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Can it still be called sport or a game when the increasing number of brutal and debilitating injuries point to a subculture of physical aggression and violence that some critics say has become inherent in hockey? What social and marketing factors contribute to the violence in a sport that once enjoyed a pristine reputation? What is the true nature of sport? Why do humans play contact sports? Is there in fact any glory left in professional hockey? These are some of the unavoidable questions this story poses.

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Introduction

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

Two incidents in February and March of 2000 had hockey fans, hockey critics, and many uncommitted observers shaking their heads about the state of North American hockey. The first incident occurred on February 21 when Boston Bruins defenceman Marty McSorley swung his stick like a baseball bat at the head of Vancouver Canucks forward Donald Brashear. Kevin Allen, a writer with USA Today, said that when McSorley swung his stick he wounded the National Hockey League as severely as he did Brashear. For hockey critics, the deliberate attack, which occurred when Brashear's back was turned to McSorley, exemplified everything that is wrong with hockey today. But the attack also concerned die-hard hockey fans, and evidence confirmed that Kevin Allen's prediction was correct. A CTV poll conducted on April 4, 2000, showed that 68 per cent of Canadians agreed that criminal charges should be laid against McSorley. Seventy-one per cent said they felt the game has become too violent and that new rules are necessary to get the game under control. Furthermore, three out of four Canadians (75 per cent) said that there is more unnecessary violence in the game than ever before.

The second incident occurred on March 11 when Toronto Maple Leaf Bryan Berard was accidentally hit in the eye by the blade of Marian Hossa's stick. Berard says that when Hossa's stick smashed into his face he heard bone crack and knew he was in trouble. Thousands of fans watched as Berard fell in a heap on the ice, and a pool of thick blood spread out from his head. The

injury fractured his orbital bone, cut his cornea, and detached his retina. It will likely result in permanent blindness in his right eye, thus ending his hockey career at the age of 23.

That these two horrific incidents happened in close succession was bound to spark a debate about Canada's national sport. Some hockey fans believe that the two incidents were an aberration and that hockey is generally a clean, exciting game. But a growing number of people, including some hockey players and coaches, are starting to speak out about the high cost in human terms of the game: the behavioural implications and ramifications, the negative role modelling, and the very nature of the sport including the culture that permeates it. The many injuries players sustain range from eye injuries like the one Berard suffered to concussions, and worse. Many of these critics blame a macho culture that in their opinion has become an integral part of hockey a behavioural tendency that encourages players to remain on the ice even when injured as proof of their commitment to the team and to the game, ultimately setting a bad example, especially for millions of young hockey fans. Can hockey still be called sport or a game when the increasing number of brutal and debilitating injuries becomes a normal occurrence? What do these injuries tell us about contact sports in general? One might also ask what factors in our contemporary North American culture encourage and support aggression and violence in sport, in hockey especially, the game that Canadians have always been proud to call their own?

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Inherent Behaviour?

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

In 1954, Hugh MacLennan, a renowned Canadian novelist, said that hockey is a reflection of the Canadian character. To spectator and player alike, hockey gives the release that strong liquor gives to a repressed man. It is the counterpoint of the Canadian self-restraint, it takes us back to the fiery blood of Gallic and Celtic ancestors who found themselves minorities in a cold, new environment and had to discipline themselves as all minorities must. But Canadians take the ferocity of their national game so much for granted that when an American visitor makes polite mention of it, they look at him in astonishment. Hockey violent? Well, perhaps it is a little. But hockey was always like that.

MacLennan's comment reflects the belief of many that professional hockey especially not unlike other traditionally masculine sports is the kind of endeavour that shows men (primarily) engaging in publicly sanctioned physical struggle, fighting as a team to gain dominance and to become victorious over others. According to this belief, hockey increasingly allows fans to do the same thing vicariously. And because of the contact element, aggression and subsequent violent behaviour is to be expected. Is this inherent to hockey? Is it an increasing behavioural trend? Hockey injuries are indeed increasing, and more and more people are questioning the cheap shots that seem to have become part of the game.

As you watch this News in Review report, use the questions below to focus your viewing. After viewing, explore through class discussion this controversial description of the nature of hockey.

1. What is it about the game of hockey that appeals to fans and players?
2. What risks do players assume when they take to the ice?
3. How does technologically advanced equipment affect these risks?
4. How is the current debate over wearing visors similar to the one that took place over helmets or goalie masks in the past?
5. What evidence is there that hockey is getting dirtier?
6. What solutions are being suggested to reduce the amount of violence and injury that occur in the game?
7. Are the incidents of high-profile injuries media hype and blown out of proportion?

Follow-up Discussion

1. What are the positive aspects of hockey? What skills does the game build? What can children learn about teamwork, co-operation, and competition from a game such as hockey? What physical skills are developed playing hockey that are in fact transferrable skills?
2. Is there such a thing as a reasonable amount of risk in any sport? In the case of hockey, what would that be?
3. Is this a social phenomenon restricted to professional hockey only? Is aggression, violence, and injury the price of glory? What is the nature of glory in the world of professional hockey?

An Ongoing Debate

Dustin Slightham is a grade nine student who has been heavily involved as a player in hockey for a number of years. He has also been recognized for his skill in the sport and for his potential. He is also not a fighter. In an electronic conversation with News in Review he expressed his views as a young player by saying, I think that violence in hockey needs to be contained more. Over the last couple of months certain events have happened like the McSorley incident an act that in my opinion is completely inexcusable.

Recently, in Dustin Slightham's English class a debate was held about banning fighting in professional hockey. Despite his concerns over the recent inexcusable acts, he does feel that fighting has always been part of the game and that therefore there is no reason to ban it now. He recognizes that there has been a dramatic influence on players to become stronger, faster, and physically larger and he notes the increased amount of time that a player is on the ice these days; he himself is on the ice four or five times a week in addition to having to keep up with his school work and other responsibilities. He notes that the

increased pressure in the sport is the price you have to pay. He believes, however, that Although hockey seems an overly violent sport, a lot of great life skills are acquired that are sometimes overlooked; such as how to deal with high levels of stress and a [demanding] daily routine.

Organize an informal debate in your class in which you explore the multifaceted nature of this news story. To what extent have the recent violent incidents been blown out of proportion? To what extent have the positive elements of the sport been downplayed or ignored? Has there been an overreaction that in the long run hurts more than it helps the game of hockey and all those who enjoy it and benefit from it?

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The Stats

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

Although Bryan Berard's eye injury was a horrific example of what can go wrong during a hockey game, it was not an anomaly. The number of serious injuries suffered by National Hockey League (NHL) players today is substantial. And as the average professional hockey player is physically larger and stronger, the injuries get more severe, and the human costs of playing hockey increase. But the costs are not just being borne by professional players. Fifty per cent of spinal fractures suffered by hockey players occur between the ages of 16 and 20.

Spinal-Cord Injuries

Probably the biggest fear every hockey player has is being hit from behind and flying head first into the boards. This can result in an injury to the spinal cord, which carries signals from the brain to the rest of the body. A spinal-cord injury can result in severe loss of movement and feeling, sometimes including total paralysis. A report released in the Canadian Medical Association Journal in March 2000 said that spinal-cord injuries have become a catastrophic part of hockey. The report determined that at least 243 spinal injuries, including six deaths, were suffered by young non-professional players since 1966. The authors of the report note that the true number of spinal injuries is likely higher because not all injuries are reported to sports medicine physicians and the Canadian Hockey Association, the two main sources for the research.

A spinal-cord injury is a life-altering event, and it can happen in an instant. The tragic injury of Travis Roy is a case in point. Roy got his first pair of skates at 20 months of age. At three he began skating and playing hockey with boys eight years old. He rotated through positions in each game and quickly developed into an excellent hockey player. As Roy moved up the hockey ladders his dream was to play Division I hockey university-league hockey in the United States. Not the biggest guy in the game, Roy worked tirelessly, lifting weights, doing aerobic training, and logging countless hours on the ice. After graduating from high school, he was recruited to play for Boston University, on a full scholarship.

Travis Roy took to the ice to fulfill his dreams on the night of October 20, 1995. Eleven seconds into his first shift of the game, he lost his balance after throwing a check and fell head first into the end boards. He fell limply to the ice and lay there, motionless. When he did not jump back to his feet his parents knew something was terribly wrong. The one rule that Roy's father had drilled into his son since he was a little boy was no lying down on the ice. One of Roy's roommates, defenceman Dan Ronan, was on the ice when the accident happened. He was lying so still, I automatically thought he'd been [knocked out] because his chin was flat on the ice. That ice is cold. I was thinking, if he were conscious, he'd get his chin off the ice. But when I finally went over to him, I saw his eyes were wide open.

Roy's father, Lee, was the next one to reach the boy. Lee remembers thinking that he hoped his son had suffered a broken arm or a separated shoulder. Knowing that his son would need to see a friendly face, Lee approached, and said, Hey, boy, let's get going. There's a hockey game to play. But when Lee got down beside him, his son said, Dad, I'm in deep shit. I can't feel my arms or legs. My neck hurts. Lee recalls trying to think of something positive to say back to his son when Travis looked directly at him and said, But Dad. I made it.

Roy's fourth cervical vertebra had been crushed when his helmet hit the boards. His spinal cord had been damaged by the impact and as a result today he has no movement or feeling below the neck. His parents were told that Roy's chances of recovery are slim and that they should be prepared for the possibility that Roy will remain a quadriplegic for the rest of his life. Travis Roy was 20 years of age at the time of his injury.

Eye Injuries

When 23-year-old Bryan Berard took a stick in the eye on March

11, 2000, his professional hockey career ended. Marian Hossa's stick fractured Berard's orbital bone, cut his cornea, and detached his retina. While Berard's injury is the latest high-profile eye injury to occur in the NHL, it is certainly not the only one. By the end of the 1998-1999 hockey season, a reported 1833 serious eye injuries had occurred since 1972. Of those, about 300 injuries resulted in an eye being blinded. None of the injured players were wearing a full face shield and only eight were wearing partial visors.

Doctors find eye injuries to be the most frustrating of hockey injuries because they are the most easily prevented. A full face shield would literally eliminate these types of injuries, but at least 85 per cent of NHL players will not wear visors because they believe it restricts their vision. This is ironic considering that every player coming up through junior hockey in Canada, Europe, or the U.S. college system must wear one.

Concussions

Concussions are probably the most frequent injury suffered by hockey players, and the seriousness of such an injury is just starting to be understood. A concussion involves the actual bruising of the brain. In hockey, it occurs when the head is in motion and suddenly accelerates or decelerates quickly, usually as a result of an unanticipated blow to the head from a stick, elbow, or shoulder, or a collision with the boards. Although the skull stops, the brain, floating in spinal fluid, keeps going until it strikes the inside of the skull. Neurological damage and bleeding are often caused by the impact. Also, the delicate connections within the brain stretch and tear, and they may not heal properly. This can result in varying degrees of loss of neural functioning. As well, the effects of concussions are cumulative. That is, each subsequent concussion compounds the earlier damage suffered by the brain.

Concussions slow an individual's reaction time, affect vision, reduce the ability to concentrate, and often result in headaches and confusion. Repeated concussions can result in death or serious neurological impairment. In the 1997-1998 season, a total of 54 NHL players suffered 82 concussions, which resulted in 428 games being missed. A number of famous players were forced to retire early because of post-concussion syndrome, a condition that results from sustaining repeated concussions. Among the retirees are Pat Lafontaine, Jeff Beukeboom, Nick Kypreos, Dave Taylor, Jim Johnson, Michel Goulet, and Brett Lindros, who was only 20 years old at the time he had to call it quits.

Follow-up Questions

1. In your opinion, how should the statistics about injuries on the previous pages, especially as they apply to hockey, be kept in perspective?
2. Why do you think concussions have been downplayed or overlooked as a serious injury?
3. Should trainers and coaches refuse to let players on the ice after they have suffered a concussion?
4. Sports medicine is a specialized and lucrative branch of the medical profession. Why has such a specialty become necessary? What are the implications of this?
5. How can the general public help to avoid hockey injuries?
6. Who is responsible for the health of hockey players?

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A Culture of Violence?

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

Disturbed by the degree and frequency of hockey injuries and the often brutal violence that occurs on ice incidents that do not go unnoticed by the television cameras and that even form part of compilation, reality-based videos that are sold commercially a number of people are starting to criticize the culture of hockey itself. Current and former hockey players, coaches, and observers are starting to speak out about the macho attitudes and peer pressure that keep players from wearing proper equipment and playing while hurt.

In an article by Scott Burnside in *The National Post* on March 14, 2000, Mike Gartner of the Washington Capitals reminisced about his decision to wear a visor after a puck he took in the face shattered his cheekbone and blinded him for two weeks in the 1983-84 season. It took four months for Gartner's vision to return to normal, and when he returned to hockey, he wore a visor. Gartner remembers being aware of the perception among his teammates that if a player wore a visor he was somehow less tough than other players.

This sentiment was echoed by Shawn McEachern of the Ottawa Senators, who began wearing a visor in 1999 after he saw an opposing player nearly lose an eye in a pre-season game with Ottawa. McEachern believes that peer pressure keeps players from wearing visors because of the belief among players that if you wear a visor other players will think you are afraid. This, of

course, has a significant psychological and strategic effect in terms of the game and it influences the dynamic of the play on the ice.

When Trent McCleary of the Montreal Canadiens decided to wear a visor after two serious eye injuries he says he became the butt of many jokes. Opponents taunted him to take off his bug screen, or they accused him of hiding behind the visor. But McCleary says he does not care about the taunting. Having suffered a torn retina and iris that put him out of the game for three months, and a skate to the face that cut open his eye socket and severed a tear duct, he feels he has been lucky to dodge the bullet twice and is not going to take any more chances.

The following comments were made by members of the Toronto Maple Leafs following Bryan Berard's eye injury on March 12, 2000. The comments, taken from an article by Cam Cole of The National Post, on March 14, 2000, demonstrate how the macho culture of hockey might prevent some players, professional or not, from wearing protective equipment.

I had 80 stitches in my face one season in Anaheim. And I tried to wear [a visor], but then I got away from it. You have to realize: [Berard's] was a freak accident, not the norm. Garry Valk

I remember talking to Brad Marsh, when he was one of the last guys to play without a helmet. He said he put one on for a couple of games, and ended up taking it off because people kept hitting him in the head. Ask anyone who wears a visor they get hit in the face more. Wendel Clark

The way I play the game, a guy like me or Tie Domi, a player could break his hand on [a visor during a fight] and never be able to hold a stick again. Darcy Tucker

There are people who say if you wear a visor, you're a bit of a pussy. Steven Thomas

Follow-up Questions

1. Discuss reasons why some players do not want to wear face protection. Make a class list and then examine each reason. Suggest whether the reason is because of peer pressure, a direct result of the dynamics of the game, or something else.
2. Would comments like the ones made by members of the Maple Leafs put pressure on other players to not wear visors? Explain your answer.
3. Reflect on the quotations on the previous page and the other

material in this section of the resource guide. Based on this information, write a one-page viewpoint that answers the question, What is the culture of hockey today? You may wish to differentiate between amateur and professional hockey. On the other hand, you may wish to examine the relationship between both. And last, you may wish to consider the role of the industry of hockey and the role of the fans in developing or defining the culture of hockey.

Playing Hurt

Another aspect of hockey culture being criticized is the tendency of players to continue to play even when they have suffered an injury as a (perhaps necessary) way of proving that they are tough and that they have what it takes. This has become a widespread phenomenon. If a player breaks a finger, the trainer will put it in a splint, and he will play the rest of the game. One player, Gary Roberts, suffered a neck injury that resulted in his not being able to raise his right arm over his head. He played the rest of the game with a protective collar on his neck, but removed the collar in overtime because he was having trouble looking down and seeing the puck by his skates.

A Recent Phenomenon?

Recent injuries and the methods used to keep injured players on the ice perhaps need to be put into some additional perspective. In the 1964 Stanley Cup playoffs, Maple Leaf Bobby Baun played the seventh game against the Detroit Red Wings with a broken leg. He had broken his tibia in a game two days earlier. On the night of the final game, he had his leg taped together and had the doctors freeze it every 10 minutes. He played the entire game and then was taken away in an ambulance. His leg was in a cast for six weeks.

Michael Farber of Sports Illustrated feels that the part of hockey culture that encourages players to continue to play while in pain is no different from the kind of behaviour demonstrated when a child (usually male) is engaged in a ritual of physical dominance in the schoolyard and refuses to say uncle. Such culturally defined behaviours and personal values reveal the fear of losing face by being the first to back down. Backing down, although in reality it could be common sense, can be interpreted by an aggressor as a signal that defeat has already occurred and can thus strengthen his or her resolve to win.

Misinterpreting signals is always part of the game. Montreal Canadiens assistant coach Dave King, says, Playing hurt is a status thing. It's the simplest way of getting the respect of teammates, opponents, and coaches. As coaches, we're always judging players. After a hard check or a big-time slash, is he the

kind of guy who gives up on the play and heads to the bench or does he stay with the play? After a guy blocks a shot, does he lie on the ice or get back up? Pain is one of hockey's measuring sticks.

Those players that fail the toughness test are often the subject of disrespect by others. Members of the Montreal Canadiens questioned the decision of Vladimir Malakhov to miss a playoff game because of neck pain. Fans and teammates alike questioned Buffalo Sabres goalie Dominik Hasek, when he took himself out of a playoff game after suffering a knee injury. And some coaches put considerable pressure on players they believe are not acting tough enough. For example, in a 1989 playoff game, Montreal Canadiens coach Pat Burns refused to let the team's trainer onto the ice to attend to a downed player because Burns believed the player was exaggerating his injuries.

Rural Roots

Some hockey analysts argue that the macho hockey culture is entrenched in the rural roots of Canadian hockey. It has been hypothesized that Canadian kids from small towns apparently dominated the sport of hockey until the 1970s and established the tradition of playing hard and playing hurt. The Sutter brothers are a case in point. The six Sutter brothers grew up on a farm in Alberta and were used to the tough routine of completing farm chores in any weather. The brothers remember playing hockey one day when it was so cold that a block heater was needed for their car. The boys' feet were so cold they were aching, and when their father, Louis, noticed that the boys were quietly crying he turned to them and said, "If I ever see you cry in a rink again, you're through." Apparently, the brothers took their father's words to heart. Rich Sutter received a high stick from Mark Messier in the mid 1990s that caused a concussion and knocked out four of his teeth. The team's trainer literally had to scrape black tape from Messier's stick off the roof of Sutter's mouth and yet doctors had to restrain Sutter from returning to the ice.

Follow-up Questions

1. Why do hockey players tend to play even though they are injured?
2. What are the repercussions if they decide to remove themselves from the game?
3. What long-term impact does playing hurt have on the players themselves?
4. How do these attitudes become part of hockey culture?
5. Women have always played hockey. The Canadian women's team has won all five world championships and took the silver

medal in the 1998 Olympics. From what you have seen of women's hockey, how does it differ from men's hockey?

6. What, in your opinion, are the gender issues in this story of hockey injuries? Does hockey demonstrate particularly male behaviour patterns? Do other sports do the same? Are there sports that are predominantly male that do not demonstrate such behaviour? Are there sports in which both men and women participate on an equal basis and in which, in your opinion, the question of gender is irrelevant?

7. What, in your opinion, is the relationship between sport in general and gender identification? Do children learn to be males or females in part through the sports in which they engage or sports that they watch?

8. Are there sports that symbolically represent the triumphing of humans over nature? Are there sports that represent humans working with the forces of nature as opposed to against them?

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A Masculine Mystique?

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Some sociologists have expressed concern about the negative values that are transmitted through team sports competition, sanctioned violence, and winning at any cost. Bruce Kidd, a professor at the University of Toronto and a former gold medalist in track and field at the 1962 Commonwealth Games, believes that competitive sports in Canadian society resemble mini military battles. He notes that military metaphors are often used in sports; quarterbacks throw the long bomb, and coaches encourage their teams to whip, punish, and destroy their opponents. Kidd recalls being encouraged by his softball coach to take out members of the opposing team while rounding the bases. In fact, as a nine-year-old, he was offered \$10 for every bag he took. And, of course, when sports are viewed as battles, the opponents become the enemy and victory can come only at the expense of others.

The Wider Impact of Competitive Sports

Educators who integrate programs whose aims are to minimize violent behaviour often point to aggressive media images, especially those involving sport, and how they contribute to defining what it is to be male in North American society as well as in others. Marc Brzustowski co-founded The Walk Against Male Violence and is an anti-violence activist and educator in Ontario. Brzustowski believes that the notion of masculinity in our culture today essentially equates male behaviour with male violence. Those who share Brzustowski's views suggest that

males are expected to be tough, to not cry, and to keep their feelings to themselves. The only emotion males are generally allowed to express openly is anger. As boys grow up, their anger is accepted and they are even encouraged to express their anger overtly through physically competitive contact sports. In addition, these critics say that our culture often perpetuates and encourages male violence by excusing it with comments such as boys will be boys, in essence refusing to recognize or deal with the aggression.

Brzustowski, like Bruce Kidd, believes that nowhere is this more in evidence than in competitive sports venues. When some coaches want to motivate their male teams they accuse the boys of playing like a bunch of girls. The implication is that femaleness is weakness. Boys and men who are made uncomfortable by the dynamics of competitive sports or other aggressive-violent rituals and behaviour become suspect males and subject to homophobic comments. Suspect males are males whose behaviour falls outside of group norms, thereby challenging the behaviour of the group. Suspect males are quickly labelled wimps, sissies, or queers. The assumption is that if a male rejects the notion that masculinity = violence he must be gay and is not a real man. In this way, the current concept of masculinity is self-policed by other males. Brzustowski believes it is time we redefine masculinity.

Analysis

Discuss the above notion of the socialization and conditioning of males and the notion of masculinity. Are females in our society subject to similar socialization and conditioning? To what extent do you think gender definitions are biologically determined? To what extent are they arbitrary concepts? Would society benefit from a new definition of masculinity?

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Minimizing the Damage

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

Although many people might agree that it would be good to eradicate the physically aggressive component of men's hockey in an effort to reduce violence and injuries, many of these same people acknowledge that it is very difficult to change entrenched attitudes. While it may be a worthy long-term goal to redefine hockey, observers argue that there are a number of more immediate steps that can be taken to improve the game.

Stronger Equipment Regulations

Most doctors agree that if hockey players wore full face shields not only would eye injuries be eliminated but so would dental injuries. Ironically, the great majority of NHL players wore a full-face mask from the time they took their first tentative steps on the ice until they were 18. Most wore visors for a few more years until they reached the NHL and were given a choice. But once in the NHL, 85 per cent of players stop wearing visors. Players argue that visors affect their vision, but critics counter that this does not seem likely when you consider that visors do not hurt their performance on the way to the NHL. And, of course, goalies wear full face shields and their vision is crucial to the outcome of the game.

Larger Ice Surfaces, Larger Players

A number of people are calling for bigger ice surfaces as another way of reducing the number of injuries suffered by players. Players today are larger and faster than they were in the past

and because of this they need more room to get around safely while on the ice. Norm Calder, an athletic therapist with the University of Toronto, notes that although 15 years ago there were few six-foot-plus players in hockey, almost all NHL players today are over six feet, and this physical fact changes the nature of the game. Furthermore, in a National Post article on March 24, 2000, Calder states that the players are better conditioned, heavier, stronger, and leaner. There is now year-round conditioning as opposed to the past when they took the summer off and went back to a construction job. Today, they are paid year-round to be hockey players so they train and work harder at it.

Respect For Other Players

Some suggest that another way violence and injuries could be reduced is if the league could somehow increase the level of respect players have for each other. A number of veterans and retired players believe that the expansion of the hockey league has created problems. You used to know everybody. Now, you look around and don't know a lot of the players. There's not a big recognition factor for what this guy or that guy has accomplished in his career, said Brett Lindros, who was forced to retire at the age of 20 because of recurrent concussions. Al MacInnis, the Norris Trophy-winning defenceman for the St. Louis Blues, agrees there has been a change in the way players see each other and he has found that players today will deliberately try to hurt each other, not just deliver a clean check.

There are now so many teams and the time lapse between rematches can be so long that the fear of reprisal has evaporated. Pat Quinn, Toronto Maple Leafs coach and general manager, also believes the problem goes beyond cramped ice spaces. There seems to be less room now. But the contact has changed, it seems to be more vicious. I don't understand what guys are trying to do. There's a different code now. They do stupid things.

Hockey's current most famous retiree, Wayne Gretzky, lamented the loss of respect that seems to have infiltrated the game. In an October 9, 1999, opinion piece in The National Post, he said,

The important thing is for the league to keep the respect that I still believe is in the game. But the equipment is so good today it sometimes makes people feel invulnerable. I sometimes wonder if an old day's player, say Bobby Hull, would drive to the net as hard as they do today without a helmet on. . . . Equipment is vital but so, too, is sustaining the respect that has always been the best protection of all.

Follow-up Questions

1. The NHL Player s Association, the union that represents the hockey players in the league, is against the league imposing new equipment regulations on the players. This includes regulations relating to helmets, visors, and full face shields. Research the position of the Player s Association by accessing its Web site at www.nhlpa.com to find out why they are against new regulations. Summarize the association s position and then write your own response to that position.

2. Hockey observers have also requested that new rules be instituted as a way to reduce the level of violence and injury. In small groups containing at least one hockey fan discuss each of the following suggestions and record what the advantages and disadvantages of each would be.

Possible new rules: automatic icing calls, no touch-up required; strict penalties for stick infractions; criminal charges for premeditated acts of extreme aggression; banning fighting.

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Marketing and Promotion Factors

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

A great number of serious injuries suffered by hockey players are a result of hockey fights. Fighting has become such a part of North American hockey that it is seen as the norm. When Marty McSorley made a public apology after smashing Donald Brashear in the head with his hockey stick, he said that he had not meant to slash Brashear, all he wanted to do was get Brashear to fight him. McSorley would never have made such a statement unless he knew that fighting is viewed as acceptable. But why is it acceptable in hockey? As you read the following information, try to determine why fighting continues to occur in hockey.

Mark Bradley, a writer for The Atlanta Journal and Constitution argues that fighting exists in hockey because it is profitable. The NHL, he believes, uses fighting as a marketing tool, a way to sell more tickets, and therefore turns a blind eye to behaviour that is banned in all other team sports. As a case in point, Bradley notes that although the NHL claims McSorley's behaviour was very out of character upon closer examination it is evident that this is simply not true. McSorley had served six prior suspensions, four involving infractions with his stick, and one for eye-gouging. He had also accumulated 3400 penalty minutes in his career against 108 goals.

Bob Levin, writing for Maclean's magazine on November 8, 1998, commented that the NHL has only made a modest attempt to

reduce hockey violence. He pointed out that the league did ban bench-clearing brawls and has limited fights to one-on-one affairs, but it does not seem to have a problem with fights themselves. Levin feels that the fact each team now employs a couple of designated goons to protect its star players is a sad reflection of hockey's decline. The real reason the hard-core support fighting is simple: they like fighting. They like the game macho and primal and raw, and they don't like [people] talking about banning it. Because fighting, as Don Cherry says, is the second-best rush in the world. Hey, whatever turns you on. So long as Cherry and his ilk recognize how much fighting turns others off. . . .

There appears to be ample evidence that Don Cherry is correct and that hockey violence does turn a lot of people on. So much so, that some of the toughest players are able to cash in on their tough-guy images and generate some profitable product endorsements. Ty Ballou is the chief executive officer of Public Label Brands, the company that launched a product line for Darius Kasparaitis of the Pittsburgh Penguins. He has a reputation for playing on the edge of the rules, but there has never been an ounce of hesitation in putting his product on the shelves. The rough-and-tumble guys are accepted. [The McSorley incident] won't cast a shadow on what we are doing.

Follow-up Discussion

Hockey Night in Canada is one of CBC's greatest revenue creators. When a fight breaks out during a hockey game, should the cameras turn away or should the program go to commentary or some other related form of programming?

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News in Review

May 2000

Discussion, Research, and Essay Questions

Hockey Injuries: What Price Glory?

1. Many fans argue that fighting is a natural and normal part of hockey, but there is virtually no fighting in women's hockey, European hockey, or Olympic hockey. Why do you think that is so? Visit the following Web sites to gather more information and then write a short report describing how hockey at these levels differs from that of the NHL: The Ontario Women's Hockey Association at www.owha.on.ca; The Women's World Hockey Championships at www.canadianhockey.ca/e/teams/womens; Olympic Hockey at www.usatoday.com/olympics.
2. Many fans look forward to seeing fights during hockey games. Some critics argue that fans actually encourage fighting by cheering and applauding whenever a fight breaks out. Contact the National Hockey League Fans Association and ask them to comment on the place of fighting in hockey and whether or not they feel hockey fights should be banned. Go to the Web site www.nhlfa.com/main.asp.
3. A number of historians and hockey fans argue that the most important hockey series to date was the 1972 Summit Series between Canada and Russia. Research this series and prepare a short report on the outcome of the series and why it is credited with helping to shape our country's national identity. Conclude by describing how this series differed from the style of hockey currently being played in the NHL.
4. Many hockey fans were upset when the police began investigating Marty McSorley for his slash against Donald Brashear. These fans felt that the incident should be handled by

the NHL alone. McSorley was eventually suspended by the NHL for the remaining 23 games of the season and the playoffs and he was charged by the police with assault with a weapon. His case should go to trial in October 2000. Should hockey players be held criminally responsible for their actions on the ice? Explain your answer.

5. Hockey parents will tell you that violence in hockey begins at a very early age. Some parents blame other parents for encouraging their children to become violent on the ice. When writer D Arcy Jenish of Maclean's magazine wrote a letter to his local newspaper criticizing the level of violence in his 14-year-old son's league, parents in the same league responded with outrage. Jenish was called all sorts of names, heard the on-ice violence defended, and was actually threatened with physical violence from another father. Read the complete article, titled *Blood Sport*, from the March 6, 2000, issue of the magazine and summarize the influence that hockey parents can have on the game.

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