

Tucker Hockey Initiatives

For The Betterment of the Game

For the 2013 – 2014 NHL Season, the NHL & NHLPA will grandfather in facial visors. Players who have played 26 regular season or playoff games do not have to wear a visor. According to Mathieu Schneider of the NHLPA, it was a clear majority of players support to make the change for the upcoming season.

Times are changing but are they changing quick enough? Last season the games best player – Sidney Crosby received a puck in the face near the end of the season and broke his jaw. The injury caused him to miss the remainder of the season and prevented the young superstar from winning the league's scoring championship. The injury not only hurt Crosby but also his Penguins overall play and team chemistry leading into and during a shorten playoff season.

In today's NHL world, teams are signing their star players to long term multi level contract deals. Recently, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins signed a 7 year – \$42 million U.S. dollar contract with the Edmonton Oilers. Management and owners are protecting their star players with long term financial deals but what about their physical health / safety on the ice. Doesn't it make sense for them to protect their players on the ice as well? The players are getting faster and the pucks are moving faster and often out of control on the ice. There is less time and space to play the game. The playing surface

is not getting any bigger but the players and overall play are getting quicker. More injuries are bound to happen with sometimes out of control play. In this year's exhibition season Sam Gagner of the Edmonton Oilers, received a stick to the face and broke his jaw. Not only player's jaws but eyes need to be protected but as well player's heads from cuts, breaks and especially concussions - do visors offer the best protection from dangerous pucks and sticks?

Skaters play minor hockey up to Midget AAA with full facial protection prior to playing Major Junior A where half visors are the norm. U.S. collegiate players play with a full facial shield as well as Women's national team players. Why not NHL players? Craig MacTavish was the last player to skate in the NHL without wearing a helmet. He played his last season with the St. Louis Blues back in 1996 – 1997. Only 17 years ago! To think that someone would play in NHL today without wearing a helmet would be considered crazy! Taking a big risk!

Just maybe as the game evolves we will look back in 20 years or so and say to ourselves - really anyone playing in today's game not wearing a full facial protection is crazy?

Just thinking? Do you have any thoughts on this subject? Letters to the editor are truly welcomed!

