

NHL Competition Committee Calls for In-Game Head Hits Penalty

Written by Matthew Coller
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After months of discussion over what type of penalty should be assessed for head hits, the NHL's competition committee has recommended that the league's referees will be given the power to hand out major penalties for hits to the head.

The 10-man group agreed on the new penalty during a meeting at the NHL's Toronto office Friday, then sent it to the league's board of governors, who will meet next week in Los Angeles and give its final recommendation.

According to [USA Today](#) the specific wording of the new penalty was not disclosed but former Detroit Red Wing Brendan Shanahan said head hits will be subject to a major penalty and game misconduct, as well as supplemental discipline.

Several brutal, yet legal, head hits led to increasing pressure on the committee and the NHL to define an illegal hit and assign a penalty. The Philadelphia Flyers' captain Mike Richards put a nasty hit on David Booth in October of the 2009-'10 season, then in March Pittsburgh's Matt Cooke crushed Boston Bruins' Marc Savard, both ugly and costly, neither illegal.

After Cooke's hit on Savard, 30 general managers proposed a penalty for blineside hits. The union could have enacted the penalty immediately, but elected to have the competition committee review the matter. The resolution for the remainder of 2009-'10 was to subject head

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hits to post-game punishments such as suspension and fine.

Mathieu Schneider, one of the five players on the committee told USA Today an in-game fine is another step toward perfecting a game still trying to find itself post-lockout. "I think things have happened since the lockout, since the rule changes, that were probably unforeseen," Schneider said. "That has made it necessary to change certain rules. The game is much faster, the collisions are taking place at higher speeds."

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Matthew Coller is a staff member of the Business of Sports Network, and is a freelance writer. He can be [followed on Twitter](#)

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