

THE USE OF 3 WATER REFEREES FOR UNDERWATER HOCKEY.

Introduction

The development of a system utilising a team of three Water Referees rather than two, for 'high level' underwater hockey games, was mainly prompted by comments received after the 2000 World Championships in Hobart. In particular those directed at the perceived inability of Referees to keep up with play, and their 'lack of vision' (always rather subjective when you are playing and you think you've just been fouled!).

During the past 3 years, the system has been used for the majority of games in the A Grade underwater hockey competition in Tasmania, and during many games at every Australian National Championships since 2001. Feedback on the system has generally been positive.

The main premise behind use of three Water Referees is that if done effectively, it allows the positioning of at least one Referee ahead of play at all times. This means that one Referee should be behind play at all times, in a position where it will be difficult for play to pass them by (even on a very quick turnover).

Identified **advantages** of the system - over the use of a 'two Water Referee Team':

- Where referees are experienced in using the system it is much easier to ensure that at least one Water Referee is always ahead of play;
- There are three pairs of eyes watching the game from different positions rather than two;
- It is arguably easier for the 'wall' referees to see the puck when many players are surrounding the puck, as the Referees are looking in from either side rather than above;
- Using three Referees means that even if one is distracted or taken out of play for some reason, there are still two watching play;
- With a third Water Referee, one Referee can be dedicated to watching for incidents off play at critical times (particularly on penalties, equal pucks, free pucks etc);
- After stoppages, one Referee can be placing the puck while the other two line up players for the restart. This allows for a much quicker restart – helping keep the advantage for an infringed team where appropriate.

Identified **disadvantages** of the system - over the use of a 'two Water Referee Team':

- The need for another person! It can be difficult enough to find two people willing to be Water Referees, let alone three (at least in our local competition!);
- If play is on a wall, the Referee in the centre of the court can sometimes get in the way of halfbacks on either team. This can be minimised by practice and careful positioning, but is at times unavoidable. To this end it is important that players are told that they are able to push/pull Referees (gently!) as required;
- Each Referee needs to maintain an awareness of the location of the other Referees if they are to maximise their effectiveness with regard to position. Again, this is much easier after practice using this system;
- On free pucks and equal pucks it can lead to some confusion if the Referees do not clearly signal what is going on, as the players may get confused and try and line up on the third Referee, rather than the two setting up for the restart.
- It can lead to more calls being made during a game, as more fouls may be seen (I've had this raised as a disadvantage by others. Personally I see it as an advantage!);
- It can lead to more Referees time outs being called during a game, as when two Referees call a foul at the same time, debate can occur as to which foul was first.

I personally feel that the system is a considerable improvement on 2 Water Referees, however I would emphasise that ultimately, good refereeing (particularly at Elite levels) still relies on the Referees themselves being fit enough to keep up, and experienced enough to see any fouls and control the game.

Regards,

Simon.

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Please note that the following diagrams and descriptions are based on my own perceptions and experiences in using 3 Water Referees to date (> 100 games at Australian Nationals, Southern Hemisphere competition, and in the Tasmanian A Grade competition). These diagrams and descriptions are simply provided as a guide to try and convey how the system has worked for us so far.

Feedback by others trying the system (or just reading these notes!) is most welcome.

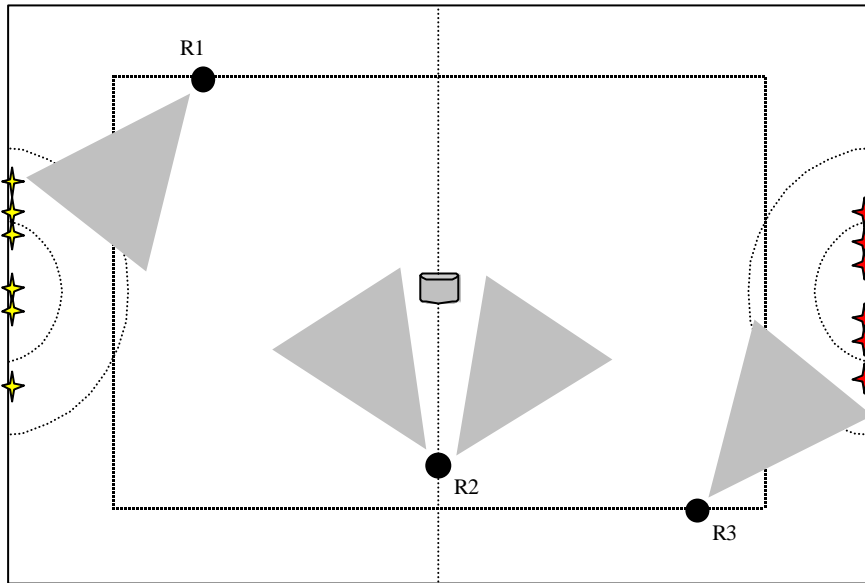
1. Things to aim for when using 3 Water Referees

When describing to others how to Referee using this system, I generally emphasise the following:

- The Refereeing Team should always aim to have 2 Referees ahead of play (one on either side of play) and 1 Referee behind play. Obviously where a quick turnover has occurred this may not be immediately possible, but keeping that positioning in mind definitely makes it easier for each Referee to work out their own ideal position in relation to play and to each other, as the puck moves around the pool.
- The location where a Referee chooses to watch the play from is never going to be 'hard & fast' (i.e. the positions shown in the diagrams below are approximations of where I would probably try and be given each depicted situation). Other Referees may prefer different locations. As with a '2 Water Referee 'Team', the position chosen is always going to vary, depending on a number of factors – including personal preference, player positions, current direction of play, changes in direction of play etc.
- The Referee covering the area 'behind' play at any given time should endeavour to ensure that they are always capable of being 'ahead' of play should there be a sudden turnover. i.e. they should be careful not to push up too far, or allow play to get underneath them!
 - ⇒ A lot of fouls are committed during the tackle by defenders on players making fast breaks, and these can be almost impossible to see if you are behind play!
 - ⇒ Often the defender will just subtly 'lean on' the player making the break, to try and slow them down so other defenders can get into position to stop them, and if you are behind the play this can be even harder to pick up than the more serious fouls.
 - ⇒ Conversely, both of the above are MUCH easier to see if ahead of a break!
- When a team moves play from one side of the pool to the other (or even from mid-pool to a side), this will usually result in there being two Referees in the centre of the pool, and one on the wall, and if a foul occurs, it's arguably more likely to be on the wall!
 - ⇒ From mid-pool, play on the wall will often be partially obscured from view by players, and it is important that a 2nd Referee moves to the far side of the court to assist the Referee already there - maintaining the 'two ahead, one behind' system.
 - ⇒ Which Referee moves to the wall, and whether they move to a position ahead of, or behind play, will depend on where they were originally, where the other Referee is, and the direction of play at the time (*see diagram 5*).
- Any Water Referee ahead of play and in the centre of the court should be aware that they may be in the way of the defenders, and should do their best to avoid this where possible (it's not always possible!).

2. Before Start of Play

REFEREE FIELD OF VIEW



NB. Referee numbering (R1, R2 & R3) is just to make it easier for me to identify referees, when conveying information in these diagrams. It is not a naming convention we would otherwise use.

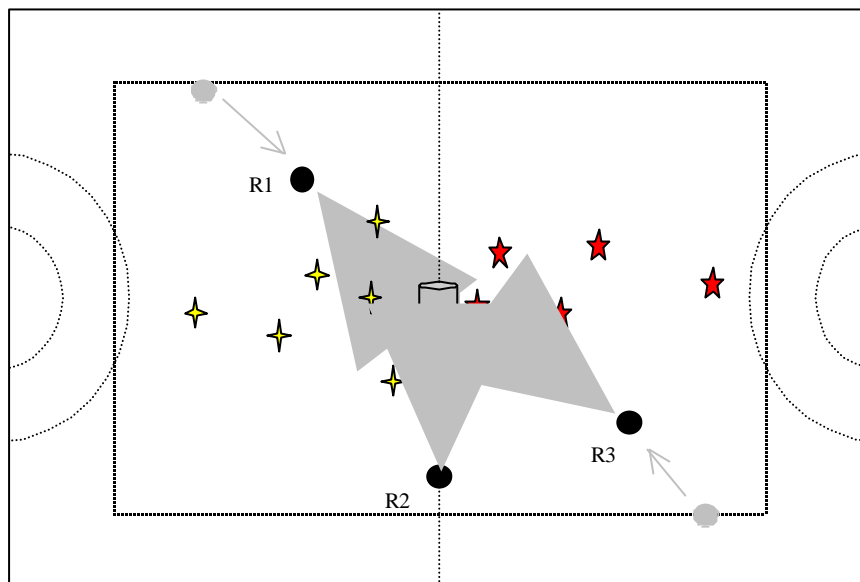
- This shows how we would usually set up for a game start, or a restart after a goal or penalty shot.
- At the time of the team gear check, Captains from both teams would be notified whether there will be two, or three Water Referees officiating during the game.

3. Immediately after start of play

MOVEMENT OF REFEREES DURING PLAY



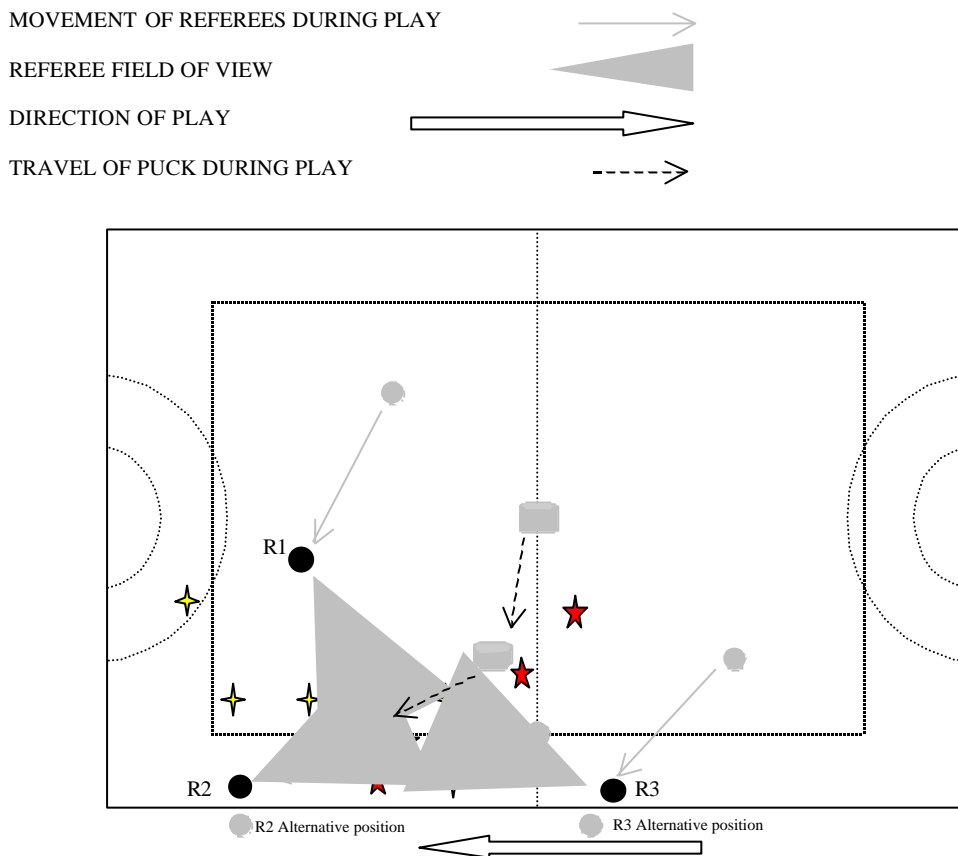
REFEREE FIELD OF VIEW



NB. Referee numbering (R1, R2 & R3) is just to make it easier for me to identify referees, when conveying information in these diagrams. It is not a naming convention we would otherwise use.

- Immediately after the start of play, *Referees R1 & R3* should move toward the centre of the court to where they have the best view into the centre of the pool.
 - ⇒ their view is in behind the forwards on their side of the court. As well as watching the centre forward players swimming off for the ‘strike’, they will have a good view of the puck if it is flicked through to their side.
- *Referee R2* would hold position to concentrate on both of the centre forwards swimming for the puck - as they ‘impact’ (an impact is exactly what occurs where both are evenly matched in speed!).
- Obviously where each Referee moves from this position will depend on where the puck goes after the strike, and the following diagrams illustrate some of the more common scenarios, and how we would most probably deal with them.

4. After Start of Play – puck moving to left of court

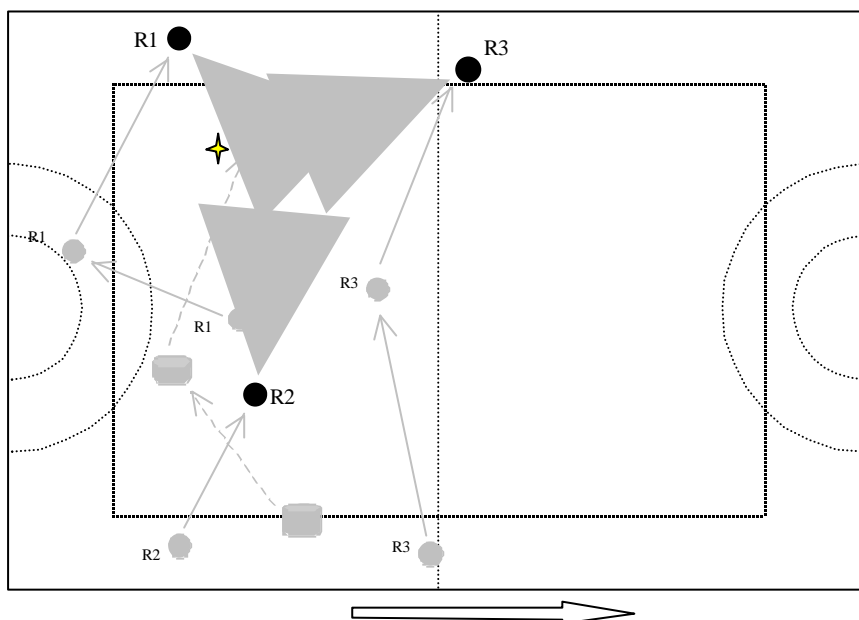
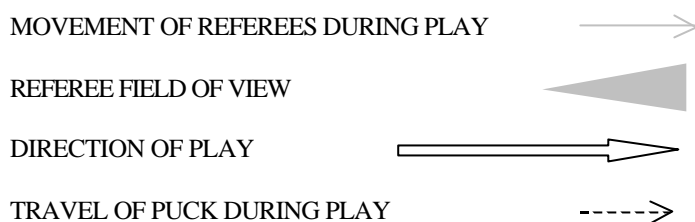


NB. Referee numbering (R1, R2 & R3) is just to make it easier for me to identify referees, when conveying information in these diagrams. It is not a naming convention we would otherwise use.

This diagram follows on from the previous diagram, illustrating where the Referees should ideally position themselves if play moves as shown.

- At any time that the puck is adjacent to a wall, there should be two Referees adjacent to that wall (where there is a sideline, my preferred position is just outside the area of the court). These two Referees should be positioned as follows:
 - ⇒ one Referee ‘ahead’ of play (*Referee R2* in this case), with the direction of play being determined by the direction in which the puck is advancing; and
 - ⇒ one Referee ‘behind’ play (*Referee R3* in this case). NB. The Referee in this position should take care not to push up too far, as if there is a quick turnover they could get caught behind the fast break, in which case there would be no Referees ‘ahead’ of play (after turnover);
 - ⇒ these two Referees are in very good positions to watch for gloving down the wall, as well as for fouls by players in this area.
- The ‘mid-court’ Referee (*Referee R1*) should also aim to be slightly ‘ahead’ of play for another viewpoint, but should be awake for any switch of play across the pool towards their side. They should try to avoid impeding the defending backs.

5. Switch of Play – defence moving puck across court



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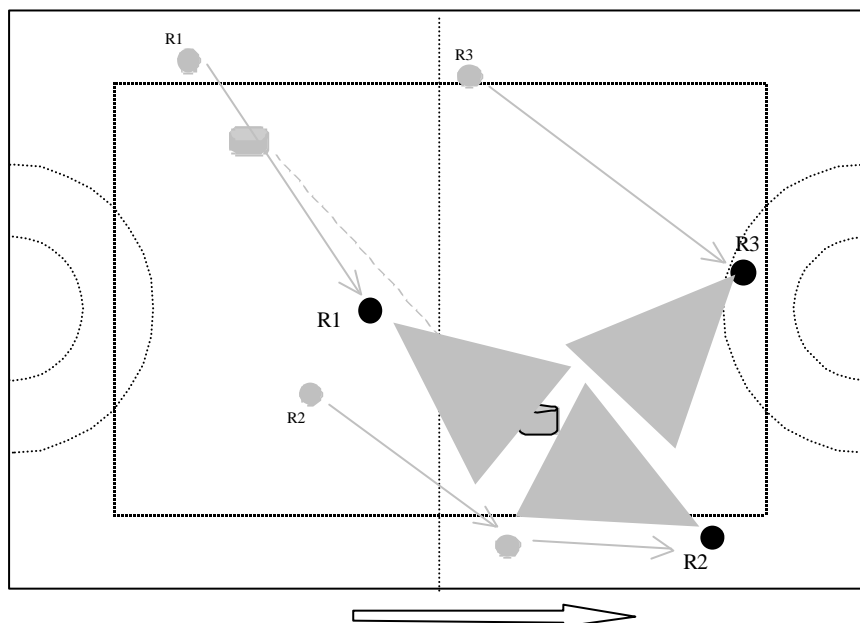
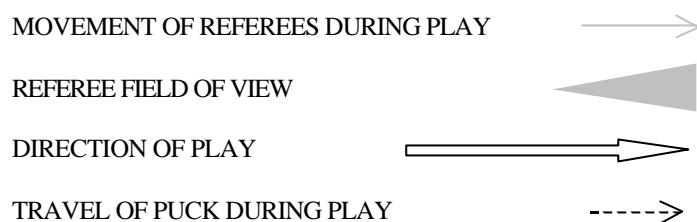
Again, this diagram follows on from the previous diagram, and illustrates how the Referees should move and set up if the puck travels as shown.

- As the puck moves cross court *Referee R1* should stay ahead of it;
- if the movement continues, *Referee R3* should move across court as shown, to take the role of 2nd Referee on the wall (though they would now be 'ahead' of the puck rather than behind it as they had been);
- *Referee R2* would now be the 'mid-court' Referee - taking that role as previously described.

It must be noted that in a situation such as this it wouldn't really matter which of *Referee R2* or *Referee R3* end up crossing the court to the far wall - and in fact, which one does will largely be determined by whether *Referee R1* ends up 'ahead' or 'behind' the puck.

- again, 'ahead' and 'behind' as used above are terms defined only by the direction of play at the time.

6. Switch of Play – puck taken on diagonal into attack



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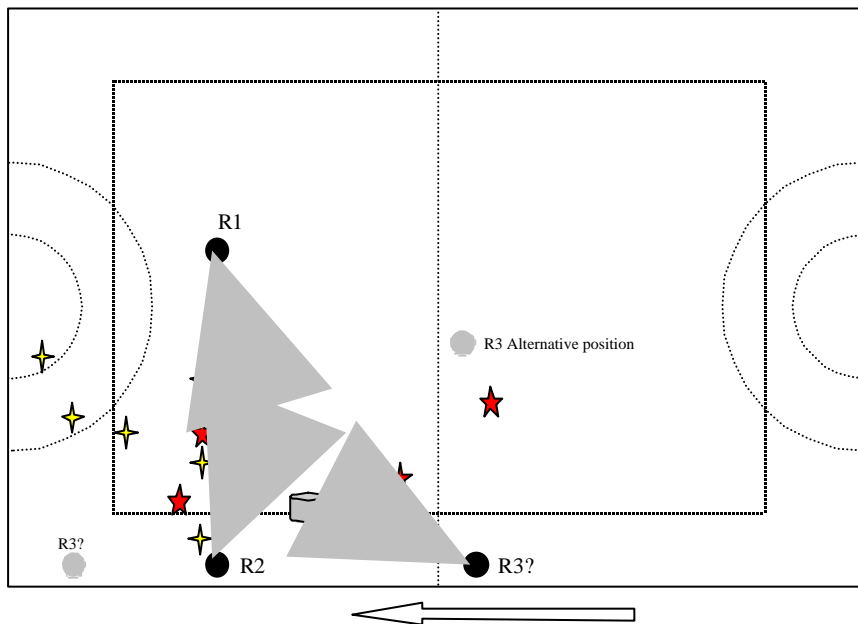
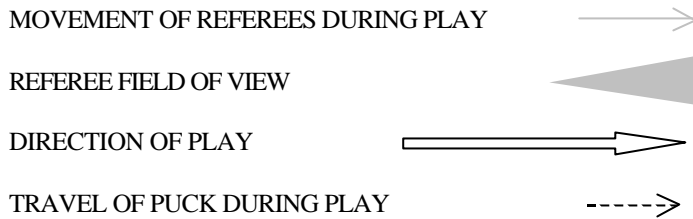
Again, this diagram follows on from the previous diagram.

As the puck is moved from the left defensive end of the pool across to the right attacking end the Referees should move as shown.

- Referee R2 would move towards the wall (how far would depend on where the puck went), and would stay ahead of the puck;
- Referee R3 should also stay ahead of the puck, and move to the middle of the pool;
- Referee R1 would also move to 'mid-court', but should stay behind the puck.

If the puck continued to move to the wall, then Referee R1 would move all the way across to be on the wall with Referee R2 – behind the puck.

7. Free Puck



Referees R1 and R2 would set up the restart as per a two person Referee team.

- Their duties before the free puck would be as per normal for two Referees, and it is important that the players are told to line up on the TWO Referees!

Referee R3 should set up in either of the positions on the wall as pictured, or in mid-pool (though a mid-pool position is more likely to get in the way of players).

- Duties of R3 before the free puck might include:
 - ⇒ Placing the puck if possible (if they know whose puck it is and where to place it), to free up the two other Referees and facilitate a faster restart;
 - ⇒ Watching the players to see who makes position on the bottom first, to ensure these are not obstructed by opposing players ‘dropping in’ later.
 - ⇒ Watching for obstructions ‘off’ the puck.

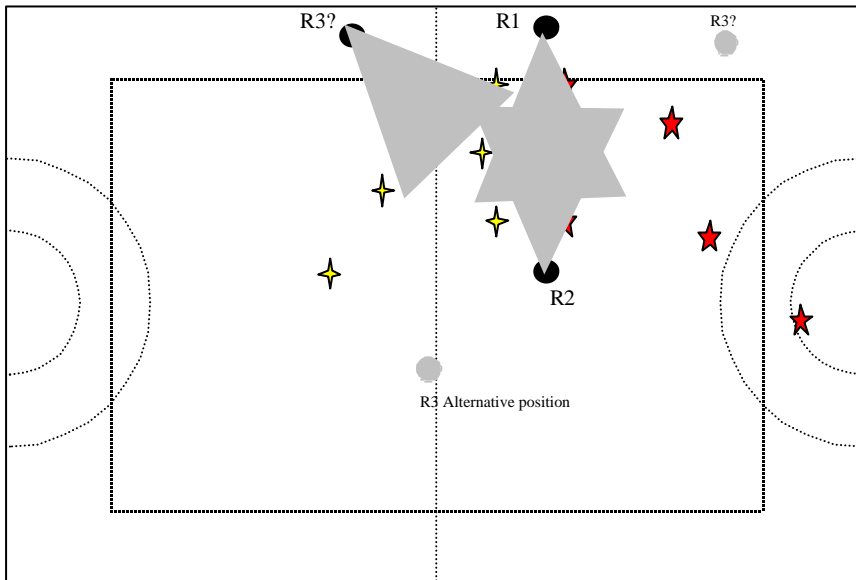
Once play commences from the free puck, Referees would position themselves according to where the puck is moved – maintaining their ‘triangular’ formation around the area of play.

8. Equal Puck

MOVEMENT OF REFEREES DURING PLAY →

REFEREE FIELD OF VIEW

TRAVEL OF PUCK DURING PLAY - - - - ->



Very similar set-up to the Free Puck situation for the Referees. *Referees R1 and R2* would set up as per a two person Referee team.

- Duties before the free puck would be as per normal for two Referees.

Referee R3 should set up either as pictured, or in mid-pool (though again, mid-pool is more likely to get in the way of players).

- R3 duties before the free puck might include:
 - ⇒ placing the puck if possible (if they know whose puck it is and where to place it), to free up the two other Referees and facilitate a faster restart;
 - ⇒ watching the players and looking for obstruction by the centre forwards on their way to the bottom (one will often 'barge' the other off the puck).

As with the free puck arrangement, once play commences from the equal puck, Referees would position themselves according to where the puck is moved – maintaining their 'triangular' formation around the area of play.

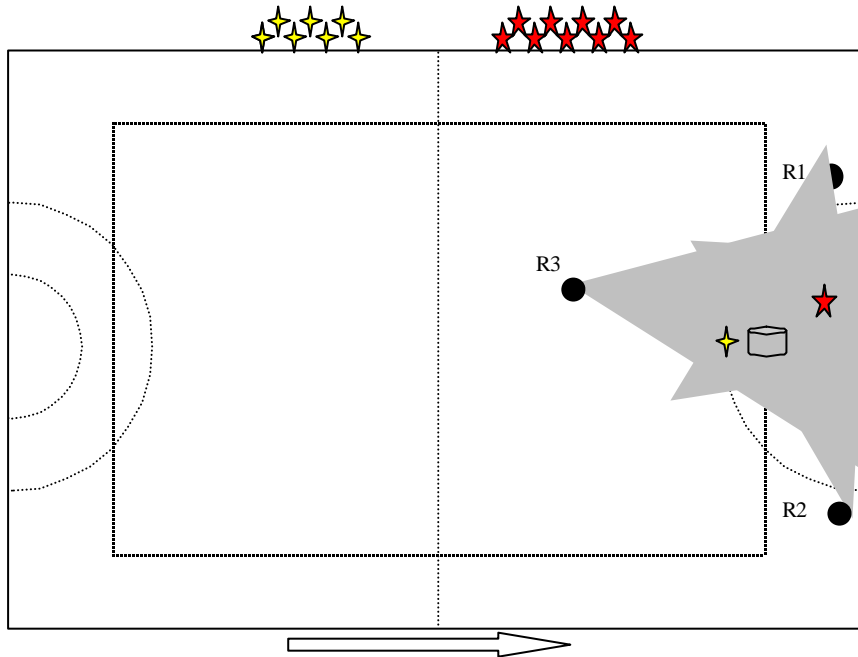
9. 2 on 1 Penalty Shot

MOVEMENT OF REFEREES DURING PLAY →

REFEREE FIELD OF VIEW

DIRECTION OF PLAY →

TRAVEL OF PUCK DURING PLAY - - - - ->



Referees R1 and R2 would set up as per a two person Referee team.

- Duties before the free puck would be as per normal for two Referees.

Referee R3 should set up either as pictured, behind the offensive players taking the free puck.

- apart from watching for fouls, their main focus should be to ensure that any 'knock down' of the puck by the defender is made by their stick and not caught on their hand or arm (very common, and often hard to see from the positions of *Referees R1 and R2 to the side*).