



PENGUINS CUP

2026

PLAYOFF RULES

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SECTION 1

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

1.A – Team Participation Requirements

1. All participating teams shall be members of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Hockey League and must be a “pure” team from the PIHL classifications of AAA, AA, or A.
2. Only teams representing a school district physically located in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall be eligible for the Penguins Cup Playoffs.
3. All association accounts receivable must have a zero balance as of the final day of the regular season or the team will not be permitted to participate in any post-season PIHL games.
4. Each team shall be certified to be in good standing with the Mid-American District of USA Hockey.

1.B – Player Eligibility Requirements

1. All players must meet all eligibility requirements of the PIHL in order to participate in Penguins Cup Playoff games. This shall include:
 - a. A player in the 8th grade or lower shall not be eligible.
 - b. A player shall be eligible for a period of 8 consecutive semesters after the commencement of his/her 9th grade year.
2. Eligibility for varsity Penguin’s Cup playoffs shall be at least 50% of the varsity regular season game total.
 - a. Players must appear on a game roster on a regular season scoresheet roster as participating in order to count towards this total.
 - b. Both Varsity and Junior Varsity league games shall count towards the Varsity total.

1.C – Eligibility Verification Procedures

1. All participating teams must have their “Team Book Check” – including a player-eligibility verification – completed by the final day of the Varsity regular season.
2. All teams must submit a recertified PIHL roster – which lists all players potentially eligible to compete in the Penguins Cup Playoffs – by the final day of the Varsity regular season.
 - a. A signature from the school principal must be applied to recertify the roster, by a date determined by the PIHL Registration Coordinator, as evidence that all players currently attend that high school and meet the academic and eligibility requirements of that school district.
3. The PIHL Playoff Committee shall consider requests for exemption from the minimum game requirement in situations where injury clearly prevented the player from meeting the requirement.
 - a. All such requests must be made using only the “Injury Exemption Request Form” and must be fully submitted no later than the final day of the Varsity regular season.
 - b. The PIHL Playoff Committee shall issue a ruling on all requests for exemption.
 - c. If the properly submitted exemption is approved by the Playoff Committee, only games missed due to the injury shall be added to the player’s total games.
 - d. There shall be no appeal permitted on rulings made for or against the minimum game requirement.

SECTION 2

PLAYOFF ADMINISTRATION

2.A – Playoff Format

1. The number of teams that shall qualify for the Penguins Cup Playoffs from each eligible classification shall be determined by the PIHL Playoff Committee and announced to the PIHL membership.
2. The PIHL Commissioner's Office shall publish the playoff format – citing the number of rounds, the layout of each playoff bracket, the potential range of playoff dates, and the potential sites (home/away/neutral).

2.B – Seeding Procedures

1. All playoff-eligible teams shall be ranked within their respective classification/conference/division by points as appropriate to the classification's playoff format.
2. Ties in the rankings shall be sorted by applying the Tiebreakers cited herein.
3. All teams shall be placed in the appropriate order into the playoff brackets, as applicable to the classification's playoff format.

2.C – Tiebreakers

1. In the event of a tie in the regular-season standings, a Tiebreaker System shall be used to break this tie.
 - a. If one team involved in the tie owns a tiebreaker advantage of all other teams involved in the tie, that team shall advance.
 - b. If a team has a tiebreaker disadvantage of all other teams involved in the tie, that team shall be eliminated.
 - c. Any time a team is removed (advances/eliminated) from the tie, the Tiebreaker System starts over from the top with the remaining teams, if applicable.
2. In accordance with the Tiebreaker rule from the PIHL Playing Rules, the Tiebreaker System shall be:
 - a. Highest points percentage in games against teams involved in the tie (head-to-head)
 - b. Most wins in the regular season
 - c. Most regulation wins
 - d. Lowest average penalty minutes per game in the regular season
 - e. Coin flip

SECTION 3

GAME ADMINISTRATION

3.A – Home Teams

1. The home team in each Penguins Cup Playoff game shall be the team with the higher seed, with #1 being highest.
2. In instances where teams from different conferences/divisions face each other with identical seeding numbers, the Tiebreaker System shall be used to determine the home team.
3. The home team shall occupy the players' bench to the left as one is facing the benches from the center faceoff circle and shall defend the net at the same end of the ice at the beginning of the game. In the event that the bench areas are clearly marked by the arena, the markings to "Home" and "Visitors" benches shall be honored.

3.B – Uniforms & Equipment

1. All player uniforms and equipment must meet the Varsity requirements cited within the current PIHL Playing Rules.
2. The home team shall wear predominantly white-colored jerseys and socks; the visiting team shall wear predominantly dark-colored jerseys and socks. No team shall be permitted to wear its third/alternate jersey in the post-season.

3.C – Game Personnel

1. The Commissioner's Office shall be responsible for scheduling all On-Ice Officials, Game Coordinators, Emergency Medical Providers, and Security Guards for qualifiers and quarter final games.
2. The Commissioner's Office shall be responsible for scheduling all On-Ice Officials, Game Coordinators, Emergency Medical Providers, Penalty Box Attendants and Security Guards for semi and final games.
3. An Emergency Medical Provider or Local Substitute shall be present and on-duty for any Penguins Cup Playoff game to start or proceed, as defined within the PIHL Playing Rules.

3.D – Admissions

1. Admission Prices for Penguins Cup Playoff Games shall be, as follows (plus fees if applicable with digital tickets)
 - a. Qualifier Games (play-ins) = \$7 for adults and students; children under 9 are free
 - b. Quarterfinals = \$10 for adults and students; children under 9 are free
 - c. Semifinals = \$10 for adults and students; children 9 and under are free
 - d. Finals = \$10 for adults and students; infants are free
2. Up to 30 players and up to 5 team personnel may sign-in for free admission to the team's playoff game. These individuals must appear on the team's certified USA Hockey roster and shall include the team's locker room monitor.
3. Only PIHL-issued playoff passes shall be honored for admission to Penguins Cup Playoff games. No other passes – including PIHL association passes, association made vouchers, and regular season credentials shall be accepted for any playoff game, regardless of round or location.
4. Credentialed media personnel shall be admitted for free to all Penguins Cup Playoff Games.
5. Each team shall provide a minimum of one representative until the end of the first period to help collect the gate at each game prior to the semifinals.
 - a. If a team does not provide a representative, the association shall be assessed 50% of the total gate money collected.
6. The home team, designated by these rules, shall provide a cash box and start-up monies for each game prior to semifinals.
 - a. The PIHL Admissions Control Sheet shall be used to record the gate money collected. A participating representative from each team shall sign the Admissions Control Sheet at the conclusion of the admissions process as a designation that the totals are accurate and that their team properly participated in the collection of the gate money.
 - b. The home team shall deposit the revenue in their association's account and then mail a check made payable to the PIHL to the Commissioner's Office within 5 business days.
 - c. If the revenues are not received within 5 business days of the date of the game, the home team shall be assessed a \$500 penalty. This amount shall be added to the gate money collected at the game.

SECTION 4

PLAYING RULES

4.A – Rulebooks

1. All playing rules shall follow the current “Official Rules and Casebook of Ice Hockey” issued by USA Hockey, with additions found in the current PIHL Playing Rules.
2. All exceptions to an applicable rulebook(s) shall be stated within these Penguins Cup Playoff Rules.

4.B – Time of Play

1. All Penguins Cup Playoff games shall consist of three, 17-minute periods using stop-time.
2. There shall be a 5-minute warm-up period prior to the start of each game. The buzzer shall sound at the conclusion of the warm-up period, at which time all warm-up activity shall end.
3. Each team shall be permitted a maximum of one timeout of 1-minute in length during regulation time.
4. The ice shall be resurfaced prior to the start of the warm-up period and again at the second intermission.
5. All games with a tied score at the end of regulation time shall then have overtime. The procedures for overtime shall be done in accordance with the Penguins Cup Playoff Rules for Overtime Periods.
6. There shall be no curfew applied to any Penguins Cup Playoff game, regardless of score, time, or situation.
7. Any game not played to completion shall be considered a suspended game. The PIHL Playoff Committee shall review all instances of suspended games, and upon full investigation, shall issue a ruling to resolve the matter within 24 hours of the start time of the suspended game.

4.C – Overtime Periods

1. Overtime shall be played for all Penguins Cup Playoff games with a tied score at the end of regulation time.
2. All overtime periods shall be 17 minutes of sudden-victory, stop-time play.
3. The on-ice manpower for all overtime periods shall be based upon 5-on-5 play, with all applicable penalties carrying over from the end of the previous period.
4. Each team shall be permitted a maximum of one timeout of 1-minute in length in overtime, regardless of whether a timeout was or was not used by the team during regulation time.
5. Playoff overtime shall utilize the following protocol for all games:
 - a. A 3-minute intermission shall take place immediately following the conclusion of regulation time.
 - b. Teams shall switch defending end zones between the end of regulation time and the start of the overtime period, and the teams shall switch defending end zones between each successive overtime period.
 - c. The ice shall be resurfaced following the conclusion of only odd numbered overtime periods (1st, 3rd, 5th, etc.).
 - d. Intermissions in overtime involving an ice surfacing shall end immediately upon completion of the ice resurfacing; intermissions in overtime without an ice resurfacing shall be 3 minutes in length.

4.D – Suspensions and Discipline

1. All suspensions and disciplinary actions acquired by players, coaches, team officials, teams, and associations shall carry-over from the regular season to the Penguins Cup Playoffs.
2. Suspensions and disciplinary actions obtained in the Penguins Cup Playoffs shall apply to the subsequent rounds of the playoffs for winning teams and/or into the next PIHL regular-season for losing teams under the terms of PIHL Playing Rule 7.3.I for “Carryover Suspensions.”
3. The “proper authority” for all supplemental discipline, as cited by the USA Hockey rulebook, shall be the PIHL Playoff Committee.

4.E – Protests and Disputes

1. There shall be no protests permitted for Penguins Cup Playoff games.
2. The PIHL Playoff Committee shall be empowered to make all decisions, resolve all disputes, and enact any appropriate policies to address matters not covered within these playoff rules or applicable rulebooks.
3. Rulings required for any dispute must be made within 24 hours of the completion of the game in-question.
4. All decisions made by the PIHL Playoff Committee shall be final and, as such, shall not be eligible for appeal.