



## Introducing Floorball to Hockey Players

Floorball is a fantastic addition to any ice hockey program. Whether you play floorball as a regular game or simply use a floorball stick and ball for individual skills development, your players will enjoy many benefits.

- Improves their agility
- Promotes team play and competition
- Provides excellent cardiovascular conditioning
- Improves hockey-specific skills – stick handling & hand-eye coordination
- Improves their ability to see plays developing
- No prior experience or training required
- Can be played anywhere – a gym, recreation center, parking lot, even a garage!
- No special equipment needed – a stick, ball, T-shirt, shorts and sneakers.
- All ages can play together – from 6 or 7 year olds through adult. Boys and girls alike!
- IT'S FUN!!!

You're going to find that your players will use their floorball stick all the time when they are away from the rink. They'll practice in their garage, driveway or even in the house. Many players will stickhandle while they're watching TV! That's something you can't do with a hockey stick. (This is why it's best for each player to have his/her own stick rather than using team-issued equipment).

### Where to Play:

Floorball can be played indoors or outdoors, anywhere you have a smooth surface. For games, an enclosed area is best but for individual practice, any small area will do. A basketball court, sport court or rec center is ideal. Floorball goals are smaller than hockey goals. A regulation floorball goal is 160 cm by 115 cm (45" x 63"). For other than regulation play, we recommend roller or street hockey goals – anything from 30" mini goals to 54" PVC goals.

For tournaments, fund raisers or other special game situations, you can set up floorball boards. A regulation rink is 40 x 20 meters (131 x 65 ft). Height of the surrounding board is 50 cm or 20 inches. FloorballPlanet often has stock of new floorball rink boards available for purchase.

### Teams:

The game of floorball is played with five field players per team in the rink plus a goalie who plays without a stick. You can play without a goalie in which case the team can play with 6 field players. Each field player has a stick and attempts to pass and shoot a plastic ball which weights 23 grams and is 7 cm in diameter (2-3/4").

## **Rules:**

Floorball is a game of skill and quickness – not strength. Checking is a no-no. In a game situation, if a field player commits one of the following infractions, a referee will award a free shot to the opposing team or remove the offending player from the rink to serve a 2-minute minor penalty:

- Holding, shoving, checking, blocking or tripping an opponent (remember you're only wearing T shirt and shorts)
- Hitting, blocking, lifting, pushing down or kicking an opponent's stick
- Hitting the ball with the stick or foot above the level of the knee
- Lifting the stick above waist level (NO SLAP SHOTS!)
- Kicking the ball twice
- Touching the ball with the hand
- Jumping up to reach the ball
- Playing the ball with any part of the body other than feet

There are no off-side rules in floorball.

## **Equipment:**

Floorball players have a stick which can range from 65 to 103 cm long. When buying a new floorball stick, the length is very important. The stick should reach one or two inches above your belly button, no higher than mid-chest. If the stick is too short, you have less playing range and it adds stress to your back since you will be constantly leaning over. If the stick is too long, your stick handling will be slower and you will lose power in your shots. A floorball stick is always shorter than a hockey stick – you are not on skates and you play the ball closer to your body.

What stick to purchase? The least expensive stick is an entry-level straight-blade stick like the Campus 36, Campus 34, or Spooky MX series. These come in three lengths – 75 cm, 85 cm and 95 cm. While a straight-blade stick is great for beginning floorballers and school programs, for hockey players (even the least experienced), a precurved stick is the way to go. FloorballPlanet offers a wide range of entry level precurved sticks from Wooloc, Salming, and Fatpipe. Prices for these sticks range from \$36 to \$59.

If any of your players are interested in doing tricks (called Zorro moves), they will likely want to purchase a stick with a Zorro blade. It has a “ball cavity” at the end of the blade which serves to cradle the ball. These sticks are available in various models – look for the “Z Tricks” description.

## **Drills and Game Play:**

Game play comes quickly and naturally to hockey players. Set up a game area (preferably enclosed by boards or walls to keep the ball within or close to the playing surface) with a net at each end.

You can play with or without a goalie. A floorball goalie plays on his/her knees without a stick. For protection, the goalie should wear knee pads, padded pants and face protection. Floorball goalie masks are similar to street hockey masks and may cost as little as \$40. The goalie is the only person who can play the ball with his hands. One of the field players can also rotate into the goalie position. In that case, he/she can use a stick and play on his/her feet.

Depending on the size of your game area, you can play 3 on 3, 4 on 4, 5 on 5 or 5 on 5 plus a goalie. We recommend free substitution and rotating positions (defensive and offensive). Just like hockey, a floorball team will play with 3 forwards, 2 defensemen, and a goalie.

Once you explain the basic rules of the game, just let them play. It will probably take a few reminders that stick checking and slap shots are prohibited. But very quickly you'll see your players get into the flow of the game – passing, stick-handling, shooting. Floorball is especially good at teaching game situations – seeing plays develop and working on one-timers. And of course they'll be running all the time so cardiovascular conditioning is a byproduct.

Floorball drills are excellent for hockey skill development and very little space is needed. With just a stick and a ball, the player can work on individual stick handling. Because the ball is very lightweight, the player quickly learns “soft hands”. Passing drills between players helps them work on ball (puck) control, sending/receiving passes correctly and of course hand/eye coordination. Add a net for shooting and the player can work on wrist shots, drags and one-timers.

Remember, Floorball is not Floor or Street Hockey. With lightweight sticks and ball, the emphasis is on ball control and quickness. Players don't need to swing hard to pass quickly or make hard shots. This is especially important for younger players who are just learning to control the stick. Emphasize form and control – speed and power will come soon enough. Unlike floor hockey or street hockey, players can work on their skills anytime and anywhere – indoors or outside. You're not going to damage walls or furniture with such a lightweight stick and ball. Encourage your young players to practice as much as they can – they'll be amazed at how quickly their stick skills develop!

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