

NHL Fines Burrows for Accusation Against Ref

Written by Matthew Coller

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If Vancouver Canucks forward Alex Burrows played in the NBA, he'd be looking at a \$25,000 fine. In the NHL, it's \$2,500. His crime? Burrows accused referee Stephane Auger was calling penalties in order to "get back at him" for a hit Burrows made in early December. What tipped off Burrows? First, Auger called the three penalties against Burrows in the third period of a 3-2 loss to Nashville. Second, Burrows says Auger told him he was going to.

After the game, Burrows said, "It was personal. It started in warm up before the anthem. The ref (Auger) came over to me and said I made him look bad in Nashville on the Smithson hit (during a game Dec. 8, 2009). He said he was going to get me back tonight and he did his job in the third."

Burrows said he thinks Auger should sit out the rest of the season. NHL Senior Executive Vice President of Hockey Operations Colin Campbell did not agree. He issued the following statement: "

The National Hockey League will not tolerate the personal nature of the comments Mr. Burrows directed at Referee Auger or the fact that he brought into question the integrity of both the official and the game.

"We have determined that Mr. Burrows' account of Referee Auger's comments to him before the game, and specifically Burrows' suggestion that these comments indicated bias against the player or the Vancouver team, cannot be substantiated. While Referee Auger engaged the player in a brief conversation prior to the opening face-off, I firmly believe that nothing

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inappropriate was said and that Referee Auger's intentions were beyond reproach."

Any time fixing, make-up calls or ref-player beefs arise, we can't help but bring up former NBA referee Tim Donaghy. Whether you believe Donaghy or not, he brought possibility of dirty refs to the forefront. For example, Donaghy said in his book:

"As it turned out, Denver didn't need the win after all; they locked up a spot in the playoffs before they got to San Antonio. In a twist of fate, it was the Spurs that ended up needing the win to have a shot at the division title, and Bavetta generously accommodated. In our pregame meeting, he talked about how important the game was to San Antonio and how meaningless it was to Denver, and that San Antonio was going to get the benefit of the calls that night. Armed with this inside information, I called Jack Concannon before the game and told him to bet the Spurs.

"To no surprise, we won big. San Antonio blew Denver out of the building that evening, winning by 26 points. When Jack called me the following morning, he expressed amazement at the way an NBA game could be manipulated. Sobering, yes; amazing, no. That's how the game is played in the National Basketball Association."

Quick note about this game: The Spurs shot 53 free throws compared to Denver's 18 and won the game 93-67. Six players for the Nuggets had more than four fouls.

The lack of a harsh penalty against Burrows might not be meant to be an admission of guilt, but one could take it that way. Burrows claimed that Auger's ego caused him to make bias calls. At very least, Donaghy proved to use refs can be egotists, too.

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