



Date: December 11, 2010

To: All Minnesota USA Hockey officials

From: Eric Olson  
MHOA President & MN Hockey Director of Officiating

Re: Concerns about the number of concussions

Dear Fellow officials:

Over the last few years the numbers of concussions that are occurring in the game of hockey are on the rise. This is a great concern to the safety committee of MN Hockey. I have been asked by the chair of the safety committee, Hal Tearse, to help focus more attention on hits leading to concussions, specifically checking from behind penalties and body contact that results in head contact. I want to stress the importance of assessing the proper penalty for hits in the back (CFB) and hits to the head. These hits need to stop in order to help prevent the risk of concussion and other serious injury. If a player is checked from behind, **regardless of location on the ice**, a checking from behind penalty must be assessed. If a player checks an opponent and the hands or stick make contact above the shoulders a head contact penalty **must be assessed**. It is not our job to interpret neither the "intent" of the hit nor the severity of the hit based on outcome but to enforce the rules that are in the rule book. We must be consistent in the calling of these penalties. If you were to put yourself in the position of the player being hit, I think we may all be more apt to assess the appropriate penalty. There is no room in the game of hockey for dangerous hits.

There may be concern from some officials about the reaction of coaches for assessing these types of penalties. Coaches will be informed of the new emphasis that we are placing on check from behind, head contact and in general dangerous hits. Coaches will be asked to support officials and their calling of these penalties to keep the participants safe. I understand that there are many factors that affect the increase in concussions but we feel that this is a first positive step to help curb the injuries. It will take some time to educate coaches however we need to stand firm in our enforcement of the rules as they are designed to protect all participants.

I want to thank you in advance for your help to make the game of hockey safer.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Eric Olson  
MHOA President & MN Hockey Director of Officiating

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