



Below are several of the commonly asked questions and comments about the "[Blue Puck.](#)" Following the questions and comments are the responses representing USA Hockey's position.

Q: Is the new rule requiring the use of the 'blue puck' at 10 & under a marketing driven program or does it have to do with skill development?

A: The new rule requiring the blue puck for 10 & under players is NOT a marketing program...the rule was proposed by the Coaching Section of USA Hockey. Additionally, the puck is available from a number of supplier's...not just USA Hockey licensees...

The new rule is based on the following considerations:

1: USA Hockey's mission is to introduce the game to kids...make sure they have fun...and help create an environment where they can improve their skills.

2: Kids 10 & under are not physically developed yet.

3: Almost all youth sports downsize their equipment and playing environment to be age and skill appropriate. In baseball, kids use smaller, lighter and softer baseballs...smaller, lighter bats...pitch from a shorter distance...and run shorter base paths...In soccer, kids play with smaller, lighter balls...they use smaller nets...usually play on smaller fields and with fewer players...Football uses a smaller football...Basketball uses smaller, lighter balls and lower baskets...tennis uses smaller racquets...etc....

Q: Where do we buy the blue puck? We've tried Officials Wearhouse and they're sold out...we've also tried e-mailing Viceroy and were told that they only sell to retailers?

A: Many associations already have blue pucks for their Learn to Play or Initiation Programs. Also, Viceroy, InGlasco and Play It Again Sports have really geared up to meet the anticipated demands. Other puck manufacturers, like Gufex, also have made the puck for many years.

Q: If we show up to play a game and no one has a blue puck, will the game be canceled?

A: Every team and every arena should have at least one blue puck to play a game...however; there is no part of the new rule that requires the game to be canceled if a blue puck is not available. Hopefully, all coaches and associations will make sure that they have at least one blue puck for their 10 & Under games.

Q: What puck do we use when we play Canadian teams?

A: Just like other rules require...if the game is played in the U.S. a blue puck is required...if it's played in Canada you play by their rules...

Q: We think the blue puck is ok for mites but think it's detrimental to skill development for Squirts...

A: The black puck that the NHL players use weighs 6 oz...the blue puck that is now required for 10 & Under players weighs 4.5 oz...and an inline puck used by adults in the World Championships weighs 3.5 oz...There's a huge size and strength difference between an adult and a 10 year old player.

For a few years the most elite adult female players in the world have been searching for a lightweight alternative to the black puck...obviously, these elite players are significantly stronger than any 10 year old. Ben Smith, U.S. National Team coach, believes the women need a lighter puck...Mark Johnson (ex-NHL and Olympic team player, current Univ. of Wisconsin women's team head coach and father of youth players) believes the 10 & Under and elite women need a lighter puck...and Canadian Amateur Hockey Association is trying to decide which light-weight puck is best through a national pilot project. (See the Hockey Canada web site)

The younger players (10 & Under) can stickhandle the lightweight puck better, make quicker moves with the puck...pass the puck quicker...and last but not least, shoot the puck better. Many will say that there are already Squirts on their team that 'can really shoot the black puck'...but they are the exception. Most Squirts can't pass the puck hard and crisp...most can't shoot the wrist shot hard and most can't move the big heavy black puck on their backhand by passing or shooting!

Younger players can experience more success with the lighter puck. More success results in more fun! More success and more fun results in more passion for the game...more passion results in more desire to work, practice and get better.

Internationally, the Finns use the blue puck up to 10 years old. The Swedes use the blue puck up to 10 years old...and the Czechs use the blue puck as well.

Q: A lot of Squirts already shoot the black puck very hard...won't they be able to shoot the blue puck too hard...possibly resulting in injuries?

A: If we're really concerned that they can shoot the blue puck too hard...then we should outlaw the composite sticks also! These composite sticks are much lighter and according to their advertisements, result in a much harder shot...that's their main purpose...

Q: Won't the blue puck emphasize shooting high?

A: No, it won't emphasize shooting high...however, it will allow the younger players to shoot the puck to all areas of the net...just like an older player...

Q: Won't the scores of Squirt games resemble football scores?

A: There might be some increased scoring...is it a bad thing if more kids get to experience scoring more goals? We don't anticipate football scores, however.

Q: Don't you believe the goalies will become discouraged and quit?

A: No. In fact some top level goalie coaches tell me that young goalies will like the blue puck because it won't hurt as much as the black puck when it hits them. It might also help their development because opponents will be able to shoot the puck quicker, therefore, requiring them to react quicker.

Q: Doesn't the blue puck bounce a lot?

A: I've heard that the blue puck bounces more...this is true when adults use the puck and when the pucks aren't cold...just like the black pucks...however, the bouncing is very nominal when kids 5 - 10 years old use this puck.

Q: Will the goalies have difficulty seeing the blue puck because of the blue crease?

A: This has not been our experience. On most shots, the puck will be shot from outside the crease. Even on scrambles around the crease the goalie won't have trouble seeing the puck.

Q: Are our counterparts in Europe and Canada being forced to use the same pucks?

A: The Finns and Swedes require the lightweight puck for 10 & under programs. The Czechs use this puck, but it's not required.

The USA Hockey Board of Directors voted on this rule in June '03 at their Annual Congress...with the recommendation and support of the Coaching Section and Youth Council. Give the new rule a chance...let's evaluate the results...and react accordingly. The players will enjoy the puck and their puck skills will definitely improve.

The Board of Directors passed this new rule with overwhelming unified support...let's not allow the very vocal minority to overturn a bold move for our majority of young players. Remember our mission. Our Board of Directors have been leaders in Risk Management and Safety and Protective...this is an outstanding step in being a leader in the direction of skill development!