

>> Hockey Rules Board

>> To ensure the current rules of the game are interpreted and applied consistently and fairly and to develop the rules to make the game even safer and easier to understand for players and spectators alike, whilst retaining the game's appealing characteristics.

HOCKEY RULES BOARD

Chairman: Manzoor Atif (Pakistan)

Secretary: Roger Webb (England)

Rules Development Secretary: Peter von Reth (Netherlands)

Development Secretary:

Secretary:

Members: Richard Aggiss (Australia)
 Seif El Dine Ahmed (Egypt)
 Jorge Alcover (Spain)
 Annabel Dillon (Singapore)
 Eric Donegani (Canada)
 Eduardo Guelfand (Argentina)
 Evlyn Raistrick (Scotland)
 Alain Renaud (France)
 Wolfgang Rommel (Germany)
 Roger Self (England)
 Islah-Ud-Din Siddiqui (Pakistan)
 Gulansingham Vijayanathan (Malaysia)
 Heinz Wöltje (Germany)

Introduction

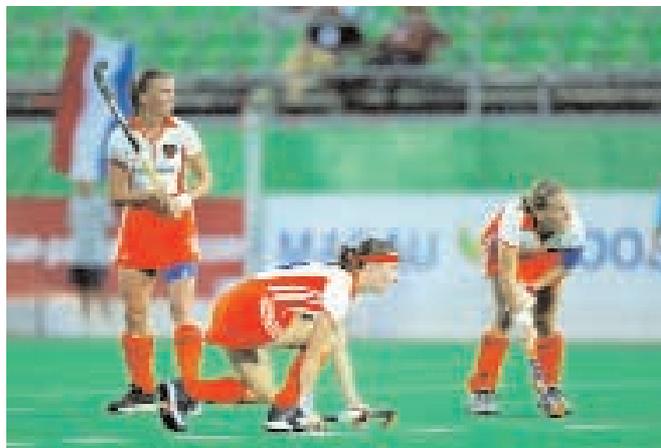
In line with our overall aims, the last two years have, on the one hand, been a period of transition for the Hockey Rules Board (HRB) – while on the other it has been a period of relative consolidation. The transition has focused on incorporation of research and development of the rules within the active remit of the HRB rather than in a separate but linked Rules Advisory Panel, which has now been disbanded. At the same time, the rules themselves have been through a period of consolidation rather than significant change. But this does not mean that the HRB has not been active, as the following report will testify.

Rules Changes

One change, which has been significant, at least as measured by the range of views about it, is allowing the edge of the stick to be used to play the ball. This change was introduced as a mandatory experiment in 1999 and was continuously reviewed. Views about it ranged from a welcome for an action which gave players more options and which in particular could be used for exciting shots at goal, to concern that it might lead to danger or could damage sticks. Making a decision involved a delicate and careful balance of these issues, with the HRB deciding that the experiment should run for a third year but that, with effect from 2002, the change would be incorporated as a formal rule.

Another change, which deserves comment, was the introduction in 2001 of a rule, which explicitly makes manufacturing a foul an offence. This reflects an ongoing concern by the HRB to protect skill and encourage attractive hockey by reducing negative and destructive actions.

Below: The Dutch anticipate a penalty corner in Macau.



For similar reasons, but also reflecting a concern about the image of the game and retaining good conduct within it, the jurisdiction of umpires has been explicitly extended to the conduct of substitute players not on the field of play.

Rules Interpretations

The HRB recognises that hockey is a complex game and that, despite good intentions and continuous review, its rules sometimes require interpretation. There has been a tendency in the past for some interpretations to emerge from individuals and bodies other than the HRB. However, it is now agreed that the sole source of such information should be the HRB.

In parallel with this agreement, the interpretations in the rules book were revised for the 2002 publication. Among other things, they incorporate material, which had formerly been published in FIH umpires briefing papers. More generally, the interpretations were rationalised and simplified. It is hoped that, together with other measures reported elsewhere, this will contribute to a more accurate and consistent interpretation and application of the rules.

Review of the Presentation and Style of the Rules

A desire to achieve a clearer understanding of the rules by all involved in the game has led to a project to review the presentation and layout of the rules book. Among other things, it is intended that the rules will be more closely linked to interpretations and that interpretations will be further simplified. Other changes will include a section bringing together material of particular interest to umpires.

Work on this review is a very labour intensive activity but is well underway. An advanced draft will be considered by the HRB in November 2002, with the new layout and content incorporated in the 2003 publication.

It is worth noting that both the rules and an informal guide to the rules are included on the FIH web site.

Rules Development and Trials

Discussions in the HRB include a wide range of options for development of the rules but it is wise to carry forward only a small number at any one time. Over the last two years the focus has therefore been on a trial, which requires three players always to be



outside their defending 23 metres area. This is therefore a way of limiting the number of defenders allowed in the 23 metres area.

Above: Florian Kunz, Germany, receives attention.

Although feedback has been varied and refers to a range of factors, the positive indications are that as a consequence the 23 metres and circle areas are less crowded and more attacking opportunities occur. There are also other beneficial effects such as a reduction in the frequency of hard hits into the circle. The trial is therefore continuing and includes plans to use it in a small number of appropriate international tournaments.

Consultation and Commitment

Associated with its more explicit responsibility for rules development, the HRB is keen to hear the views of the hockey community. It is therefore responding positively to a concern that the rules are sometimes not applied uniformly and appropriately especially in major tournaments. A circular was sent to all national associations and continental federations in the middle of 2002 seeking their views on this matter and also on wider ideas for rules development. These views will be the focus of a workshop involving representatives of NAs and CFs to be held alongside the 2002 Congress.

This reflects the HRB's commitment to being open to ideas and to taking steps to support the development of the game while preserving its attractive and distinguishing features.

The HRB's Ongoing Role

This report has concentrated on the major focuses of HRB activity over the last two years but must also acknowledge the considerable amount of more detailed work undertaken by its members and officers. But there is still more to be done in the context of the overall aims of the HRB.



Manzoor Atif
Chairman, Hockey Rules Board