

## NHL Punishes Devils for Kovalchuk Deal, Again

Written by Matthew Coller

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Maybe they'd sound like 10-year olds, but if the Devils were to cry "no fair" on the NHL, who could blame them? The NHL poured salt in the wound of the New Jersey Devils by fining the team for attempting a legal contract that they already rejected (source : [NHL.com](http://NHL.com) ). The Devils' attempted to sign Ilya Kovalchuk to a 17-year, \$102 million contract this summer, but were turned down by the league. They tried again, got the deal accepted but now face a \$3 million fine and the loss of a first and third round pick as punishment for their legal contract.

The NHL is sending a clear message to teams who try to sign free agents to long-term, front-loaded contracts. As we've followed all summer, similar long-term, front-loaded deals to stars such as Chris Pronger and Marian Hossa went unpunished by the league, even after they investigated and decided on [new guidelines](#) .

The Blackhawks and Flyers (among others) were grandfathered in despite breaking the rules that didn't exist. Long-term, front-loaded deals were allowed according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement due to a loophole that took the average salary across the length of a contract as the team's cap hit.

It seems rejecting the contract and forcing the team to re-work the deal was punishment enough. It forced the Devils to work around a bigger cap hit, throwing a wrench in their cap blueprint for the next, say, 17 years or so. But, the NHL elected to punish the team twice for the same crime (which, again, wasn't actually illegal to begin with).

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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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