

Boulerice Suspended 25 Games For Cross-Checking

Contributed by Robert Arbizio
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Suspension Ties NHL League Record

Philadelphia Flyers Forward, Jesse Boulerice, has received a suspension of 25 games from the National Hockey League. The suspension was given to Boulerice following a brutal cross-check to Vancouver Canucks player, Ryan Kesler, during Wednesday night's match. The suspension ties the NHL record for a suspension handed out in relation to an on-ice incident at a hockey game.

The incident in question was a brutal cross-check that occurred during the middle of the third period of the Flyers-Canucks match up. The Flyers were clearly winning the game, and Kesler was not in possession of the puck at the time of the hit, leaving many to wonder why it happened in the first place.

Boulerice later stated that it was a bad reaction on his part. Many within the league feel that this excuse doesn't stand up to a hard hitting cross check, during which Boulerice hit the Canucks players so hard that it broke his graphite hockey stick in two when it came into contact with Kesler's jaw.

The NHL web site quoted Colin Campbell, Senior Executive Vice President of Hockey Operations, as saying, "This was more than a careless and reckless play - it was senseless."

Campbell went on to say, "This was a deliberate cross-check to the face where Jesse Boulerice broke the shaft of his stick on Ryan Kesler's jaw. Boulerice went out of his way to deliver the cross-check and we will not tolerate this kind of conduct. This was a stick that was broken as it was used to another players face. You don't use your stick for swinging at players, cross-checking players in the head."

Following the game, Kesler addressed the matter for the press and stated that he felt that the blow deserved a suspension of more than 20 games. It would seem that Kesler got his wish, as the National Hockey League imposed a 25 game sentence against Boulerice.

The only other time such a large sentence was given out for an on-ice incident was last year, when New York Islanders Forward, Chris Simon, gave a two-handed hit to the face of Ryan Hollweg of the New York Rangers.

The suspension means that Boulerice will not be eligible to play again until December 13. He will also have to forfeit \$63,500 in salary, which will be donated to the Player's Emergency Assistance Fund.