

Appendix I: Hockey Then and Now

The game of hockey has changed over the years in a few big ways. Here's a very simplified run-down of some of the differences between the 7-woman game played in the earliest years in Minnesota, and the 6-woman game played now:

Then – 1899

(Simplified from *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*.¹ The book contains rules for a few different leagues and where there are numerical specifics, we've picked the New York league, the only American league included.)

Players - 1899

There were 7 players to a side, consisting of:

Goal: The goal-keeper or minder primarily defended the goal. They were *not* allowed lie, kneel, or sit upon the ice.

Cover-Point: Defensive skater. They were primarily tasked with covering the opposing player who was in possession of the puck.

Point: Defensive skater. They were primarily tasked with covering the opposite side of the ice from the Cover Point and trying to intercept passes.

Rover: Offensive skater. Used their judgment to determine their forward position on a drive.

Left Wing: Offensive skater. Stayed to the left side of the ice on a drive.

Right Wing: Offensive skater. Stayed to the right side of the ice on a drive.

Center: Offensive skater. Stayed to the center of the ice on a drive.

One player is designated the captain and may speak for the team to the referee as invited.

No change of players. If there was an injury, you could sub a reserve in if one was available, or the other side could drop a player to equalize, depending on the league.

Rink and Gear - 1899

The rink must be at least 112' long by 58' wide.

It could be a designated rink, but could also just be an area of lake ice designated by clearing out snow, as there are no markings on the ice.

Now – 2024

(Heavily simplified from the 2023-2024 Professional Women's Hockey League rules.² While the NHL rules are probably more familiar and slightly different, we're here for the women's game.)

2024 - Players

A game-day team is composed of 19 skaters and two goalkeepers,³ with up to 6 players on the ice at any given time. These consist of:

Goalkeeper: Defends the goal. Only one may be on the ice at a time. They are *expected* to lie, kneel, sit, and do the splits on the ice in defense of their goal. A goalkeeper may be pulled to add an additional skater to the ice.

Skaters: Typically split into 3 Forwards and 2 Defenders, the 5 skaters in play at any given time, (or 6 if the goalie is pulled), will be some combination of players who shoot and players who defend, based on the specific strategy of the team. This has become simultaneously highly specialized and broadly generalized, as it shifts as lines come on and off the ice from moment to moment. A predetermined group of forwards who go out together is called a line, and defenders are typically pairs.

One player is designated the captain and may speak for the team to the referee as invited.

Players swap out almost constantly from the eligible players on the bench, and injury substitutions happen that way as well. There are special provisions if both goalies are injured.

2024 - Rink and Gear

The rink is significantly bigger—200' long by 85' wide and has rounded corners 23' in radius. It is surrounded by boards, safety glass, and safety netting to protect spectators.

The rink has a series of regulation lines, circles, and markers that are used to determine positions for face-offs and other issues of play.

The goal is made of two posts, 4' in height, driven into the ice 6' apart, and at least 5' from the end of the ice. A goal is scored when a puck goes between the goal posts from the front, underneath an imaginary line that stretches from the two post tops. If a goal post breaks, play is stopped until it can be replaced. (By the 1920s a goal frame had been established.)⁴

Sticks must be made of wood, with no harder substances attached, and cannot be more than 3" wide at any point, for all players. Some leagues specified a 13" limit to the length of the blade.

Farrell quotes F.S. Stocking of Quebec, a noted goal-keeper of the day, that sticks are not particularly useful for actually blocking shots, but are used for clearing the puck after a shot is blocked.⁵ (By the 1910s Goalies sticks have started to shift.)⁶

Pucks must be made of vulcanized rubber and are 1" thick and 3" in diameter.

Clothing was not usually specified, and Farrell lamented the number of men who played in shorts and didn't properly protect their knees. Farrell recommended pants with padding at the knees.⁷ (By the 1910s, leg pads were in use in some cases.)⁸

Players were not permitted to wear clothes that aided in goal keeping in the men's leagues, although in the early women's leagues full advantage was taken of the long skirts of the day, even sewing lead weights into the hems to improve their puck stopping ability.⁹ Shorter hockey kits for women were available by the early 1900s but not always worn.

Game Format - 1899

The game consisted of two halves of 20 minutes each, exclusive of stoppages, with an intermission of 10 minutes between, and goals swapped after each half.

All players play for the entirety of the game (40 minutes).

The goal frame—posts and crossbar—still forms a 4' tall by 6' wide target, but are more formal in shape and must be painted red. They are secured to the ice by flexible pegs. A highly specified white nylon cord net is attached to the goal frame and completely covers the back of the net. When the net gets knocked out of place, they move it back.

Sticks are mostly made of composite and may be taped to improve puck handling. For skaters, they are still no wider than 3" in the blade, and all of the other measurements are now heavily regulated.

Goalie sticks are noticeably different, with a 3.5" maximum width that runs up the shaft, and a safety knob on the end. They're a part of the goalie's shot stopping arsenal.

Other than the quality of the rubber, the puck hasn't changed since 1899. Thank goodness.

Gear is highly regulated and specialized, with differing uniforms for home and away games. Protective equipment includes gloves, specific pads, helmets, and face masks. Mouthguards and neck and throat protectors are highly recommended but not required.

Goalie gear is heavily specialized and may only be worn by the two designated goalies. Goalie pads and gloves are designed to assist in stopping the puck.

2024 - Game Format

The game consists of three 20-minute periods separated by two 18-minute intermissions. The goals are swapped each period.

Players come on and off the ice and ice time in a game is not guaranteed. (Approximately 23 minutes in a 60-minute game was average for top players in the PWHL in 2024)¹⁰

A tie at the end of normal time resulted in a 10-minute overtime. At the end of that overtime, teams had to arrange to hold a rematch prior to the next scheduled game.

Rules of Play - 1899

The puck might be stopped, but not carried nor knocked on, by any part of the body.

The puck was “faced” by being placed between the sticks of two opponents, and the referee then calling play. This was done at the start of each period at center ice.

In the event of a rule infringement, the captain of the opposite team could have the puck faced again at the place where it was last played. If the puck left the ice at a sideline, or a foul occurred behind the goal line, the puck was faced at a spot perpendicular to the line in question, either 3 yards from the sideline or 5 yards from the goal line.

Once the puck is touched by a team, no player on the same team who was nearer to the opponent’s goal line than the puck was allowed touch the puck or prevent another player from touching the puck, until the puck was touched by an opponent. A player had to always be on their own side of the puck (in other words: no forward passing).

No player was allowed to raise their stick above the shoulder.

Charging from behind, tripping, collaring, kicking, or cross-checking was not allowed, and the referee gets to remove a player from the ice for any amount of time at the discretion of the referee, if they suspect the player broke the rule intentionally.

During the regular season, a tie at the end of normal time results in a 5-minute overtime with 3 skaters and 1 goalie (or 4 skaters). At the end of that overtime, if the game is still tied, play proceeds to a shootout. In the playoffs, teams instead take a 15-minute intermission and then play an additional 20-minute period, repeating as necessary, until a goal is scored.

2024 – Some Rules of Play

Skaters may stop the puck and knock it down with their hands, but may not close a hand on the puck or pass the puck to a teammate with their hand.

The puck is “faced-off” by a referee dropping the puck between two players who are facing each other in the direction of their opponent’s goals at approximately one stick length apart. This is done at the start of each period at center ice.

The location of the face-off after a penalty, the puck leaving the ice, or another incident is determined by a variety of things, like when the penalty is assessed, and happens at a set of designated locations marked on the ice, typically in at points forward and to the left or right of the offending team’s goal, but occasionally at center ice.

The middle of the rink is split by lines into a neutral zone around center ice, and two attacking zones closer to each goal. Players’ skates may not precede the puck into the attacking zone in front of their opponent’s goal. Forward passing, however, is encouraged. The puck may not be sent down the ice, crossing both the center line and the opposing goal line, without being touched. This incurs an icing penalty, and results in a face-off at one of the end zone dots.

Players are expected to be in control of their sticks, and the puck may not be struck by a stick held above the shoulders. A stick which causes injury while above the level of an opponent’s shoulders is also subject to specific penalties.

Most of the old infractions still apply, with dozens of additions like hooking, head-butting, and fighting. Penalties are now heavily formalized and time in the penalty box or penalty shots are determined by a number of factors including the type of penalty, prior penalties, and potential overlapping penalties.

As no substitutions for anything other than injury were allowed, this always left the offending team short-handed.

Checking was permitted, but frowned on by players like Arthur Farrell, who loathed these “football tactics” infiltrating hockey.¹¹

Officials - 1899

Referee: One for the game. Their decision was final on all disputes of play.

Umpires: One for each goal, stationed behind the goal. They determined when a goal had occurred and had final say over goals.

Timekeeper: Tracked the game time, excluding stoppages.

When a player is in the penalty box, the offending team may not replace them on the ice, and must play short-handed. The PWHL has a jailbreak goal system, where scoring short-handed instantly ends the penalty even if the time has not elapsed.

Checking is permitted in the PWHL, but only when there is a clear intention to play or gain possession of the puck.

2024 - Officials

Referees: Two for the game. They assess penalties and drop the puck for the start of each period.

Linespersons: Two for the game. They track and rule on off-sides and icing, and drop the puck for all other face-offs.

Official Scorer: They track the rosters and record all details of goals throughout the game.

Real Time Scorers: Responsible for electronically reporting the score in real time.

Game Timekeeper: Tracks the game time, excluding stoppages, and resets the clock as needed.

Penalty Timekeeper: Tracks the penalty time specifically.

Video Review Staff and Video Goal Judge: Review all goals to determine legality for every game. Handle coordinating video reviews with the on-ice staff.

¹ Farrell, Arthur. *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*. Montreal. C. R. Corneil, Printer. 1899.

² Professional Women's Hockey League Official Rules 2023–2024. <https://www.thepwhl.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/PWHL-Rulebook-Final-v-Jan-2024.pdf> Accessed 9/12/2024.

³ The PWHL allows teams to have 21 skaters and 2 goalkeepers on their active roster, but 19 skaters and 2 goalkeepers are designated eligible each game. They also have reserve players who can be called up.

⁴ “Ice Hockey.” *The 1922 Gopher*. University of Minnesota. Spring 1921, p376. The photo on this page shows the team posing around a goal frame made of chicken wire and blankets.

⁵ Farrell, Arthur. *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*. Montreal. C. R. Corneil, Printer. 1899, p88.

⁶ “Senior Girls Lose to ‘Sophs’ on Ice.” *The Minneapolis Journal*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. February 26, 1917, p6. In the photo of Elizabeth Lagaard, Winifred Bailey, and Sarah Paper jokingly forming a kick line, Paper’s stick is noticeably wider going up the shaft, though not on par with goalie sticks today.

⁷ Farrell, Arthur. *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*. Montreal. C. R. Corneil, Printer. 1899, p47.

⁸ “As the Tribune Camera Man Saw the University Co-eds Play Hockey.” *The Minneapolis Tribune*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. February 25, 1917, p41, and “Ice Hockey.” *The 1918 Gopher*. The University of Minnesota. Spring 1917, P467. In the full version of the photo from the yearbook, Eleanor Schwerin on the far right can be seen wearing full leg pads. She’s the only person wearing them, but was a Left Wing for the team in the game the photo was taken during, so it’s unclear if the pads were personal preference or if she had stepped in as goalie at some point.

⁹ Avery, Joanna and Julie Stevens. *Too Many Men on the Ice: Women's Hockey in North America*. Polestar, Victoria, BC. 1997. p57-59.

¹⁰ Kennedy, Ian. “Poulin, Larocque, Fast leading PWHL in time on ice.” February 13, 2024.

<https://thehockeynews.com/womens/pwhl/poulin-larocque-fast-leading-pwhl-in-time-on-ice>. Accessed 8/5/2025.

¹¹ Farrell, Arthur. *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*. Montreal. C. R. Corneil, Printer. 1899, P80.