

GET THOSE BOARDING PENALTIES EARLY

It is early in the season so let's make it imperative to call boarding penalties properly. Here are the Rules in the NFHS Rules Book for BOARDING Penalties:

ART. 1

No player shall check, cross-check, elbow, charge, trip or otherwise contact an opponent in such a manner that causes the opponent to be thrown violently into the boards.

PENALTY: MAJOR.

ART. 2

If flagrant or the action causes the player to crash headfirst into the boards, either a **MAJOR and MISCONDUCT or GAME DISQUALIFICATION** penalty must be assessed.

Take notice that there is NOT a minor penalty associated with Boarding in NFHS/MHSAA Rules. Also, the rule explicitly states "check, cross check, elbow, charge or trip." This pretty much covers the gamut of physical contact in the dangerous areas along the wall—it is NOT an accident that this rule is addressing "check, cross check, elbow, charge or trip" in an effort to cover all circumstances that can cause boarding.

This rule is meant to teach respect for an opponent in a vulnerable area and to use appropriate contact to separate opponent from puck to gain possession----not to "blow up" an opponent.

It is important to understand that even a legal body check

which throws an opponent violently in the boards is a boarding penalty. Appropriate and respectful force is what is needed, not an overabundance of physicality for the aggressor to launch an opponent and potentially cause harm or injury.

Officials who do not enforce this rule, but take it upon themselves to, in effect, incorporate their own philosophy regarding this rule by "bailing out" on the real penalty to call a roughing minor penalty are doing the game a disservice.

The future and growth of our game really depends on how we address and enforce these physical and dangerous types of penalties to deter dangerous play and protect the student athletes. Let's try to use some criteria as we hope it will lead to more consistency in our penalty choices, learning and teaching opportunities for coaches and clear awareness from players.

Boarding Checklist:

Did the contact send opponent directly into the boards?

Was the force used appropriate or excessive?

Did the aggressor extend arms or create more speed or jump into an opponent in an effort to exert more force than needed to gain control of puck?

Did the aggressor attempt to mitigate the hit to a vulnerable opponent in any way?

Did any last second movement by a player create his vulnerability for the hit?

What was the result of the hit?

Something to Consider: Boarding, charging and checking from behind are all penalties that sometimes overlap in their enforcement. Remember that checking from behind and charging can occur anywhere on the ice. But, both of these hits, if they send the player violently into the boards, should be called boarding.

Mechanics: "Get out of the way!" How many times has an official had this yelled at them either immediately following a face-off or as a team attempts to pass or ice the puck? As if we wanted to get in the way. Staying out of the play is a primary concern of hockey officials. For face-offs, slowly back out while keeping your "head on a swivel" to allow skating players to move around you. To avoid interfering at the sideboards, try to move opposite of the puck. On occasion when trapped by oncoming players, it may be necessary to get up on the boards.