



**NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY RULES SUBCOMMITTEE
MAY 19-21, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING REPORT**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **None.**

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Division I Women's Ice Hockey Rules Subcommittee approved the following rules change proposal. The subcommittee requests approval from the NCAA Division I Women's Ice Hockey Oversight Committee for the following item:

a. Player's Benches (Rule 3.1)

- (1) Recommendation. The accommodations provided, including bench height and number of doors must be similar for both teams.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. Uniform bench and access-door accommodations for both teams preserve the principles of fairness, neutrality, and consistent game operations.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. For teams not already in compliance, there will be a small budget impact to ensure benches are at the same height.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

b. Starting Lineups (Rule 7.2)

- (1) Recommendation. If the team that scores a goal on the first shift of the game challenges the starting line-up of the opposing team and the opposing team did not have the correct starting line-up, the scoring of the goal would nullify the bench minor penalty, and no further penalties would be assessed.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. The combination of disallowing the goal and assessing a bench minor restores competitive fairness while emphasizing the importance of proper pregame procedures.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

c. Protective Equipment (Rule 9.3)

- (1) Recommendation. Require that all players wear cut-resistant protection on the neck, wrist, and socks beginning with the 27-28 season for Division I and 28-29 for Division III.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. The adoption of mandatory cut-resistant protection standards reflects the continued emphasis on student-athlete safety and injury prevention.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. The cost to obtain required equipment is significant, the longer rollout hopes to provide relief to budget cycles.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

d. Helmets (Rule 9.4)

- (1) Recommendation. A player who intentionally removes their helmet during play will be assessed a minor penalty. If a goalkeeper intentionally removes their helmet and/or facemask when the opposing team is on a breakaway, a goal will be awarded to the non-offending team.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. This rule reinforces the importance of mandatory protective equipment and promotes player safety by prohibiting the intentional removal of helmets during live play. In addition, the automatic goal provision for goalkeepers who deliberately remove their helmet and/or facemask during an opposing breakaway preserves competitive fairness by eliminating the opportunity to intentionally create a stoppage of play to negate a clear scoring opportunity.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

e. Coincidental Penalties (Rule 19)

- (1) Recommendation. During the last five minutes of regulation or at any time in overtime, when a minor penalty is assessed to a player of Team A, and a major penalty is assessed to one player of Team B at the same stoppage of play, the three minute (or one minute, if A is serving a double minor) differential shall be served immediately.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. During the final five minutes of regulation and at any time in overtime, the immediate serving of the differential between coincidental penalties ensures that the penalized team does not gain an unintended advantage through penalty timing administration.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Major Penalties (Rule 20)

(1) Recommendation. A second major penalty in the same game is an automatic game misconduct.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Major penalties are reserved for serious infractions. When a player commits a second major foul in the same game, the automatic game misconduct reflects the seriousness of repeated dangerous actions and helps protect player safety.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

g. Major or Misconduct Penalty to Goalkeeper (Rule 28.2)

(1) Recommendation. A goalkeeper shall not be sent to the penalty bench for an offense which incurs a major penalty.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Goalkeepers occupy a unique role with specialized equipment and substitution requirements. Having another player serve the major penalty maintains the full penalty consequence without unnecessarily disrupting game flow or creating avoidable safety and administrative issues.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

h. Face Masks (Rule 47.1)

(1) Recommendation. Add other helmet openings to the foul of Face Mask.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Expanding the rule beyond the traditional face mask improves safety, creates more consistent enforcement, and addresses dangerous actions that can place stress on the head and neck area.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

i. Fighting (Rule 48.1)

(1) Recommendation. Edit the definition of fighting to be “one player punches or attempts to punch an opponent repeatedly”. Singular punches to be penalized as roughing.

In the Women's game only: A major penalty of roughing to be permissive for a “sucker punch”.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

j. Head Butting (Rule 49)

(1) Recommendation. Allow a minor penalty to be called for an attempted head-butt or a head-butt that is not done forcibly. Reserve the Major and Game Misconduct penalty for a forcible or egregious head-butt.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This change creates a clearer penalty scale for head-butting. Minor penalties apply to attempts or non-forceful contact, while more severe, intentional head-butting actions continue to carry major and game misconduct penalties. The goal is more consistent enforcement and better alignment between the severity of the act and the penalty assessed.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

k. Checking From Behind (Rule 50)

- (1) Recommendation. Remove “in open ice” from the checking from behind rule.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. The revision simplifies penalty application for officials by eliminating discretion between a minor and major standard on checking-from-behind fouls. Officials can utilize other fouls such as “charging” for open ice hits from behind when warranted.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

l. Hitting After the Whistle (Rule 53.3)

- (1) Recommendation. Eliminate “hitting after the whistle”, classify this contact as roughing or unsportsmanlike conduct, when it occurs.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. Contact occurring after the whistle is typically retaliatory, unnecessary, or confrontational in nature and more appropriately fits within existing categories that already address avoidable physical altercations and player behavior.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

m. Throwing the Stick (Rule 55.5)

- (1) Recommendation. Change the penalty for throwing the stick outside the playing area from a Misconduct to a Game Misconduct.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. Reinforces the emphasis on player safety and sportsmanship by addressing behavior that presents unnecessary risk to participants, fans and officials.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

n. Goalkeeper Leaving Stick (Rule 55)

- (1) Recommendation. If a goalkeeper, upon leaving the ice, leaves the stick or other equipment, or piles snow that stops an imminent goal, a goal shall be awarded.
- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.
- (3) Rationale. Similar to existing awarded-goal provisions for fouls committed during clear scoring opportunities, this revision restores equity when an imminent goal is prevented through illegal tactics rather than legal play.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

~~o. High Sticking (Rule 64.4)~~

- ~~(1) Recommendation. Permit high sticking the puck anywhere on the ice.~~
- ~~(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.~~
- ~~(3) Rationale. This change removes the stoppage when a player plays the puck with a high stick. The focus is on keeping the game flowing and rewarding skill, while still maintaining strict penalties for any high sticking that involves contact with another player.~~
- ~~(4) Estimated budget impact. None.~~
- ~~(5) Student-athlete impact. None.~~

Retracted by Rules Subcommittee on June 18, 2026

p. Delay of Game (New Rule)

- (1) Recommendation. In the event that the puck is shot into the end zone by the attacking team from their own side of the center red line, and the opposing goalkeeper freezes the puck resulting in a stoppage of play, the ensuing face-off shall be conducted at one of the end zone face-off spots in the goalkeeper's defending zone.

The defending team shall not be permitted to make any player substitutions prior to the face-off. However, a team shall be permitted to make a player substitution to replace an injured player, or when a penalty has been assessed which affects the on-ice strength of either team.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This rule is designed to keep the game moving and prevent teams from using a goalie freeze as a way to slow play or gain a line change advantage. The face-off location rewards territorial pressure, and limiting substitutions ensures the defending team cannot use the stoppage for strategic rest unless it's for injury or penalties.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

q. Spitting (Rule 79.5)

(1) Recommendation. Spitting to be penalized as a Game Disqualification.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Spitting is treated as an immediate removal offense because it presents both a health risk and a serious sportsmanship issue. The penalty reflects zero tolerance for conduct that endangers others and is considered fundamentally unacceptable in the game.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

r. Offside (Rule 86.1)

(1) Recommendation. A player must control the puck with their stick prior to their skates going into the offensive zone.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. The goal is to make zone entries more controlled and less based on skating through a loose puck. Players must clearly possess the puck with their stick before entering the offensive zone, which helps reduce offside confusion and encourages more structured offensive play.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

s. Hand Pass (Rule 84.2)

(1) Recommendation. Permit hand passes that are initiated and completed in the defensive zone.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. The rule is designed to reduce stoppages for technical infractions that do not create a competitive advantage in dangerous areas, while improving flow and defensive-zone problem-solving.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

t. Faceoff Location following hand pass or high stick (Rule 84.3/84.4)

(1) Recommendation. The faceoff location following a hand pass or high stick violation will take place at the faceoff dot nearest the point of the infraction with the least territorial advantage gained.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This approach minimizes disproportionate territorial penalties for non-penalty infractions, improves consistency in officiating decisions, and supports continuous play.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

u. Shootout (Rule 91.2)

(1) Recommendation. Eliminate the mandatory shootout at the end of extra periods. Defer procedure to conference policy. In non-conference games, the policy of the home team's conference will be followed. In neutral site games, the policy of the designated home team or in-season tournament will be followed.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This change gives conferences control over how games are decided after overtime, whether that is a tie, extended overtime, or a shootout.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

v. Coaches Challenge (Rule 93.4)

(1) Recommendation. Allow a coach to challenge when a minor penalty for goalkeeper interference and the goal is disallowed.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Permitting a coach's challenge for disallowed goals due to goalkeeper interference introduces an additional layer of review for one of the most subjective goal review categories. The provision is designed to improve accuracy in determining whether interference materially affected the goalkeeper's ability to play their position.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

w. Coaches Challenge (Rule 93.4.c)

(1) Recommendation. Require a coaches challenge for an unobserved act that would lead to a major penalty of a player.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This change ensures that if an act was not directly observed by officials, it must be initiated through a coach's challenge and confirmed via video before a player is removed.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

x. Video Review (Rule 93.7)

(1) Recommendation. Require all goals be cleared in NCAA Tournament games.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Every goal in the NCAA Tournament would be automatically reviewed before being confirmed. The goal is to eliminate missed calls in the most important games of the season and ensure that all scoring plays are validated consistently using available video evidence.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. It would require any team hosting an NCAA tournament game to have video review available for use. The committee notes that any level of review is allowable, to avoid being cost prohibitive.

- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

y. Body Checking (Rule 94)

- (1) Recommendation. Restructure Rule 94 to provide clarity on legal body contact and illegal body checking. Guidance will be provided to allow legal contact on parallel pursuits, end-wall pursuits, forward angling, corner defense, and 50/50 puck battles. Illegal methods continue to include overt extension of the shoulder, arm or torso, opposite direction hits, and driving through opponents.

- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

- (3) Rationale. This rule language update is intended to improve the consistency and clarity of the body contact standard in women's ice hockey. The revision better defines legal competitive contact associated with angling, positioning, puck pursuit, and contested puck battles while continuing to prohibit deliberate body checking and forceful physical play.

The updated language with situations provides officials, coaches, and players with clearer guidance regarding acceptable body contact, particularly in transition play, puck retrievals, and contested possession situations where incidental or competitive contact is expected.

This clarification supports more uniform rule enforcement nationally while maintaining the women's game's emphasis on skill, puck possession, positioning, and player safety.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.

- (5) Student-athlete impact. This would add more physicality to the women's game but still does not expose the players to full legal body checking. The committee feels that players will be more prepared for contact with the updated language.

z. Shootout (Appendix B)

- (1) Recommendation. All players are eligible to participate in the shootout unless they are serving a 10-minute misconduct or have been assessed a game-misconduct or Disqualification penalty.

- (2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. This change makes shootouts more about the full roster available at the end of the game. Players are only excluded if they are serving a major disciplinary penalty or have been removed from the game, ensuring coaches can use their best available players for this deciding format.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

aa. Exhibition Games

(1) Recommendation. Define exhibition games and require that all NCAA Ice Hockey Rules will be followed in these formats.

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2026.

(3) Rationale. Exhibition games are still NCAA games in terms of rules. Even though they don't count toward standings, they must be played under the full NCAA rulebook so that players, coaches, and officials are operating under the same standards as regular-season and tournament competition.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and announcements.** Members and invited guests were welcomed and thanked for their time.
2. **Secretary-rules editor report.** The secretary-rules editor provided a presentation of rules proposals to prepare the committee for this week's discussion.
3. **National coordinators of officials reports.** The national coordinator led a discussion on points of emphasis for the 2026-2027.
4. **2026-27 playing rules timeline.** The committee discussed adjustments to the meeting timeline for 2026.
5. **Adjournment.** The annual meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m. Eastern time on May 21, 2026.

Report of the NCAA Division I Women's Ice Hockey Rules Subcommittee

May 19-21, 2026, Annual Meeting

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Committee Chair: Mel Ruzzi, Brown University, ECAC Hockey

Staff Liaison(s): Paden Alie, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division I Women's Ice Hockey Rules Subcommittee February 19-21, 2026	
Attendees:	
Emma Pais, student-athlete, Colgate University.	
Kelsey Cline, The Ohio State University	
Lee-J Mirasolo, Stonehill College.	
Katie Lachapelle, College of the Holy Cross.	
Mackenzie Gaydosh, active official.	
Krissy Langley, National Coordinator of Women's Ice Hockey Officials.	
Jeff Fulton, Secretary-Rules Editor.	
Absentees:	
Jeff Siegel, Rochester Institute of Technology.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Michelle Morgan, Commissioner, Atlantic Hockey America.	
Doug Christensen, Commissioner, ECAC Hockey.	
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:	
Paden Alie.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Ty Halpin, Greg Johnson and Ryan Richardson.	