

LEVELED BOOK • Y

# Hockey



Written by Kira Freed

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## Focus Question

Why is hockey a popular sport worldwide?

# Words to Know

astounding  
collegiate  
facilities  
flanked  
hazard  
influence

infraction  
neutral  
passion  
proficient  
referee  
vicious

Front cover: The Boston Bruins compete against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Back cover: Children's teams compete in Russia.

Title page: A goalie successfully stops a puck from landing in the net.

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Spectacular Sports  
Level Y Leveled Book  
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Written by Kira Freed

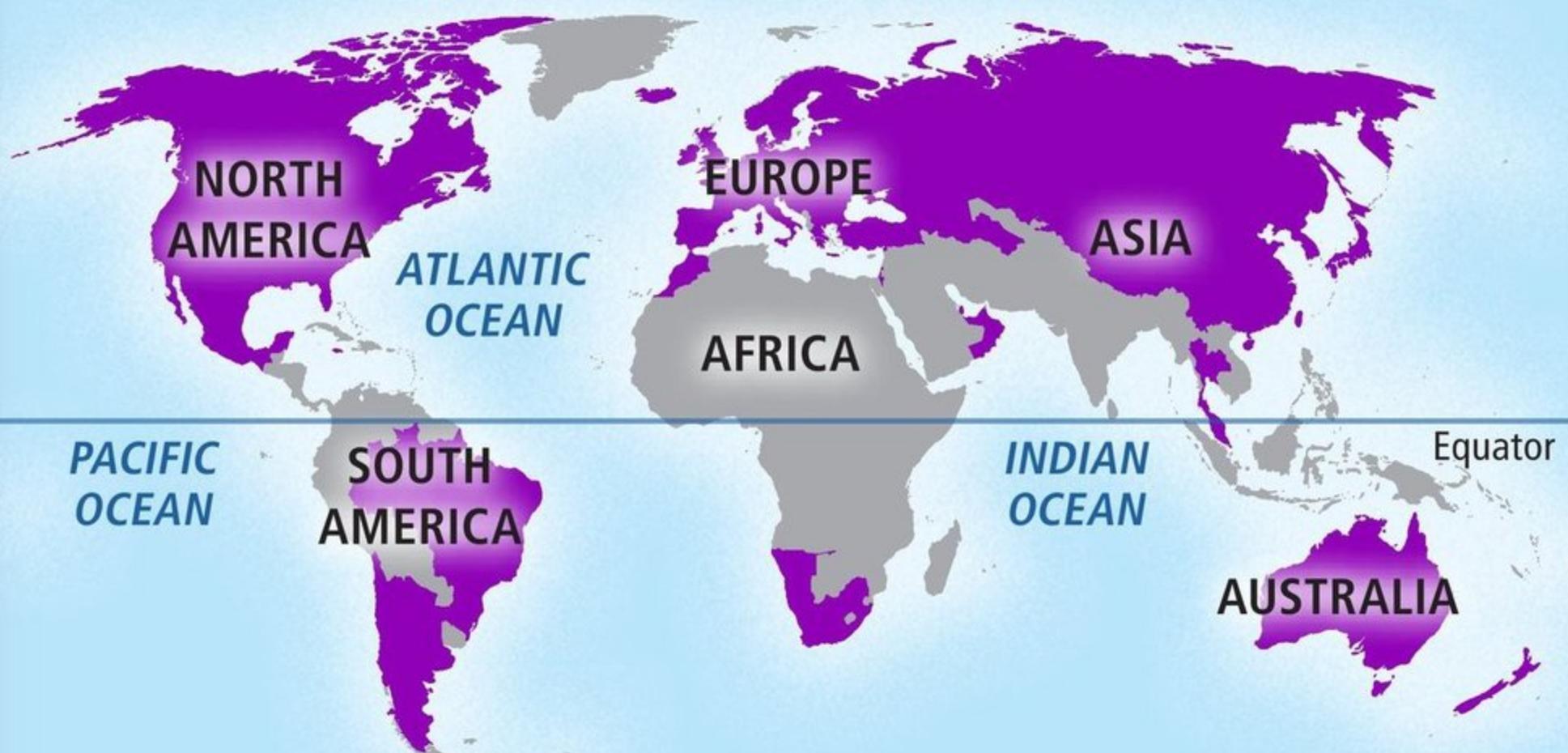
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## Correlation

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## Where Hockey Is Played

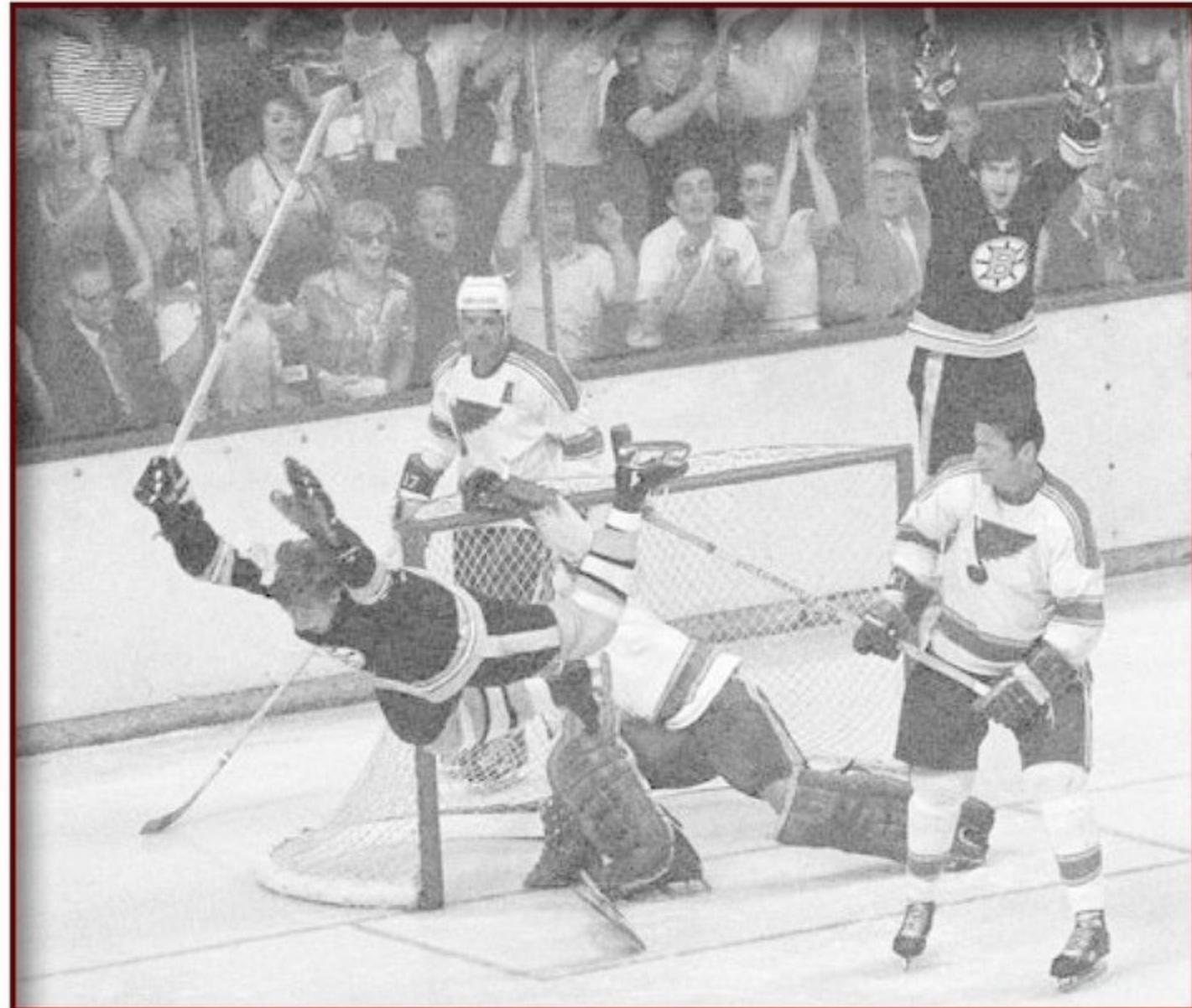


Countries in both hot and cold parts of the world play hockey.

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Bobby Orr raises his arms in victory just as a Blues player trips him and sends him flying.



## Flying High

The date was May 10, 1970—Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Finals, the top games in men's hockey. The Boston Bruins, playing the St. Louis Blues, had beaten their competitors in the first three games. In Game 4, the score was tied 3-3 at the end of the third period. Forty seconds into overtime, Bruins center Derek Sanderson passed the puck to defenseman Bobby Orr, who was known for his powerful slap shot. Orr shot the puck into the Blues' net to give the Bruins their first Stanley Cup win in twenty-nine years.

The electrifying energy of last-second moments like this, the speed of the game, and the **passion** of its players make the sport of hockey a global phenomenon. People around the world are devoted to this spectacular sport.

## Hockey Around the World

Over seventy countries play organized hockey. A 2013 survey conducted by the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) revealed that the sport's popularity is on the rise, with 1.64 million players around the world. Canada dominates with over seven hundred thousand players, followed by the United States with over five hundred thousand. Other top hockey countries include the Czech Republic, Finland, Sweden, Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, and France. Men's hockey has been part of the Olympic Winter Games since 1924. Women's hockey was added in 1998.

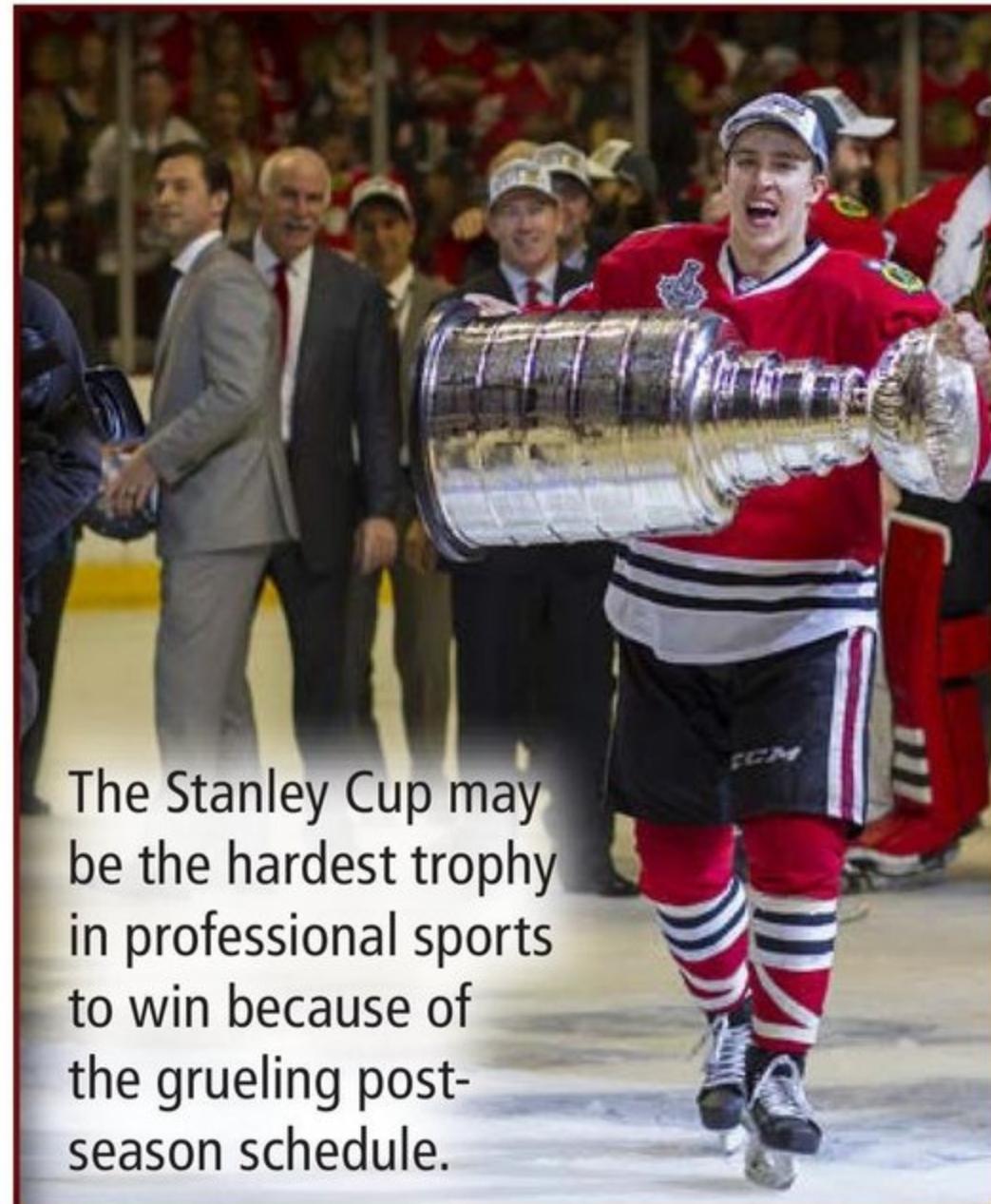
People usually play hockey in indoor arenas so the ice can stay frozen year-round. However, in cold regions, hockey players can also enjoy the sport outdoors on frozen ponds and lakes or in **facilities** usually used for other sporting events.

Many communities have ponds or outdoor rinks where players of all ages can practice their hockey skills.



## Playing with the Best

The best hockey players in the world play in the National Hockey League (NHL), which originated in 1917 with five Canadian teams. The first U.S. team, the Boston Bruins, was established in 1924. The NHL now has thirty teams—seven based in Canada and twenty-three in the United States. A championship series at the end of each season yields a Stanley Cup winner.



The Stanley Cup may be the hardest trophy in professional sports to win because of the grueling post-season schedule.

Canada has had a women's hockey league—the Canadian Women's Hockey League—since 2007. The U.S.-based National Women's Hockey League, formed in 2015, helps women's hockey grow. Youth and **collegiate** hockey programs offer young people opportunities to play and compete.

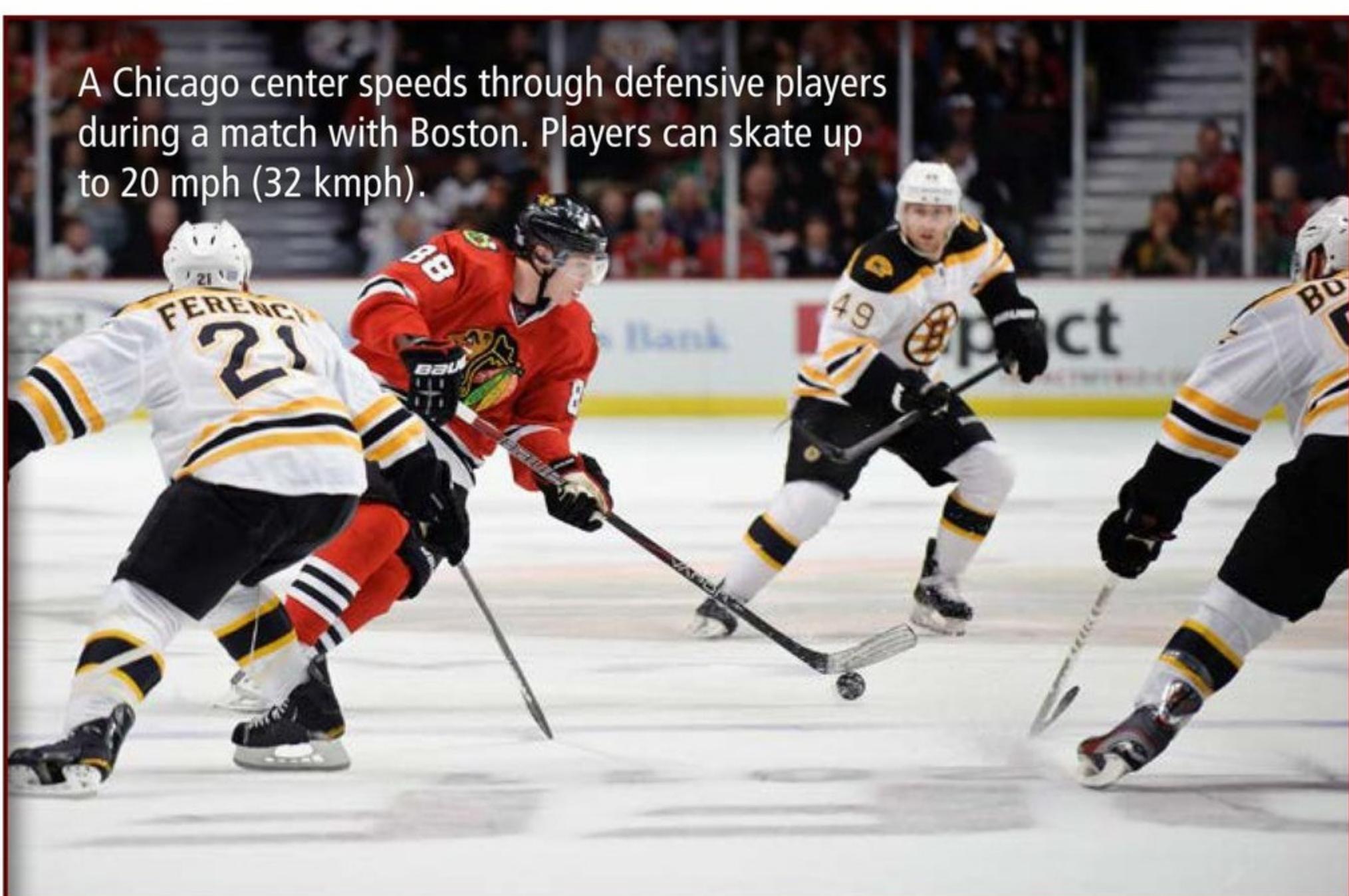
Hockey ranks sixth among professional team sports in North America. It is especially popular in areas with cold weather. As pro hockey has expanded southward, the sport has gained more of a following in warmer regions as well.

## Playing the Game

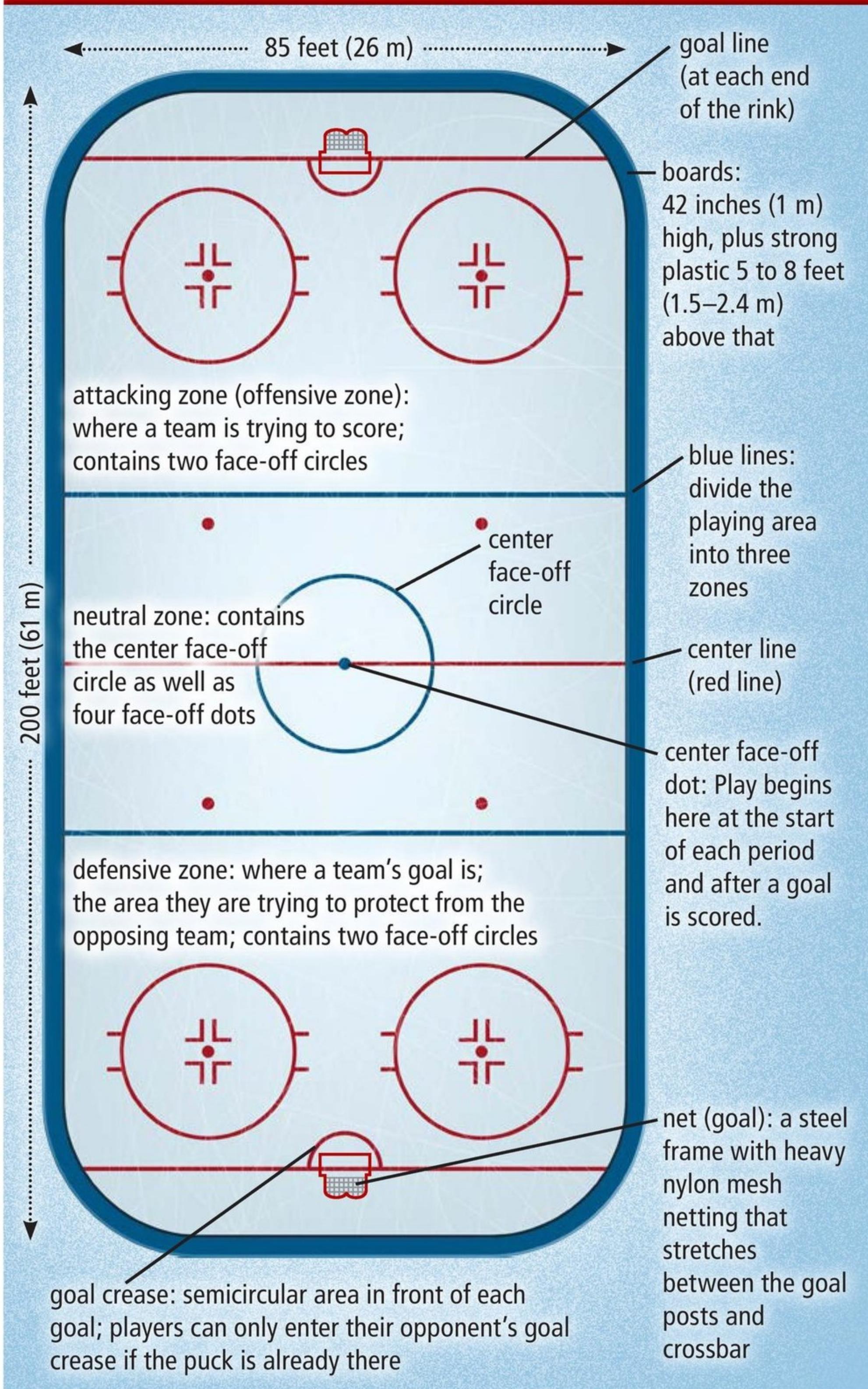
Hockey is a fast and exciting team sport played on ice with a hard rubber puck that measures 3 inches (7.6 cm) in diameter and 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. Players use long, thin, specially engineered sticks to stickhandle (control), pass, and shoot the puck. They score goals by getting the puck into the opposing team's net. The team with more goals at the end of the game wins.

Athletes attracted to the sport need to be extremely **proficient** at skating both forward and backward as well as changing directions and stopping in an instant. They also need to be skillful at stickhandling, passing, and shooting the puck and blocking the other team's shots while moving at a high rate of speed.

A Chicago center speeds through defensive players during a match with Boston. Players can skate up to 20 mph (32 kmph).



## Hockey Rink



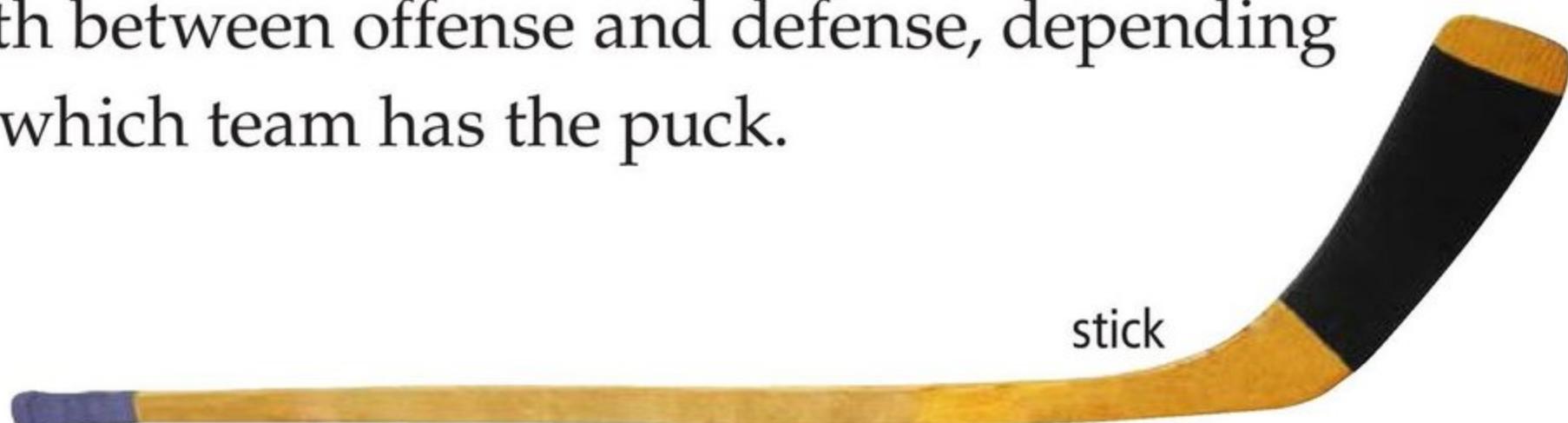
Each team is always trying to gain control of the puck so they can score goals. Whichever team has the puck is on offense, and the other team is on defense.



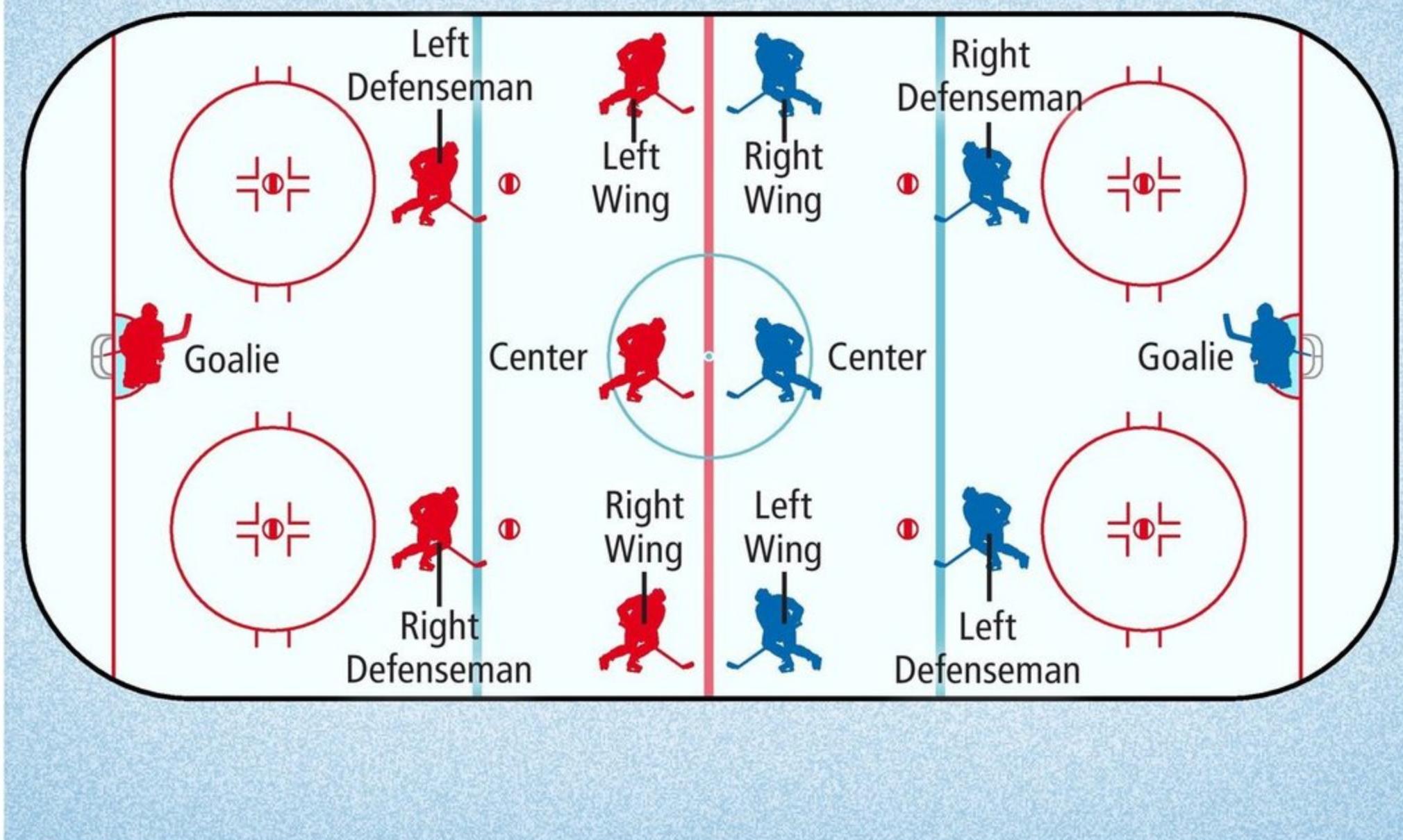
puck

Two blue lines on the ice divide the playing area into three zones. The middle section—the **neutral** zone—is **flanked** by each team's defending zone. An offensive player is not allowed to enter the other team's defending zone unless the puck has crossed the blue line.

A hockey team usually has six players on the ice at any given time, each one playing a different position. Five players move all over the ice, trying to score goals and stop the opposing team from scoring. They also try to gain control of the puck if the other team has it. Those five players consist of a center, left and right wings, and left and right defensemen. The center—the offensive leader—is generally in charge of attacks up the middle of the rink, while the wings mainly cover the sides. The defensemen mainly try to keep the other team from scoring. Regardless of position, all players must be capable of quickly switching back and forth between offense and defense, depending on which team has the puck.



## Hockey Positions



The goaltender, or goalie, guards the net and is the main player responsible for keeping the other team from scoring. The goalie is the only player allowed to use his or her hands or other body parts to stop the puck. The goalie primarily stays in the crease, which is a semicircular area in front of the net.

Stopping a puck that's traveling at more than 100 miles per hour (161 kmph) can be quite a challenge. Goalies wear special leg pads and gloves—a blocker on the hand that holds the stick, and a catching glove for catching the fast-moving puck. A goalie's stick has a bigger blade for extra help in stopping pucks.

Professional hockey games have three periods, each twenty minutes long. (Youth hockey has shorter periods.) If the score is tied at the end of the third period, the game is extended with a five-minute overtime period. The first team to score during overtime is the winner.

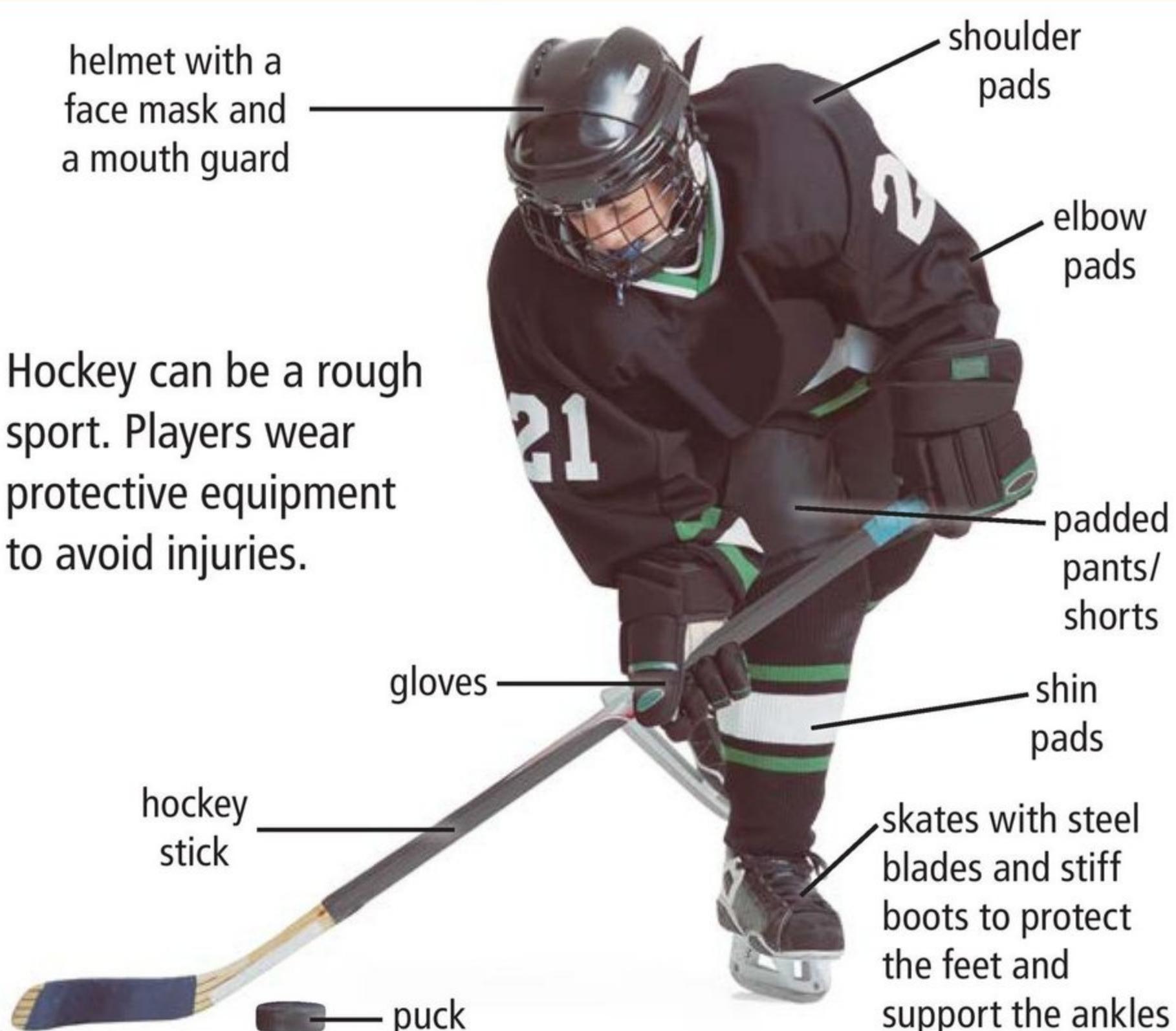
Periods start with a face-off inside the center circle. One player from each team, along with the **referee**, stands inside the circle. The referee drops the puck, and the two players battle for control of it. Face-offs also occur after goals are scored, penalties are given, or play is stopped for any number of reasons; in those cases, they can take place at one of the other eight face-off dots on the ice.



Players take great pride in winning face-offs and use many different techniques in order to win.

Referees give penalties to players for both minor and major offenses. Minor offenses include elbowing, kneeing, and stopping another player with a stick or a body part. Major offenses include jabbing a player with a stick, deliberate fighting, or a **vicious** hit that causes a player to hit the rink's boards hard with the front of his or her body. A player on whom a penalty has been called must leave the ice and sit in the penalty box for two or five minutes, depending on the seriousness of the **infraction**. That player's team plays short-handed until he or she returns to the ice.

### Clothing and Equipment



## The Birth of Hockey

Hockey has its origins in ball-and-stick games played on grass that date back to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Persia. Ice-skating became popular in Europe beginning in the seventeenth century, and games on ice were played in various countries. Hockey was originally a casual game played without rules. It was played with a ball, which was difficult to control on ice and presented a **hazard** to players and spectators.

The first hockey rules were the “Halifax Rules,” developed in eastern Canada. James Creighton, who was from Nova Scotia (one of Canada’s eastern provinces), took the rules to Montreal, Quebec, and developed the “Montreal Rules.” The first official hockey game, played on March 3, 1875, in an indoor skating rink in Montreal, marked the debut of a wooden disk, or puck, instead of a ball. Hockey was an instant hit in Montreal and spread throughout Canada and south into the United States in the decades that followed.

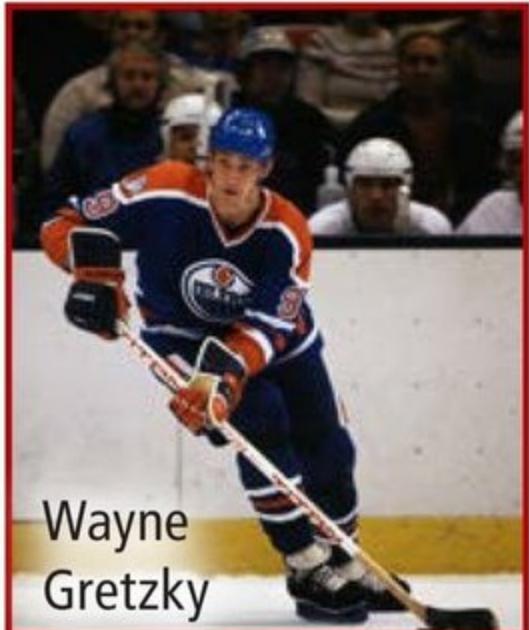
### Do You Know?

Frank Zamboni invented the “Zamboni,” a machine that spreads water on rough ice to make it smooth. It has been used on NHL rinks since 1954.



## Hockey Legends

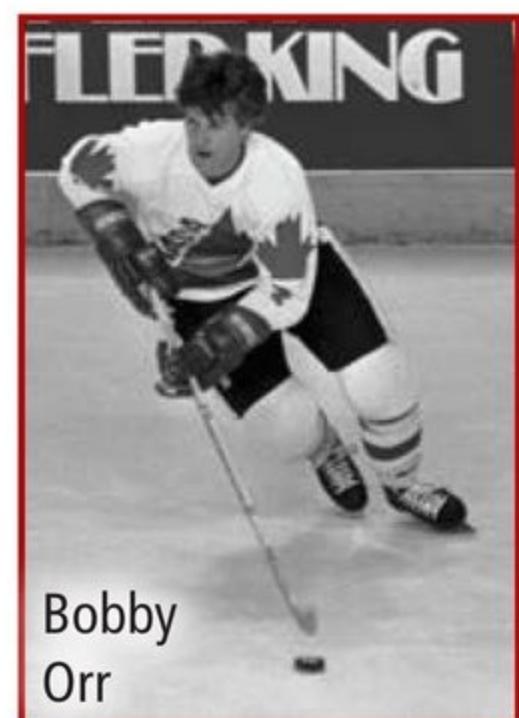
Wayne Gretzky is widely considered the best hockey player of all time. He played professionally for two decades, starting in 1979, and led the



Wayne  
Gretzky

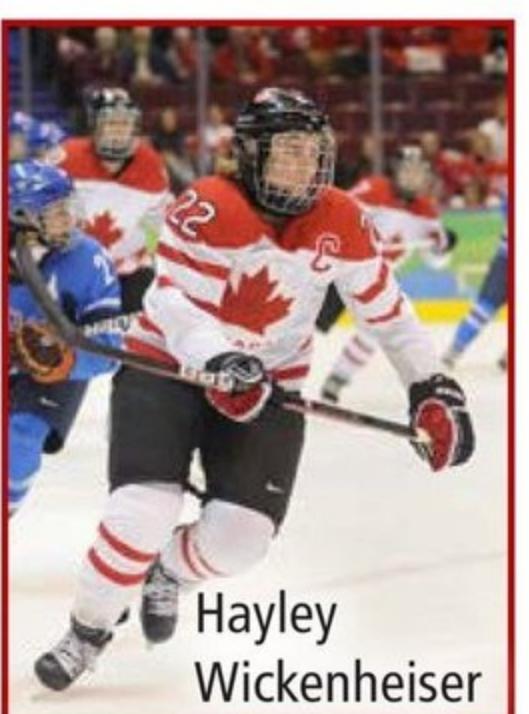
Edmonton Oilers to Stanley Cup championships four times while setting **astounding** records for goals and assists. His remarkable talents earned him the nickname “The Great One.”

Bobby Orr played for the Boston Bruins from 1966 to 1975. He scored in overtime to lead his team to a Stanley Cup championship in the 1969–1970 season, its first win in twenty-nine years. During his career, he won many trophies for most valuable player and leading scorer. Orr’s popularity helped hockey take root in the United States.



Bobby  
Orr

Hayley Wickenheiser joined Canada’s National Women’s Team in 1994 at the age of fifteen. She



Hayley  
Wickenheiser

has led the team to seven medals at the Women’s World Hockey Championships and five Olympic medals. Wickenheiser has had a strong **influence** on the growth of women’s hockey.

## Why Hockey?

Hockey is a challenging sport to play, but by learning the rules and practicing, committed young players can become skilled. They need to be good skaters, and even if they are, they must be prepared for serious bruises.

Yet if hockey is so challenging, why are millions of people of all ages hooked on it? Jeremy Rupke coaches hockey and maintains a website to help players improve their skills. In his words, “Hockey is a fast-paced, action-packed game that requires quick thinking, communication, and a lot of skill. Everyone works together as a team for a common goal. Hockey is a great way to have fun, challenge yourself, and make a lot of new friends.”

“Perhaps one of the greatest feelings in hockey is when the game starts and everything else in your life stops. Once the puck hits the ice, all your worries disappear. It’s just you and the game.”

Jeremy Rupke, pictured here with a team he coaches, has had a passion for hockey since he could walk.



## Glossary

<b>astounding</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	causing surprise and wonder; amazing (p. 14)
<b>collegiate</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to college or college students (p. 6)
<b>facilities</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	buildings or areas with equipment that makes certain tasks easier (p. 5)
<b>flanked</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	positioned at one or two sides of something or someone (p. 9)
<b>hazard</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a possible danger or risk (p. 13)
<b>influence</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the ability to affect people or things (p. 14)
<b>infraction</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a behavior that breaks a law or rule (p. 12)
<b>neutral</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	not supporting or connected with either side in a conflict or contest (p. 9)
<b>passion</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	intense enthusiasm; an object or activity that creates intense feelings or interest (p. 4)
<b>proficient</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	skilled at doing something (p. 7)
<b>referee</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a judge of a game or match who makes sure the rules are followed (p. 11)
<b>vicious</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	purposely cruel or violent (p. 12)

# Hockey

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,523

## Connections

### Writing

Choose one of the thirty teams in the NHL. Research to learn about that team and write a report about it.

### Social Studies

Research to learn about one famous hockey player. Create a trading card for that player that includes his or her name, picture, career statistics, and other interesting facts. Present your trading card to the class.



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