

# **DIRIGO HOCKEY LEAGUE RULEBOOK**



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## **Preamble:**

The following rules and regulations govern all aspects of participation in the Dirigo Hockey League. They are designed to ensure fairness, safety, and consistency for all players, teams, and officials throughout the season. All participants are expected to understand and abide by these rules as a condition of league involvement.

## **ARTICLE I – PLAYER ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION**

1. Players must be 18 years old to participate in the Dirigo Hockey League. Players who are not 18 on the first night of play may join later in the season but will not receive a playoff exemption due to age.
2. All players must be registered with the current Dirigo governing body (i.e. AAU, USA Hockey etc.). *Note: governing body may require team registration in addition to individual.*
3. Payments are collected from the team captains. Players requesting refunds must work with their team captain.

## **ARTICLE II – TEAMS AND TEAM ROSTERS**

### **Section A – Team Classification**

The Dirigo Hockey League reserves the right to implement divisions (A, B, C) and move teams among divisions if the Dirigo Hockey Committee deems necessary based on the scores and competitiveness of the league. If scores and competitiveness are close, then teams will remain in one division until playoffs, at which point the top teams will compete for a championship.

### **Section B – Team Registration and Fees**

1. Team captains must collect governing body registrations (i.e. AAU/USA Hockey) from all players on their roster. This is to be submitted to the league coordinator along with jersey numbers.
2. All team fees are due before the first game of the season. If more teams register than available slots, priority will be given first to returning teams, then to teams that have submitted payment.
3. Once a team is registered, there will be no refunds.

### **Section C – Team Rosters**

1. A maximum of twenty-five (25) players are allowed on a team roster. Any non-sub pool player who appears in at least one game counts toward that limit for the season. Full-time goalies are included in the roster limit, while substitute goalies and sub pool players are not.
2. Players may only be on one team roster per season. Any player listed on a team's roster who appears in at least one regular season game is considered rostered to that team and may not play for another team for the remainder of the season. Players in the free agent sub pool may play for multiple teams throughout the season. Appearing in games as a substitute does not place a player on a team's roster. However, once a sub pool player is officially added to a team's full-time roster and appears in a game for that team, they are no longer eligible to play for any other team for the rest of the season.
3. Goalies are allowed to substitute as often as necessary and for as many teams as necessary during the regular season. Goalies not rostered for a team may also substitute for teams but must turn in a governing body registration to the league coordinator.

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4. Rosters remain open during the regular season to support league growth and viability, but only full-time players (those who have appeared in at least 25% of regular season games rounded up) are eligible for playoffs. Exceptions may be granted for verified medical issues, family emergencies, or military service pending approval by the Dirigo Hockey Committee. Requests must be submitted at least 30 days before the playoffs. Players rostered on non-club NCAA teams are not eligible for exemptions. Rosters are frozen for the final two regular season games to ensure fairness for all teams.

### **Section D – Policing of Rosters**

1. Referees will check rosters at the beginning of each game. Any team found playing with a non-rostered player or player from another team will forfeit the game (recorded as a 3-0 loss) and may face further league discipline.

### **Section E – Team Uniforms**

1. Each team is responsible for providing their own jerseys with a unique color scheme and numbers. All players (except the goalie) are required to be in matching uniforms. Captains should always maintain “spare” jerseys to ensure this policy is met. To ensure compliance, captains are expected to plan in the offseason so that all jerseys are ready by opening night.

2. If the referees determine that the jerseys of the teams are too alike to officiate the games effectively, the visiting team may be asked to turn their jerseys inside out or wear practice jerseys.

### **Section F – Sub Pool & Free Agency**

1. The league will maintain a sub pool of substitute players who are not full-time members of any team. This pool is composed of players entering the league via free agency and is intended to help teams with short rosters on a week-to-week basis during regular season games.

2. Teams may borrow players from the pool for individual games without being required to sign them to their roster.

3. Pool players are available on a first-come, first-served basis and may choose which team they are or are not willing to play for.

4. Players listed on a team’s opening roster may only move to the sub pool if they have not appeared in a regular season game for that team. A player who moves from an opening roster to the sub pool must appear in a game for a different team before playing for their original team. Once they do, they may not be added back to their original team’s roster for the remainder of the season, including playoffs, and are not eligible to return to that roster until the following season. However, they remain eligible to appear as a substitute for their original team during the regular season.

## **ARTICLE III – PLAYING RULES**

### **Section A – Playing Rules**

Section Six of the USA Hockey Rulebook (“Playing Rules”) will serve as the foundation for the Dirigo Hockey League’s playing rules, with specific amendments outlined in this rulebook. Notable amendments include blue line icing, NHL-length penalties, and major penalties for all body checking infractions. The league coordinator will ensure that game officials follow the USA Hockey Rulebook and are properly informed of all Dirigo-specific modifications.

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## **Section B – League Format**

1. The number of regular season games each team is guaranteed will be based on the total number of teams registered. The season will run from late-September to early-March, with no games scheduled on Super Bowl Sunday or major holidays.
2. Each game will begin with a three-minute warm-up, followed by three 12-minute stop-time periods. The warm-up clock will start whether or not teams are on the ice. Officials are instructed to keep games within a one-hour time slot and may use running time in the third period if necessary. If the goal differential is three goals or less, the final two minutes of the game will be played with stop time. Teams should be ready one minute before the scheduled start of each game.
3. Points will be awarded as follows: two (2) points for a win, one (1) point for a tie, and zero (0) points for a loss. If the game is ahead of schedule, referees may choose to allow a five-minute, 3-on-3 overtime period, but this is at referee discretion and not guaranteed.

## **Section C – Penalties & Suspensions**

1. To encourage clean play, the Dirigo Hockey League follows NHL-standard penalty lengths regardless of period duration: two (2) minutes for minor penalties, five (5) minutes for major penalties, and ten (10) minutes for misconducts. All misconducts are reviewed by the Dirigo Hockey Committee for potential suspension. Suspension decisions must be made before the player's team's next scheduled game.
2. If a player is suspended and there are not enough regular season and/or playoff games remaining for them to complete their suspension, the suspension will carry over into the next Dirigo Hockey League season that they are registered.
3. If a player participates in a game while under suspension, or if a team uses an illegal player (such as a suspended, unregistered, or rostered player from another team), all involved players may face suspension, as determined by the Dirigo Hockey Committee. The game will also be forfeited by a score of 3-0. A second offense may result in the team's expulsion from the league without a refund.
4. Off-ice altercations that happen on the premises of the rink facilities (including parking lot) will result in suspension from the league.
5. The Dirigo Hockey Committee reserves the right to suspend or permanently ban any player who consistently violates league rules, displays poor sportsmanship, or, in the committee's judgment, poses a risk to the health and safety of other participants. This includes, but is not limited to, players who habitually receive game misconducts, engage in fighting, threaten officials, or attempt to injure others. Any action taken by the committee will be in addition to any penalties assessed by on-ice officials.
6. Checking and Slashing Major Penalties: If a player receives a 5-minute major for any checking or slashing penalty, it will result in the following:
  - Second offense: One Game Suspension
  - Third offense: Three Game Suspension
  - Fourth offense: Ineligible for remainder of the season.
7. Fighting / Third Man in Penalties: a player receiving one of these penalties will result in the following:

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- First offense: Three Game Suspension
- Second offense: Ineligible for remainder of the season

8. Match Penalties – Any player assessed a match penalty must attend a hearing with the Dirigo Hockey Committee, the League Coordinator, the Player Representative, and the Conduct Representative. The player must comply with the committee's decision before being allowed to return to play.

### **Section D – Dirigo Hockey League Rule Amendments**

1. There will be no red line. Icing is determined by the defending team's blue line.
2. A game may begin with six skaters if a goalie is unavailable. If no goalie arrives by the start of the second period, the game will proceed with running time. Teams may not request a delayed start for lack of a goalie.
3. No player is permitted to step onto the ice surface before the Zamboni has exited and the doors closed. Any violation of this rule will result in a two (2) minute minor penalty, which will be assessed at the start of the game.
4. There will be no time-outs during any game, until the playoffs, where there will be one per team.
5. The Dirigo Hockey League does not enforce a formal "mercy rule," recognizing that ice time is often more valuable to players than the score. However, if a team leads by 8 or more goals in the third period, the leading team may request running time, which will be granted.

### **ARTICLE IV – PLAYOFFS**

1. Tiebreakers in the standings will be applied in the following order: (1) head-to-head results, (2) total number of wins, and (3) goal differential.
2. Playoffs will be single elimination.
3. Playoff games tied at the end of regulation will proceed to a 12-minute 3-on-3 overtime period, with teams switching sides at the start of overtime. If still tied, additional 3-on-3 overtime periods will be played until a goal is scored to determine the winner. Teams will not switch sides again after the initial overtime period.
4. Each team is allowed one time-out per game. If a team uses its time-out during regulation, it will not receive an additional time-out in overtime.
5. Only players who meet the 25% participation requirement outlined in Article II are eligible for playoffs. Exceptions for goalies will be subject to a vote by the Dirigo Hockey Committee with the requesting team ineligible to vote.
6. The number of teams qualifying for the playoffs will be determined by the league based on the total number of teams each season. Typically, four or six teams will qualify, depending on league size, to maintain a balanced and competitive playoff format. The top two seeds may receive a bye in the first round, depending on the number of teams that qualify. The league coordinator will communicate the playoff format to all teams at the beginning of the regular season so that teams are informed in advance.