



# Hockey Zones

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**Tucker Hockey's Official Newsletter - Reinforcing Hockey's Positives to ALL ages!**

**For the LOVE of the GAME!**



## Zero Tolerance

Over the years many players, administrators, coaches, parents and fans at all levels of hockey from minor to the NHL have discussed and debated about the safety of our great game. There definitely appears to be an increase in concussion related injuries throughout hockey from head shot incidents. The players have become stronger and faster. However, the playing surface dimensions have not increased in size. With hockey equipment built like armour, increased physical forces generated by often illegal / contact hits with multi – use facilities at the professional level these factors only added to the problem. The question is: Have we progressed to the zero tolerance for headshots yet?

With his recent press conference to disclose his ongoing issues with Post-Concussion Syndrome, Sidney Crosby has added his name to a growing list of notable players that have seen their careers derailed by unnecessary blows to the head. Luckily,

for Crosby, he has been able to participate in the early stages of the Penguins 2011 – 2012 training camp without a recurrence of his concussion symptoms. That is one of the key factors in a return to action. The team is still debating with the notion of exposing him to contact in practices though. A wise move, no doubt!

Marc Savard, Patrice Bergeron, Keith Primeau, Pat LaFontaine, and Eric Lindros have all lost seasons, parts of seasons, and / or their careers due to the lasting effects of concussions. And the list of affected players goes on from there. Eric Lindros was “The Next One”, the next superstar after Gretzky and Lemieux. His career, and that of his younger brother Brett, was cut short by the cumulative effects of concussions. Part of that can be possibly attributed to their style of play. Eric was a power forward after all, but he was also on the receiving end of some pretty violent hits. Towards the end of his career, the hits didn’t even have to be directed at his head to cause a new concussion, a clear sign of the cumulative

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**“Prepare and prevent,  
don't repair and repent”  
~ Author Unknown**

## Tucker Hockey

**President** ..... Rex Tucker  
**Executive Assistant** ..... Christyne Kavanagh  
**Hockey Consultant** ..... Bob Tuff  
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..... Ashlea Kilpatrick

### Hockey Zones Newsletter

**Managing Editor** ..... Rex Tucker  
**Publisher** ..... Christyne Kavanagh  
**Advertising Sales** ..... Rex Tucker  
**Contributing Writers** ..... Wally Kozak  
Christyne Kavanagh ..... Michael White  
Bob Tuff ..... Ern Rideout  
April Clay ..... Rex Tucker  
..... Jeff Mueller  
**Official Photographer** ..... Terrence Leung

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Advertising Enquiries: Christyne at  
programs@tuckerhockey.com  
Send prebuilt ads with "Tucker Hockey Ad" in  
subject line to  
programs@tuckerhockey.com

### **Mailing Address**

P.O. Box 46014 Inglewood RPO  
Calgary, AB T2G 5H7

Ph: (403) 998-5035 Fax: (403) 244-5037  
Email: programs@tuckerhockey.com  
**www.tuckerhockey.com**

# Zero Tolerance (Cont'd from Cover)

effects of previous concussions.

One of the items approved by Hockey Canada's board of directors during this year's 92nd Annual General Meeting was zero tolerance measures for all head contact or checks in minor, female, junior and senior hockey. In minor and female hockey, a minor penalty shall be assessed for all accidental hits to the head, while a double minor penalty, or a major and game misconduct at the discretion of the referee based on the degree of violence impact, shall be assessed for any intentional contact to the head. In junior hockey (Junior A, B, C, & D) and senior hockey, a minor and misconduct or a major and a game misconduct shall be assessed for all checks to the head, at the discretion of the referee. A major penalty and a game misconduct, or a match penalty shall be assessed to any player who injures an opponent under this rule.

As well, Hockey Canada has recently joined the growing list of sports organizations that look to reduce the occurrence of concussions among

their players. The introduction of a website that looks to educate all of those people associated with hockey in Canada is a major step forward in the battle to prevent concussions in hockey. The above measures are great steps to making our game—a safer game throughout the hockey development system. Basically, every governing body of hockey has been looking at the head shot issue. For example, the 3 Canadian Junior Leagues are adopting their own programs to eliminate hits to the head, including training players on how to properly deliver a body check. Another change being considered is adopting softer player protective equipment, such as elbow and shoulder pads without hard plastic caps.

Another contributing factor may be related to equipment, or the improper wearing of equipment. Helmet manufacturers have made great strides in the development of helmets that reduce the possibility of suffering a concussion. However, these helmets do not provide enough

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## Next Issue Winter 2012 Features

- Tucker Tips
- Kontinental Hockey League (Russia)
- Hockey in the Czech Republic Part 2
- Highlights from the World Junior Tournament
- A Salute to Minor Hockey Week

# Welcome to Hockey Zones

The official newsletter of Tucker Hockey. The Fall 2011 issue consists of fresh hockey education and teaching articles, an expression of hockey philosophies and viewpoints, addresses various hockey issues for public discussion, provides features on hockey people at the "Calgary grass roots rink level", features upcoming Tucker Hockey Adult and Minor Hockey programs, and provides hockey quotes, stories and prize contests. In summary, it will create good hockey ... "Food for Thought!"

Enjoy your hockey - the World's Greatest Sport! - and I hope you enjoy our Tucker Hockey Newsletter!

- Past issues available at [www.tuckerhockey.com](http://www.tuckerhockey.com) -

## Zero Tolerance (Cont'd from 3)

protection if they are not worn properly. Most players wear their helmet straps loose, which will allow the helmet to shift on the head before, during, and or after contact. This is very dangerous if that contact results in the players head making contact with the glass, boards, or ice. As a former player, I understand that this is a comfort matter, but it is still unsafe. In Minor Hockey, a referee will instruct a player to fasten a helmet strap if he/she sees it undone, why not extend that authority to a loose strap?

With the tragic passing this summer of 3 professional hockey players their primary role being that of “enforcer”, a cry went out to eliminate fighting from hockey. It was presumed that their role went a long way towards their subsequent depression and ultimate premature ending of their lives. This may well be proven in the future. But in the world of “enforcers”, etiquette requires combatants to drop their gloves and remove their helmets. What if they left their gloves on, like boxers? There’s no plastic in the fingers of the gloves, just foam padding, like the large gloves boxers wear. Another factor may be in the ending of a hockey fight. It usually ends with a “takedown”. Both players, now not wearing helmets, go to the ice. This is just another opportunity to suffer a concussion.

The NHL likes to differentiate their brand of hockey from all others based on the allowable amount of violence. This seems to be a big selling point of the game south of the US - Canada border. But when you start losing your marquee players to avoidable, potentially career-ending, blows to the head, what are you really marketing? Violence by another name?

Other sports like football and baseball have taken progressive measures to reduce concussions in their games. In the NFL, the other major North American league known for its contact and collisions, the quarterback is the marquee performers on each team. The NFL has recognized this and adopted rules protecting these players. First, you can’t hit the quarterback in the head. Then, after it was noted that forcing defensive players to hit lower on the quarterback’s body was causing severe knee injuries, low blows were outlawed. After some particularly violent blows to the heads of other position players that resulted in concussions, the NFL started assessing fines to the offending players with the option of suspensions for repeat offenders. Studies of the brain tissues

of former football players has shown that repeated blows to the head cause permanent injury. The league has stepped up and is trying to protect its players. It realizes that football is an inherently violent sport, but it is willing to take some control in an effort to protect the players from each other.

This year, Major League Baseball introduced a new measure for helping players deal with concussions. I know, you don’t associate baseball with concussions, but they happen more often than you might think. Those foul balls that move the catcher’s mask are still moving at over 80 miles an hour at contact, that’s got to leave a mark! Also, collisions happen on the base paths as players try to break up double plays, taking knees or elbows to the head. Batters get hit in the head by pitches, and, occasionally, fielders will run into each other chasing fly balls. Baseball has always had a 15 and 60 day disabled list, allowing teams the ability to replace injured players within the confines of a 25-man roster. This year, MLB introduced a 7-day disabled list, specifically for allowing players with concussions (supposedly mild) to recuperate without penalizing the team.

The upcoming hockey season will be interesting at all levels to see how the zero tolerance measures within the development system will get addressed. As well as how will the NHL deal with head shots and fighting violence? This writer firmly believes there should be a zero tolerance for both head shots and fighting in hockey. Period! Zero tolerance – are we there yet? What are your views on this high profile topic? The editor would love to receive your comments at [programs@tuckerhockey.com](mailto:programs@tuckerhockey.com).

