NHL Senior Vice President of Player Safety and Hockey Operations Brendan Shanahan announced Wednesday afternoon that Blues forward Chris Stewart has been suspended three games for his hit on Niklas Kronwall of the Detroit Red Wings. The incident occurred at 11:14 of the first period of the Blues and Red Wings' Tuesday night matchup.

Here is all that you need to know about the incident itself and the suspension that followed.

The skinny:

Niklas Kronwall had the puck in the Detroit zone and tried to pass the puck to teammate Brad Stuart along the blue line when Blues forward Patrik Berglund slightly tipped the puck to keep it in the Red Wings' zone. Kronwall retrieved the puck and skated toward the right-wing boards. As he curled back, he was approached by Chris Stewart. The Blues forward came from behind Kronwall, leaning toward Kronwall's right. Stewart gave Kronwall a shove at the numbers and Kronwall flew into the boards. Kronwall lay on the ice while both Red Wings and Blues players swarmed the area as a scrum ensued. Stewart was given a five-minute major and a game misconduct for checking from behind. Kronwall did return to the game, but not until late in the second period.

Niklas Kronwall on the hit:

"I think I got lucky there. I think it could have ended a lot worse."

The suspension:

Chris Stewart was handed a three-game suspension and will forfeit $46,621.62 of his annual

salary. The money will be given to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

Shanahan released a video explanation for his judgment. In the explanation, Shanahan states that the hit "does not appear to us to be an attempt to reverse-hit Stewart, and it is our opinion that Kronwall does not contribute significantly to the violent collision with the boards that results from the shove from behind by Stewart.

"The onus is on Stewart to avoid this hit or minimize it."

This is Stewart's first suspension in his four-year NHL career.

Reaction from Blues GM Doug Armstrong:

"It's a situation that we accept and we move on with. But I just want to be 100 percent crystal clear that our support for the type of player Stewart is hasn't wavered. He's a very honest, hard player. This is a hockey play that went awry, but I don't think it's any reflection on the type of player that Chris Stewart is.

"Playing over four years in the league and with 200 games, he's a physical player and this is the first time he's had any type of incident like this. I'm sure we don't expect him to have another like this."

LetsGoBlues.com Owner and Operator Curt Price's take:

"If you watch the replay, you can see that Stewart is taking an angle at Kronwall and at the last second, Kronwall cuts into Stewart and slams on the brakes. Stewart expecting a check from Kronwall, dishes out a check of his own...and sends him head first into the boards.

The play isn't near as ‘dirty’ once you slow it down and analyze it.”

My take:

At first, I was very skeptical of the hit. It was definitely a dirty play that Stewart could have easily avoided. If you would have asked me directly after the hit, I would have said that Stewart deserves 7-10 games.

After reading many responses to the hit (including Curt Price’s), I have a new take on it. It did look like Stewart was slightly bracing himself for a hip-check from Kronwall. Maybe he was giving Kronwall a pre-emptive strike? We will never know the full truth, as Stewart may have reacted before he let his brain think. Either way, I feel that three games is fair, but four or five would have been more understandable.

The one problem that I have with Shanahan’s ruling, as I do with many suspensions or non-suspensions in this league, is the fact that he took Kronwall’s return into consideration. I never have understood why the NHL even looks at this; the league should be punishing the act, not the result. Stewart did something illegal. He should be punished in the same way.

Kronwall quote courtesy TSN.

Shanahan quote courtesy NHL.com.

Armstrong quote courtesy Lou Korac of In the Slot.

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