The recent action taken on Aaron Rome and his hit on Nathan Horton in the Stanley Cup Finals is just another reminder that the NHL disciplinary system is simply not working.

Rome, who lined Horton up and nailed him with a shoulder in his head, received a four-game suspension from the league. Horton will miss the remainder of the playoffs with a concussion.

"Two factors were considered in reaching this decision," said Mike Murphy, the NHL senior vice president of hockey operations. "The hit by Rome was clearly beyond what is acceptable in terms of how late it was delivered after Horton had released the puck and it caused a significant injury."

The suspension means that Rome will not be able to participate in the remainder of the series.

Rome was punished and will not be able to hoist Lord Stanley's Cup on the rink, if the Canucks can pull off a victory. That is a pretty big punishment for someone who has battled all season for that chance. But why do I still laugh at this penalty?

Let's take a look at recent history of suspensions and fines.

Curtis Glencross of Calgary may be able to shed some light on this.

A man who made two questionable hits this season did not see any suspensions, although he

was fined. The first example happened on December 1, 2010 in a game that Calgary was hosting the Vancouver Canucks. Glencross laid a hit on Vancouver defenseman Keith Ballard that did not result in a penalty. Play continued as Ballard seemed to be watching Glencross, hoping he would get close for retribution.
The two met along the boards and started jawing at each other.
Glencross proceeded to get his stick up and cross-check Ballard in the face, causing him to hit the ice.
He received a five-minute major for cross-checking and a game misconduct.

Glencross, probably expecting a suspension, only received a fine and was allowed to play in the Flames' next game. The fine was for an undisclosed amount.

Just over a month later, Glencross and the Flames were hosting the Minnesota Wild. Glencross shot the puck into the Minnesota zone as defenseman Clayton Stoner chased after the puck behind his net.
A few feet from the boards, Glencross drove Stoner from behind, forcing him awkwardly into the boards, hitting his head on the lower portion of the boards.
Once again, Glencross was given a five-minute major and a game misconduct.

Now that one has to be a suspension. Nope. Glencross received a miniscule $2,500 fine and played in the next Calgary game.

Both of these types of plays are seen a lot each NHL season. Sometimes they are punished, sometimes they are not. Olli Jokinen of Calgary was suspended for three games nearly a month before Glencross' first incident, even though it was almost exactly the same type of cross-check that Glencross put on Ballard.

If you're reading this on LetsGoBlues.com, chances are that I don't need to tell you that the NHL disciplinary system is more inconsistent than Brad Boyes' goal-scoring. Now I will tell you something you may not have thought about.

Remember the Sean Avery incident in December 2008? Yea, I'm talking about the infamous

“sloppy seconds” comments that involved Dion Phaneuf and his girlfriend, Elisha Cuthbert. Avery, who at the time was a member of the Dallas Stars, was handed a whopping six-game suspension for his actions, as well as being told he had to complete anger-management classes before he could return to NHL-action.

While I do not support Avery’s words, I find it hard to believe that he did worse damage than what Rome, Glencross and Jokinen’s hits did.

There was a situation earlier this season that involved James Wisniewski and Avery. Wisniewsk i, playing for the Islanders, had a scrum in front of his team’s net with Avery, a member of the Rangers.
After Avery refused to drop the gloves, Wisniewski made a lewd sexual gesture toward the Ranger.

Once again, this is not something I condone, but is this as bad as what Rome has done? No, but apparently it’s
almost
as bad.
Wisniewski was handed a two-game suspension for his behavior.

It is no secret that the NHL is the fourth most important of the four major sports in America (behind baseball, football and basketball). The league has an image that it wants to protect; fining and suspending players who harm that image are understandable acts.
But isn’t the image also impaired when players are trying to injure each other on the rink and it goes almost unnoticed?

It seems that the system is backwards. Players should be reprimanded for sexual suggestions on and off the rink, but is that really what needs to be taken out of the game the most?
The #1 concern should be player injuries and risky hits.

The league has appointed a new league disciplinarian (Brendan Shanahan has taken over for Colin Campbell, who served as the league disciplinarian for 13 years), but does that mean that things are going to change overnight? As much as we want to believe that Campbell would just reach in a hat and pull out a number of games-suspended for every questionable hit, a lot of

deliberating goes into these judgments. Campbell consulted with multiple people before making his decision; Shanahan will have to do the same, especially as the new guy on the scene.
I would expect a lot of the same lopsidedness for years to come.

If the NHL wants things to change on the ice, they have to look at illegal hits with more of a forceful hand. No matter what is said in the media or what lewd gestures are made on the ice, illegal hits that could ruin players' careers have to have higher punishment-levels if things are going to change.

I know that, the players know that, but does the NHL know that? It does not seem that they do.

Quotes courtesy TSN.ca .

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