

Non-Skating Official Guides: Penalty Box Manager

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Table of Contents

- Introduction
 - Resources
- Equipment
- The Basic Routine
 - Cueing
 - Supporting Penalty Box Timers
 - Jammer Penalties and Jammer Swaps
 - Managing the Queue
 - Foulouts
- Penalty Box Managing in Depth
 - Start- and End-of-Period Processes
 - Injuries in the Box
 - Assessing Penalties
 - Double (or More) Penalties
 - Are You The Jammer?
 - Self-Reports and Rescinded Penalties
 - Conversation in the Box

Introduction

For perhaps 95% of the game, the Penalty Box Manager directs traffic, times jammer penalties, and supports Penalty Box Timers. The other 5% of the time, the PBM smoothly applies complex rule edge cases and addresses challenging situations while under intense pressure. The Penalty Box Manager role requires deep knowledge of rules and practice, excellent track awareness, and calm nerves.

The Penalty Box Manager is not required to complete paperwork. However, awareness of the Penalty Box Timer paperwork is important for the role.

As is the case with many nonskating roles, the Penalty Box Manager role appears nowhere in the Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby, nor does it appear in the Officiating Procedures. The rules and procedures require that a

Penalty Box Official perform various duties. The rules are conventionally implemented by staffing one Penalty Box Manager and two Penalty Box Timers.

It is legal to staff the penalty box differently, provided that the officials are able to execute duties specified in the rules. That said, there are good reasons for why conventional staffing looks like this. You'll also find some variation in the division of duties between the Penalty Box Manager and Timers. We discuss some of the drivers of these conventions and differences below.

It is critical for officials working these positions to understand the rules that underlie their practices, as well as the "safe, fair, and fun" qualities of gameplay that they support.

Resources

- WFTDA Online Learning Course: Intro to Penalty Box Training for Officials
- WFTDA Rules Section 4.4 and 4.5, Penalty Enforcement
- WFTDA Casebook Section 4.4 and 4.5
- WFTDA Officiating Procedures covers foulouts, queue management, assessing penalties, and other topics.
- WFTDA Officiating Cues, Codes, and Signals covers verbal and visual cues.

Equipment

The Penalty Box Manager typically uses (at least) two stopwatches for timing penalties. Most host leagues provide stopwatches for the penalty box staff, although many PBMs bring their own.

The PBM is responsible for the Penalty Box Whiteboard, a handheld whiteboard that is divided into halves by team, and the markers and erasers for that board. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3). These items are usually supplied by the host league.

The side of the penalty box belonging to each team is marked, often with colored fabric or felt swatches or with tape. The jammer seat should be marked to distinguish it from the blocker seats. See the WFTDA Tournament Track Setup Requirements, "Penalty Box" section e, although note that this practice is widely used outside tournaments and the other requirements in this document are not.

The Penalty Box Manager may choose to wear colored armbands to associate their hand signals with each team's side of the box.

You can PBM in a face mask.

The Basic Routine

Work from the center of the penalty box, directly behind the two jammer seats. Many penalty box managers work standing, but you are free to sit if you can do so while executing the role and clearly cueing skaters.

Watch the track for penalty calls. As each penalty is called, relay as much information about the incoming skater to your Penalty Box Timer as possible. Penalty Box Timers are often required to have their heads down, focused on their paperwork and their stopwatches. The penalty box paperwork requires the skater's number and position. Your communicating these data before the skater is seated helps the Penalty Box Timer manage multiple skaters efficiently, and prevents an influx of skaters from overwhelming the box.

Direct the skater to an appropriate seat in the penalty box. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.2). The Penalty Box Timers may also direct skaters; coordinate how you'd like to direct traffic with the PBTs prior to the game.

Blockers and pivots should be seated on the two outer seats of each team's box, and jammers in the inner seat. If the skater sits in the wrong seat, request that they move, but ensure that their time is started from their initial arrival. (Casebook C4.4.1.A)

Visual cues used to direct skaters are not standardized. Most Penalty Box Managers use one arm to signal each side of the box (i.e., the skaters from one team). The arm is raised to draw the skater's attention and then lowered to point to the desired seat, repeatedly.

If the seated skater is a jammer, the Penalty Box Manager is responsible for timing their penalty. However, the Penalty Box Timer for the relevant team actually records the penalty on their paperwork. For instruction on how to perform penalty timing, reference WFTDA Online Learning's Intro to Penalty Box Training for Officials. This guide does not cover these core procedures in deference to this resource.

An example series of events in the penalty box might look like this:

Referee: *short whistle* Black 409, low block!
Penalty Box Manager: *raises arm on Black side of the penalty box*
Black 409: *Leaves track and skates towards box*
Penalty Box Manager: Black 409 reporting as Blocker, Black 409 as Blocker.
Penalty Box Timer (Black): *begins recording Black 409's entry*
Referee: *short whistle* White 010, forearm!
Penalty Box Manager: White 010 reporting as Jammer, White 010

as Jammer.
Penalty Box Manager: *directs Black 409 to a seat*
Penalty Box Timer (Black): *begins timing Black 409 and completes data entry*
Penalty Box Manager: *raises arm on White side of the penalty box*
White 010: *Leaves track and skates towards box*
Penalty Box Timer (White): *records White 010's entry*
Penalty Box Manager: *directs White 010 to a seat and begins timing White 010*
Penalty Box Timer (Black): Black 409, stand!
Penalty Box Manager: White 010, stand!
Referee: *short whistle* Black 98, cut!
Penalty Box Manager: *raises arm on Black side of the penalty box*
Penalty Box Manager: Black 98 reporting as Blocker, Black 98 as Blocker.
Black 98: *Leaves track and skates towards box*
Penalty Box Timer (Black): Black 409, done!
Black 409: *Leaves the box*
Penalty Box Manager: White 010, done!
White 010: *Leaves the box*
Penalty Box Manager: *directs Black 98 to a seat*
Penalty Box Manager: White 010 served 30 seconds as jammer
Penalty Box Timer (White): *records White 010's full-length service*
...

This is illustrative; every game is different, and the specific phrases quoted here are not required. It's important to understand about the basic routine of the penalty box that the penalty box staff are constantly managing multiple processes. Skaters enter and leave the box; new penalties are called on each team; more complex events (discussed below) take place in the box itself. Multitasking, remaining calm under pressure, and supporting the other penalty box officials are all critical capabilities for the Penalty Box Manager.

Track awareness is also key to success as a Penalty Box Manager. Whistles often overlap, making it challenging to discern multiple penalties called in close succession. Penalties assessed right at the end of the jam, during or after the jam-end whistle signal, often results in surprise reports. Watch the track to monitor for skaters reporting.

Cueing

The Penalty Box Manager should be familiar with all of the Officiating Cues, Codes, and Signals related to penalty management. Note that there are many cues beyond "Stand" and "Done"!

In particular, you should know how to cue multiple skaters at once, how to assess and signal penalties (see *Assessing Penalties*, below) and how to manage the queue (see *Managing the Queue*, below).

Additionally, the Penalty Box Manager should be familiar with the undocumented but fairly standard visual cues for "Stand" (extending the arm with open, upwards palm, then raising the arm) and "Done" (an outwards pushing gesture with open palm).

In JRDA games, penalty box staff are *required* to use hand cues in the box. It is prohibited to touch junior skaters as part of a cue unless explicitly requested *by the coach*. See JRDA Officiating Procedures 8.2.

Supporting Penalty Box Timers

The Penalty Box Timers are almost always busier than the Penalty Box Manager, with responsibility for two seats and up to four skaters each. Supporting the Penalty Box Timers is a key part of the PBM role.

Continuously feeding Penalty Box Timers information, as described above, is the most important support mechanism. When you as PBM direct traffic and allow PBTs to focus on their timers, paperwork, and cueing, they can be most effective.

When working with less-experienced Penalty Box Timers, you can also provide support in high-volume situations. Take a third seated skater on one of your timers.

Jammer Penalties and Jammer Swaps

The Penalty Box Manager is responsible for timing penalties for the two jammers seated directly in front of them. This allows the PBM to perform *jammer swaps*, which are a key reason that the box is usually staffed with one manager and two timers.

WFTDA resources and training cover jammer swaps in detail. Review:

- Rules 4.4.2, Penalty Enforcement for Jammers
- Casebook 4.4.2
- WFTDA Online Learning: Intro to Penalty Box Training for Officials
- WFTDA Online Learning: Jammer Swap Training for Officials. Note that this course is part of a paid bundle.

This guide deliberately does not cover jammer swap scenarios, in deference to the official resources above.

The intricacies of some unusual jammer swaps are not universally understood. For example, A-B-A swaps (where you may have both jammers in the box for a period of time) and double-penalty swaps may confuse skaters, coaches, and other officials. As Penalty Box Manager, it's important that you understand these complex and rarely-seen situations in part because you may be the *only* official in your area of the track who does understand them. You may need to repeatedly cue a skater, manage chatter from coaches or other officials, or answer questions about what occurred in the box after the jam. Stay calm and be confident in your application of the rules.

Managing the Queue

When a team's penalty box is filled with two *seated* skaters, additional incoming skaters should be returned to the track using the "<Color> <Number>, return to the track" cue. (Rules 4.4.1). This cue is referenced in WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3.1 but is not defined in the Cues, Codes, and Signals document. The hand signal is a "pushing" gesture with an open palm and a horizontally extended arm. Note however that fouled-out skaters should not be returned to the track; see below under Foulouts.

When you place a skater in queue, write their number and position on the side of your whiteboard for their team. As soon as a seat opens in the box, hold your whiteboard up to have referees or center-based NSOs direct the skater to report to the box. Continue to hold the whiteboard until the skater reports. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3).

If the jam ends with a skater or skaters still in queue, hold up your whiteboard during the entire lineup period. This allows the Penalty Lineup Trackers and the Jam Timer to validate that the queued skaters are on track, as required. See WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3.3 and 6.1.1.

Erase queued skaters from your board as they report. Skaters do not have to report in listed order. They should be seated in the order in which they report. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3.2)

Foulouts

Rules 4.5 governs foulouts and expulsions.

When a skater reaches seven *or more* penalties, they have fouled out. You should be prepared for this situation by maintaining awareness of which skaters are already at five or six penalties, relying on your Penalty Box Timers to help you do so. Then, when a penalty call is observed or when the skater approaches the box, you can rapidly confirm that this is the seventh or further penalty with your Box Timer.

Once you have confirmed that a skater has reached seven penalties, signal to the Penalty Lineup Tracker (see Before the Game, below, on signals), and begin the foulout procedure.

A fouled-out skater is not required to report to the penalty box, provided they remove themselves from the play area. If the skater does not report, their penalty time starts when the box confirms the foul-out via signal to the Penalty Lineup Trackers or when a substitute is seated. (Rules 4.5, Casebook C4.5.C).

The foul-out procedure requires:

- A penalty box seat is considered occupied until the skater is or would be cued to Stand. The seat may be physically occupied by the skater, or may be empty if the skater removed themselves from play. If the skater isn't seated, use a clipboard or other object to mark the seat as taken until the Stand cue would be given. Note that if the skater is serving multiple penalties, they may remain seated (or the chair "occupied") for more than 20 seconds.
- When cued to Stand, the skater moves to a designated foulout location. This is usually a spot located directly to one side of or behind the Penalty Box. It may or may not be physically marked. At this point, another skater may be seated in the vacated seat.
- The skater is released at the end of the jam, whether or not time is remaining on their penalty/penalties.
- When released by the Penalty Box staff, the skater collects any personal items from their bench and leaves the play area.
- Any time remaining on the skater's penalties is served by a substitute.

Advise a fouled-out skater when they sit that they have fouled out. Instruct them to move to the side of the penalty box when they are cued to stand by the Penalty Box Timer. Once the jam ends, check to see if an Official Review or Official Time Out is immediately called. (Such action could result in the skater's seventh penalty being rescinded). If not, advise the fouled-out skater that they must leave the play area. They may retrieve personal items from the bench before leaving (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 8.1).

If the skater is the Jammer or Pivot, ask them to give you their helmet cover. Place it on the chair to indicate that a substitute is required to be seated *in that role*. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 8.1.1)

If, at the end of the jam, the skater has time remaining to serve, a substitute must be seated. Depending on placement of the penalty box relative to the team benches, you will often need to rely on your Penalty Lineup Tracker, Head NSO, or a referee to coordinate a substitute with the team captain or coach. You should take responsibility for starting this process with any other

officials involved. You may call an Official Time Out if needed, but in the best case a substitution can be handled without an Official Time Out.

In JRDA games, you must direct the fouled-out skater to the designated parent chaperone for their team. The parent chaperone does *not* need to approach the box or enter the play area, but you need to know who and where they are in order to direct the skater to them. (JRDA Officiating Procedures 9.1.3).

If a skater fouls out but would otherwise be placed in the queue, do not return them to the track. Hold them at the side of the box until a seat is available. See WFTDA Officiating Procedures 8.4.

Be aware that not all Penalty Box Timers have performed a foulout. You may need to remind Box Timers to continue timing the empty chair after the skater has stood and moved to the side of the box.

Penalty Box Managing in Depth

Start- and End-of-Period Processes

Before the Game

Ensure that colored badges, if present, are located on each side of the penalty box. It is typical, but not mandatory, for each team's seats to be on the side of the penalty box opposite their team bench.

Know who the captains are. You may need to assess a penalty to the captain in some rare circumstances. The Head NSO can provide you with this information.

In JRDA, know who the parent chaperones are and how you will direct fouled-out skaters to them. Your Head NSO or Penalty Lineup Tracker may assist by pointing out the chaperone or locating them during the foulout process. Discuss with those officials to establish how you'll handle this process.

Confirm with PLTs and/or the Head NSO how you'll handle substitutions if a foulout occurs. (See under Foulouts for more details).

Check with PLTs to confirm how signals of five, six, and seven penalties will be relayed to the box. These signals are not rules-mandated, but are an important convention to make sure that skaters are fouled out at the correct times. The common signal is a hand with five fingers extended held over the chest (five penalties); the same with one finger extended (six penalties); and the same with two fingers extended (seven penalties/foulout).

Set expectations with Penalty Box Timers for how you'll work together:

- Who will direct traffic?
- Who will signal to the PLTs?
- How should PBTs ask for support when they need it?

At the End of Period 1

Record the color, number, position, and penalty time remaining for each skater currently in the box on your penalty box whiteboard. (WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.6)

Before Period 2

Ensure that all skaters required in the box are seated. Hold up your whiteboard to advise the referees and Penalty Lineup Trackers who needs to report, just as with a queue situation after a jam ends.

At the End of the Game

If any skaters are seated in the box, wait until the Jam Timer blows a rolling whistle (which indicates the end of the time during which an Official Review may be called). Then, release the seated skaters.

The Penalty Box Timers will be called on to validate their penalty totals against the Penalty Lineup Trackers. If needed, assist them in being ready for this verification.

Injuries in the Box

Teams may substitute skaters in the box between jams. See Rules 4.4 and Casebook C4.4.A. The substitute should arrive at the box to release the seated skater; the skater should not leave without a substitute in the box unless an Official Time Out is in effect to facilitate the substitution. Substitution may be done in response to injury or to equipment failure, such as a broken skate. Ensure that the relevant Penalty Lineup Tracker is aware of the substitution. Substitutions may not occur during play.

If a skater in the box is bleeding, vomiting, or in a state where they cannot safely be returned to play,

1. Immediately stop the jam, if a jam is in progress, and call an Official Time Out.
2. Call for the EMTs to attend the penalty box.
3. If necessary, have the Head NSO or Head Referee locate the person who has the biohazard kit, which is required by the WFTDA Risk

Management Guidelines 7.1. This person is typically not an official but a member of the host league. They will be responsible for safely cleaning any bodily fluids or other biohazards.

4. Advise the Penalty Lineup Trackers and the score table that the jam was called due to injury. You may use the nonstandard cue for "called due to injury" by making finger guns and touching the tips of your index fingers together in a horizontal line.
5. Either yourself or through another official (as described above), arrange for a substitute to be seated in the penalty box. Advise the Penalty Lineup Tracker for that team of the substitution.

Assessing Penalties

The Penalty Box Manager is empowered to assess relevant penalties unless forbidden by the Head Referee. Typically, the Penalty Box Manager will assess penalties related to entry and exit of the penalty box and to skater conduct within the penalty box.

- Leaving the penalty box early is an Illegal Procedure.
- Removing gear other than the mouthguard while seated is an Illegal Procedure - Equipment Violation (Rules 4.4).
- Anyone other than a penalized skater (such as a coach or teammate) entering the box is an Illegal Procedure. (Rules 2.1 and 4.4). Note that putting a foot or skate into the box, or reaching into the box to hand an item to a penalized skater, does not count as entering the box. See Casebook C4.2.4.F.
- Profanity or abusive language may be penalizable. In a WFTDA game, profanity directed at an official or audible by the audience is a Misconduct. See Casebook C4.3.F.

JRDA conduct rules are considerably stricter than WFTDA. Review JRDA Rules section J4.3.1-2 for a description of conduct violations you might observe. All profanity merits a Misconduct penalty in JRDA games, even if non-directed. See JRDA Casebook JC4.3.1.B and JRDA Code of Conduct 5.8.

When you assess a penalty, write the skater's number and the penalty code on the appropriate side of your whiteboard. Circle the penalty code to indicate that you are assessing the penalty. Hold your whiteboard up until acknowledged by the Penalty Lineup Tracker.

In the unlikely event that you are not empowered to assess penalties, don't circle the penalty code. Hold the whiteboard up until a referee assesses the

penalty. You can also use this procedure if the relevant skater is no longer located in the penalty box area.

Consult WFTDA Officiating Procedures 7.3.4 for the process to assess a penalty.

Hot Entries

Entering the box "hot" and causing the penalty box bench or chairs to move towards the officials is penalizable as a Misconduct. See Casebook C4.5.B.

This includes a skater who fails to slow down appropriately, as well as a skater who loses control and hits the box in an uncoordinated manner. You do have discretion to assess this penalty when it is merited by the impact, and not otherwise. You may make this decision based on your assessment of the severity of the incident and the extent to which the skater's disregard for safe entry caused it. For example, sitting down heavily and causing a lightweight or unsecured chair to move slightly when the skater entered carefully and with respect for the safety of the officials does not merit a penalty. Contrarily, entering the box at a high speed or after losing control and causing the box seats to move in a way that threatens the safety of the officials does merit a penalty.

Causing the penalty box bench or chairs to move in a way that causes the bench or chairs to strike an official is a Gross Misconduct, which merits expulsion. Should this occur, assess the Misconduct penalty and call an Official Time Out following the jam. Recommend to the Head Referee that the skater be considered for expulsion. If the contact caused any injury to the official, stop the jam immediately and have the medics attend the box.

See Casebook C4.5.B and Intro to Penalty Box Training for Officials on WFTDA Learning.

Double (or More) Penalties

Multiple penalties may be relayed to the penalty box by referees or center-based NSOs. The visual cue for a multiple penalty is defined on page 5 of the Cues, Codes, and Signals document.

The most common double-penalty scenario is a skater who fails to leave the track after an initial penalty call. You can often anticipate this if you're watching skaters begin to report.

Make sure that Penalty Box Timers receive the warning of a multiple penalty. They both need to record the multiple penalty on their paperwork to match up with the Penalty Lineup Trackers, and to adjust the skater's timing accordingly.

Are You The Jammer?

After an attempted or successful Star Pass, it may not be obvious that a skater entering the penalty box is, or is not, the jammer. A Pivot may enter with the star in their possession; they might be the jammer, but they also might not be in the case of an illegal or incomplete Star Pass. A skater who started the jam as the Jammer may enter without the star in their possession, or with the star in their hand. Even lacking the star, they may still be the Jammer if they failed to complete a Star Pass.

Watch the jam referee for your cue: the skater the jam referee is following is the jammer, save in the case that the jam referee has made an error. If the jam referee is standing facing the box, their jammer is in the box!

If a skater is seated as a blocker, but is actually the jammer, or vice versa, ask the skater to move seats. There should be no change to their timing.

You may ask a jammer who is not wearing the star to show the helmet cover. See page 11 of Codes, Cues, and Signals.

Self-Reports and Rescinded Penalties

Occasionally skaters arrive in the box who do not have a penalty to serve. Likewise, skaters may come to the box who were initially assessed a penalty but whose penalty was rescinded by the referees.

Self-reports and rescinded penalties often cause Penalty Box Timers' paperwork to fail to match up with the Penalty Lineup Trackers'. Make sure that information on the penalty is relayed to the PLTs as soon as possible. Margin notes on the PBT paperwork are often helpful during statsbook preparation in the case that not all of the paperwork is in sync.

Conversation in the Box

Skaters may ask questions of the penalty box staff. You're never required to answer a question if it negatively impacts your duties. It is best to only answer questions that you have accurate, factual answers to:

- "How much time do I have remaining?"
- "How many penalties do I have?"

are fine because they fall in the scope for which you are directly responsible.

- "What penalty was I called for?"

is fine if you actually heard that information. Don't speculate; it may cause misunderstanding or disruption.

- "Where can I reenter the track?"

is unwise to answer. Your guidance, whether correct or incorrect, would have impact on the game.

JRDA Officiating Procedures 8.3 advises only communicating status information.

It's important to be aware that penalized skaters, as well as other participants like coaches, team benches, and announcers or hot microphones, may be able to hear conversation in the penalty box.

Even while (or especially while!) the penalty flow is limited and you're paying attention to the game, avoid commenting on the game or the performance of teams and skaters. Doing so may create the impression of bias, favor, or lack of professionalism, even if that impression is inaccurate.