

The Role of The Captain

The captain has a very special role in Hockey played under international rules, whether it is the indoor or outdoor variety. Aside from the formalities of the pre-game meeting between the umpires and the opposing captain, there are specific rules that define the captain's duties during a match. The international rulebook released by the FIH makes no reference to a coach. The role you think is played by the coach is actually assigned to the captain. That includes any and all communication with the umpires, controlling the tempers of teammates (if need be), and taking responsibility for all team violations of the rules (delay of game, illegal substitution, and any repeated misconduct by more than one member of the team). Responsibility may include serving a suspension from play (a Yellow card), while the team plays short a player. Captains can receive a Yellow card if members of their team repeatedly:

- Challenge the decisions of either umpire,
- Substitute in violation of the rules,
- Display signs of losing control of their tempers.

This suspension is for a minimum of five minutes (three minutes in Indoor Hockey- the umpire can make it longer), so the captain must be prepared to fulfill these duties. Part of this preparation includes a clear understanding of the rules of Hockey, recognizing when to use proactive leadership to avert confrontations involving teammates, and the ability to act in a mature manner in all situations.

Aside from the above items, the captain has the following responsibilities:

- Organize the team for the next match (Where and when is it? What color shirt/socks? Are the players warmed-up and thinking Hockey before the match?)
- Be responsible for the sportsmanship of teammates during AND after the match
- Stop disagreements between teammates (there is no time to debate during a match)
- Personally thank both umpires at the end of the match no matter what happened during the match. **Remember:** carefully check the scorecard before signing it.
- Lead the post-match cheer and hand shake (see sportsmanship above)
- Pre or post game exchange of pins or other gifts (Important: if you exchange gifts for one match, then you must do it for all matches in a tournament.)

It is important that the captain not assume an authoritative attitude, unless it is necessary (calming heated tempers, meeting with umpires, etc.). A captain is not a bully who constantly demands that every player do everything in unison before every match. On occasion a unified warm-up may be required if there is no warm-up taking place, or especially when the team demonstrated a lack of preparedness in the previous match. When leadership by example, or through encouraging remark works, that is all that is needed. Only when a situation demands immediate action should the captain flex their muscle. Of course, if every player were truly responsible for their own actions, and the team had agreed in advance on what needed to be done (in both practice and competition) to be successful, then the captain's role would actually be reduced to a mostly ceremonial one. Which type of team do you think is stronger? A team that requires a captain to stay focused on the team's goals? Or a team where everyone embraces equal responsibility to maintain focus in order to achieve team goals? What do you think is the best way to divide up this type of responsibility in order to build the strongest team?