



## Modern Hockey and Danger!

When responding to new rule changes and interpretations, there needs to be a period of adjustment to allow players, coaches and umpires to feel comfortable.

Previous communication has made reference to modern rule interpretation and has given some guidance to umpires about being less technical and allowing for a more open style of hockey. However, some umpires have become confused and it would appear that they might think that there is now no need to blow the whistle at all! In lower grades and certainly in junior grades, this approach can become problematic and unsafe. I would therefore like to offer the following comments for umpires to re-address their approach:

- Player safety and the elimination of danger are paramount. The whistle must be blown in the following situations to remove danger: aerial balls dropping into players; balls raised into a crowded circle; the ball hitting the goalkeeper and raising back into crowded circle; balls deflecting off sticks and lifting into players; shots at goal that are dangerous or lifted up into players.
- Deliberately raising the ball from free hits or open field play is **ILLEGAL** – no matter how ‘not dangerous’ these hits are. Note that the ball may be deliberately lifted when shooting for goal (pending danger). In particular, undercuts in open field play should be dealt with strictly under misconduct.
- Situations where there is aggressive body contact in tackle situations should be dealt with strictly to avoid injuries.
- Any other situation where player safety is at risk should be managed by the umpire carefully to ensure fairness and player safety.
- In most cases, when the ball hits the foot, the whistle will need to go. Any advantage gained by a player stopping the ball with their foot is an infringement. In some cases, when the ball is stopped with the stick, then spins onto the foot, or the ball jumps up and touches the foot, the umpire should consider playing on.

Fast, open style hockey comes about when umpires understand the spirit of the advantage rule. In many cases, a quick whistle is the advantage as it forces the offending player to retreat, which in turn establishes flow. In more closely contested games, or games with less skilled players, more whistle is required to help the game to flow.