

# THE RULES OF OUTDOOR HOCKEY

## Frequently asked Questions

(Updated: May 8, 2012)

### Introduction

This document is designed to provide support and guidance for participants, be they players, coaches, umpires or administrators. It is not meant to replace the rule book but to serve as a guide for interpreting some of the rules.

Our aim is to succeed in ensuring that the game is played, coached and officiated fairly, with the spirit of the game always being upheld and the Rules applied accurately and consistently in all games at all levels.

The purpose of this Paper is to share Rules related questions that are regularly sent to FHNS. In all cases prior to answering the questions submitted, we first checked with the Secretary of the FIH Hockey Rules Board to ensure absolute accuracy.

Items in **blue text** are actual text from the Rule Book. Readers are strongly recommended to read the Outdoor Rules Umpire Manager Briefings which provide further guidelines on the application of the rules. Both documents are available on the Field Hockey Nova Scotia web site at [www.fieldhockey.ns.ca](http://www.fieldhockey.ns.ca).

### Danger

Rule 9.8: "Players must not play the ball dangerously or in a way which leads to dangerous play."

- A ball is considered dangerous when it causes legitimate evasive action by players.
- The penalty is awarded where the action causing the danger took place.

#### Interpretations

Refer to Q&A for raised balls.

#### Notes

Do not judge danger only on how hard the ball is hit.

### Raised Balls

Rule 9.7: Players must not play the ball with any part of the stick when the ball is above shoulder height except that defenders are permitted to use the stick to stop or deflect a shot at goal at any height.

- When saving a shot at goal, a defender must not be penalised if their stick is not motionless or is travelling towards the ball while attempting to stop or deflect the shot. Only if the ball is genuinely hit while above shoulder height and a goal is prevented should a penalty stroke be awarded.
- If a defender attempts to stop or deflect a ball travelling towards the goal which will actually miss the goal, any use of the stick above the shoulder must be penalised by a penalty corner and not a penalty stroke.
- If dangerous play results after a legitimate stop or deflection, a penalty corner must be awarded.

#### Interpretations

- Unless you are positive that the defender has deliberately hit the ball away when defending the shot, do not penalize them for the stop. Remember that these stops are usually reactionary and some deflection will occur.
- For stops above the shoulder that do not involve a shot at goal, the following should apply:
  - If the action prevented an opponent from getting the ball, a yellow card should be issued. If the ball was in the circle – PS; if the ball was in the 23m area – PC.
  - If the ball was going out of the field and the action did not prevent an opponent from getting the ball – Green Card. If the ball was in the circle – PS; if the ball was in the 23m area – PC.
  - If the stop was a reaction to a dangerous shot – penalize the player who made the shot under rule 9.8.

Rule 9.8: "Players must not play the ball dangerously or in a way which leads to dangerous play."

- A ball is considered dangerous when it causes legitimate evasive action by players.
- The penalty is awarded where the action causing the danger took place.

Rule 9.9: Players must not intentionally raise the ball from a hit except for a shot at goal.

- A raised hit must be judged explicitly on whether or not it is raised intentionally. It is not an offence to raise the ball unintentionally from a hit, including a free hit, anywhere on the field unless it is dangerous.
- If the ball is raised over an opponent's stick or body on the ground, even within the circle, it is permitted unless judged to be dangerous.
- Players are permitted to raise the ball with a flick or scoop provided it is not dangerous. A flick or scoop towards an opponent within 5 metres is considered dangerous. If an opponent is clearly running into the shot or into the attacker without attempting to play the ball with their stick, they should be penalised for dangerous play.

Rule 9.10: Players must not approach within 5 metres of an opponent receiving a falling raised ball until it has been received, controlled and is on the ground.

- The initial receiver has a right to the ball. If it is not clear which player is the initial receiver, the player of the team which raised the ball must allow the opponent to receive it.

Rule 13.2e: "the ball must not be raised intentionally directly from a free hit"

Rule 13.3k (Penalty Corner): if the first shot at goal is a hit (as opposed to a push, flick or scoop), the ball must cross the goal-line, or be on a path which would have resulted in it crossing the goal-line, at a height of not more than 460 mm (the height of the backboard) before any deflection, for a goal to be scored.

- The requirements of this Rule apply even if the ball touches the stick or body of a defender before the first shot at goal.
- If the first shot at goal is a hit and the ball is, or will be, too high crossing the goal-line it must be penalised even if the ball is subsequently deflected off the stick or body of another player.
- The ball may be higher than 460 mm during its flight before it crosses the goal-line provided there is no danger and provided it would drop of its own accord below 460 mm before crossing the line.
- 'Slap' hitting the ball, which involves a long pushing or sweeping movement with the stick before making contact with the ball, is regarded as a hit.

Rule 13.3L (Penalty Corner): for second and subsequent hits at the goal and for flicks, deflections and scoops, it is permitted to raise the ball to any height but this must not be dangerous.

- A defender who is clearly running into the shot or into the taker without attempting to play the ball with their stick must be penalised for dangerous play.
- Otherwise, if a defender is within five metres of the first shot at goal during the taking of a penalty corner and is struck by the ball below the knee, another penalty corner must be awarded or is struck on or above the knee in a normal stance, the shot is judged to be dangerous and a free hit must be awarded to the defending team.

## Q&A on Raised Balls

**Q:** At a PC there is a height restriction on a hit shot at goal if it is the 1<sup>st</sup> shot at goal. When is this restriction no longer applicable? In other words when does the restriction cease to apply?

**A:** Immediately the ball has passed beyond 5m of the circle edge (i.e. the PC is over) or for the second or subsequent shots or deflections. If the first shot at goal is a hit or push that is deflected by a second attacker higher than 460mm (backboard height), the deflection is considered to be the second shot at goal and is legal. *See Rule 13.3k.*

**Q:** I have been told by an experienced umpire in my Region that if I stop a high shot at goal with my stick at or above shoulder height (I am a defender - not a goalkeeper) and that shot is considered by the umpire to be going wide of the goal, he will award a PS – for an intentional offence in the circle!

**A:** Completely wrong! It is considered an offence but it must be penalised with a PC – not a PS. As a defender you are currently permitted to stop the ball with your stick at above shoulder height only if the shot is travelling towards the goal. *See Rule 9.7.*

**Q:** I am concerned about the change that allows the raised ball to fall directly into the circle (unless it is dangerous). Can you confirm exactly who has "right of way"?

**A:** The initial receiver has a right to the ball. Who is the initial receiver? The player who is the closest to its landing area. If it is not clear which player is the initial receiver, the player of the team which raised the ball must give way and allow the opponent to receive it. That means 5m of space and time to receive it and control it on the ground. *See Rule 9.10*

**Q:** Why is our team continually penalised when we lift the ball into the circle? It isn't an offence to lift it in is it?

**A:** You are right. It is not an offence to raise the ball into the circle. To be precise the umpire should only blow it if it is dangerous or considered to be leading to dangerous play...no other reason. And what is the definition of dangerous? A

ball is considered dangerous when it causes legitimate evasive action by players. See Rule 9.9 as well as the *Umpire Manager Briefings published by the FIH*.

## Obstruction

Rule 9.12: Players must not obstruct an opponent who is attempting to play the ball.

Players obstruct if they:

- back into an opponent
- physically interfere with the stick or body of an opponent
- shield the ball from a legitimate tackle with their stick or any part of their body.
- A stationary player receiving the ball is permitted to face in any direction.
- A player with the ball is permitted to move off with it in any direction except bodily into an opponent or into a position between the ball and an opponent who is within playing distance of the ball and attempting to play it.
- A player who runs in front of or blocks an opponent to stop them legitimately playing or attempting to play the ball is obstructing (this is third party or shadow obstruction). This also applies if an attacker runs across or blocks defenders (including the goalkeeper or player with goalkeeping privileges) when a penalty corner is being taken.

### Interpretations

- The fundamental principle of the obstruction rule has is that players must not obstruct an opponent who is *attempting to play the ball*.
- Players must not tackle unless they are in a position to play the ball without body or stick contact.

## Q&A on Obstruction

**Q:** What exactly is stick obstruction?

**A:** Stick obstruction is when the player in possession of the ball places the stick over the ball as the tackler moves his/her stick towards the ball (i.e. attempts to tackle). The possessor is measured as attempting to prevent the tackler from getting access to the ball and must therefore be penalised. See Rule 9.12

**Q:** Can I tackle from behind? Some umpires say yes and mysteriously others say no! I am completely confused.

**A:** Yes you can tackle from behind. To be precise you can tackle from the front, the sides or the back of an opponent – but only if you can play the ball without prior body or stick contact. See Rule 9.13

**Q:** The rules frequently use the term “playing distance”. How do you define “playing distance”?

**A:** “Playing distance” is the length of the outstretched arm and extended stick.

## Advantage

Rule 12.1: Advantage: a penalty is awarded only when a player or team has been disadvantaged by an opponent breaking the Rules.

- If awarding a penalty is not an advantage to the team which did not break the Rules, play must continue.

### Interpretations

The "advantage Rule" is specified more simply and clearly: a penalty is awarded only when a player or team has been disadvantaged by an opponent breaking the Rules. If awarding a penalty is not an advantage to the team which did not break the Rules, play must continue.

### Umpire Guidelines

- It is not necessary for every offence to be penalised when no benefit is gained by the offender; unnecessary interruptions to the flow of the match cause undue delay and irritation.
- When the Rules have been broken, an umpire must apply advantage if this is the most severe penalty
- Possession of the ball does not automatically mean there is an advantage; for advantage to apply, the player/team with the ball must be able to develop their play
- Having decided to play advantage, a second opportunity must not be given by reverting to the original penalty
- It is important to anticipate the flow of the match, to look beyond the action of the moment and to be aware of potential developments in the match.

## Notes

Remember that you can play advantage when a deliberate foul has occurred and when play has stopped, then card the offender.

## Penalty Corners

Effective June 22, 2010, all Field Canada National Tournaments and the CIS Field Hockey events will use the following new rule:

### Breaking at Penalty Corner

- Until the ball has been played, no attacker other than the one taking the push or hit from the back-line is permitted to enter the circle and no defender is permitted to cross the centre-line or back-line.
- For any offence of this rule by a defender, the offending player(s) shall be required to go beyond the centre-line and cannot be replaced by another defender.
- For an offence of this rule by an attacker who enters the circle before the ball is played, the offending player(s) shall be required to go beyond the centre line. The player who pushes or hits the ball from the back-line must not feint at playing the ball.
- For an offence of this rule the offending player shall be replaced by another attacker.

## Q&A on Penalty Corners

**Question:** Can I use a drag shot at a PC? I am collecting the ball centimeters outside the circle and dragging it in – it's all one movement and the ball does not leave contact with my stick until I release it (the shot).

**Answer:** Yes of course you can. This is a very skilful piece of play and it must not be penalised unless it is dangerous.

**Question:** What is the correct decision if I slap the ball when shooting at goal during a PC?

**Answer:** Slapping the ball involves a long pushing or sweeping movement along the ground with the stick before making contact with the ball. The slap is regarded as a hit and it will therefore if it is the 1<sup>st</sup> shot at goal, be restricted in terms of height. It must not cross the goal-line at above the height of the backboards. *See Rule 13.3k*

## Penalty Strokes

- The player taking a penalty stroke must start by standing **behind and within playing distance of the ball** and must not approach either the ball or the goalkeeper after taking the stroke. The former limitation of taking only one step forward has been deleted.
- The Rules now specify that the whistle must be blown to start a penalty stroke when both players are in position (rather than requiring the umpire to confirm that both are ready which can cause confusion in the absence of a common spoken language).
- How offences at a penalty stroke are dealt with has been rationalized. It is now clear that the penalty stroke is **taken again** if a goalkeeper prevents a goal being scored but leaves the goal-line or moves either foot before the ball has been played. For any other offence by the goalkeeper which prevents a goal being scored, a goal is awarded.

## Q&A on Penalty Strokes

**Question:** Now that the one step restriction is removed at a PS, can the taker take as many steps as they like - a "run-up"?

**Answer:** No! The taker has to be behind the ball and within playing distance of it. He/she is unlikely to be able to run at the ball if it is in playing distance! (Playing distance is the length of the outstretched arm and extended stick).

**Question:** Can I use a drag shot at a PS?

Answer: No

**Question:** What's the difference between a flick and a drag-flick at a PS and why is a flick permitted but a drag flick is not?

**Answer:** A flick is "pushing the ball so that it is raised off the ground" (absolutely what it says in the Rules book) and it is permitted at a PS. The drag-flick is not permitted specifically when taking a penalty stroke - because the stroke is intended to be taken from a specific spot and not from a point in front of that spot which is essentially what happens when a dragging action is used!

## Discipline

To improve control of player conduct and therefore to protect the image of hockey, the intended duration of a temporary suspension may be extended for misconduct by a player while suspended.

New umpiring signals have been introduced to indicate dangerous play (place one forearm diagonally across the chest) and stick obstruction (hold one arm out and downwards in front of the body half-way between vertical and horizontal; touch the forearm with the other hand).

**Effective June 22, 2010**, all Field Canada National Tournaments and the CIS Field Hockey events will use the following new rule:

### Green Card – 2 minute suspension

- For any offence, the offending player may be warned (indicated by a green card).
- Where a green card is issued the offending player shall be temporarily suspended for two (2) minutes.
- During the period of temporary suspension of a player, the team shall play with one less player.
- The umpire shall immediately restart the game after the issue of the green card.
- The offending player must leave the field immediately. If the player interferes with play on the way to the technical table area the umpire will further penalise the player under the normal conduct of play provisions.
- The two minute temporary suspension shall commence when the player is seated at the technical table area.
- The timing of the suspension shall be controlled by the technical officials on duty at the technical table.

## Other Questions & Answers

**Question:** Is it an offence if the ball hits my hand while I am holding my stick? I am confused and three times now I have been penalised for it?

**Answer:** It is NOT an offence if the ball hits the hand holding the stick. *See Rule 9.11*

**Question:** If I am lying on the ground blocking a shot at goal (I am a goalkeeper) and the ball re-bounds off my body and is ½ a metre in front of me and an attacker hits it hard and fast directly at me without making any attempt to draw it back first or lift it over or around me, why is it that I am penalised and a PS is given? It's happened twice now and I am getting tired of it!

**Answer:** I am sure you are! This is completely the wrong decision. The umpire should be awarding a free hit to the defence.

## New Free Hit Rule (Self-Pass)

In the 2011 rulebook, the free hit rule has been re-worded. It now incorporates two variations on the old rule: the option to 'auto' or 'self' pass and the restriction when hitting the ball directly into the circle from the attacking 23 metre area.

Outlined below is the actual wording issued by FIH. Under each part of the rule, there is a guide to umpires and a brief commentary to provide some clarity.

Note: In all cases below, when the term 'free hit' is used, the rule will also apply to side-line hit-ins and long corners inside the attacking 23 metre area. Note also that the 'auto pass' can be used to start the game, or to re-start after a goal has been scored.

### 13.1 Location of a free hit:

- A free hit is taken close to where the offence occurred
- 'Close to' means within playing distance of where the offence occurred and with no significant advantage gained. The location from which a free hit is taken must be more precise inside the 23 metre area.

#### Commentary and guidelines

- Around the field, the placement of the free hit has become more liberal. In particular when a team takes a free hit back from where the infringement occurred, a 10 – 20 metre tolerance may be appropriate. Clearly when the ball is taken ahead of the spot, then maybe a 5 metre tolerance is acceptable.
- Inside the attacking 23 metre area, free hits (and auto passes) need to be managed more closely.

### **A free hit awarded within 5 metres of the circle to the attack is taken at the nearest point 5 metres from the circle**

#### Commentary and guidelines

- Most turfs have the dotted line marked 5 metres from the circle edge. No attacking free hit (or auto pass) is allowed within this line and the circle edge. Instead, the ball needs to be taken directly back and outside the dotted 5 m line.
- FIH Clarification: if the free hit is called within the hash marks, but outside the circle, the attack takes the free hit from the hash marks in retrospect to where the foul occurred.

### **A free hit awarded outside the circle to the defence within 15 metres of the back-line is taken up to 15 metres from the back-line in line with the location of the offence, parallel to the side-line.**

Commentary and guidelines: Using old terminology – "Take it up to the 16"

### **A free hit awarded inside the circle to the defence is taken anywhere inside the circle or up to 15 metres from the back-line in line with the location of the offence, parallel to the side-line.**

Commentary and guidelines: If a free hit is awarded inside the circle, it can be taken anywhere from inside the circle (or straight up to "the 16").

### **Rule 13.2 Procedures for taking a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field**

The ball must be stationary

Commentary and guidelines: In many cases the ball will not be stationary. However, it needs to be made clear to the opposition and the umpire that the free hit (or auto pass) has been taken.

### **Opponents must be at least 5 metres from the ball**

- If an opponent is within 5 metres of the ball, they must not interfere with the taking of the free hit or must not play or attempt to play the ball. If this player is not playing the ball, attempting to play the ball or influencing play, the free hit need not be delayed.

#### Commentary and guidelines:

- Allow play to carry on in the spirit of open, flowing hockey.
- Deal with players who interfere deliberately under misconduct. However, if a player chooses to 'auto pass' then they should not be permitted to try and manufacture a foul by running at the opposition who may not have finished retreating 5 metres. The 'auto pass' rule is intended to speed up the taking of free hits – not to create an opportunity for a manufactured foul.

FIH Clarification: Any free hit to the attack within the 23m all players must be 5m from the ball except the person taking the free hit. A self pass can be used and if players are not 5m and not impacting the play, the play should go on. Players who are NOT 5m cannot play or interfere with the game until the ball has travelled 5M (the distance they should have stayed away). If an opponent or other player was 5m away when the self-pass commenced, they can attempt at any moment after the take of the free hit.

**When a free hit is awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball**

Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory

**The ball is moved using a push or hit**

Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory

**The ball must not be raised intentionally directly from the free hit**

Commentary and guidelines: Self-explanatory

**If the player taking the free hit is the next player to play the ball, the actions of taking the free hit and of next playing the ball must be two separate actions**

Commentary and guidelines:

This rule describes the 'self pass.' It means that the self pass needs to show clearly that the free hit (to one's self) has been taken. Therefore a player should attempt to make the ball stationary and pass to himself or herself, before say dribbling down the field with the ball. The temptation might be for players to carry on when the whistle goes without formally self passing. This rule requires them to make the self pass and their next action, two separate events.

**Before another player of the team which took the free hit is allowed to play the ball, the ball must move at least 1 metre**

The ball does not have to move 1 metre before the player taking the free hit may play the ball again.

Commentary and guidelines:

- The movement of the ball one metre to a player of the same team (conventional pass) is now an established rule. However, it too has been liberalised. The movement of the ball one meter at a free hit allows for opposition players to compete for the ball more safely when contesting the ball at an overhead pass situation. However, note that when a player does an 'auto pass,' then the ball does not need to move one metre.

FIH Clarification: Self pass does not have to travel 1m; pass to another player must travel 1m.

**From a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has traveled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of either team other than the player taking the free hit.**

**Commentary and guidelines:**

Under no circumstances may a player play the ball directly into the circle from a free hit (or auto pass) within the attacking 23 metre area. The ball must first have traveled (moved) 5 metres (conventional or self pass) or be touched by another player of either team.

FIH Clarification: Taking a free hit at 5m from the circle with a self pass, and nobody interfering/defending the attack, the ball must travel 5m and then the ball can be played into the circle (by played means to touch the ball with the stick). If the free hit is taken with a self pass, defenders will, as expected, approach the attacker and might touch, or intercept the ball. If this happens the ball can be played into the circle, but may have only travelled 3m before touched by a defender or incoming teammate.

**Rule 13.2h From a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has traveled at least 5 metres or has been touched by a player of either team other than the player taking the free hit.**

- If the player taking the free hit continues to play the ball (i.e. no other player has played it), that player may play the ball any number of times, but the ball must travel 5m before that player plays the ball into the circle by hitting or pushing the ball again

- Alternatively, another player of either team who can legitimately play the ball must deflect, hit or push the ball before enters the circle, or after this (2nd) player has touched the ball, it can be played into the circle by the player who took the free hit.

Note: It is permitted to play the ball high above the attacking circle so that it lands outside the circle subject to Rules related to dangerous play and that the ball is not legitimately playable inside or above the circle by another player during its flight.

All parts of Rule 13.2 apply as appropriate to a free hit, centre pass and putting the ball back into play after it has been outside the field. In particular rule 13.2h also applies if the attack puts the ball back into play within the 23m area after it has been outside the field.

## **Q&A on Self-Pass Rule**

Q1: If I choose to do a self pass, must the ball move 1 meter before I can play it again?

A1: No, the ball does not have to move 1 meter if the player taking the free hit will retain possession. But, the ball is to be played (for example, tapped) and then controlled in a second action. As the player takes the free hit, the player cannot remain in continuous contact with the ball as the player moves off from the position of the free hit (Rule 13.2 f & note).

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Q2: The rule says nothing about the teammates of the player taking the free hit having to be 5 meters away. Can the attacking team have more than one teammate within playing distance of the ball?

A2: Inside the attacking 23 meter area, players from both teams must be 5 meters from the free hit. Outside of the attacking 23 meter area, two or more players from the same team may be close to the free hit spot (Rule 13.2c).

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Q3: The rule said you do not have to move the ball 1 meter for the next action. I thought the ball always had to move 1 meter at the start of a free hit. What changed?

A3: This applies only to a player starting the free hit with a self pass. The ball does not have to move 1 meter in order for the same player to collect the ball and continue on. If the player taking the free hit chooses to pass to a teammate, the ball **MUST** move at least 1 meter before the teammate can play the ball.

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Q4: Am I correct in understanding the rule that if I take the free hit (not going into the circle) I can play it again and it doesn't have to roll 1 meter but must be two separate actions?

A4: Correct (Rule 13.2 f).

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Q5: Going into the circle, is it true that the ball must travel 5 meters and I cannot touch it again, another player must?

A5: Not correct. If the player chooses to start the play with a self pass, they are permitted to move with the ball as if the free hit happened anywhere else on the field. The ball cannot be played into the circle until it has moved 5 meters. This includes a push, slap push and hit. If the player taking the free hit chooses to pass to a teammate, the ball can be played into the circle by the second player. Remember, both teams must be 5 meters away when the free hit is to the attack within the 23 meter area (Rule 13.2h).

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Q6: Does this mean that I cannot hit the ball directly into the circle?

A6: Correct. The attack cannot pass the ball directly into the circle from a free hit within the 23 meter area (Rule 13.2h).

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Q7: Does this new free hit rule apply to the center pass, side-ins, hit-ins ("16's"), and long corners.

A7: Correct. The only restart of play that this new rule does not apply to is the insertion of a penalty corner. The rule governing the penalty corner (Rule 13.3) has not changed.

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Q8: If the same player is taking the second touch on the ball, the player does not have to move the ball 1 meter, but the player must make two separate actions, no smooth rolling dribble, no dragging the ball, right?

A8: Correct. Umpires will be instructed to give a free hit to the opponents if the player restarting play attempts a self pass but does not make two separate actions (Rule 13.2f).

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Q9: If Player A is fouled by Player B, and whilst Player B is still close to the free hit spot, Player A takes a quick self pass to restart play. How does Player B get 5 meters away before they are permitted to tackle or otherwise defend against Player A?

A9: Possible scenarios...

- Player B must be attempting to get 5 meters away from the spot of the free hit. He/She should not be penalized as long as they are not delaying in their attempt to back away.
- Player A will not be permitted to run at Player B to create a foul. This is more likely to happen within the 23 meter area in order for the attack to manufacture a penalty corner. This action by Player A should be blown against them and handled under misconduct if the actions persist.



Rule 13.2b states that opponents must be 5 meters from the ball. Therefore, this distance must be created before the opponent attempts to tackle or engage the attacker in any way.

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Q10: Does Player B have to get 5 meters from the ball carrier, or 5 meters from where the hit was taken from?

A10: Rule 13.2b states that opponents must be 5 meters from the ball. Therefore, this distance must be created before Player B attempts to tackle or engage the ball carrier (Player A) in any way.

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Q11: Can Player B run close to the ball carrier for 5 meters without interfering and then engage?

A11: No. Any opponent running close to a player is interfering even though they may not be tackling. They would be preventing the attacker from moving in any direction by placing their body close to the attacker. This will not be permitted. As stated in the answers to Q9 and Q10, the opponent must create a 5 meter distance from the ball before tackling or engaging the ball carrier (Player A).

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Q12: From an attacking free hit inside the 23 meter area the ball cannot be played directly into circle by the attack when it is 5 meters away, right? But because every free hit has to be 5 meters away the requirement that the ball has to be played indirectly into the circle would only apply to a foul that is awarded when the ball is within 5 meters of the circle, right? So if I am standing anywhere outside the dotted line I can hit the ball into the circle as it will have traveled the required 5 meters, correct?

A12: Not Correct. The rule says the ball cannot be "played" into the circle inside the 23 meter area until it has traveled 5 meters—but that doesn't include traveling 5 meters from an initial hit or push into the circle or from a hit or push directly into the circle after a short-tap self pass. Let's put it this way, on these attacking free hits inside the 23 meter area, unless the attacker taking the free hit decides to self pass and then dribble into the circle, a second touch by a different player (from either team) is required before the ball can enter the circle unless the player who took the free hit has dribbled at least 5 meters before passing into the circle. If I'm taking the free hit and pass to a teammate, who has to be 5 meters away anyway, they can hit into the circle. If they're already in the circle, I can't pass the ball to them unless I dribble at least 5 meters before making the pass. This is to prevent the short-tap self pass and then crushing the ball into the circle when the free hit started from inside the 23 meter area.

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Q13: Should a free hit to the attack within 5 meters of the circle be moved back to be 5 meters away from the circle?

A13: Correct.

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Q14: Deliberately deleted

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Q15: Are the dashed lines outside the circles still required? If so what purpose do they serve?

A15: The proximity markers serve the purpose of defining the 5 meter area outside the circle and now indicate the minimum distance away from the circle that a free hit can be taken when the foul occurs near the circle line.

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Q16: Rule 13.2 (c) when a free hit is awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball. Does this mean on any free hit awarded inside the 23 metres area the ball is pulled outside of the 23 metres area AND all players other than the player taking the free hit must be at least 5 metres from the ball.

A16: No. The ball does not have to be brought outside the 23 meter area when a free hit is awarded within that area. Only within the 23 meter area do players from both teams have to be at least 5 meters from the player taking free hit. Also, you should not allow the attacked to commence the free hit from outside the 23 meter area when the free hit is awarded within the 23 meter area.

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Q17: When you used the phrase "Played into the circle" for attacking free hits in the 23 meter area, does that include carrying the ball into the circle?

A17: Yes. All free hits must be taken from at least 5 meters from the circle; therefore, carrying the ball into the circle from a self pass on a free hit is permitted.

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Q18: Can you just take a touch into the circle and shoot as soon as it enters the circle whilst the defense is still 5 yards away?

A18: The starting point for the free hit will be at least 5 meters from the circle so this will not happen—unless a player is fortunate enough to carry the ball all the way into the circle and can get a shot off without being contested. If so, good for them but, realistically, there will be no opportunity for the player taking the free hit to just "tap-and-shoot" or make a little touch on the ball followed by a direct shot.

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Q19: Can an attacking side use a self-pass instead of an injection at a short corner or gain an advantage from an injection error and strike the ball a second time?

A19: The rules governing the penalty corner have not changed. The injector on a penalty corner can only play the ball once as the "self pass" aspect of the free hit rule does not apply to a penalty corners. Even in error, the Injector must not approach within playing distance after their initial attempt to play the ball.

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Q20: In a self pass, how do you distinguish two separate actions?

A20: The easiest way to explain this is "a definite separation of stick and ball" before the ball is carried on as a self pass. Beginning with a smooth rolling dribble or a drag action, even with a change of direction, is not allowed.

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Q21: Does distinguishing two separate actions have to do with the distance the ball travels after the first touch?

A21: No. There is no required distance if performing a self pass. If passing to a teammate, the ball must still travel 1 meter.

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Q22: Deleted intentionally.

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Q23: Deleted intentionally.

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Q24: Is there a definition given for the term **played**?

A24: The term **played** is meant to require a touch of the ball by the initial taker of the free hit, another teammate or a defender after it has moved a minimum of 5 meters in any direction outside of the circle. It can also include a player carrying the ball into the circle if action is restarted with a self pass.

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Q25: Under the new free hit rule, can a defending team hit the ball into or across the circle from a hit-in ("16"), side-in or free hit inside their 25?

A25: Yes. There are no new restrictions for the defense when restarting play within the 23 meter area they are defending.

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Q26: Under the new free hit rule, can a player from a defending team stand within 5 meters of a teammate at a hit-in, side-in or free hit within their defending 23 meter area?

A26: Yes. There are no new restrictions for the defense when restarting play within the 23 meter area they are defending.

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Q27: What does the umpire do if the attack pushes or hits the ball into the circle without first meeting the requirements of the new rule governing attacking restarts (long corner, free hit, side-in) within the 23 meter area they're attacking -- immediately blow the play dead or hold for advantage?

A27: This is not a situation where advantage is to be played. If the criteria for entering the circle is not met, a foul has occurred and should be penalized accordingly.

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Q28: Do you have to use the self pass on all/any free hits, side-ins, hit-ins ("16's") or long corners?

A28: No. The team restarting play is not required to use the "self pass" action.

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Q29: When a free hit is called do you have to move the ball one meter before any hit/push is taken by the initial player or a teammate?

A29: Very simply, the answer is no. The ball does not have to be moved one meter BEFORE a hit/push is taken. Only when the defense has fouled within 5 meters of the circle does the ball need to be moved—it has to be moved 5 meters away from circle before play resumes.

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Q30: I'm a college goalkeeper and was thinking about whether goalkeepers can self pass by starting with my stick and then kick the ball?

A30: Yes. Goalkeepers have to restart by playing the ball with their stick but their second action on the ball can be a kick.

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Q31: [The goalkeeper continues...] If so, when I do can I tap it, pop it up, and then punt it? I bet I could just about reach the other circle.

A31: There is nothing in the rules preventing you from trying this action. It has not been attempted much in recent years as it is a very uncontrolled action. Aerials are intended to send the ball into an open area or to a specific player. Any player attempting to come in and tackle the goalkeeper who has started the free hit will be put in danger by the attempt at this action due to the timeframe needed to execute it.

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Q32: Prior to the new self pass rule, a long hit (long corner) could always be driven directly into the circle, is this still true?

A32: No. Attackers may not drive the ball directly into the circle when they are restarting play within the 23 meter area. This restriction applies to side-ins, free hits, and long corners.

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Q33: What signal should umpires use when the self pass has not been executed correctly, i.e. when the player does not use two separate actions on the ball?

A33: The umpire should whistle a little louder than normal and give a strong, firm directional signal. If the player asks why the reversal on the free hit, let them know (in a calm demeanor) that they need two actions to start the free hit with a free pass.

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Q34: If my team is awarded a free hit 5 meters from the circle or even a long hit, can I hit the ball directly at the circle to one of my teammates who then tips or deflects it into the circle? If I'm reading the rule correctly, as long as my hit goes 5 meters and my teammate touches it before it enters the circle, this should be legal, right?

A34: You can hit the ball directly "**at**" the circle—that is not a foul. But, even if you are more than 5 meters away from the circle, for example on a long hit, if you hit the ball directly at the circle and it crosses the circle line untouched by another attacker or defender, this will be considered hitting directly into the circle and that is a foul. Under these circumstances, a foul occurs at the moment the ball crosses the circle line untouched by a second player.

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Q35: On an attacking free hit from inside the 23 meter, if the attacker restarting play wants to hit the ball into the circle without first passing to a teammate, must the player using the self pass dribble 5 meters away from the initial placing of the ball or can the player simply move a total of 5 meters? Asked another way, as an example, can the player use a self pass and move the ball 3 meters in one direction, then move the ball back 3 meters to the initial spot, thus constituting more than 5 meters? Or, must a player starting with a self pass move the ball until it is outside a 5 meter radius from the starting point before hitting it into the circle?

A35: Prior to being played directly into the circle [from an attacking free hit inside the 23 meter area], the ball can be moved in any direction over a distance of at least 5 meters. So, yes, the player can self pass and travel 3 meters away from the initial spot of the free hit and then move back to the starting point for a total of 6 meters, thus exceeding the 5 meter requirement needed for the re-starter to self pass and then play the ball directly into the circle from an attacking free hit inside the 23 meter area.

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Q36: If I self pass on a free hit, do I have to dribble 5 meters before I can pass?

A36: No. The 5 meter travel requirement only applies when you want to play the ball directly into the circle from an attacking free hit inside the 23 meter area [including side-ins and long corners].

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Q37: Attacking free hit inside the 23 meter area—one meter outside the proximity marks—given that the defense must be five meters away, they setup one meter outside the circle. The attacker hits the ball directly at the circle (no self pass). A defenders stick touches ball outside the circle and the ball goes into the circle. The ball never touches the stick of an attacker. No foul?

A37: Correct. No foul. [13.2.h, page 31, "from a free hit awarded to the attack within the 23 metres area, the ball must not be played into the circle until it has travelled at least 5 metres **or has been touched by a player of either team** other than the player taking the free hit."]

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Q38: If the attack has a side-in within the 23 meter area, do the attack players have to be 5 meters away from the ball as they do on a free hit?

A38: Yes. Procedures for free hits, center passes and putting the ball back into play from a side-in, hit-in ("16"), or long corner, are all governed by the new free hit rule. Therefore, when a free hit/side-in/hit-in/long corner is awarded to the attack within the 23 meters area, **all players from both teams** must be at least 5 meters from the attacker restarting play. If the attack is getting play restarted quickly, they can do so while another player is within 5 meters as long as that other player is not judged to be influencing play.

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Q39: Is there a small list of maybe 5 of the most common ways the new free hit rule is being violated by the defense and the offense so we all can start with a common focus?

A39: As of April 8, 2009, our umpires and teams have been playing with the new rule for about three weeks. No major issues have arisen and I am concerned that we are already focusing too much on this rule and not on the whole game. I would prefer not to add to the attention it has received by creating such a list and, rather, allow our umpires to focus on the entire game.

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Q40: The game really moves quickly and I know we can verbally communicate with the players but what are the basic signals to deal with the fouls related to the self pass or other aspects of the new free hit rule so that it's clear and understood why we blew our whistle as the game quickly moves on? Or are we just to talk?

A40: (Updated on 08/02/2010 for clarity.) This is one of many examples when there is no secondary signal to "explain" why the umpire blew the whistle. What is the secondary signal for intentionally running behind the goal, or for an attacker waiting for the ball while straddling the opponent's goal-line, or the goalkeeper using their hand to play the ball over a long distance, or an attacker coming into the circle early on a penalty corner? Sometimes there is only a primary signal (typically direction). The signal in this case is for the umpire to blow the whistle and show direction. There simply isn't an official signal for every possible foul that can occur in a game, or on a free hit. Umpires should not feel the need to talk just because there is no secondary/explanatory signal for breaches of the rules. If someone doesn't know what happened, it's up to them to move on with the game in the direction indicated by the umpire. That said, many umpires have found it

helpful to hold up two fingers on one hand when a player uses a self pass to restart play but do not use two actions to begin.

For the various violations that can happen with regard to 'distance' (the opponents or teammates weren't far enough away, the attack didn't travel 5 meters -- or 7 yards/6.4 meters in high school games -- before entering the circle) hold up an open hand showing five fingers (2011 rules). While the other signals are not official secondary signals, they seem to be universally understood and are acceptable.

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Q41: If a free hit is awarded outside the 23 meter area, must the offensive players be five meters away (before they could be 1 meter) and can the ball be hit directly into the circle?

A41: Outside of the attacking 23 meter area, other than the option of restarting with a self pass, the free hit rule has not changed.

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Q42: If there's a side-in for the attack inside the 23 meter area, let's say at about the 22, and without self-passing the attacker hits the ball directly into the circle, at the top, in front of the cage, where does the defense take their free hit? Up at the 22 on the side line or where the ball went into the circle?

A42: A free hit is awarded to the opposing team from the spot where the free hit was incorrectly executed.

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Q43: During a free hit to the attack inside the attacking 23 meter area, a defender is 3 meters away and tips the ball. The ball goes to an attacker who was only 4 meters away from the start of the free hit. Is this a held whistle?

A43: You have already recognized that the defender was not 5 meters from the spot of the free hit. This is a breakdown of the play. Only attempt to play advantage **IF** you see there is a clear possibility for the attacker to control and constructively continue the attack. Otherwise penalizing the breakdown is appropriate.

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Q44: [The situation continues...] Does the defender's touch negate the 5 meter rule for the attack?

A44: Once the ball is touched by a defender or an attacker other than the re-starter, the requirement that the re-starter's teammates be 5 meter away does not apply.

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Q45: [The situation continues...] Does this call change as the situation occurs closer to the circle?

A45: Not at all.

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Q46: In a self pass, can the second action be an aerial ball, i.e. flick or lifted hit?

A46: You can restart play with a self pass and then flick the ball safely, but you are not allowed to intentionally lift the ball **with a hit** except for a shot on goal.

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Q47: If my team gets a free hit inside the 23 can we move it outside the 23 so we can hit it directly into the circle?

A47: No. Intentionally moving the location of an attacking free hit and restarting outside the 23 meter area to create an opportunity to play the ball directly into the circle must be seen as an unfair advantage and penalized accordingly.

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Q48: On a self pass within the attacking 23 meter area, can you tap it to yourself, move it 5 meters, and then lift it safely into the circle? Safe on the way up and safe on the down?

A48: Yes but recognizing that when the ball is coming down in the circle in this situation, danger is **very likely**.

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Q49: On a long hit/long corner. Player A restarts with a self pass, travels/dribbles less than 1 meter, then passes to a teammate who was 5 meters away when the play started but is closer than 5 meters when they receive the pass. This teammate one times the ball with a drive directly into the circle. Legal?

A49: Yes.

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Q50: For a foul between the proximity markers and circle, the ball must be brought back and placed 5 meters outside the circle (in line with the proximity markers). If the ball is hit directly towards the circle, the play can only be legal if the ball is touched on the circle line, not before and not after, correct?

A50: Not correct. The ball is considered as in the circle once the ball has touched the circle line therefore, based on your description, it reached the circle without being touched by another player.

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Q51: The attack is awarded a free hit just inside the attacking 23 meter area. The attacker starts with a self pass and dribbles about one meter outside the 23 meter area, then dribbles back into the 23 meter area. Does the requirement to dribble 5 meters before hitting into the circle still apply?

A51: Yes. The attack would still have to travel 5 meters with the ball or the ball would still have to be touched by a teammate or defender before the ball could legally enter the circle. [Note: The rule requirement is for a total movement of 5 meters, not a requirement to move the ball a minimum of a 5 meter radius from the starting point of the free hit. Therefore, while 1 meter back and 1 meter forward would not be allowed, 3 meters back and 3 meters forward would be allowed.]

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Q52: In a self pass, can the first action be a simple tap on the top of the ball or does it have to physically move away from its original spot?

A52: A simple tap on top of the ball does not constitute the start of a free hit.

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Q53: I came across an umpire who feels that there are now more bump-ups to a penalty corner on defensive fouls within 5 meters of the circle because the attack no longer has the advantage of a quick hit, i.e. they must stop and pull the ball 5 meters away from the circle. So on a poor tackle within 5 meters of the circle by the defense she is bumping-up to a penalty corner. My thought is we cannot bump-up on a foul that prior to the rule change would not have been bumped-up to a penalty corner just because there is a new free hit rule. Obviously if you have a breakdown foul within 5 meters of the circle that you would have bumped-up last year then you would still bump-it up this year, but minor fouls should not be bumped up. We got into quite a discussion on this. Her feeling was the advantage to the attack has been taken away by having to stop and bring the hit back to a point 5 meters away from the circle so it, the advantage, should be replaced by awarding a penalty corner. Can you put out some type of clarification to umpires on the use of bump-ups within 5 meters of the circle?

A53: Intentional/breakdown fouls by the defense inside the attacking 23 meter area but outside the circle are penalized with a penalty corner. It is not considered an "upgrade" or "bump up" --- it is simply the appropriate penalty for the appropriate foul. There is no change to any interpretation that would allow anything more than the appropriate penalty for the appropriate foul.

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Q54: With the new free hit rule, when there is a long hit do both teams have to be 5 meters away [from the re-starter]?

A54: Yes. However, if the attack is getting play restarted quickly, they can do so while another player is within 5 meters as long as that other player is not judged to be influencing play. [See # 38 for more details.]

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Q55: I was at a scrimmage and we had a discussion on the free hit rule inside the attacking 23 meter area. An athlete who recently played in Argentina says the ball must move at least 5 meters in one direction before playing the ball into the circle. The answer to question 51 says that the attacker inside the 23 meter area who starts with self pass can play the ball into the circle after going in two directions as long as they dribbled a total distance that's greater than 5 meters. So which way are we going to allow?

A55: Even if the attacker stands still and dribbles the ball back and forth in front of their feet, as soon as they have amassed a total distance of 5 meters, they can play the ball into the circle. Before posting our answer to question 51, we verified with the FIH that movement outside a 5 meter radius drawn from where the free hit is taken is **NOT** the intent of the rule's 5 meter requirement.

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Q56: Before players could self pass, if the re-starter swung at the ball and topped it, we would let them try again if the ball didn't travel two rotations. I heard with the self pass that if the player swings and mis-hits like that and the ball only does one rotation, that's not a self pass and the re-starter has to back away from the ball and let the other team take possession. Is that correct?

A56: Incorrect. As long as the ball has **ANY** movement it is considered in play. The person taking the free hit (including side-ins, hit-ins, long corners and center passes) may play it again and is not required to back away.

Note that if the ball does not move 1 meter, only the person taking the free hit or an opponent may play the ball after the mis-hit. A teammate of the person taking the free hit may not play the ball since it did not move 1 meter.

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Q57: If I get a free hit inside just inside the 23, I'm an attacker, I know I can't just start outside the 23 so I can hit it right into the circle but, what if I start at the 22 and then dribble back so I'm outside the 23, then can I hit it directly into the circle?

A57: No. The ball must travel 5 meters or more in any direction or directions before being played directly into the circle. It does not matter that you moved the ball outside the attacking 23 meter area. The 23 meter **line** has no subsequent bearing on this particular play.

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Q58: [The attacker continues...] What if I get a free hit just inside the 23, can my teammate, as long as he's behind me, stand just outside the 23 area so I can hit it to him and he can hit it into the circle?

A58: No. On attacking free hits inside the 23 meter area, **ALL** players must be 5 meters from the spot where the free hit will be taken. The 23 meter **line** has no subsequent bearing on this particular play.

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Q59: I know on a self pass that my second action can be an aerial. If I'm taking a corner -- you know, a "long hit" -- and I self pass about a foot, then I can lift the ball up and over the circle to my teammate on the other side of the field as long as he's outside the circle, right?

A59: Initially, this was considered a foul by the FIH. Current practice, however, allows this action at all levels of the game.

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Q60: The attacking team fouls inside the circle and the defensive player "moves the ball" by tapping or taking small hits to the 15m line simulating, but not intentionally conducting a "self pass". Is the ball now in play? Also, what if the same events happen after the ball crosses the back-line?

A60: If the team that has been given possession has met the criteria for starting a free hit/side-in/hit-in, and they play the ball with a legal first action, then -- at that instant -- the ball is in play. If the player "tapping" the ball forward continues to play (self pass) after the ball has reached the 15 meter line (**assuming the ball was initially stopped to indicate the beginning of a free hit**), this is perfectly legal. When the player attempts to do the same thing on future plays, the umpires must be consistent in their judgment. The player DOES NOT get the opportunity to decide halfway through the play to now want to stop the ball and set up for a "traditional" free hit. Umpires must be very focused on the play and the players' actions to decide when the free hit is or is not taken.

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Q61: I understand that if the self pass option is attempted and the re-starter carries the ball off in a "contact dribble", that the free hit has not been taken legally. Should the re-starter get to re-set and try again?

A61: No. The re-starter fouled. Free hit to the opponent.

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Q62: If the ball is 1 meter outside the 23 meter area and the attacker does a self pass and moves the ball 1 meter into the 23 meter area and then hits it directly into the circle this is legal correct?

A62: This is a legal play because the foul occurred outside the attacking 23 meter area.

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Q63: Can you discuss dragging as the first motion? If we are on a crappy grass field and the drag is attempted but there is a definite separation of ball and stick because the ball is stuttering on the grass. Is that ok? On another similar situation, can someone drag the ball 6" and then release and tap the ball?

A63: Dragging the ball as the first action of a self pass is not allowed. It must be a tap, hit or push to move the ball.

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Q64: Players are taking free hits from the broken line circle and tapping the ball forward 1 meter, then tapping it again a second time about a meter and letting the ball roll ever so slightly (2-3 meters) into the circle. The players are claiming that it is considered a dribble, but I have been told that the tap that puts the ball into the circle has to occur after the ball has moved a total of 5 meters. Am I correct?

A64: Yes. Before entering the circle the ball must be played again after it has travelled a cumulative 5 meters.

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Q65: Some attack players are starting the self-pass with a slow push that goes one meter or less before tapping it again. Sometimes, before the second tap, the defense (who moved 5 meters away) has approached and is trying to play the ball even though the second tap hasn't yet occurred. How long can the initial touch go before it is considered too long? What do we do about the approaching player if the second touch hasn't been completed?

A65: As soon as the re-starter plays the ball, the defense can approach, provided that the defender gets 5 meters away from the spot of the free hit prior to engaging the attacker. **The defense does not need to wait for a second play on the ball.** Some players are attempting to use this slight drag to scan the field before deciding whether or not to stop and try to restart the free hit [as if they didn't self pass] when they find no options. Umpires must be consistent. So, if a re-starter plays off of this action once as a self pass, the umpire should judge that the same action taken later by the player is also a self pass—that the free hit has been taken.

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Q66: When play is restarted with a self pass by the blue team inside the circle they're defending, if there are not two separate actions, would this be penalized by awarding a penalty corner or a penalty stroke for the red team [the attack]?

A66: When a defender attempts to self pass on a restart within circle but fails to begin with two actions, the attack is awarded a penalty corner.

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Q67: After attending a high school rules interpretation meeting last night some umpires were discussing the self-pass from a long hit or a side-in inside the 16 yard line. For a violation of the indirect circle entry requirement (i.e. the ball is played directly into the circle), the NFHS's Officials Guide VI.B.6.e (page 69) says that, "Violations result in a free hit taken by the opponent at the spot where the free hit, side in or long hit was incorrectly executed." Does this mean that the ball is placed on the long hit mark or the sideline for the ensuing free hit?

A67: No. For all violations by the attack inside the 16, the defense can choose to take the resulting free hit up to 16 yards away from the back-line, in line with where the foul occurred. This governance does not change because the attack illegally Self Passed or violated the Indirect Circle Entry requirement. Remember, the violation is considered the exact same as any free hit to the defense inside the 25 yard / 23 meter line. For more details on the Self Pass and the Indirect Circle Entry, please visit our SPICE page ([www.usafieldhockey.com/spice](http://www.usafieldhockey.com/spice)).

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Q68: When you have a free hit inside the attacking 25 yard line (NFHS) and you use the self pass, when moving the ball 5 yards do you also have to move your feet when moving the ball?

A68: No. The player is not required to move their feet or body in any direction. The umpires must decide if the BALL has moved a cumulative 5 yards to satisfy the rule (5 meters in the Rules of Hockey). The decision has nothing to do with the player himself or herself. For more details on the Self Pass and the Indirect Circle Entry, please visit our SPICE page ([www.usafieldhockey.com/spice](http://www.usafieldhockey.com/spice)).

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Q69: I heard that if the ball is stationary and the re-starter just taps the top of the ball; that counts as the first action on the self pass even if the ball doesn't move. Is that correct? And, let's say a player is at the 16 waiting for her teammate or the ball girl get the ball and roll it to her. Does stopping the ball count as the first action?

A69: No. No. The ball must be moved. The initial stopping of the ball or tapping the ball on top does not constitute movement or the action of a hit / push to begin the play.

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Q70: Player A takes an attacking free hit in the attacking 23 meter area. She takes two touches (legally utilizing the self restart), then stops the ball -- or allows the ball to stop by itself -- for attacking player B to come and play the ball into the circle. The ball has not traveled 1 meter. Am I correct that the ball doesn't need to travel 1 meter because player A self started?

A70: No, you are not correct. The ball must move 1 meter before another player of the same team can play the ball, taking a self pass does not negate this rule. Only the player who initially took the free hit, whether they choose the self pass option or not, can play the ball before it has moved 1 meter.