



## The IFF / GBFF Guide to Choosing Equipment

In order to take part in any official floorball events, the International Floorball Federation (IFF) must approve the equipment you use. You can check that the equipment you indeed to use is approved by checking the IFF website which contains lists of approved equipment. The easiest way to check is to make sure that the IFF approved equipment sticker is attached. This includes sticks, goals, rinks and balls.

If you are a member of a school or youth team, you may find that there is already a set of plastic sticks in a cupboard somewhere that you could use to start off with, although these are not suitable for competition level!

If you do not have access to an existing set of equipment, or are perhaps looking to upgrade, have a look though the following information that we hope will help you in choosing your new equipment.

### What stick should I choose?

As the sport has developed across the many nations, so a huge variety of equipment has been developed. The GBFF has teamed up with two of the leading manufacturers, Canadien and Excel, who offer discounts on equipment to GBFF members.

Unfortunately at present, floorball equipment is not available in sports shops in the UK, however our sponsoring manufacturers will be setting up stands at most GBFF events so you can see before you buy.

It is important to try different stick options – each stick consists of the shaft and the blade, both of which can have different properties and therefore it is just as important to try out combinations of blade with each shaft as it is to try out different models. The prices vary widely depending on the brand and model. A slightly softer standard stick usually costs less compared to a harder stick which has been developed for competitive play at a high level. There is no advantage to the beginner in trying to advance to the harder sticks to early as many very good players still prefer the additional control afforded with a softer stick.

The best players often choose a stiffer stick to enable them to make quicker passes and to take quicker shots. Clearly handling a stick will help you determine how stiff it is, but if you are starting out, have a look on the blade. The stiffness is measured by applying a load to the shaft and measuring the deflection, which will appear in the format of 28mm / 300N i.e. the stick deflects by 28mm under a load of 300N (3kg) The less the value in mm (the deflection), the stiffer the stick.



The IFF recommend that young players and beginners start playing using a soft stick with a soft compound blade to enhance both stick skills and to improve ball control and dribbling.

As you progress, you may find it sensible to buy a second spare stick as if yours does happen to break during a game, you can be sent off if you continue to play with damaged equipment.

## **The finer points of choosing a stick**

If you are buying a stick for your own use, make sure that the length of the shaft is correct. Sticks are always a very personal choice for each player. The sticks can be shortened if necessary with some basic tools, and you can bend the blade within the boundaries of the rules. It is best to get some help or advice from the more experienced players if you want to modify your stick in this way.

If appropriate, ask for the help of an adult in carrying out any modifications to your equipment.

## **Choosing the right shaft**

A short stick can give you better control and technique because it brings you closer to the ball. That means you can take more advantage of a good pass and hopefully score. A slightly longer stick means that you can reach further, which may be advantageous in a defensive position, however too long and you will certainly be disadvantaged. It is therefore important to make sure that the shaft is at the right length for you. This is generally accepted to be the height measured from the floor to your navel, including the blade.

If you do need to shorten the stick, make sure that the shaft it is well secured, and cut it using a hacksaw. If the stick has retaining screws, you may need to drill new retaining holes in the shaft you have just cut. If appropriate, make sure that the IFF sticker is visibly retained or you may not be allowed to play! Remember to measure twice and cut once!

## **Choosing the right blade**

There is a wide range of blades that are available, although it would be wise to use a blade from the same manufacturer as the shaft, as there is some variation in fixing hole locations between the different brands. The manufacturers will be able to advise you on the various properties of the different blades. Again, start with a softer blade as it makes ball control easier, and the ball will not rebound away from the blade so much when receiving a pass, making control easier. This does mean that your shot



may be a little slower, but with good technique the goalkeeper will still struggle to see the ball!

## Bending the blade

If you watch one of the established teams, you will quickly realise that each player's blade looks very different. This is not just because of the different brands, but because you are allowed to bend the blade to suit your particular playing style. If you do get the opportunity, ask existing players if you can try out their stick so you can see what suits you. Some players prefer to keep the blade completely straight, or with the slightest curve as it arrives from the manufacturers. A small angle means that you will have a better (and initially more predictable) backhand, and your pass is likely to be far more accurate.

Other players choose to bend the blade to the limits of the rules. The resulting curved blade will give you better control on your forehand, but passing and backhand shots will be more difficult.

When you put your stick on a flat surface, if the distance between the surface and the lower edge of the blade at its highest point is more than 3cm, you will be sent off. If you are in doubt – ask!

It is best to ask somebody who knows how to angle the blade to do it for you, as otherwise you can risk permanently damaging your new blade.

## Clothing

With the exception of the goalkeeper, you do not need any special clothing to play. We will deal with goalkeeper equipment later, but for outfield players, all you need is clothing suitable to go running.

If you are going to be playing in competitive games, there are some rules regarding what you can and can't wear. Every player must have an individually numbered shirt (and shorts) from 2 to 99. The goalkeeper is always number 1. Trousers (e.g. tracksuit bottoms) are not permitted in matches. It is now possible to buy specialist floorball shoes, but any non-marking, indoor trainers are perfectly adequate.

If you are thinking of buying a team kit, it would be sensible to talk to one of the league organisers before you commit, so you make sure that you do not end up with the same team colours as one of the existing teams in the league. If two teams do turn up with the same colours, it is the responsibility of the home team to find an alternative kit. Dark Grey and Black are also not to be used as this is the colour used by the referees.



## Goalkeepers

The goalkeeper is a fundamental member of the team, and should be looked after with care. A full kit can cost a lot of money, so it may be sensible to the team to buy a keepers kit. This also means that if your keeper does decide to move on, the team are not left stranded! There is a lot of specialist clothing that can be bought, although the most important piece of clothing is the helmet. The IFF state that this must be an approved helmet – ice hockey, roller skating, cycling, motorbike helmets etc. all offer completely different types of protection and are not suitable for floorball. The other equipment – padded trousers and tops, padded vests, gloves (although some keepers play without), jockstrap and box (for some at least) are all available from our recommended manufacturers, Canadien and Excel. The keeper does not play with a stick, and as most of the time is spent on the knees, it is sensible to buy a good set of knee supports.

You are not allowed to wear clothing if the purpose is to cover parts of the goal, so clothing ten sizes to big for you will not be an advantage as you will be sent off! The emphasis should be on comfort, balance and unrestricted movement so you can make those lightning reflex saves.

## The Ball

The ball is an airflow ball. It is similar to a practice golf ball, but is field hockey sized. As with most things in life, the properties of the ball are subject to close scrutiny under the rules of the game. It consists of a hollow plastic shell 72mm in diameter, it has 28 symmetrically placed holes through the shell and it weighs 23g.

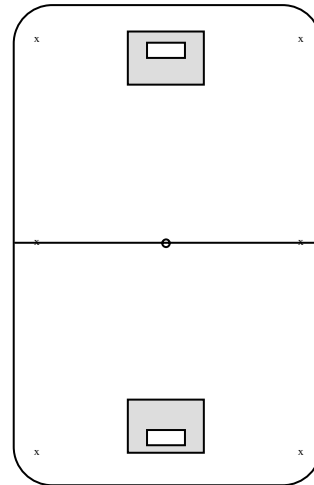
## The Goal

Official leagues use official goals, the dimensions of which are available within the rulebook. For practices, and of particular use in school games, smaller goals can be obtained. There are small goal competitions in some of the primary school leagues, although as yet there is no senior league. The small goals game is played with 'rush' goalies and is played on a smaller pitch with 3 players on each side. There are a number of such variations in floorball, so if the facilities available to you are not suitable for the main game, do not be afraid to come up with your own (safe) variation!



## The Rink

At present there are only a few full rinks available for use in the UK, and these are used for the main league games. We do not have the luxury of purpose built floorball centres with permanent rinks set out, as can be found in some of the other member nations. Generally floorball can be played anywhere, from the full sized rinks set up in major sports centres to the school playground. You can practice your individual skills anywhere, even in the kitchen at home (parents permitting!)



Many teams practice in their local sports centre. Ideally you need a sports centre with an area the size of four badminton courts or a basketball court. Put benches across the four corners, and put the goals set into the pitch a couple of metres and you have all the basic constituents of a rink. For those who prefer (and where the sports centre agrees) you can mark out areas such as the face off spots and the goalkeepers area with hazard marking tape or similar which can then be removed after the event. In some schools where the game is becoming so popular, the schools have now painted permanent markings on the pitches.

If you do not have access to a sports centre, it is quite feasible to play the game outside on tarmac or similar although this will significantly increase the wear on the sticks. Often this means that you will have netting rather than walls to rebound the ball from, so it may be more appropriate to play with 'hit-ins' rather and playing off the rink/walls. Simply adjust the rules to suit your own situation.

For those with unlimited means, the International rink size is 40m x 20m and the goal size is 160 x 115cm. The rules do allow all rink sizes in between 36 x 18m and 44 x 22m, as long as the rink formula is  $\text{Length} = 2 \times \text{Width}$ .

A fully equipped rink has goal marking, a centre line, and a centre spot plus the other size face off points, all clearly marked as set out in the rules.

A board should also enclose the rink, 50cm high, with rounded corners. The board has to be movable and come apart when collisions occur.

Substitution zones, 10m long should be marked on the board starting 5m from the centre line.

The rink is always checked and approved by the referees and if not up to standard the home side are forced to make the adjustments so that the game can be played.