

Commentary

NHL needs to follow NBA's lead

For the second time in recent memory, tempers flared and punches flew at an NBA contest as a late-game brawl between the New York Knicks and the Denver Nuggets on Saturday, Dec. 16, subjected the NBA's already-tarnished image to further scrutiny.

Late in the Nuggets' 123-100 victory in Madison Square Garden, Denver's J.R. Smith was going for a breakaway layup when he was nearly tackled with a foul around the neck by the Knicks' Mardy Collins. That was enough to send the eight other players already on the floor from both teams into the fracas, including Denver star Carmelo Anthony. Anthony eventually took a swing at Collins as part of the scrum spilled over into the crowd in a scene reminiscent of the November 2004 brawl between Indiana and Detroit.

All 10 players on the court at the time of the Denver-New York incident were ejected from the game, and while suspensions were doled out by the league afterwards, none was hit harder than Anthony. Anthony was told by league commissioner David Stern that his services wouldn't be needed (well, desired; I'm sure Denver would love to have him in the lineup, getting acclimated to the Nuggets' recently-acquired Allen Iverson) for 15 games. Oh yeah, Anthony

was the league's leading scorer at the time.

What Anthony's suspension says to me is that Stern is trying hard to get thuggery and violence out of professional basketball. No one wants to see another repeat of one of professional sports' ugliest scenes (the Detroit-Indiana debacle), and I think it's refreshing to see those in power not bowing to the league's stars. Anthony deserved to be punished for his role in the latest melee, and perhaps the only way to get through to these players is to take them out of their venue for a solid period of time.

That's why the NHL's paltry "penalty" handed down for Scott Nichol's sucker punch on Jaroslav Spacek in the Buffalo Sabres' 7-2 victory over Nashville Thursday, Dec. 21, is despicable.

Nichol, who has a reputation for these kinds of actions, was sent into the Sabres' goal by Spacek late in the game, and with Spacek's back to him, quickly got to his feet and sent Spacek to the ice with a shot to his jaw and a yank of his collar. Spacek was utterly defenseless, having no inkling that Nichol was ready to unload on him.

Getting just nine games for a vicious attack like that isn't going to teach Nichol anything, just like fining the Washington Capitals' Alexander Ovechkin a mere \$1,100 — with no suspension — won't make him think twice about toning down his aggressive style a bit that could have seriously injured the Sabres' Daniel Briere. Ovechkin's fine amounts to a baker's dozen days worth of full per-diem meal expenses — and hey, what multi-millionaire doesn't need help paying for their day's worth of food — and, in my opinion, just rubs salt into Briere's still sore wounds.

The NHL treats its players, and especially its stars like Ovechkin, with kiddie gloves. Apparently, as long as someone doesn't get seriously injured, just about anything is fair game. The only way to really crack down on the ugly parts of the game — Nichol's sucker punch, Ovechkin's blind-sided check into the boards, etc. — suspensions have to be lengthy and fines have to be hefty. Otherwise, it's going to be business as usual until someone winds up dead on the ice.

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Sports Reporter

South, North head into tournament on winning notes

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

If Williamsville South and Williamsville North are to meet for the third time in the finals of the Rotary Club of Williamsville Holiday Basketball Tournament, they will have to continue each's winning ways.

South (3-1, 3-4) won its third game in a row last Tuesday after blowing out West Seneca East, 88-58, at home. North (1-3, 3-5) snapped a three-game losing streak with their own 30-point home win, 71-41, last Tuesday over West Seneca West.

North opens the tournament at 6 p.m. Thursday against Fredonia, followed at 7:30 p.m. by South against Starpoint. The consolation and finals are at 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Friday.

South increased a 28-12 first-quarter lead over West

Seneca East to 57-36 at halftime. All 11 Billies players who dressed scored, a first this season.

"We had very steady play from everybody because we maintained the lead in the second half," said JV coach John Gartelman. "It was a real good overall team effort."

The Trojans had no answer for South center Frank Pieri, who led with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

Spencer McIntyre (12 points) and Adrian Wood (10 points) also scored in double figures for the Billies.

After blowing halftime leads in its last three games, which resulted in all losses, everything came together in North's home win over West Seneca West.

Up 28-20 at halftime, the Spartans outscored West 27-4 in the third quarter for the win.

"It seemed like everything we were trying to accomplish in game situations finally clicked," said North coach Chuck Swierski. "The forwards and center were rebound-

ing, and our guards were ball-handling. Everybody was running, passing and making quick decisions and finishing layups. We had some early success in the quarter and instead of letting up, they went for the kill, which is something we haven't done before."

North spread the third quarter scoring around. Ryan Young and Steve Barth scored six each, and Alex Calderon, John Piaggione and Alex Barth had four each.

Young finished with 13 points, nine rebounds and five steals. Zach Boron added 13 points, Steve Barth chipped in 10 and Calderon had nine.

North has beaten South in the finals the past two years. A reception for all former South players will be held at Sorrentino's following the South-Starpoint game.

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The Rotary Club of Williamsville to sponsor Holiday Basketball Tournament

The Rotary Club of Williamsville and the Williamsville South High School Basketball Boosters Club will sponsor a Holiday Basketball Tournament December 28-29 at Williamsville South High School, 5950 Main Street.

The tournament will feature boys' varsity and junior varsity teams from Williamsville South, Williamsville North, Starpoint

and Fredonia high schools.

On December 28, the JV tournament will be played at 2:30 p.m. (North-Fredonia) and 4 p.m. (South-Starpoint) followed by the varsity tournament at 6 p.m. (North-Lake Shore) and 7:30 p.m. (South-Starpoint). The consolation (2:30, JV; 6 p.m. varsity) and finals (4 p.m. JV; 7:30 p.m. varsity) will be held on Dec. 29.

"This is the third annual tourna-

ment benefiting our community," said Jerry Sheldon, Rotary chairman for the event. "We hope to build on the success of last year's tournament and provide an entertaining annual sporting event. Our goal is to make this tournament a great holiday tradition for both athletes and spectators alike."

"It's been a huge success," added Williamsville South coach Al Monaco. "We never knew how

big it was going to get when it started. Jerry Sheldon and the guys at the Rotary do a fabulous job and volunteer a lot of time and effort. The crowds at the tournament last year were bigger than the first year and we're hoping for another great tournament."

North has beaten South in the finals the past two years.

The Starpoint game has an added storyline. All of Starpoint Principal Gil Licata's kids, Rachel, just graduated, played for South's girls varsity basketball, Claire, a current junior on the South girls varsity team and Joey, an eighth grader on the South boys JV, attend South.

"It's a nice little rivalry there

especially with them being a league rival in recent years," Monaco added.

The Williamsville South High Athletic Department will assist with tournament operations and the Boosters Club will run a concession stand to benefit the school's sports program. Proceeds received by the Williamsville Rotary from admissions, raffle and program will go toward student scholarships and other charitable purposes in the Amherst community.

Admission is \$2 per adult and \$1 per student. The iPod raffle is \$2 per ticket and three for \$5.

For more information, contact Sheldon at 332-5928.

Amherst

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the free throw line as the Flames fell, 59-49, at home on Thursday to Lake Shore (2-1, 5-3).

"We got 54 shots off and most were good looks at the basket," he said. "We just didn't make anything and couldn't pick it up on defense like we usually do."

Brian Wallden, East's usual main scoring threat, was triple-teamed and held to four points on 3-of-11 shooting. He also grabbed 10 rebounds and blocked two shots. Justin Andreozzi led East with 13 points, eight rebounds and two blocks. Rick Silvestri added 10 points. Andy Heim had seven points. Aaron Tichenor came off the bench to score five points and haul in five rebounds.

Jake Fladd led Lake Shore with 27 points.

East led 17-15 after the first quarter but Lake Shore outscored the Flames 15-5 in the second quarter to lead 30-22 by halftime. Lake Shore was ahead 44-36 after the third quarter.

East looks to rebound at 6 p.m. Thursday against Riverside in the first round of the Clarence Booster Club Tournament held at Clarence High School. The winner plays Clarence or Niagara-Wheatfield on Friday.

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