



Tactical advice for high school coaches and players - September 2016

Certain rules of field hockey are unique to our sport, specifically the Self Pass Rule and No Offside. High school coaches and players are familiar with these differences but during games, the tactical application of these unique rules tends not to be applied to their fullest potential. The reasons for this has to do with field hockey being a new sport to the players and virtually every young person has played soccer during their life (and some have played hockey) where these two field hockey rules are dealt with very differently.

SELF PASS

In soccer and in old field hockey, the player starting the play after a foul or if the ball went out of the boundaries of the field has to PASS the ball to start the play. Starting the play this way is ingrained in people who play soccer and it shouldn't be for new HS field hockey players but it is the soccer experience that they fall back on. In many cases in soccer, players leave the free kick to a defender to come and take it while the forwards and midfielders move up to take a position further up field. The fact that the soccer ball travels over the heads of the first line of defenders makes this play work in soccer, but it does not work well in field hockey.

How best to use the Self Pass

Players should NEVER leave the ball for another player to come up and start the play so on a free hit, sideline hit or 16 yard hit, the player closest to the ball should immediately starting moving with the ball and then either continue to run with the ball or make a quick pass to a team mate BEFORE the defending team can get ready to defend. This will ensure that the attacking play continues quickly especially because defenders inside the 5 metre space from where the free hit is taken are not allowed to make any effort to tackle and must let the attackers go forward.

NO OFFSIDE

Soccer and hockey both have offside so the natural instinct of new players to field hockey is for the forwards to not stand in or run to an "Offside" position. The happens in most high school games even though "No Offside" has been the situation in field hockey since 1997.

How best to use No Offside

As soon as a team gains possession and is on the attack, one, two or even three forwards should run as high up the field as possible. This means that they should get inside the attacking 25 yard area and especially in the attacking circle when the play is in the attacking half. When the attacking play is near the 25 yard line or inside the attacking 25 yard area, two forwards should be near the goal posts.

The position of forwards as high up the field, all the way to the goal line, will open lots of space between the defenders and will also ensure that passes into the circle can get deflected into goal.

SUMMARY

When players change the way they think about and take Free Hits using the Self Pass and realize there is no Offside, attacking in field hockey is much, much more efficient.