

Boycott the National Headshot League (#NHL)

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, April 18, 2012

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Before I get into my increasingly radical antipathy towards the NHL and NHLPA and their callous disregard for brain injury risks, I'd like you to spend a few moments watching this gratuitous display of intent to injure at a bantam hockey game in Kelowna last month involving teenagers. It will properly explain what I am about to say about the NHL and its embrace of callous violence.

More after the jump below.

[YouTube Video](#)

Last year I just wrote about [boycotting companies that advertise with the NHL](#) until they get rid of headshots. Now we should just boycott the NHL. When hockey transforms into a sick, disgusting decay in the direction of [Rollerball](#) to the point where teenagers are running goalies with elbows to the head, it is time to seriously question what kind of social, moral and criminal negligence and liability we should be directing at the NHL and the union that is supposed to represent the players' interests.

Are the corporations that own these players really as cynical, greedy and psychopathically empathy-free as those in Rollerball? As long as their obvious gross indifference to the risk of brain injury continues, then yes.

And honestly, I'm far past caring about whether the Canucks, or any team, does well in the playoffs tonight or at all. The game has become intolerable as the sub-plot of the playoffs this year is the ghoulish rubber necking as we wait for the next headshot.

The last month has been the most violent month I have ever seen in hockey:

1. Duncan Keith gratuitously elbowed Daniel Sedin in Chicago on March 21. Welcome to spring. Keith, one of my favourite players ironically, received merely a 5 game suspension. The NHL thus granted tacit approval for the intent to injure hit. Daniel Sedin is still out. Maybe he'll play tonight. Maybe not. How long was Sidney Crosby out?
2. Shea Weber recently slammed Henrik Zedderberg's head into the glass. Weber was fined \$2,500 because there was no apparent injury. Apparent is an interesting word. When can a brain injury show up? Within 48 hours? Within two years? 30 years? After an autopsy?
3. Chicago's Andrew Shaw ran Phoenix goalie Mike Smith, only to receive a 3 game suspension.
4. Carl Hagelin hit Ottawa's Daniel Alfredsson in the head, only to receive a 3 game suspension.
5. Vancouver's Byron Bitz targeted Kyle Clifford's head with his elbow, only to receive a 2 game suspension.
6. [Last night](#) Raffi Torres charged, left his feet and hit Marian Hossa in the head with his shoulder. Torres received no penalty, his team ended up with a power play, but today Torres has been

suspended indefinitely, whatever that means.

Are you spotting the pattern? The cost of doing business is reasonably cheap.

Just days earlier than the Duncan Keith hit, [The Good Wife](#), which is set in Chicago, [featured a plot line](#) with hockey players, fighting, brain injuries, class action lawsuits, league negligence and chronic traumatic encephalopathy. [See Derek Boogaard below.]

Are players and teams targeting star players to cut down on the chance of leading teams being credible contenders? It sure looks that way.

Are there bounties on key players, [like the NFL has experienced](#)? Possibly, it sure looks like there could be.

What ethical and legal obligations do the NHL and the NHL Players' Association have to protect players from head injuries that have short term and long term consequences? Not as many are in place as there need to be.

How did hockey fights contribute to [Derek Boogaard's death](#)? It seems so.

I am not interested in watching the kind of sport Don Cherry wants hockey to be. If Don Cherry were smarter, he'd consider the risks of brain injuries for more significantly when he rants about testosterone. Don Cherry's ultimate irony, in fact, is his encouragement of a grotesque level of violence in hockey with callous disregard for the health of the players...all while he recognizes the deaths of Canadian Forces personnel, firefighters, police and other emergency workers who die in the line of duty. I don't understand how he can contend with that kind of paradox.

I am not interested in watching a sport that condones this kind of gratuitous headshot violence with insultingly minuscule consequences.

I am not interested in encouraging children to grow up with a sense of healthy competition, sportsmanship within a context of compassion and empathy for fellow human beings with the NHL as any kind of model we're to emulate.

The NHL is morally bankrupt, as is the NHLPA if they continue to tacitly encourage this kind of brain abuse.

And in the meantime, we should not patronize that business, just like we do not patronize any businesses that harm their workers through action or inaction.

All headshots should start with 20 game suspensions, to be extended for as long as the injured player is out. That is a deterrent that is more effective than a \$2,500 fine to a 5 game suspension.