

Greetings Hockey Officials,

As you are probably aware, a member of the Benilde-St. Margaret's boys' hockey team was injured in a junior varsity hockey game last week. In that contest an inadvertent check from behind resulted in the severe injury. This situation reminds all of us in the hockey community to renew our efforts to emphasize the elimination of hitting from behind in hockey and to emphasize proper contact techniques.

For nearly a decade the MSHSL has identified the reduction and removal of checking from behind as a major point of emphasis for coaches, officials and hockey players. This education process continues the foundation laid for boys and girls who grew up playing youth hockey under the guidelines created by Minnesota Hockey and USA Hockey. High school coaches, officials and student-athletes all have an essential and continuing role in helping to remove this type of contact from games and practices.

Currently, 124 girls' hockey teams with students from 241 schools and 156 boys' hockey teams drawing students from 270 schools participate in MSHSL high school hockey. Together, players from those teams working with the thousands of high school hockey coaches and officials across the state can sustain this awareness and emphasis to ensure the game will be played within the rules which will help eliminate these potentially catastrophic injuries.

With that in mind, MSHSL staff makes the following recommendations.

Coaches:

- **Daily** remind your hockey players to eliminate checking from behind.
- Prior to checking or contact drills, emphasize proper checking and contact technique.
- Before every game and every period remind your team to be aware of hitting from behind situations and to stay away from those situations.
- Be grateful when officials enforce the rules which will make the game safer for all involved.

Officials:

- In your pre-game meetings with captains and coaches emphasize appropriate contact and checking.
- Prior to each period talk to the captains or coaches to again remind them of the points of emphasis.
- When there are checks from behind do not hesitate to make the call—you are protecting all of the players involved.

Hockey Players:

- Remember what your coaches and the officials have taught you—stay away from checking from behind situations.
- Remind each other to keep it clean and hit the brakes when you see the numbers on the back of the jersey.

Thank you for cooperation.

Craig Perry – Boys' and Girls' Hockey Tournament Director - cperry@mshsl.org
Kevin Merkle – Director of Officials Program – kmerkle@mshsl.org