



**ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY
ASSOCIATION**
Limited by Guarantee



20th November 2017

CIRCULAR NIHL-01-1718-OPEN

Attacks to the head; Clarification on Discipline

To all NIHL Clubs:

Since part way through the 2016-17 season the basis for deciding suspensions in Senior Hockey for attacks/blows to the head has been modified whilst still being compliant with the EIHA discipline rules and interpretations document. This was done as a result of concerns felt by the EIHA and clubs about the number of head injuries, including concussions, being caused by reckless and dangerous play.

This change is fairly well-known and recognised by clubs but to avoid any doubt:

Any forceful blow to the head where a player has no opportunity to see it coming or defend themselves from it will incur a minimum suspension of 6 games. This includes punches, checks, elbows, crosschecks or any other form of attack to the head and/or neck area. It includes attacks from behind, "sucker punches", and anything else where the victim of the attack could be deemed to be unable to defend themselves against, or mitigate the impact of, the attack.

A number of suspensions have already been assessed under the above criteria. Please bear in mind that the initial attack immediately incurs a match penalty and that is in addition to any other penalties that might also be assessed. If a player commits more than one offence (including more than one match penalty offence) in an incident each offence should be called individually. It doesn't mean a player will be assessed more than one match penalty for a single blow but it does mean that if any other match penalty offence is committed prior to, or after, the blow to the head you can expect more than one match penalty to result from an attack by an individual player.

In addition to the above, any player who has already been assessed a 6 match suspension under the above interpretations/guidelines and after serving their suspension comes back and incurs a further suspension under the same criteria can expect, as a minimum, to be assessed a six game suspension and an additional 10 disciplinary points. This means a minimum suspension of 11 games (including 5 on points accumulation as, even with no other offences beyond the attacks to the head, two points accumulation thresholds will be passed). That will be the minimum sanction but they will also face the possibility of being assessed an indefinite suspension with a review date set for a point at which they can apply to return to playing.



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We all have a duty of care to those playing the game and we cannot allow players who appear to be unable to control themselves, or are willing to commit such offences, continue to endanger others. Hence applications to return after indefinite suspensions will involve a player appearing before an EIHA panel to interview the player with a view to deciding if they are able and willing to control themselves in a game environment and will not present an unacceptable risk to the safety of other players.

The EIHA shall be conducting a review of the Disciplinary rules and interpretations with particular regards to serious incidents of foul play in the summer and has introduced these measures on an interim basis until then. As always, should you have any questions, please contact your Regional Chair or League Manager to discuss this matter further.

Many Thanks

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League Manager, NIHL

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE