



**CANADIAN HOCKEY  
ASSOCIATION  
CANADIENNE DE HOCKEY**

**Information Bulletin d'information**

**CANADA**

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To: Branch Technical Directors  
Branch Referees-in-Chief

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Branch Presidents Life Members  
Council Representatives HDC Council Members  
Directors

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From: Maurice Roy, CHA Referee-in-Chief

**SUBJECT: CHECKING TO THE HEAD- 2002 / 03 NEW RULE CLARIFICATION**

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Please ensure that this Bulletin is given the widest possible distribution, especially at all your development clinics. The Checking to the head rule has been approved by the CHA Board of Directors, and mandates that all Canadian Hockey officials emphasize it.

Deliberate checks to the head have become a major problem in today's game. All head injuries, specifically concussions are on the rise. Concussions not only deprive players of playing time, they end players careers and can have long term affects away from the rink.

Checks to the Head demonstrate a lack of respect and fair play and must be penalized. Any moderate or severe blow to the head must be penalized with a Minor Penalty and a Misconduct or a Major penalty and a Game Misconduct for Checking to the Head (new rule 2002 – 2003) as concussions and other head injuries are having a major impact on the game. A Match penalty could also be assessed under this rule. These are aggressive fouls and must be called at **ALL** occurrences during the hockey game, including shorthanded situations.

***Specific clarifications of the new rule are included in this bulletin.***



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***CHECKING TO THE HEAD - NEW 2002 - 2003***

A Minor and a Misconduct penalty, or a Major and Game Misconduct penalty, at the discretion of the Referee, based on the degree of violence of impact, shall be assessed to any player who checks an opponent to the head area in any manner. A Match penalty could also be assessed under this rule. If a player is injured, a Major and Game Misconduct penalty, or a Match penalty must be assessed.

**Note:** Referees are instructed not to substitute other penalties when a player is Checked to the Head with significant impact.

***CLARIFICATIONS ON CHECKING TO THE HEAD – NEW 2002 - 2003***

Referees should be aware of the tragic consequences of head injuries and concussions and strictly enforce the rule. It is the responsibility of players, team officials and Referees to make every attempt possible to reduce the incident of this frightful injury. Team officials can teach players legitimate methods of checking an opponent, while players can be educated to the dangers of checks to the head. The Referee has the responsibility to penalize players who check an opponent in the head. If the Referees are consistent and strict in calling infractions that may lead to concussions, then along with the cooperation of players and team officials, these type of fouls and the chances of a player suffering such injuries can be significantly reduced.

The Checking to the Head penalty call is based on the “degree of violence of impact” and can be defined in three categories: minimal, moderate and severe.

***Minimal impact*** would be called under other appropriate rules. ie. elbowing, high-sticking, roughing, roughing after the whistle, etc. A glancing blow or minimal impact to the head where a penalty is still warranted.

***Moderate impact*** would be a more significant degree of violence without injury that warrants a Minor and Misconduct penalty under Checking to the Head rule.

***Severe impact*** would be a high degree of violence, with or without injury, that warrants a Major and Game Misconduct or a Match penalty, at the discretion of the Referee under the Checking to the Head rule.



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What previously may have been considered a legal check with a shoulder check to the head shall now be penalized as Checking to the Head if moderate or severe impact is made.

**These Checking to the Head infractions can occur anywhere on the playing surface as a result of the initial contact to the head. Checking to the Head could also be the result of an open ice hit, with or without the fouled players head being down.**

Body checking has not been removed from the game – but high hits or targeting the head shall be penalized.

A Fight is still to be called a Fight, not checking to the head.

Referees are to strictly enforce penalties that call for infractions as a result of low hits as these types of infractions may increase.

The penalty signal for “Checking to the Head” will be patting flat (open palm) of the non-whistle hand on the side of the head.

If you have any questions regarding the Rules Emphasis for this season, please contact your Branch Referee-in-Chief for further clarification.

Sincerely,

Maurice Roy  
Referee-in-Chief  
CANADIAN HOCKEY ASSOCIATION