of June 2019, the design specs for the official Blind Hockey puck are:

Material: 22-gauge steel  
Diameter: 5 ½ inches / 14 centimeters  
Height: 1 7/8 inches / 4.8 cm  
Construction: Hollow  
Weight: 220g  
Colour: Black  
Contents: 8 ball bearings

#### **A-2 ADAPTED NET**

The official regulation sized net for Blind Hockey shall be three (3) feet in height by six (6) feet in width.



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### A-3 UNIFORMS

White jerseys and socks are never to be used in the sport of Blind Hockey, as they do not contrast well against the white ice and boards and are difficult to see by visually impaired players. The home team shall wear a dark colored uniform, while the away team will wear a brightly colored jersey, such as bright yellow or orange, to ensure maximum contrast.

### A-4 GOALTENDER BLINDFOLDS

All goaltenders shall wear a blind fold under their helmets.

### A-5 PASS WHISTLE

The referees shall carry an electronic whistle to indicate once the One Pass Rule has been completed. As of May 2019, the official Pass Whistle of Blind Hockey is the Fox 40 Electronic Whistle on setting 3. (See B – 5 “One Pass Rule”).

## **B – Adapted Rules**

### B-1 DEFENDING DIFFERENT ENDS

Teams will remain in the same end adjacent to their bench for each period unless the referee determines that a team has an advantage by always defending the same end. In the event teams need to switch ends for the second period they will also switch benches to assist with line changes.

### B-2 BODY-CHECKING

No body-checking is permitted.

### B-3 PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

All players must wear full protective equipment including CSA certified or HECC certified full facial protection. A player playing without all mandatory equipment shall be assessed a Minor penalty for Delay of Game and will not be permitted to play unless wearing all mandatory equipment. The offending player may not be able to serve the penalty until they are wearing the proper equipment.

### B-4 HIGH STICK

For tips, use the 3 foot crossbar to determine if the tip is good or not for two reasons 1) we are encouraging players to keep their sticks down and 2) if we went with the regular 4 foot rule you don't have a cross bar to visually base your call on which creates challenges.



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#### B-5 SLAP SHOTS

Slap Shots are not permitted in Blind Hockey – during the act of shooting a player may raise their stick so that it is parallel with their hip at maximum. Result would be a penalty for slap shot.

#### B-6 ILLEGAL NOISE

Blind Hockey players and especially goaltenders rely on their ability to hear the puck in order to play. As such, anyone not on the ice is asked to remain quiet. It is at the referee's discretion to determine if anyone off ice is making too much noise and being disruptive. A minor penalty may be assessed if disruption persists.

#### B-7 ILLEGAL STICK TAP

A player may only tap his/her stick on the ice in the offensive zone. This allows teammates to communicate effectively via stick-tap with certainty that it is a teammate indicating their location even if they cannot see them. A player who is deemed to be stick tapping in the defensive or neutral zones will be penalized with a two (2) minute unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

#### B-8 "ONE PASS" RULE

In order to give the low vision and completely blind players the best chance to track the puck, teams must complete "One Pass" after crossing the offensive blue line prior to being eligible to score.

The referee will indicate that the required "One Pass" has been completed by blowing a distinct electronic Pass Whistle (see A-6 Pass Whistle) that emits a different sound than the usual whistle for a minimum of five (5) seconds, so that players will know that an attempt to score is possible.

Once the pass has been completed, they may try to score until the puck exits the attacking zone or there is a stoppage in play. If the puck exits the attacking zone or there is a stoppage in play resulting in a face-off, the attackers must again complete a pass before attempting to score.

#### B-8-a DEFINITION OF A GOOD "ONE PASS"

A "One Pass" shall be considered completed when an attacking player deliberately moves the puck either with their stick or skate, and the next player to touch the puck is a teammate, without a defending player having any contact with the puck in between.



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#### SCENARIOS:

An attacking player moves the puck to their teammate, and the puck is touched by either a defensive player's stick or body, but goes to the intended receiver of the pass anyways. RESULT: No pass.

An attacking player crosses the blue line and dumps the puck into the zone, and the next player to touch the puck is their teammate (even if it takes several seconds). RESULT: Good pass.

#### B-8-b GOAL OR SAVE WITH NO PASS

If a team attempts to score without making the required pass either resulting in the puck entering the net or the goaltender stopping play, the resulting face-off will take place at the neutral zone face-off dot outside the attacking zone.

If a team attempts to score without making the required pass, and the goaltender makes a save resulting in the puck returning into play, play shall be allowed to continue but the referee will alert the attacking team by yelling "NO PASS, NO PASS."

#### B-9 OWN GOALS

Due to the "One Pass" Rule there are several situations where the puck may end up in the net due to actions of the defending team, which have different results depending on the play:

1. If the "One Pass" HAS been completed, and the attacking team IS eligible to score, no matter what the defending team does if the puck enters the net it shall be awarded as a good goal.
2. If the "One Pass" has NOT been completed, and the attacking team is NOT eligible to score, and the defending team accidentally deflects the puck into their net, the goal shall NOT count.
3. If the "One Pass" has NOT been completed, and the attacking team is NOT eligible to score, BUT the referee determines the defending team accidentally put the puck into their own net by a deliberate act while controlling the puck it shall be awarded as a good goal.

#### EXAMPLES:

The "One Pass" has been completed, the attacking team is eligible to score, the defenseman attempts to pass up the middle of the ice and the puck hits the skate or shin pad of any player (either team) and ends up in the net. RESULT: Good goal.





The One pass has not been completed, the attacking team is NOT eligible to score, the attacking forward shoots the puck off of a defenseman's shin pads or stick and it deflects into the net. RESULT: No goal.

The One Pass has been completed, the attacking team is eligible to score, the attacking forward shoots the puck off of a defenseman's shin pads or stick and it deflects into the net. RESULT: Good goal.

#### B-10 OFFENSIVE CREESE VIOLATION

The goaltender is the only player permitted in the goal crease. Other players may place their sticks in the crease, but no part of their bodies or skates are permitted in the crease. If an attacking player enters the crease – even if they have possession of the puck – the result shall be an offensive crease violation and the resulting face-off shall come outside the zone. If the offensive player entered the crease prior to putting the puck in the net the result shall be NO GOAL as the crease violation occurred first.

#### SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1. In the event the referee determines that a defensive player pushed the offensive player into the crease the result shall be a Defensive Crease Violation and the resulting face-off shall take place inside the zone.
2. In the event that an offensive player scores while in the crease as a result of a defensive player pushing them in prior to the referee stopping the play, the result shall be a good goal.
3. If the defensive team is in control of the puck and working towards exiting the zone, a crease violation will not be called if an attacking player enters the crease so as to try and intentionally stop the play

#### B-11 DEFENSIVE CREESE VIOLATION

No defensive player may enter the crease. A referee may give a warning to the defensive players to exit the crease. In the event a defensive player blocks a shot while in the blue paint they shall be given a two (2) minute penalty for a defensive crease violation.

#### B-12 GOALTENDER FREEZING THE PUCK

As the goaltender is blind (and blindfolded), and the puck does not make noise when still, the goaltender does not have to cover the puck to freeze it after making a save so long as the puck stops in the crease. After the goaltender makes a save, the moment the referee determines it is no longer moving, the puck shall be deemed frozen, and the play shall be whistled dead. However, if





the goaltender makes a save and the puck is moving within the crease on the rebound, the puck is still live and the attacking players may score provided their skates remain outside the crease. Finally, if the puck comes to a stop in the crease BUT the goaltender did not make a save (usually when the puck hits the post or is pushed in during a scramble in front) the play continues.

#### **B-13 GOALTENDER INTERFERENCE**

An attacking player who makes contact with the opposing goaltender within the goal crease with any part of his/her body or skates shall automatically be assessed a penalty for Goaltender Interference.

#### **B-14 ILLEGAL GOALTENDING**

Goaltenders must be in a standing position at each face-off during the game, and must return to a standing position each time the puck exits the zone. A goaltender who attempts to remain on their knees or lying on their side during the face-off shall be awarded a two-minute delay of game penalty for Illegal Goaltending.

### **C – Adapted Procedures**

#### **C-1 PULLING THE GOALIE**

There are two situations where the goaltender may be pulled for an extra attacker, in both cases the result is the team may add an additional skater bringing the total to six (6) skaters.

1. Delayed Penalty

During a delayed penalty situation, the team that will be awarded a power-play may add an extra attacker with the goalie remaining in the net. In effect, they can “pull the goalie” and be allowed a sixth (6) skater on the ice while the goalie remains in their crease.

2. End of Game

If a team would like to “pull the goalie” for an extra attacker towards the end of the game they may do so, but only at a stoppage in play. Should a goalie attempt to skate off of the ice during play, the play would be whistled dead immediately and that team would be assessed a two (2) minute minor for delay-of-game.







#### C-2 PENALTY SHOT

A penalty shot may only be awarded if the “One Pass” rule had already been completed, and the player was eligible to score. In the event a defensive player takes a penalty that would usually result in a penalty shot, but the “One Pass” had not been completed and the attacking player was not eligible to score, the result shall be a two (2) minute minor penalty.

#### C-3 TIE BREAKING SHOTS PROCEDURE

The normal IIHF Tie Breaking Shots Procedure will apply. The only adaptation is the referee will ensure the goaltender knows they are facing the next shot before allowing an attempt, and will blow their whistle to start each attempt to allow the goaltender to know the puck is in play.

### USA HOCKEY BLIND HOCKEY CONTACTS

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