

IIHF OFFICIATING PROCEDURE MANUAL

# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM



INTERNATIONAL  
ICE HOCKEY  
FEDERATION

# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

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# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## PREFACE

Welcome to the updated and new version of the procedure manual for the three officials system, the toolbox and guidelines for you as a game official or an officiating coach to be able to better understand the best and most efficient way of working as a referee or a linesperson.

As the world governing body for ice hockey, seeks to unify the key elements in the games so that it is as similar as possible regardless on what level or where in the world a game is played. To have a common procedure and working patterns for game officials is one of these key steps to make sure that the national program and as well as any international tournament is officiated in the best possible way.

The IIHF hopes that you as a reader of this document will be able to understand and work as a game official within the Three officials system:

- Receive a basic knowledge about officiating in the 3-officials system.
- Clarify the various areas of responsibility and tasks in the 3-officials system.
- Unify the working pattern within the IIHF officiating family.

Please note that this document is a living document, we continually work for perfecting and developing our procedures and the role of the game officials, therefore it is important you always assure that you have the latest version of the OPM downloaded from the IIHF webpage.

We wish you great success in your reading and education around the three officials' system and as well the implementation of the same in the coming games.

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# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## INTRODUCTION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. DEFINITION OF THE THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

To have game officials working in the three officials' system is to use one of the most traditional ways of officiating a ice hockey game. The three officials' system is outlining many of the basic procedures in which other officiating systems are building their base on. A game official familiar and confident in this system will have good opportunities to be successful in any other officiating system. The three officials' system consists as the name say of three game officials in the game, divided into one referee and two linespersons. Teamwork is key for success, Knowing the responsibilities and get the job done.

#### 1.2. REFEREE

For a referee, the most important thing in the 3-officials system will be the cooperation between the two linespersons on the ice. In this system the position of the referee is at some points a lonely job with all the major responsibility on the single referee but as a team with the linesperson the hardest situations could be made easy. The referee needs to have the mobility that is needed to get the perfect angle to view the situation that is happening and at the same time be able to cover as much as possible of the ice in general. It easy to end up watching only the area of play and to be a game official that "chases the game". This sets some high demands on the referees feel for the game, "Hockey IQ" and ability to read where potential situations will occur.

#### 1.3. LINESPERSON

It is the utmost important priority that the Linesperson is having a good player control over the full ice surface during play and at the same time to cover their areas of responsibility. In this mix of procedures, a good linesperson can also in a good way support the referee, both during play and in the stoppages. To be able to do this there is a high demand on the official's "Hockey IQ" to read and react to the game in a proper way. The primary area of responsibility for the linesperson is to monitor the procedures and decisions around offsides and icing and should be set in first place for every linesperson prior to supporting the referee.

#### 1.4. TERMS

**Referee** = is the one referee in the game who has the main responsibility in calling penalty and goals.

**Linesperson** = is divided into linesperson number 1 (L1) and linesperson number 2 (L2). L1 makes call for the offside and the decision on the "race" towards the puck during an active icing. Supporting referee in the close area around the play/puck. L2 is having its focus area around the center line - Icing calls, support L1 with offside decisions. Support referee with player control outside main area of play.

**Disconnected** = Game official is put in a position where it does not have a good angle in on the main area of focus.

#### 1.5. IMPLEMENTATION

The game of ice hockey is a team sport from start until end. It is important that all 3 officials on the ice take their individual responsibility and works the game in the best possible way. It is a vital aspect that the game officials utilize their fullest capacity of their Hockey IQ, feel for the game in the best way when implementing this manual in combination with following the official playing rules so that the game is served in the best possible way.



# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## REFEREE

## 2 REFEREE

### 2.1. LINE CHANGE – PROCEDURE

The most important part for the referee when conducting the changing procedure is to be in a clear and open position, that enables a good contact and communication with both teams. When conducting the changing procedure, the basic position for the referee is changing from where the following face-off will take place.

- **Face-off at centre ice:** Changing procedure is made at centre ice, positioned roughly one meter towards the players benches to maintain a good contact with the benches.
- **Face-off in the neutral zone:** The referee shall take a position on the opposite side of the face-off dot where the face-off is taking place and make the line changes in a position that is between the face-off dot in neutral zone and in the end zone. Close to the starting position that is used after that the changing procedure is over.
- **Face-off in the end zone:** The referee shall take a position by the top of the circle on the opposite side from the circle that is used for the upcoming face-off. After the procedure is finished the referee shall use active skating to get back to the basic position for the face-off in the end zone.

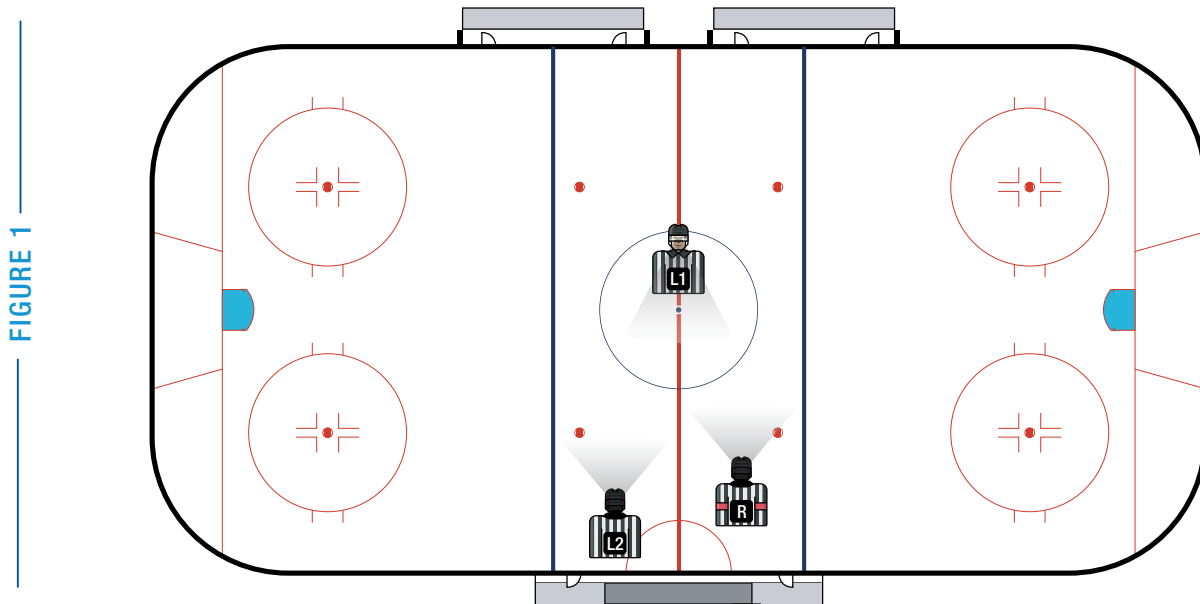
Throughout the full changing procedure the linespersons needs to pay full attention to assure a good player control and at the same time with speed get in correct positions for conducting the following face-off.

### 2.2. POSITION OF THE REFEREE FOR FACE-OFFS

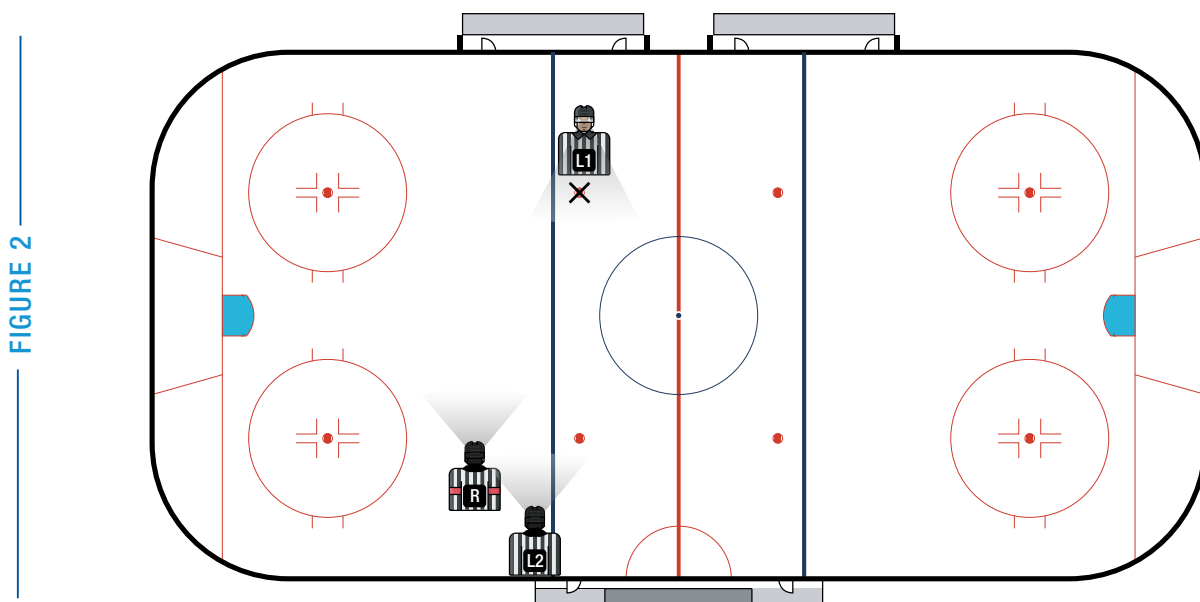


## THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM REFEREE

For face-off at center face off spot in the neutral zone, the referee should be positioned on the side of the scorekeeper's bench about 3 metres from the boards, and 1.5 meters metres from either side of the red line in order to not block the view for linesperson. This will enable the referee to be on top of the play or to move in quickly in both directions while following the play up the ice. (Figure 1).



For a face-off at any of the four spots in the neutral zone, the referee should be positioned on the opposite side of the ice, about 1.5 metres inside the blue line and 1.5 to 3 metres out from the boards. From this position, if the play goes directly into the end zone, the referee is able to follow it quickly, and implement his “end zone positioning”. If, however, the play breaks out up the ice, the referee is far enough out from the boards to avoid collision with the linesperson (Figure 2).

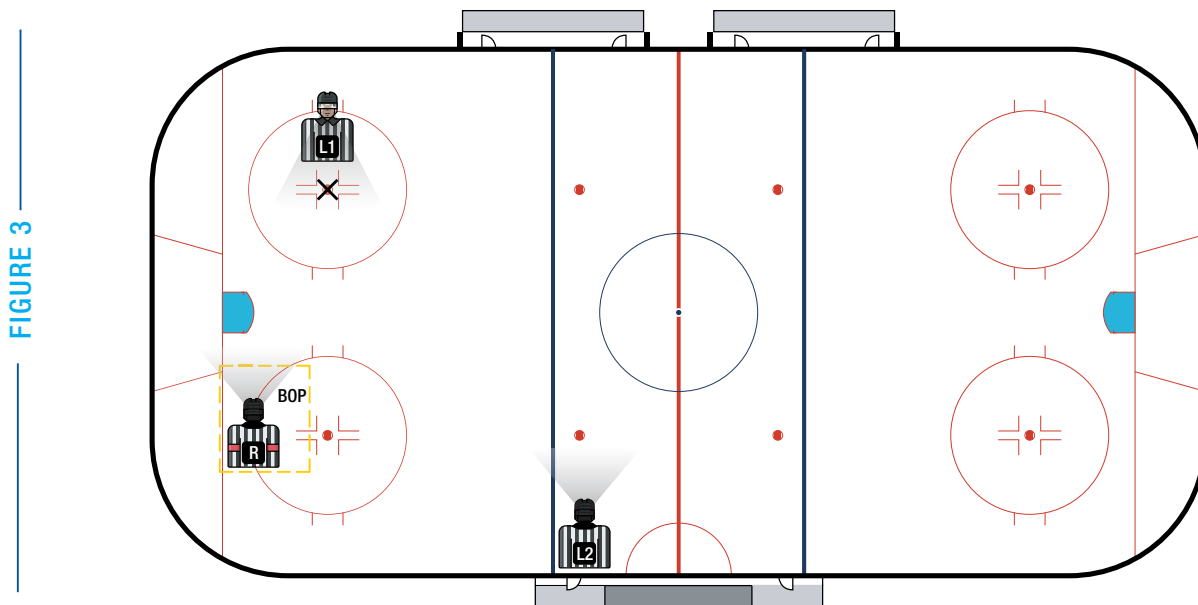


# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## REFEREE

When the face-off takes place at one of the end face-off spots, the referee should be at the “Base of Operations position” (BOP). From this position the referee will be ready for a close play at the net and have an excellent view of the goal line. Also, in this position the referee will not be in the way if a quick shot is taken at the net (Figure 3). The referee should avoid the area behind the goal line and the corners. If caught in these areas, the referee will lose mobility due to player congestion, will be screened by the net and too far behind the play should it break out of the zone quickly.

If the center and the team is warned for a first face-off violation, the referee does not move over to the other side of the Face-off. However the referee should warn the offending team that a second violation will result in a penalty being assessed. The linesperson taking the Face-off should give the referee time to issue the warning and get back to their proper position again.

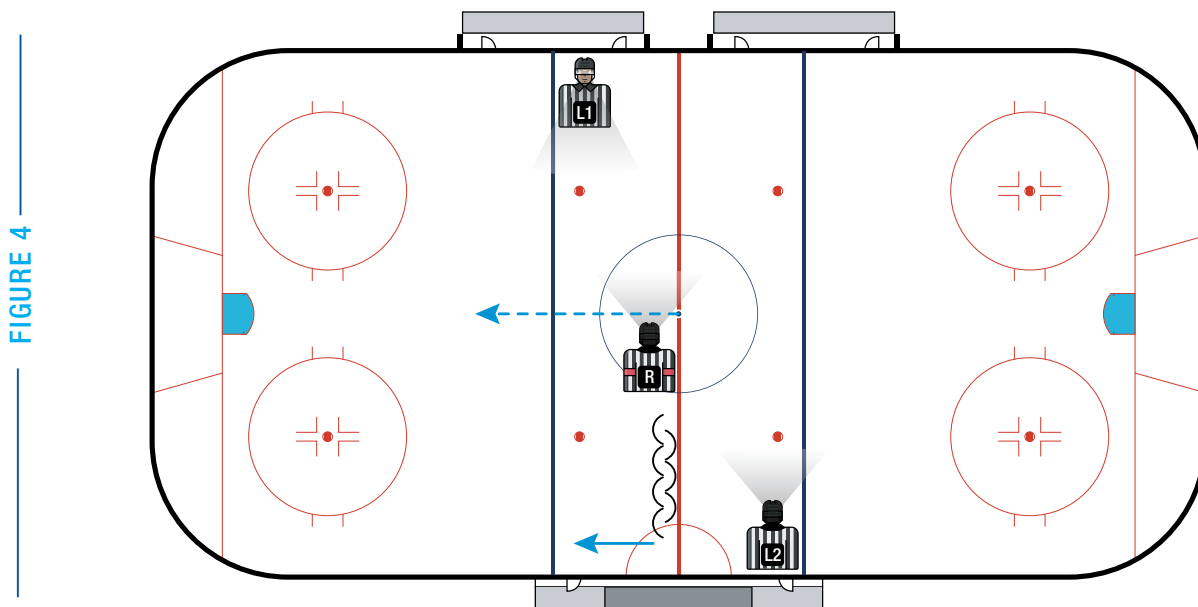


### 2.3. POSITIONING WHILE PLAY IS IN PROGRESS

Positioning for the referee in the three official system is basically the same as for the two official system, with a few variations. The referee in this system has the responsibility of calling penalties for infractions anywhere on the ice. The referee will not call offsides or icings; these are the responsibility of the linesperson. If a call is very obvious and the linesperson has been blocked out, then the referee may stop the play. This type of call would only be the odd exception.

After conducting the face-off at centre ice, it is imperative that the referee gets back towards the boards as quickly as possible, because while the referee is in the middle of the ice, part of the ice and some of the players will be behind the referee's back. Good positioning means keeping all of the players in front of you (Figure 4).

# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM REFEREE



How does the referee get back to the boards after a face-off? Does the referee skate backwards along the centre red line to the boards? The answer to both of those questions will vary depending upon the direction of the puck after the face-off. If the puck remains in the centre ice area, the answer to the second question is yes, providing the puck is in front of the referee. Common sense dictates that the referee will not skate to the boards when the puck is behind him. If the puck goes into the end zone, the answer is no, as the referee must follow the play. This means that the referee should angle towards the end and side boards and remain within proper range of the play.

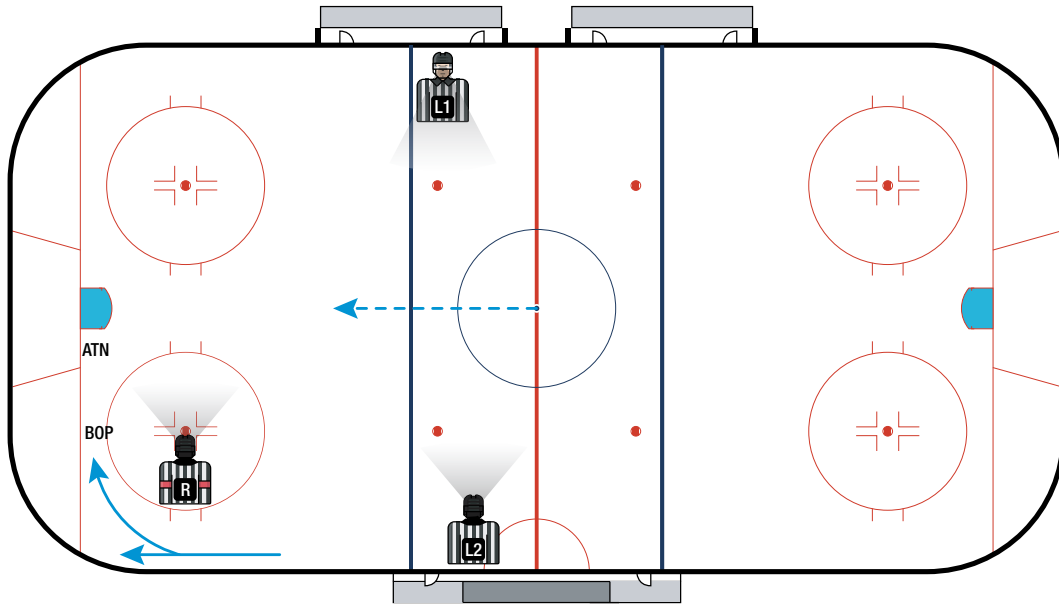
**Note:** For experienced referees it is allowed to use the Cross over move behind the net, to gain better position at the net and to stay away from the play. This is an exceptional procedure, and may take place only when the play dictates and it is safe.

As the play moves into the end zone, the referee should follow the play at these distances: 6 to 8 metres behind the play if the puck is on the opposite side of the ice, and 8 to 10 metres behind the play if the puck is on the same side of the ice. This will provide the referee with a good perspective of all the players. Also, if the puck suddenly changes possession and the play start out in the opposite direction, the referee will have sufficient room to avoid interfering with the play. If the play does go deep into the end zone, the referee should assume the “end zone positioning” as described earlier in this section (**Figure 5**).



# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM REFEREE

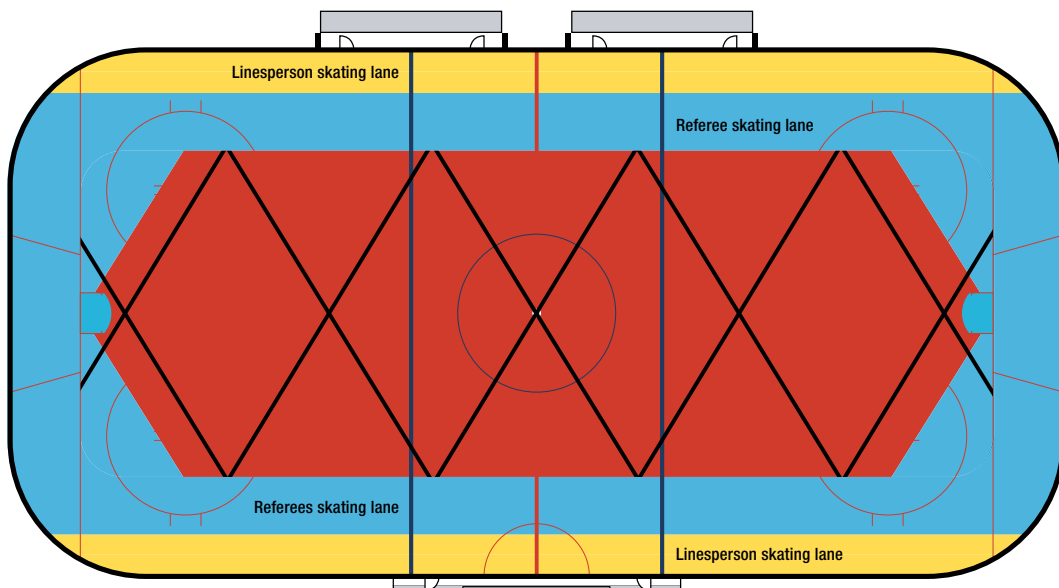
FIGURE 5



The referee skating up the ice should be in the blue area only. The red area should not be used by the officials, nor should they “cross over” from one side of the ice to the other side while play is in progress (**Figure 6**). They can move over at a stoppage of play, depending on the location of the face-off, and for a face-off at centre ice.

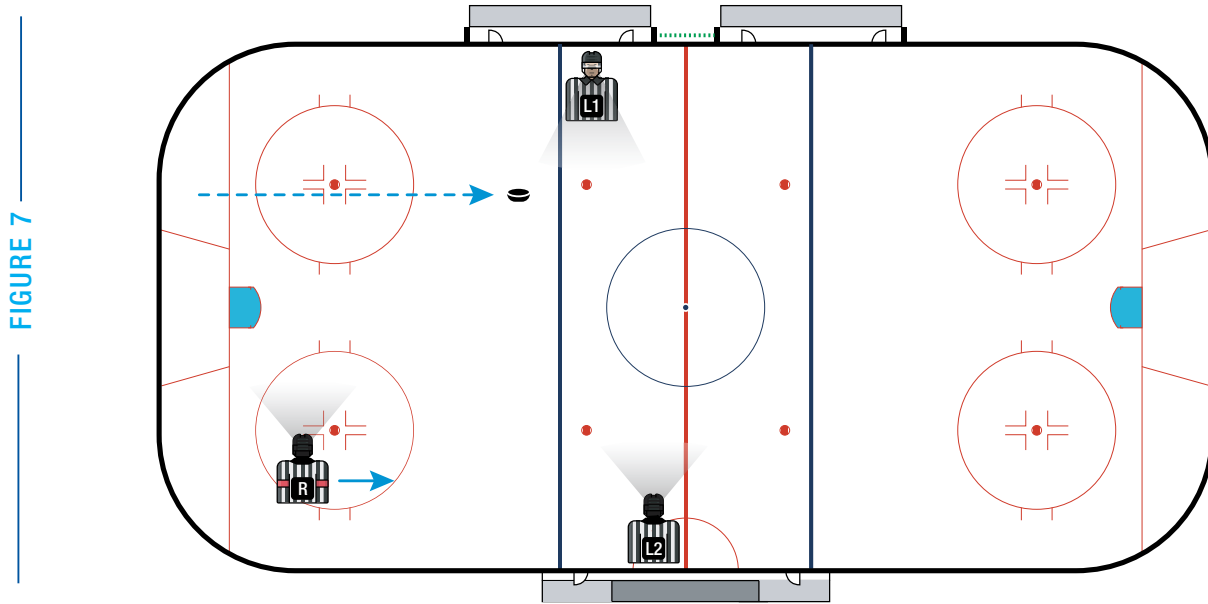
**Note:** For experienced referees it is allowed to move behind the goal line when the play dictates, using the “stay out of trouble zone”. Immediately when the play does not demand this move, the referee should move back to the normal procedure.

FIGURE 6

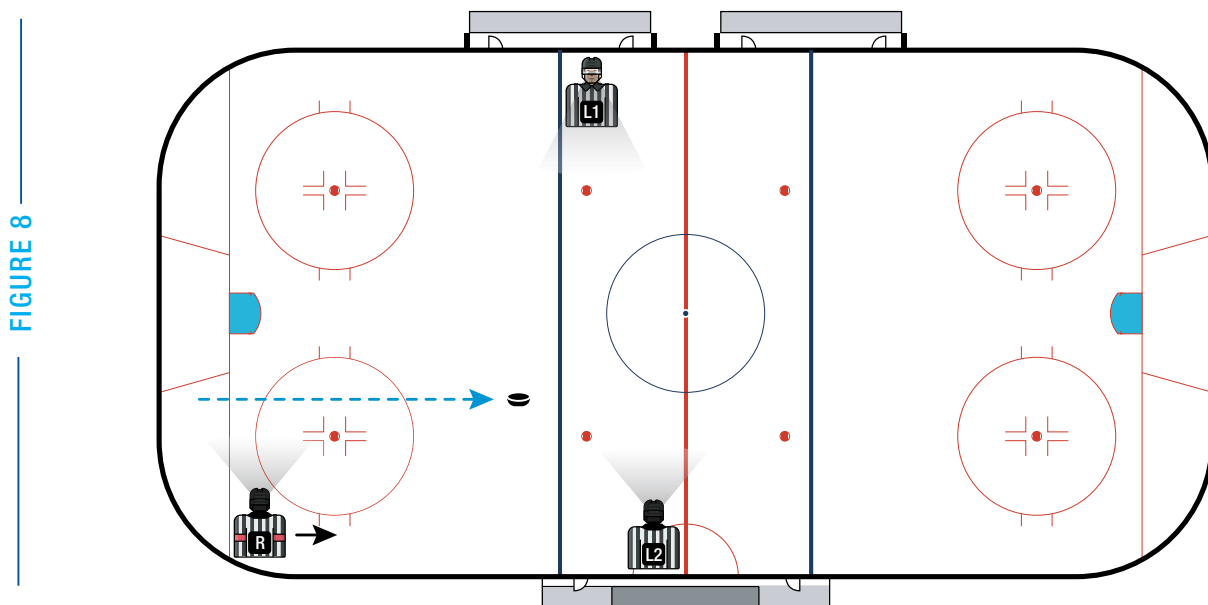


# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM REFEREE

If the defending team gains possession of the puck, the referee must be prepared to move out of the end zone with the play. When the puck is on the opposite side of the ice, the referee should be 2 to 4 metres from the boards and 6 to 8 metres behind the play (**Figure 7**).



If the puck is on the same side of the ice, the referee should be 1 to 1.5 metres from the boards and follow 8 to 10 metres behind the play (**Figure 8**).



# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM REFEREE

When the puck is on the same side of the ice, the referee must stay near the boards to ensure the following:

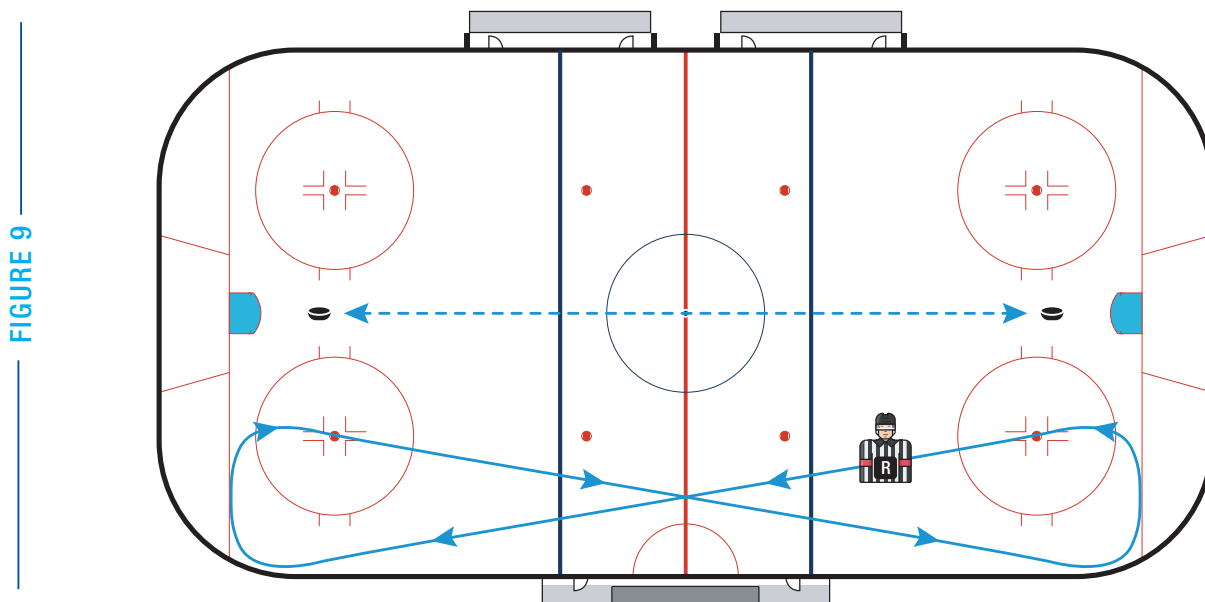
- No player gets behind the referee,
- The referee does not interfere with the play,
- If the referee is going to get hit by a player, contact should be against the boards for protection.

When play is in the end zone, the referee will utilize the “end zone positioning” as described earlier in this section. As play moves into the neutral zone and approaches the far blue line, the referee should remain close to the side boards if the puck is on the same side of the ice and roughly 8 to 10 metres behind the play. This will enable the referee to keep all players in view. If the puck changes direction and starts coming back, the referee will be able to get out of the way of the players. However, if the play is on the other side of the ice, the referee should move out 6 to 8 metres behind the play. In this position the referee will have sufficient time to move back if the play comes back. As the play moves into the end zone, the referee can establish their “end zone positioning” based on the location of the play.

## Common Faults and Tips

A common fault for referees is their failure to move out of the attacking zone in pursuit of the play if there are opposing players straggling behind. Follow the play, glance back several times and rely on your linesperson to communicate with those players and to keep you informed of any problems that may occur. To reduce the number of stops and starts, and to maintain excellent position while play is in progress, try to maintain a “figure 8” pattern of positioning by using tight turns (**Figure 9**).

Many altercations occur in the area around the net. Once play has stopped the referee should move to a position of not more than three metres from the net but with all players and both benches in full view. Your presence and verbal communication will deter any actions and you will have a good view of any altercation or players leaving the benches.



# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## LINESPERSON

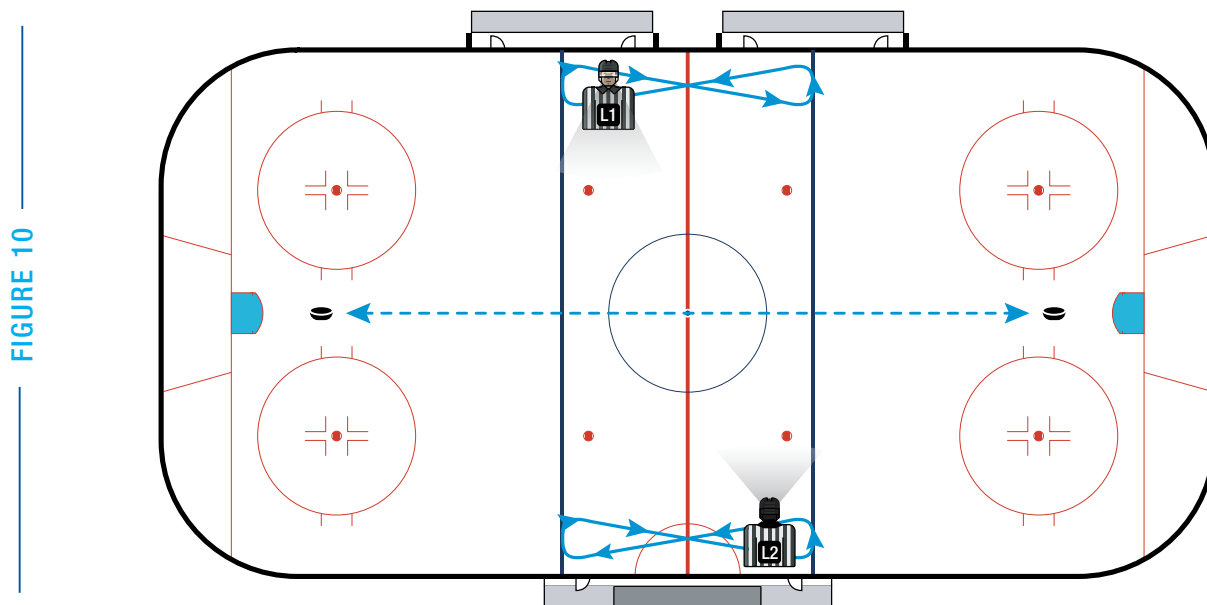
Most of the face-offs are conducted by the linesperson. The linesperson who is conducting the face-off should retrieve the puck. Upon the stoppage of play, the two linespersons should watch the players on the ice as their first priority. If two players are standing talking and challenging each other, they should be immediately aware of this potential trouble, move in quickly and separate the players before any serious trouble occurs. If there is no potential trouble, one linesperson will proceed to the position for the Face-off and the other will retrieve the puck, skate back and take the face-off.

### 3 LINESPERSONS

#### 3.1. POSITIONING WHILE PLAY IS IN PROGRESS

- They should always be in position to call the play – good sightline (with good sightline you earn trust)
- They should be at their blue line (or slightly inside the blue line), establishing the best position to have an unobstructed view down the line. This is called “Working the Line” as the puck crosses the line.
- They should not straddle the line or end up in a dangerous position by jumping up and sit on the boards.

They should work from the blue line to a position about midway between the centre red line and the other blue line (**Figure 10**).

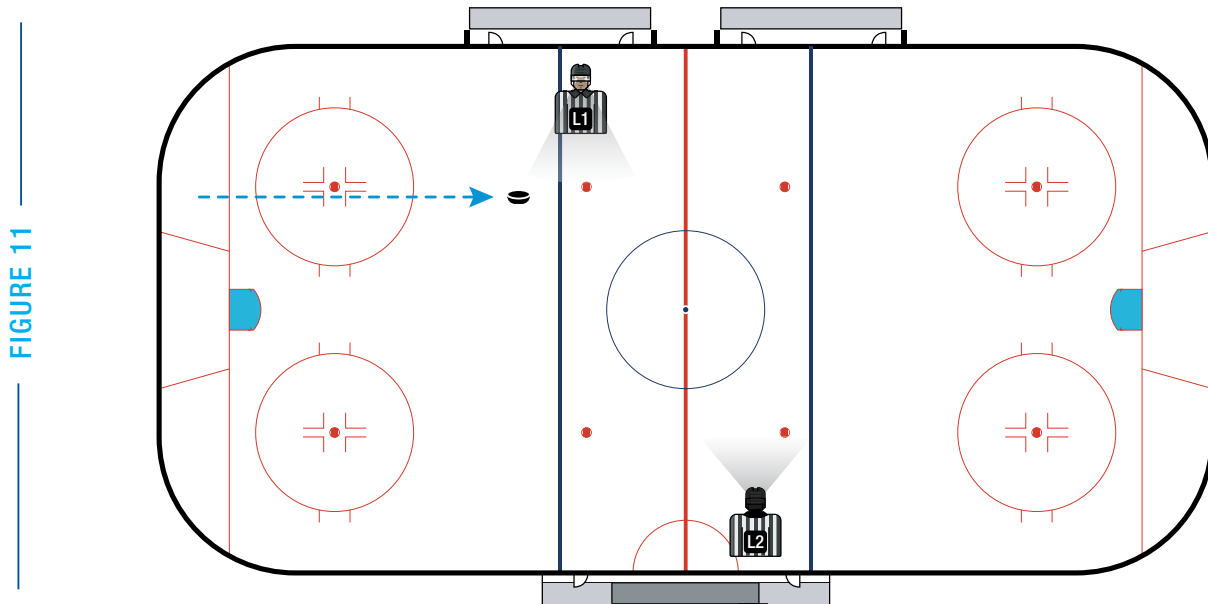


The back linesperson must ALWAYS position themselves so that this linesperson is at the same level as the deepest offensive player in order to cover their blue line in case of a fast break, long pass situation.

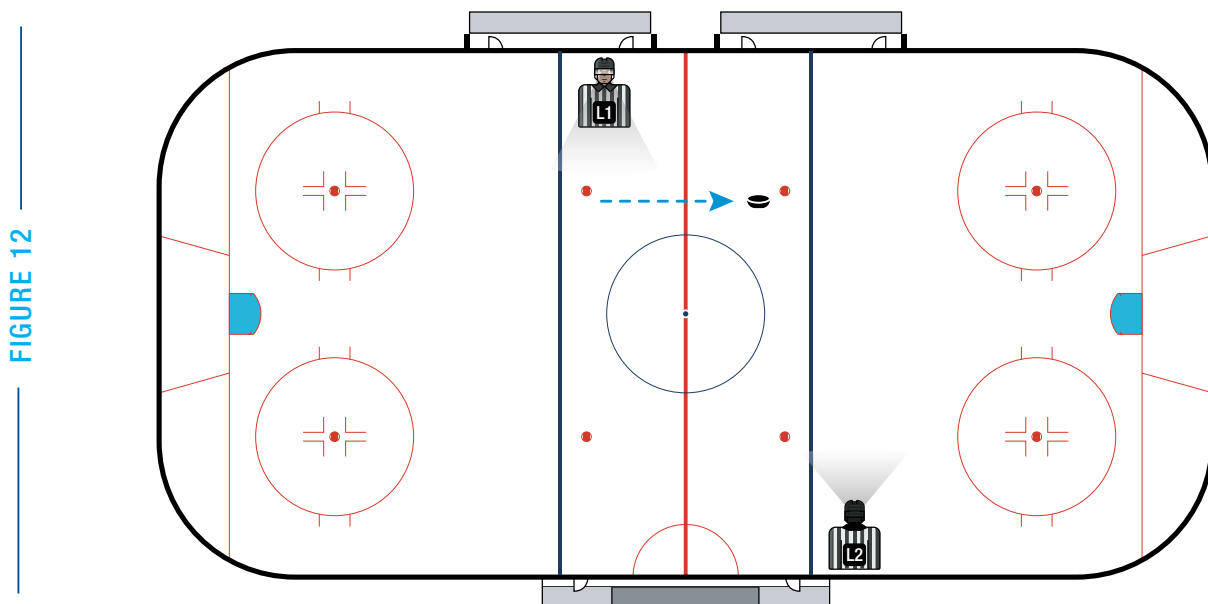
When play is in the end zone, the front linesperson, L1, should be one stride outside the blue line, turn the body at 45 degree angle to view the entire end zone while the other linesperson, L2, should be midway between this blue line and the centre red line on the opposite side of the ice (**Figure 11**).

## THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM LINESPERSON

When the defending team gains possession in their end zone, L2 should anticipate the play coming out of the end zone and move back to the red line. In these positions, L1 and L2 now have both blue lines covered. **(Figure 11).**



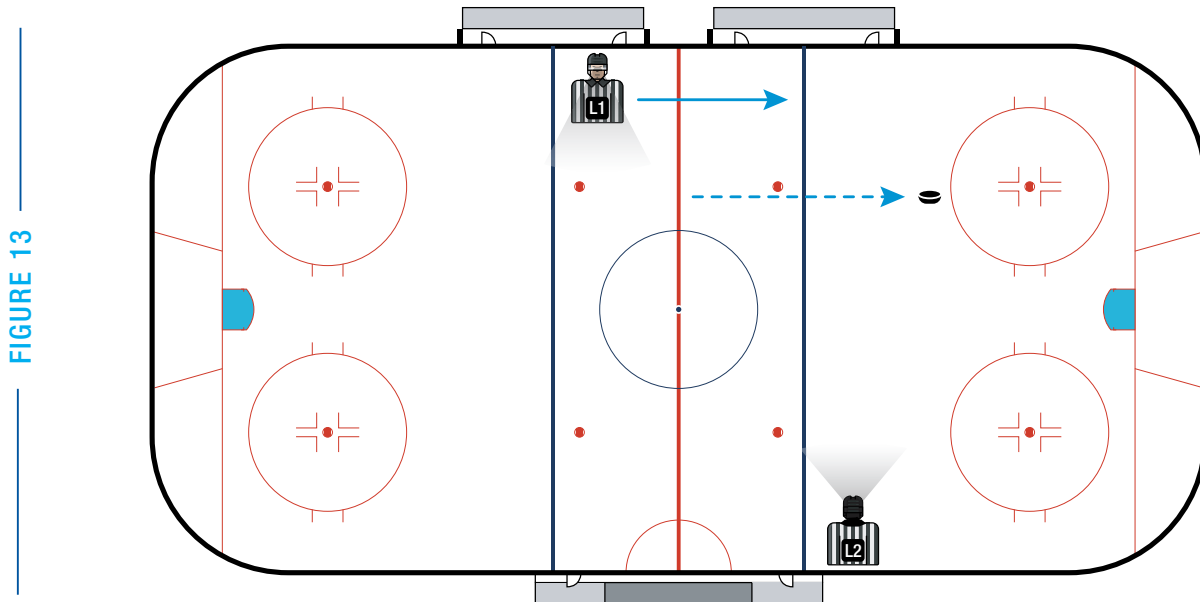
Linesperson, L1, must observe attacking players behind the play as the play leaves the end zone and be able to get back to the blue line in time to make a call if the play changes direction. After the puck crosses the blue line, L2 will move to the attacking blue line and be in position to call a potential offside at that line **(Figure 12).**



# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## LINESPERSON

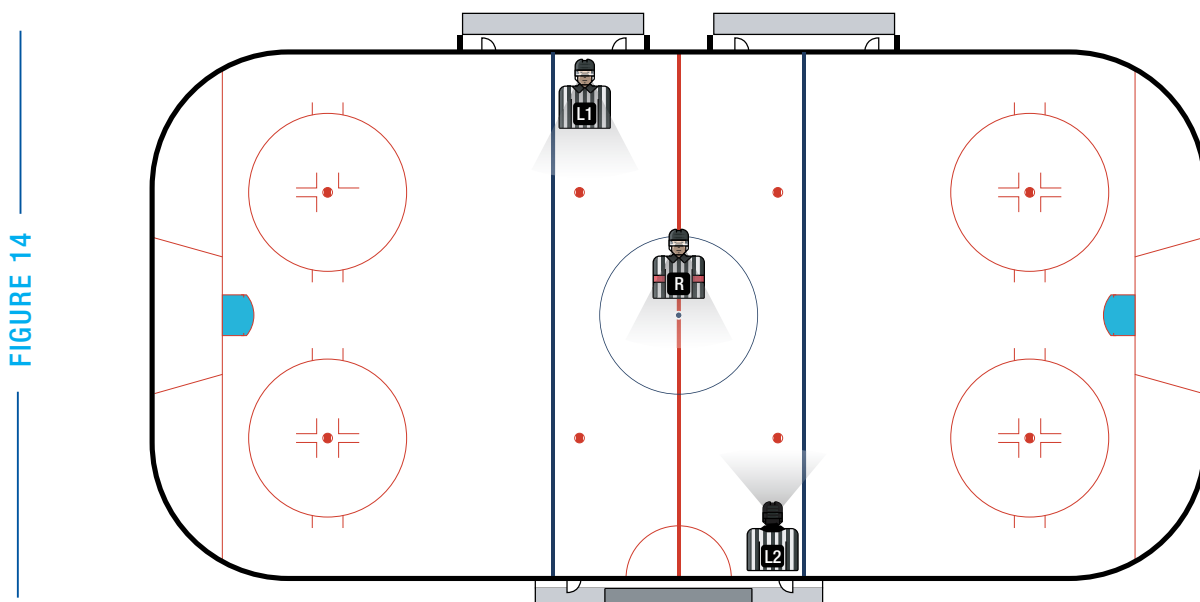
When the puck approaches the blue line, L2 must be at the line while L1 should move up to a position midway between the centre red line and blue line. Both linespersons should always be at their blue line and in correct position before the puck, on any potential offside play at the blue line (**Figure 13**). When the puck comes out of the end zone, the procedure for positioning is then reversed for each official.



### 3.2. POSITIONING FOR A FACE-OFF

- Face-offs will be taken by the linesperson retrieving the puck.
- The linesperson not taking the face-off must hold and cover the line of the linesperson taking the face-off.

When the referee is taking a face-off at centre ice, the two linesperson should be on opposite sides of the ice against the side boards, just outside the blue line (**Figure 14**).

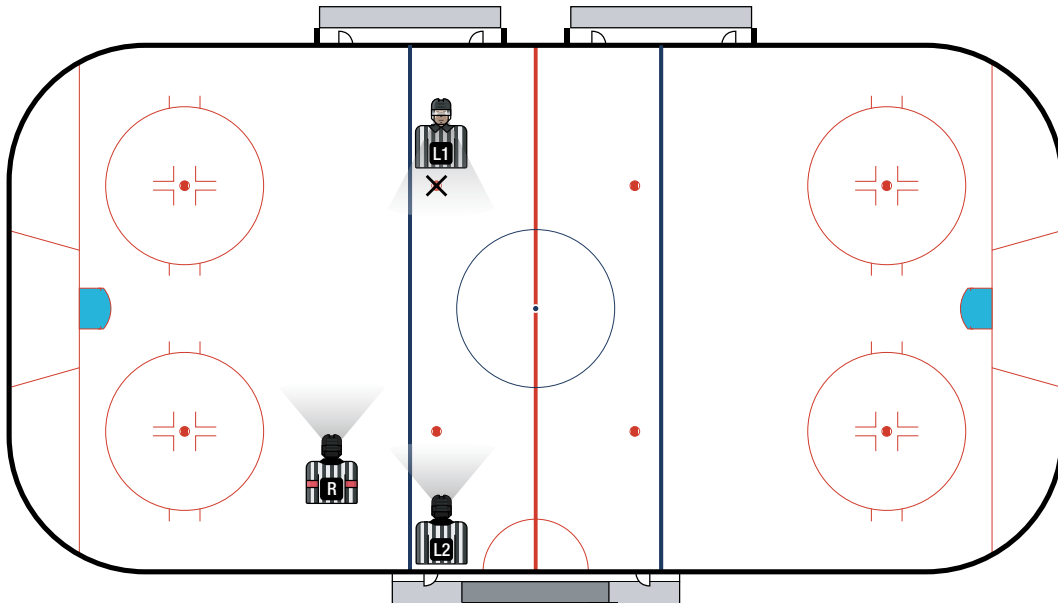




## THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM LINESPERSON

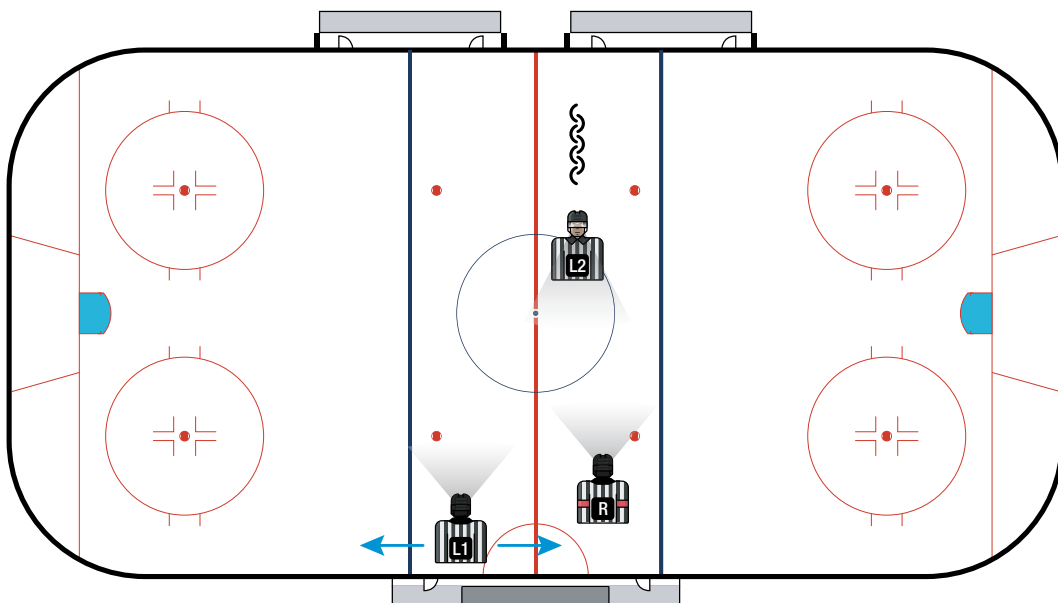
For a face-off at the face-off spots in the neutral zone, L2 must always follow the play and cover the attacking blue line, as L1 is always taking up their position as back linesperson between the blue line and the red line (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15



The linesperson taking the face-off, L1 should be facing the scorekeeper's bench so that the timekeeper can start the clock when the puck is dropped. L2 positioning on the side of the scorekeeper's bench is responsible for all lines in case L1 is trapped in the middle of the ice. (Figure 16).

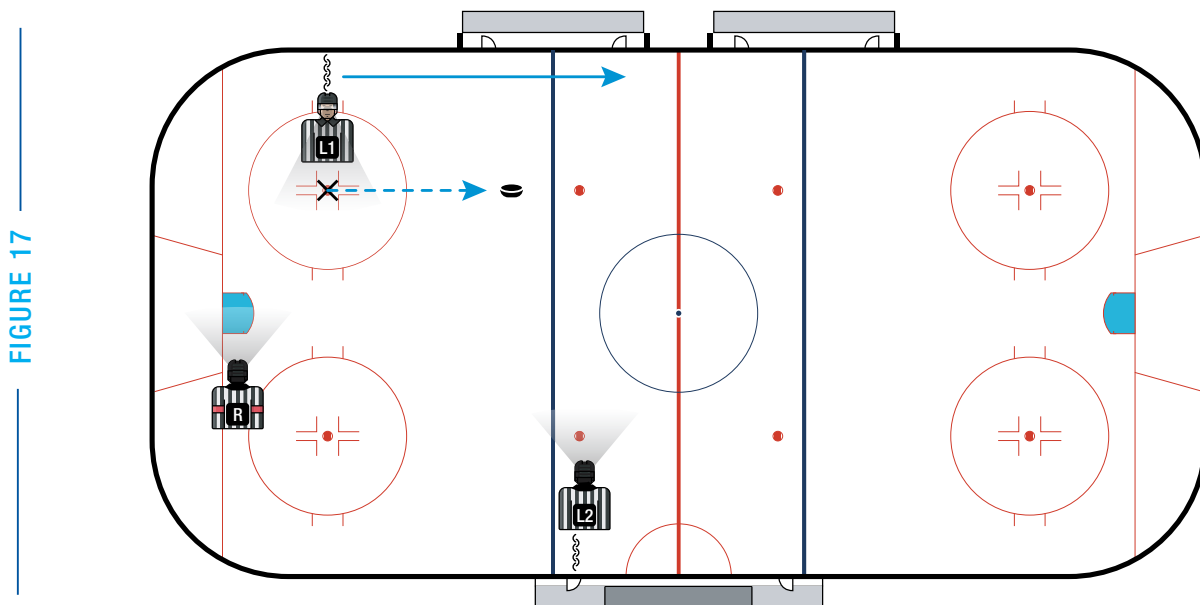
FIGURE 16



## THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM LINESPERSON

When the face-off is at an end face-off spot, L2 should be positioned one stride outside the blue line on the opposite side of the ice. If the referee is screened from seeing players positioned behind L1, who is conducting the face-off, then L2 may move off the boards an appropriate distance to get a clear view.

If a player is encroaching, L2 will blow the whistle and raise its arm, slightly bent with the open palm - on the side of the team which conducted the face off violation. After the puck is dropped, L2 will move back to the side boards and take a position one stride outside the blue line. L2 will remain there and L1 will then move out midway between the centre red line and blue line. (Figure 17)



Both linespersons should work as a team, always aware of what is going on and knowing where the other linesperson is at all times. They should always be alert and ready to cover each other's lines if one linesperson should fall or be trapped out of the play. They should always be prepared to cover for the referee if he falls or gets trapped out of the play, if the play turns around and the referee is caught far back. If this happens the linesperson may have to enter the end zone and practice the "end zone positioning" until the referee gets back into position. Working as a team, along with the referee, they should have complete control of the hockey game.

# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM

## PROCEDURE DURING A SCRUM/FIGHT

### 4 PROCEDURE DURING A SCRUM/FIGHT

#### 4.1. REFEREE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The referee should never at any point get physically involved with players that are involved in a scrum or fight. The basic procedure for the referee should be to take a position a bit from the direct area of the scrum/fight. For a good overview of the situation and be able to assess the proper penalties and as well use the voice/whistle to communicate with the involved players.

For situations in the end zone, it is important that the referee also takes a active control over the "point players" in the end-zone and if they are making any movement down towards the scrum and over the outlines of the face-off circle. Regardless of where on the ice the scrum occurs one focus area for the referee is also the benches if there is any players jumping in/joining the fight/scrum.

It is the job of referee to work actively to memorize/note the number of the players that is involved in the scrum. This is an important job if the goalkeeper gets involved in the situation and one player on the ice needs to serve the penalty or if there are players that will come in from the benches into the situation.

#### 4.2. LINEPERSON RESPONSIBILITY

The linesperson should be the one in the officiating team that will be active to try to deescalate the situation and if needed, physically interrupt the involved players. The linespersons should always try to work together in a pair in every situation when they try to break up a fight/scrum. Good communication is key.

When the linespersons are monitoring the right time is to enter the situation it is very important that the linesperson safety is put in the first room, that should never be down prioritized. The referee must support the linespersons by punishing any player that endangers the linespersons in this work.

#### 4.3. COMMON FAULTS AND TIPS

The linesperson should set as their standard for positioning to be at the blue line before the play crosses the line. To reach the line at the same time as play crosses the line does not give an opportunity to view the full ice surface and watch as play develops up ice.

The most important factor to take in consideration when a scrum or fight occurs is to minimize the involved players in the situation. To work in an active way to prevent others from joining and to communicate verbally and when needed, physically is the best way to minimize the severity of the situation.

# THREE OFFICIALS SYSTEM PROCEDURES DURING PENALTY SHOOT

## 5 PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

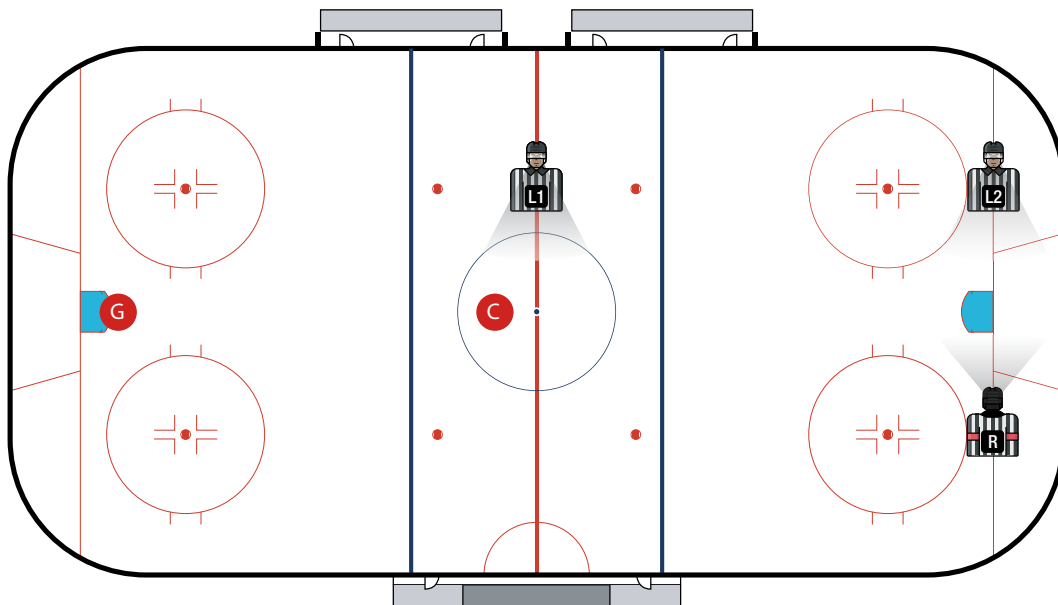
### 5.1. GENERAL PROCEDURE

The referee will take a position at the net on the same side as the scorekeeper's bench. On the opposite side of the net one linesperson, L2, takes the position to support the referee in the penalty shoot. The other linesperson, L1, will position the puck on the centre ice spot and stand over the puck until all the participants for the shot is ready, all game officials are in position and rest of the players left the ice. When this is done L1 takes a position between the benches in the neutral zone. The referee must make sure that everyone is set for the penalty shoot and that L1 has moved from centre ice. The shoot will start with a signal from the whistle from the referee by the net. The referee will have the main area of responsibility to monitor the shooter and as well monitor the goalkeeper and the puck crossing the line.

Only the referee should make any of the official signals for a goal or a wash out if no goal is scored (put the whistle in your pocket).

It is important that the referee involves the linespersons in situations with any doubts but that the decision call is always the referees. When a shoot has been taken it is the job of L1 to control the players and for L2 to take the puck. If it is during a game winning shoot procedure both linespersons will alternate being the L1 and L2 (**Figure 18**).

FIGURE 18



### YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME

For any comments email: [officiating@iihfoffice.com](mailto:officiating@iihfoffice.com)



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