

Ice Hockey

Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Toyohashi. Next January, Aichi Prefecture will be hosting the ice hockey and ice skating events for the winter edition of the National Sports Festival of Japan (*Kokumin Taiiku Taikai - Touki Taikai*) with Toyohashi serving as a host for the ice hockey tournament! With that in mind, I would like to introduce you all to the basics of ice hockey.



Ice hockey as it is today started around the end of the 19th century. Teams and leagues began to form in Canada, and it soon spread to Europe and the United States. In 1910 the NHA, which would later become the NHL, was formed, and ice hockey began to be played at a professional level. In 1920, Ice hockey was held for the first time as an Olympic event, and Japan began competing internationally around the 1930s.

Ice hockey, as the name implies, is played on ice. The athletes wear ice skates, and use an L-shaped stick to pass and shoot a hockey “puck” across the ice surface. The rules of ice hockey are few, resulting in long periods of uninterrupted play. The main rules infractions in ice hockey are: intentionally deflecting the puck with hands or feet (unless you are the goalkeeper), offside¹, and icing². There is no rule against making (aggressive) contact with your opponent.

A match consists of three 20-minute periods. In the case of a tie, there will be a 5-minute sudden-death playoff. If the match is not decided in these 5 minutes, a “shootout” will occur, where each team takes 3 penalty shots and the team that scores the most wins.

Each period in ice hockey begins with a face-off, where a player from each team stands in the middle of the rink and competes for the puck, which is dropped by the referee.

Hockey is played with 6 players on each team, a goalkeeper, two forwards, two defenders, and a center.

The rink used in ice hockey is 200 feet long by 85 feet wide, with rounded corners. The rink is split into a defending zone, attacking zone, and a neutral zone. There is a blue line indicating the neutral zone, and a goal line which is drawn across the front of the goal. There are 9 face off spots, including the one in the center from which the match starts. There is an arc in front of the goal, and

¹ Entering the attacking zone ahead of the puck puts you in an “offside” position.

² Shooting the puck from the defending zone beyond the opponent’s goal line.

a trapezoid-shaped area behind the goal, which indicates where the goalkeeper is allowed to handle to puck.

The main scoring techniques in ice hockey are the snapshot and the wrist shot. The snapshot is similar to a golf swing in that the player swings the stick and hits the puck with full

power. The wrist shot, on the other hand, is a smaller, more difficult to read movement, in which the athlete flicks the puck using their wrists, without swinging the stick. Snapshots in professional-level hockey can reach speeds of 150kph.

In general, if you commit a penalty in hockey, you must sit in the penalty box for a set period of time, which is based on the severity of the penalty. The team which committed the penalty is not allowed to send out a substitute for the player who is in the penalty box. In other words, when a team commits a penalty, they are at a player disadvantage until the player in the penalty box returns to play. If during this period, however, the opposing team scores a goal, the penalized player can return to play immediately. There are 6 types of penalties in ice hockey. The most common penalty, the minor penalty, results in a 2 minute stay in the penalty box. A double minor penalty results in 4 minutes, a major penalty 5 minutes, and finally, a misconduct penalty earns you 10 minutes in the penalty box. Two major penalties result in a misconduct penalty. There are also a "game misconduct penalties," and "match penalties." A game misconduct penalty results in the player's removal from the match, but allows for immediate substitution of the removed player, while a match penalty results in both the player's removal, and a 5 minute period during which they cannot be substituted. Fighting, intentional tripping, and high sticking (lifting the stick above shoulder height to hit either the puck or an opponent) are all examples of penalties in ice hockey. If a player is fouled in the middle of an attempted shot at the goal, that player is awarded a penalty shot, in which they go one-on-one with the goalie and attempt to score a goal.

In January 2021, Toyohashi will be serving as a host for the Japan National Sports Festival's ice hockey tournament. Toyohashi will primary host the junior division tournament, but will also host a handful of senior division matches. Will Hokkaido continue their domination of the junior division? Come out and see!

