



The following is from Steve Horgan, USA Field Hockey interpreter for the Rules of Hockey and the Rules of Indoor Hockey. It is for umpires, players and coaches. USA Field Hockey has authorized the use of the logo by the rules interpreter to help signify that the information contained herein has been carefully reviewed for official distribution.

FIH Rules Definitions:

Push

Moving the ball along the ground using a pushing movement of the stick after the stick has been placed close to the ball. When a push is made, both the ball and the head of the stick are in contact with the ground.

Hit (which is not permitted in indoor hockey)

Striking the ball using a swinging movement of the stick towards the ball.

FIH RULE 9.5 Players must not hit the ball. 'Slap' hitting the ball, which involves a long pushing or sweeping movement with the stick before making contact with the ball, is regarded as a hit and is therefore not permitted.

PUSHING vs HITTING: This is the current hot topic of discussion at regional qualifying tournaments.

Question sent to the FIH:

Is there any official guidance on what "close to the ball" is considered for a push? It seems that from reviewing video and watching some matches that the distance for this is expanding more each year. I had some players simulate a free hit for me to look at the distance closer. Their motions were quite natural and other than the possibility of their stick beginning at .7m-1m it seemed OK.

Umpires are aware that there is always some hard contact when a push is executed, but, where is the line between push and hit.

Answer Back From FIH Rules Board:

It can be helpful to consider the definition and interpretation of a push in relation to the definition and interpretation of a hit. If there is a distinct "swinging movement of the stick", the action is a hit and this includes what is sometimes referred to as a "slap" hit. If instead the stick is positioned near the ball ready to play it, there will not be a "swinging movement". Because this is in preparation for playing the ball, the stick will inevitably be "close to" the ball. This description of a push intentionally avoids suggesting a distance for "close to".

Our experience shows that specifying a distance is less rather than more helpful. It usually and unhelpfully leads to discussion about why is X permitted but not X plus a small amount more. Or it can be difficult and contentious to judge X consistently.

Instead, assessing a push does, admittedly, require judgment. The aim in that judgment should be to assess what a player is intending to do. If a player intends to play the ball with some continuous contact between stick and ball – it is a push. If a player intends to play the ball by striking it or making very brief instantaneous contact between stick and ball – it is a hit.

With the above interpretation players, coaches and umpires alike must understand that there will be some inconsistency in the decisions. Players and coaches must adjust to what is being called as long as the umpire is consistent!