

Cammalleri Braces for Ban after Channelling Messier in Slashing Incident

While Montreal Canadiens Mike Cammalleri should no doubt be suspended for slashing New York Islander Nino Niederreiter on Saturday in Montreal's 7-2 pre-season victory, there is much more to it than that.

Oct. 4, 2010 - [PRLog](#) -- There really is a first time for everything.

For instance, up until the Tampa Bay Lightning won the Stanley Cup in 2004, they were considered a perennial joke of an organization. Sure, they degraded into even more of a laughingstock after the lockout before getting back on the road to respectability, but that's beside the point.

And up until Chicago Blackhawk Marian Hossa won the Cup last season, no one knew if he had it in him to be anything but an overpaid, overrated, and oversized anti-rabbit's foot of a player. And now by the grace of fate he's only thought of as the first two.

And finally there's Montreal Canadiens Mike Cammalleri, who has always been one to play by the rules.

I mean, for one, he meets the NHL's minimum-height requirement (albeit just barely). And he isn't exactly a contender to break Tiger Williams's record for most career penalties in minutes. It's fair to assume there was nary a single fighting major among the possibly record-low 16 PIM of his last year. And, yet, the 5'9" full-grown-man-wannabe, who has not once been suspended over the course of his seven-year career in the league, faces disciplinary action after violently slashing the heel of New York Islander Nino Niederreiter on Saturday in the Habs' 7-2 blowout pre-season victory.

And all poor old innocent El Nino did? Assist on the only meaningful Islanders goal in the game to make the score 2-1. Well, actually, there's more. Niederreiter also threw an elbow in Cammalleri's direction earlier on, leading to Cammalleri's ill-advised Jason Voorheesesque attempt at retribution. It wasn't even a good impression, either... no machete or anything. He didn't even bother to borrow goalie Carey Price's mask en route to being tossed from the game and having the play reviewed by the NHL brass as a result of his ejection.

All things taken into account, Cammalleri cannot be slashing opponents left, right, and center in retaliation for what would probably amount to a legal body check on a player of normal size. He deserves at least a one-game ban to think long and hard about what he did, but therein lies the double standard of the situation. The Islanders subsequently made a mockery of the game by icing a line of goons to counter the Habs' own Legion of Doom in Lars Eller, Ryan White, and Benoit Pouliot after Tomas Plekanec made the score 5-1 in the third period.

It should be noted that the video evidence proves White couldn't fight if his dignity depended on it (which it literally did), and that Pouliot is at least allergic to the notion of exerting any kind of energy on the ice, leading to the only possible conclusion that the Islanders were trying to send some kind of message to the Habs.

After the ensuing face-off, Isle Michael Haley made a B line towards center Lars Eller and tried to start something. Soon thereafter most everyone else was getting involved as well, with Jeremy Yablonski squaring off against Habs defenseman Jaroslav Spacek, causing the most hilarious turtling display of the year thus far after Spacek's head got caught under his jersey. If that's not the most accurate depiction of a turtle ever seen in the sport, I don't know what is. What I do know is that message the Islanders were trying to send? It went something like this:

“We’re going after your top prospect, because you went after ours, but we’re only going to do it when the score is out of hand because we don’t respect Nino enough to do it right after the fact when we still have a chance. That and we’re only going to do it when you least suspect it, because we’re afraid of getting our asses handed to us otherwise.”

Forget that four of the five Islanders players have played 19 NHL games or less over their careers, despite each of them being in their mid-20s (Haley has played two, Yablonski one, and Rob Hisey none). Forget that the only veteran presence on the ice for New York was journeyman defenseman Anders Eriksson. Hell, even forget that the Islanders were forced into icing a line-up featuring only a select few NHLers (Jon Sim, Jed Ortmeyer, Dean McAmmond, Jack Hillen, Bruno Gervais, and Manny Legace, if you can call them NHLers) with the Islanders playing the rest of their team against the New Jersey Devils on the same night. What should never be forgotten is that the resulting farce of a game between the Habs and Isles in Quebec City no less gave old Nordiques fans little alternative but to cheer on the much-hated Habs, Cammalleri brain fart and all.

The Islanders made themselves look stupid on Saturday and tried their hardest to take the Habs down with them. While there is little excuse for Cammalleri’s actions, there is a rationale behind them. He shouldn’t have to risk his livelihood in a nothing game at the hands of an Islander, who, talented as he may be, likely won’t see regular-season action for the next few years. Cammalleri should get suspended, but the Islanders should get fined for trying to call their efforts on Saturday anything close to an attempt at playing hockey. If anything, it was an affront to the sport. Unfortunately, an affront to the sport that has taken place time and again under the guise of saving face. All it amounted to was an ugly display of bad sportsmanship all around.

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