

NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE (NIHL)

Rules of Competition 2025-2026

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1. Scope & Interpretation

All NIHL sanctioned games and tournaments must adhere to the [IIHF Rules of Ice Hockey](#).

Where the IIHF rules are supplemented or amended by the **IHUK In-House Rules & Officiating Guidance** (<https://www.ihukreferee.uk/downloads>), the IHUK wording will take precedence for domestic competition.

Order of precedence: IIHF Rules → IHUK In-House Rules → NIHL Rules of Competition.

Insurance notice: Participants are covered by EIH insurance **only when** the game, tournament or camp has been formally sanctioned or approved by EIH.

2. League Identity & Structure

The NIHL National Division (NIHL) operates through a dedicated company, **Premier Ice Hockey League Ltd**, in which all participating teams are equal shareholders. This collaborative model ensures each club has an equal voice and stake in the league's governance and operations. While operated by this company, the NIHL remains affiliated to and governed by **England Ice Hockey (EIH)**.

The regular season will run from **20 September 2025** to **22 March 2026**, with the league format detailed in Appendix A.

League and Challenge Matches

League matches take precedence over all challenge and cup fixtures. Challenge games may be organised prior to the start of the league season but must be sanctioned by EIH in advance and will be subject to all league rules, excluding roster limits (see section 5.2 for detailed NIHL roster limits). Each player must be registered with EIH.

Following the regular season, the **top eight teams** will advance to the NIHL playoffs, with the format detailed in Appendix B.

- The eight qualifying teams will be split into **two groups** based on league position.
 - **Group A:** Teams finishing **1st, 4th, 5th, and 8th** in the league standings.
 - **Group B:** Teams finishing **2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th** in the league standings.
- Teams will play each other in their group **home and away**.
- The **top two teams** from each group will progress to the **Playoff Finals Weekend**, where:
 - Winner of **Group A** will play the runner-up of **Group B**.
 - Winner of **Group B** will play the runner-up of **Group A**.

League Title Tiebreakers

If two or more teams are tied on points at the end of the regular season, their position in the standings will be determined by the following criteria, in order:

1. Most regulation wins (60 minutes).
2. Most wins excluding shoot out wins
3. Head-to-head points between the tied teams.
4. Head-to-head goal difference between the tied teams
5. Best goal difference (goals for minus goals against in all league games).
6. Most goals scored in all league games.
7. Fewest penalty minutes in all league games.
8. Coin toss/draw conducted by NIHL/EIH, if all other criteria are equal.

The **NIHL National Cup competitions** will begin, with each team playing **five home and five away games**. The **top four teams** will progress to home-and-away semi-finals, with the top seed selecting their opponent. The winners will then meet in a **two-legged final**.

Points System (All Competitions)

Result Points Awarded

Regulation win 2 points

Overtime/shootout win 2 points

Overtime/shootout loss 1 point

Regulation loss 0 points

- No league match shall end in a tie.
- If scores are level after regulation, games will proceed to:
 - **5 minutes of 3-on-3 overtime**, and if still tied,
 - If still tied, a **Game Winning Shots (GWS) competition** will take place as follows:
 - Each team selects **three (3) shooters** to take alternate shots.
 - If the score remains tied after three rounds, the shootout continues with **one shot each (“sudden victory”)** until a winner is determined.
 - Any eligible player may take a penalty-shot attempt, and the same player may be used for multiple attempts. Eligible players are those not serving a penalty and not injured at the time of the attempt.
 - The goal credited as the winner will be recorded as the **Game-Winning Goal (GWG)**, and the final score will be increased by one goal for the winning team.

Promotion & Relegation

There is **no promotion or relegation** in the NIHL.

NIHL Game Length & Format

- Game duration and format for NIHL matches are defined as follows:

	Length	Format
NIHL	3 x 20 minute periods	Full ice, checking, stop clock

League Entry & Affiliation

- Clubs seeking first-time entry (or re-entry after a hiatus) must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) no later than **28 February**. All other clubs must complete annual affiliation by **31 May** for the upcoming season.

- By applying, clubs agree to follow the EIH Rule Book and rules set by IIHF, IHUK, and EIH.
- Teams from the previous season are automatically accepted if they:
 - Have no outstanding debts, and
 - Meet re-affiliation requirements.
- Returning clubs must still formally confirm their intent to participate each season.
- League structure is reviewed annually by NIHL/EIH.

Additional Requirements for NIHL National Division

- In addition to EIH affiliation, any **new team** seeking to join the **NIHL National Division** must apply to **Premier Ice Hockey League Ltd**.
- The application will be circulated to all **club shareholders** of Premier Ice Hockey League Ltd for consideration.
- Acceptance is subject to a shareholder vote as set out in the company's Articles of Association.
- A team must have **both**:
 - EIH affiliation approval, **and**
 - Premier Ice Hockey League Ltd shareholder approval to participate in the Premier NIHL National Division.

Withdrawal

- Any team that withdraws after the season begins:
 - Is liable for fines (at NIHL/EIH discretion), and
 - Must settle all unpaid fees or penalties.
- Withdrawals must be submitted in writing by an authorised club signatory to: info@englandicehockey.com

3. Governance Hierarchy

Level Body		Responsibility
1	EIH Board	Governing body with strategic oversight, ratification of rules & sanctioning authority
2	Premier Ice Hockey League Ltd Board (shareholder directors)	Oversight of league operations, commercial strategy and major competition decisions within shareholder framework

2	NIHL Management Committee	Day-to-day league ops, discipline referrals, & liaison with EIH on compliance matters
3	Risk & Governance Committee (EIH)	Rule-change scrutiny; safeguarding and governance audit
4	Club Representatives	Provide operational feedback, participate in fixture planning and vote on league matters as per shareholder agreement

4. Season Calendar 2025-26

Date	Milestone
28 February	Expression-of-interest
31 May 2025	Affiliation deadline
15 Jun 2025	League formats confirmed
20 Sep 2025	Season opens
31 Dec 2025	Season-Age reference date (6.2)
31 Jan 2026 17:00	Domestic transfer deadline
22 Mar 2026	Regular season ends
28 Mar – 19 Apr 2026	National play-offs

5. Team Eligibility & Minimum Squads

5.1 Affiliation & Contacts

Clubs must:

1. Complete NIHL/EIH affiliation **before 31 May** for the following season.
2. Settle all outstanding fines/fees.

5.2 Squad Registration & Roster Limits

- **Initial Registration Deadline:** 31 August 2025.

Roster Size

- Each Club may register a maximum of **25 players** at any one time.

- This limit **includes** any **two-way players from outside the Club** (external two-ways).
- It **excludes** two-way players registered **within the same Club system** (Junior/NIHL structure) for the purposes of the 25-player cap.

Status Definitions (clarification)

- Players are either **registered, on Injured Reserve/suspended (ineligible), or not registered**. There is **no “active” status**.

Game Sheet Roster

- A maximum of **22 players** (20 skaters + 2 goaltenders) may be **named on a game sheet** for any match.
- **NBT Imports:** Each Club may **register a maximum of 5 non-British-trained (NBT) players** at any one time. **No more than 4 NBT players may be named on any game sheet.**
 - For the avoidance of doubt, **internal two-way players who are NBT count toward the Club’s 5-NBT registration cap and the 4-NBT game-day limit when dressed**, even though they are excluded from the 25-player roster cap.
 - **Sponsor licence numbers do not override** these registration or game-day limits.
- If fewer than 4 NBT imports are dressed for a game, the number of Over-25 players permitted in the lineup may be increased by the same number.

Anti-avoidance

- Internal two-way registrations must not be used to circumvent the NBT registration or game-day limits. Breaches may result in forfeit and/or referral to League Operations/DOPS.

Age-Category Requirements

Principle. These are minimum age-category requirements. Clubs may select any mix of players above these minimums, subject only to the Over-25 ceiling and the NBT Import Player Limits.

- Over-25: Maximum 11 players (born on or before 31 December 2000).
- Under-25: Minimum 3 players (born on or after 1 January 2001).
- Under-21: Minimum 2 players (born on or after 1 January 2005).
- Under-18: Minimum 2 players (born on or after 1 January 2008).
- **Minimum Bench Strength:** 10 skaters + 1 goaltender (all may be Over-25).
- **Counting across bands.** A player who is U18 also counts toward U21 and U25 minimums; a U21 also counts toward U25.

- **Note:** Age-category rules set minimum requirements for U25, U21, and U18 players. Clubs may include additional players in these categories if they wish. **(See Appendix G for examples)**

Shortfall penalty (game-day lineup)

- **Penalty for unmet minima.** For **each** missing player against the **U25 / U21 / U18** minimums (after applying the “counting across bands” rule), the club’s **maximum dressed lineup is reduced by one** from the standard **22**.
 - Shortfalls **accumulate** across categories.
 - The NBT import limit and goaltender rules are **unchanged**.
- **Floor.** The adjusted maximum can **never** drop below the **Minimum Bench Strength (10 skaters + 1 goaltender)**. If a club cannot meet the Minimum Bench Strength, the fixture cannot proceed and may be subject to forfeit under ROC.
- **Timing.** Compliance is checked **at lineup submission**. Injuries/ejections **after** puck drop do not affect compliance for that game.

Injury Reserve (IR)

- A player placed on IR is **ineligible to play for a minimum of 30 days** from the date of placement.
- Use [this form](#) to place a player on IR or remove from IR.
- During this period, the Club may **register a replacement player** without exceeding the 25-player roster limit, provided all roster, age, and NBT import rules are met on the game sheet.
- **Process:** IR placements must be **lodged via the Registration/GameStats system (TBD)**. Approval is managed by **League Operations/EIH**, who will maintain the official IR register.

Bench staff:

Each team must have a minimum of **one registered Head Coach** and **one registered Assistant Coach** present per match. The **Head Coach** is the individual registered with EIH in this position at the start of the season and may not be alternated on a game-by-game basis. A Club may change its registered Head Coach no more than **twice** per season; further changes require **NIHL/EIH** approval.

A **player-coach** (a registered player who is also registered as a coach) is permitted **provided that a non-playing registered coach (18+)** is on the bench **for the full duration of the game** and acts as the **in-game bench lead**.

For the purposes of the minimum staffing requirement, a dressed **player-coach may count as the Assistant Coach**; the other required coach must be **non-playing** on the bench at all times.

If the **non-playing registered coach is ejected or otherwise unavailable**, the player-coach must **cease playing immediately** and act as a **non-playing coach** for the remainder of the game. Failure to maintain a non-playing coach on the bench may result in the game being stopped/abandoned at the Referee's discretion and the matter referred to **League Operations/DOPS**.

Where the **registered Head Coach** is also a player-coach and dresses to play, a **non-playing registered coach** must be designated as the **Game Bench Lead** for that fixture. This **does not constitute a change** of the registered Head Coach for the purposes of the "two changes per season" rule.

NIHL National clarification: The coaching qualification level requirement (L1/L2) does **not** apply to NIHL National fixtures; the minimum on-bench requirement is satisfied by **any EIH-registered coach (18+) who is not dressed to play**, subject to all other registration, safeguarding and bench-pass conditions.

A qualified medical practitioner is strongly recommended to be present on the bench. A **Qualified Medical Practitioner (for the purposes of these Rules):** A clinician who is either (a) a **GMC-licensed doctor**, or (b) **another statutorily regulated healthcare professional** (HCPC/NMC-registered) acting within their professional scope of practice, holding appropriate indemnity and current immediate-care-in-sport competence.

Failure to meet these requirements by **31 August** may result in removal from NIHL competition.

Two-way players (registration & usage)

Definitions (for this clause only)

- **Internal two-way:** Player registered within the same Club system (Junior/NIHL structure).
- **External two-way:** Player registered with a different EIH senior Club (outside the Club system).
- **Season Age:** Player's age as at **31 December** of the season year.
Appearance (counts toward caps): Recorded when the player is **listed as dressed on the official game sheet** at lineup submission for an NIHL National fixture (League/Cup/Playoffs).

Appearance limits

- **Internal two-way (any age):** **No restriction** on appearances in EIH competition.
- **External two-way – U23 (Season Age ≤23):** **No restriction** on appearances in EIH competition.
- **External two-way – Over-23 (Season Age ≥24):** **Maximum three (3) appearances** in NIHL National while retaining eligibility to appear for their other EIH senior team. **Upon a fourth (4th) appearance**, the player becomes **ineligible to appear for any other EIH senior team** for the remainder of the season, unless subsequently transferred in accordance with ROC.

Counting & compliance

- Caps apply per season and **reset at season end** or on **permanent transfer** of registration.
- EIHL/League Operations will verify appearances via the official game sheet/GameStats.
- Breaches may result in game forfeiture and/or referral to League Operations/DOPS.

Interaction with 5.2 roster/NBT rules (for avoidance of doubt)

- External two-ways are **included** in the 25-player roster cap; internal two-ways are **excluded** for that cap (per 5.2).
- If an internal or external two-way is **NBT**, they still **count toward the Club's NBT caps and game-day limits** when dressed (per 5.2).
- A Club's **immigration sponsorship capacity** (*Home Office Sponsor Licence/CoS*) **does not override** roster, NBT, or appearance-cap limits.

Availability/transfer (inactivity rule)

- If an **external** two-way player does not appear in a game for **30 consecutive days**, they may be transferred to another Club within the league. (*This applies only to external two-ways.*)

6. Player Eligibility & Age Rules

6.1 Eligibility Checklist

A player may compete in NIHL if they:

1. Are registered to the relevant club/team;
2. Hold either a **British passport** or a valid **IIHF ITC** approved by IHUK;
3. Have no unpaid EIHL fines; and
4. Meet the age & transfer rules below.

Possession of a British passport does not remove the IIHF ITC requirement where IIHF rights were transferred abroad. BT/NBT status is assessed independently of nationality.

6.2 Season-Age Definition

Season Age = age a player **will attain on or before 31 December** of the playing season.

6.3 Minimum Age for Senior Competition

1. Players with **Season Age \geq 16** may dress for senior fixtures from opening night.
2. Players with **Season Age 15** who will turn 16 by 31 Dec may apply under 6.3.2.
3. No player younger than Season Age 15 may play senior hockey.

6.3.2 Under-Age Application (15-year-olds)

Submit via EIH Cognito Form **at least 72 h before** first fixture:

- GB Pathway or equivalent elite-performance confirmation;
- Coach assessment of physical & emotional readiness;
- Parent/guardian consent;
- GP/physio clearance.

League Ops may approve, condition or refuse.

6.4 British-Trained Definitions

- **British-trained:** A player who has been under UK jurisdiction for a minimum of 16 consecutive months before their 18th birthday, or is currently registered U18.
- **Non-British-trained (NBT Import):** All other players.

BT/NBT classification is determined by EIH at (re)registration using IIHF transfer/registration records and domestic history. Nationality/citizenship has no bearing on BT/NBT. A player may be **British-Trained and still require an IIHF ITC** if their IIHF rights were transferred abroad. A player may be a **British citizen and still require an IIHF ITC**, and may be **classified as NBT** if the BT criteria are not met. Where a player spent a protracted period outside UK jurisdiction before age 18, EIH may request information to verify the “16 consecutive months” criterion; absent sufficient evidence, the player will be classified as NBT until verified.

Knowingly false or misleading declarations may result in reclassification, sanctions, and referral to League Operations/DOPS.

NBT Import limits:

- Maximum **4 NBT imports** on the ice and on the game sheet.
- NBT Import age is not included in British-trained player categories.
- If fewer than 4 NBT imports are dressed, the number of over-25 players allowed may be increased by the same number.

Roster registration limits:

- Maximum 25 players (see 5.2).

6.5. ITC Holders

- **Limited ITC:** one-club registration.
- **Unlimited ITC:** movement options per IHUK rules; annual renewal £55.50 until player holds British citizenship.
- Please refer to the [IHUK ITC Policy](#) for further information.

7. Movement of Players

7.1 Mechanisms

All player movement must be processed through the correct Game Management function and approved in line NIHL rules.

Weekend fixtures: Transfer or registration requests must be lodged by **17:00 Friday** to be eligible for games played on Saturday or Sunday.

Mid-week fixtures: Transfer or registration requests must be lodged by **17:00 on the day before the fixture** to be eligible.

Emergency Back-Up Goaltender (EBUG):

- In cases where a Club cannot dress two eligible goaltenders due to unforeseen injury/illness after the registration deadline, an **Emergency Back-Up Goaltender** may be registered on game day with approval from the League.
- EBUG must hold a **current EIH player registration** and be listed on the club's roster in the **EIH Registration System** (or on a standing two-way with a local club) **prior to participating**.
- Use of the EBUG provision is limited strictly to **game-day emergencies** and must be notified to the League immediately.

All player movements remain subject to the roster size, NBT import, and age-category limits set out in 5.2, and must not cause the receiving team to exceed these limits on any game sheet.

7.2 Rules & Restrictions

- No playing *down*; a downward move must be a permanent transfer. All roster limits in section 5.2, including NBT import and age category limits, apply to players playing up.
- Dual registration rules in the EIH Regulations apply in full to NIHL unless otherwise stated in these rules.

8. Fixture & Match-Day Administration

Key revisions:

- Latest face-off: **19:30 Sat/Sun; 20:00 mid-week**.
- Fixture change requests within 3 working days of issue: NIHL/EIH decision final.
- "Failure to fulfil" sanctions updated on DOPS Rules & Procedures

- Bench off-ice officials to be named on the game sheet; Scorekeeper to record in Esports GameStats; one emergency volunteer (EV) per team per season.

Bench Off-Ice Officials to be recorded each game

For every sanctioned fixture, the following Bench Off-Ice Officials must be named in the official game record (Esports GameStats) and will appear on the published game sheet whenever they are on the bench:

- Team Manager (if on the bench)
- Equipment Manager
- Physiotherapist / Sports Therapist
- Team Medic / First Aider

Registration & compliance

These roles must comply with the registration and safeguarding requirements set out elsewhere in the appropriate rules and regulations (including, where applicable, registration with EIH and Enhanced DBS). Team Managers must meet their specific requirements to be bench-eligible.

Scorekeeper (Scorer) duty to record

The Scorekeeper (Scorer) must record the full name and role of each Bench Off-Ice Official for that fixture in Esports GameStats. If a listed person is not present, the field should be marked "N/P" (not present).

Publication on the game sheet

The names and roles recorded will be published on the official game sheet for the fixture.

Emergency Volunteer (EV) – once per team per season

Clubs may appoint an Emergency Volunteer to any role listed in no more than once per team per season.

- The EV must be declared to the Scorekeeper pre-game and recorded with the suffix "(EV)".
- The club must complete registration/DBS (as applicable) within 7 days.
- The EV allowance does not apply to Gamesheet Officials (Scorers/Timekeepers).

GameStats Tool Requirements

- Visiting team club admins must submit their line-up into the GameStats tool **no later than 120 minutes before scheduled face-off**.
- Home team club admins must submit their line-up into the GameStats tool **no later than 90 minutes before scheduled face-off**.
- All club admins must **sign off games** in their club's GameStats admin interface before **23:59 on the day of the game**.

- Any and all queries about game events captured on the gamesheet must be submitted within **18 hours** of fixture completion by email to **support@nihlnational.com**.
- It is the responsibility of the Club Admin to ensure that their Head Coach has reviewed the gamesheet and raised any requests for changes to goals, assists, or penalties with the Referees **before leaving the arena**. Requests to change statistics after the Referees have signed off will not be accepted.

Game Times & Prioritisation

- League games have priority over challenge matches.
- NIHL teams must be available for all weekend dates unless excluded before fixture publication.
- Saturday/Sunday face-offs must start by 19:30; midweek games by 20:00.
- As per IIHF Rule 77, the referee is responsible for ensuring the game starts “*at the designated time*” and that periods resume promptly after intermission. The game must begin no later than **five (5) minutes after the official scheduled start time**.
- Intermissions shall be **no less than 15 minutes and no more than 20 minutes** in duration, unless otherwise approved by the NIHL.
- In the event of a **late team arrival**, the warm-up will be reduced to a minimum of **15 minutes**, after which the game must commence immediately. The referee may adjust the warm-up length for safety or operational reasons, but no further delay to the scheduled start time will be permitted without NIHL approval.

Fixture Amendments

Fixtures may only be rescheduled in the following cases:

- Ice withdrawn by the venue or senior team fixture conflicts.
- By mutual agreement of both teams, subject to approval by NIHL/EIH at least 28 days in advance.

Every effort will be made to rearrange postponed fixtures at the **next available opportunity**, with final approval resting with NIHL/EIH.

NIHL/EIH reserves the right to decline any rearrangement request.

Postponements

A fixture may only be postponed due to:

- Ice failure or unsafe rink (confirmed by management).
- Medical emergencies or Acts of God/severe weather (red alert level).
- Death of a team member or official.

Abandoned Games

Games may be abandoned by rink management or officials due to:

- Ice failure or unsafe conditions.
- Player/spectator safety risks.
- Medical emergencies. Any life-threatening or potentially life-threatening incident involving a player, official, team staff, or spectator that requires immediate clinical intervention and/or activation of the venue Emergency Action Plan (e.g., AED use, compromised airway/breathing/circulation, suspected spinal injury, collapse), **or** any situation where the mandatory match-day medical cover/AED is unavailable such that play cannot safely continue.
- Serious disciplinary incidents (e.g. mass brawls, bench clearings, team refusal to play).

Outcomes:

- If fewer than two (2) periods are completed, the game is to be replayed.
- If two (2) or more periods are completed, the score will normally stand but remains **subject to NIHL/EIH confirmation following review.**
- **All abandoned games will be subject to review by NIHL/EIH, and where relevant, GRP and EIH DOPS** to determine whether disciplinary sanctions, forfeits, or score adjustments are required.
- No abandoned games will be replayed unless exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing by both teams and NIHL/EIH.

Game Review Panel (GRP)

The NIHL operates a Game Review Panel to support the Department of Player Safety (DOPS) by reviewing certain major penalties and serious incidents on game nights. The GRP reviews all five-minute major penalties, Game Misconducts, Checking to the Head, Checking from Behind, and Abuse of an Official.

Reviews are based solely on official game footage uploaded in accordance with Appendix C. Failure to upload required footage by the stated deadline will result in the penalised player(s) being ineligible to participate in further games until the footage is provided, in addition to any fines or sanctions under Appendix C.

9. Appendices

- A – Divisional structures & games matrix
- B – Play-off formats
- C – Minimum video recording spec & fines
- D – On-ice official fees
- E – Playoff Prize money distribution
- F – Examples compliant rosters
- G – League contacts

Appendix A – League Structure & games matrix

National Ice Hockey League (NIHL)

Division	NIHL
Games	54
Format	54 Games
Start date	20 th September 2025
End date	22 nd March 2026
Playoffs	Top 8 teams
Playoff dates	28-29 th March 2026 4-5 th April 2026 11-12 th April 2026
Champs date	18 th & 19 th April 2026
Cup games	5H & 5A against all teams
Cup final	1 st place team and picks semi final
Clubs	Basingstoke Bison Bristol Pitbulls Hull Seahawks Leeds Knights Milton Keynes Lightning Peterborough Phantoms Romford Raiders Sheffield Steeldogs Solway Sharks Swindon Wildcats Telford Tigers

Roster limits for all league, cup, and challenge games are as set out in section 5.2.

Appendix B – Playoff formats

NIHL Playoffs 2025/2026

All games will follow the EIH Rule Book, unless otherwise specified below.

Attendance and Format

- Participation in the NIHL Playoffs is mandatory.
- Failure to participate will result in a 10-point deduction at the start of the next season and may incur a fine.

Format Overview

Following the regular season, the **top eight teams** will advance to the NIHL Playoffs.

The eight qualifying teams will be split into **two groups** based on league position:

- **Group A:** 1st, 4th, 5th, and 8th in the league standings.
- **Group B:** 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th in the league standings.

Teams will play each other **home and away** within their group.

The **top two teams** from each group will progress to the **Playoff Finals Weekend**, where:

- Winner of **Group A** plays the **runner-up of Group B**
- Winner of **Group B** plays the **runner-up of Group A**

The winners of these semi-finals will meet in the **NIHL Playoff Final** to determine the champion.

Overtime and Penalty Shots (Group Stage)

- No playoff match in the group stage shall end in a tie.
- If scores are level after regulation, games will proceed to:
 - **5 minutes of 3-on-3 overtime**, and if still tied,
 - If still tied, a **Game Winning Shots (GWS) competition** will take place as follows:
 - Each team selects **three (3) shooters** to take alternate shots.
 - If the score remains tied after three rounds, the shootout continues with **one shot each (“sudden victory”)** until a winner is determined.
 - Any eligible player may take a penalty-shot attempt, and the same player may be used for multiple attempts. Eligible players are those not serving a penalty and not injured at the time of the attempt.
 - The goal credited as the winner will be recorded as the **Game-Winning Goal (GWG)**, and the final score will be increased by one goal for the winning team.

Playoff Group Tiebreakers (Group Stage)

If two or more teams are tied on points at the end of the group stage, their position in the standings will be determined by the following criteria, in order:

1. Most regulation wins (60 minutes).
2. Most wins excluding shoot out wins
3. Head-to-head points between the tied teams.
4. Head-to-head goal difference between the tied teams
5. Best goal difference (goals for minus goals against in all playoff games).
6. Most goals scored in all league games.
7. Fewest penalty minutes in all league games.
8. Coin toss/draw conducted by NIHL/EIH, if all other criteria are equal.

NIHL Playoff Final Weekend

- If the score in the Semi Finals is level after regulation, game will proceed to:
 - **20 minutes of 5-on-5 overtime**, and if still tied,
 - If still tied, a **Game Winning Shots (GWS) competition** will take place as follows:
 - Each team selects **three (3) shooters** to take alternate shots.
 - If the score remains tied after three rounds, the shootout continues with **one shot each ("sudden victory")** until a winner is determined.
 - Any eligible player may take a penalty-shot attempt, and the same player may be used for multiple attempts. Eligible players are those not serving a penalty and not injured at the time of the attempt.
 - The goal credited as the winner will be recorded as the **Game-Winning Goal (GWG)**, and the final score will be increased by one goal for the winning team.

NIHL Playoff Final (sudden-death overtime; no GWS)

If the score in the Final is level after regulation, the game will proceed to successive 20:00 periods of 5-on-5 sudden-death overtime until a goal is scored ("golden goal") and a winner is determined. No Game Winning Shots will be used.

- Standard stop-time rules apply.
- Penalties, player eligibility, and substitutions continue per the Playing Rules.
- Teams change ends at the start of each overtime period.
- Ice resurfacing and intermissions between overtime periods shall follow league practice as outlined in Game Times.

Player Eligibility

- To be eligible to participate in the Playoffs, a player must have appeared in at least **25% (14 Games from start 25/26 Season) of their team's regular-season league fixtures.**
- Games missed due to injury or illness, confirmed by appropriate medical documentation, shall not count against this requirement. Eligibility will be assessed based on games the player was medically available to play.
- **Cup Competitions:** A player must appear in at least **one (1) preliminary round game** to qualify for the Cup Playoffs.
- This rule applies to all players, including those who transferred mid-season (25% calculated from the start of the season).
- **Age Eligibility:**
 - Regular season age rules in 6.3 apply in full.
 - Players with a **Season Age of 16–18** are eligible to participate in playoff and cup rounds **with no minimum regular-season appearance requirement**, subject to all other eligibility rules (registration, transfers, suspensions, roster limits)
 - Players younger than Season Age 16 remain ineligible for senior competition unless specifically dispensed under 6.3.2.
- All roster size, NBT import, and age-category limits set out in 5.2 apply to playoff fixtures.
- Dispensation may be granted in cases of injury, international call-up, or cancelled fixtures, with supporting documentation. Final decisions rest with the NIHL/EIH.

Match Day Protocols

- Standard match-day rules apply.

Discipline

- Suspensions or penalty points from the playoffs will carry over to the following season.
- Match reports will be produced for all major offences.
- Inappropriate, abusive, or destructive behaviour will be handled on-site by EIH DOPS.
- Sanctions may include ejection, future bans, and liability for damages.

Appendix C - Minimum video recording spec & fines

NIHL Minimum Video Recording Requirements

Every NIHL game — including league, cup, and challenge fixtures — must be video recorded by the home team. **Submission Deadlines:**

- **All fixtures (any day):** The home club must upload full game footage to the designated platform **by 23:00 (local time) on the day of the game** to enable GRP review.
- This deadline ensures we can meet our published incident-notification timelines— **Friday/Saturday fixtures by 12:00 (noon) the following day; all other fixtures by 22:00 the following day.**

It is the **home team's responsibility** to ensure adequate filming and timely submission.

Failure to Upload Footage:

- For weekend fixtures (Saturday/Sunday): Any player receiving a penalty subject to GRP review will be ineligible to play until the footage is uploaded.
- For all other fixtures: The GRP/DOPS may impose sanctions or delay disciplinary decisions.
- Late submissions may also incur fines and/or penalty points at the discretion of the league.

Minimum Filming Standards

Recording Equipment Levels:

- **Level 3:** Two end zone cameras **and** one panning centre-ice camera
- **Level 4:** Level 3 plus additional camera angles (e.g., overhead, bench)

All video recordings must be:

- Digital format; Full HD (1080p); Minimum 30 frames per second (FPS)

If recording is interrupted, officials must be notified at the next stoppage. Once resumed, officials should again be informed. Officials will notify coaches of filming changes during a stoppage.

DRS Video Review Process

The **Discipline Review System (DRS)** video process is available to all clubs.

See Section 13, Appendix I, of the **DOPS Rules and Procedures** for detailed guidance on:

- How to initiate a review
- Timelines
- What to do if video is not made available

Appendix D – On-Ice official fees

League	Officials	Referee	Linesman	Game Fee	Max Mileage	Max Mileage Fee	Max Total Fee
NIHL	4-officials	£73 x 2	£49 x 2	£244	600 @ 0.45p	£270	£512

Appendix E – Playoff Prize Money Distribution

Following the Playoff Finals Weekend, a **NET prize fund** will be calculated and approved jointly by NIHL/EIH. The method of calculating the NET figure is a matter for management and is not included in this Rules of Competition.

The distribution of the approved NET prize fund shall be as follows:

1. Final Four Teams

- Champion: £8,000 Prize Money
- Runner-Up: £7,000 Prize Money
- Semi-Finalists (2 teams): £6,000 Prize Money Each

2. Non-Final Four Teams

- After deduction of the Finals Prizes, the remaining NET Prize Fund shall be distributed in equal shares among all league teams that completed the season (including the four Playoff Finals Weekend teams).

Guiding Principles

- This distribution model ensures that teams qualifying for the **Final Four** are rewarded for competitive success.
- At the same time, all league members share in the financial success of the Playoff Finals Weekend, reflecting their contribution to the season.
- Percentages may be adjusted by NIHL/EIH management in consultation with clubs, but the principle of rewarding both achievement and participation will remain consistent.

Administrative Guidance

- Each team entitled to a share of the prize fund will be asked to submit an **invoice to EIH** for their allocated amount.
- **No VAT is to be added** to these invoices, as this distribution represents a share of league prize money rather than a supply of goods or services.

Appendix F – Example Compliant Rosters

1. Balanced Veteran Roster

- 11 Over-25
 - 4 NBT Imports
 - 3 Under-25
 - 2 Under-21
 - 2 Under-18
- = 22 total (all categories met)

2. Youth-Heavy Roster

- 5 Over-25
 - 4 NBT Imports
 - 7 Under-21
 - 7 Under-18
- = 23 total (all categories met, exceeds youth minimums)

3. Maximum Over-25 Scenario

- 11 Over-25
 - 4 NBT Imports
 - 3 Under-25
 - 2 Under-21
 - 2 Under-18
- = 22 total (hits over-age max and all youth mins)

4. No U18s; only 1×U21 (minima: U18=2, U21=2, U25=3).

- Counts after banding: U18 **0** (–2), U21 **1** (–1), U25 met via older players.
- Total shortfall = **3** ⇒ Max dressed = **22 – 3 = 19**.

5. U18=2, U21=2, U25=2 (short by one U25).

- Total shortfall = **1** ⇒ Max dressed = **21**.

6. Severe shortfall totalling 12 (e.g., youth pipeline issue).

- Adjusted max = **22 – 12 = 10**, but **floor applies** ⇒ must still present **10 skaters + 1 goalie** to play; otherwise ROC forfeiture rules apply.

Appendix G - Contacts

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