

Goalie conviction draws clearer lines around hockey violence

By Jennifer Pritchett, Associate Editor



The conviction of a hockey goalie who struck a player in the face with his stick and caused serious damage sends a message that violence will not be tolerated in sport, says Toronto civil litigator [Sarah O'Connor](#).

Historically, it's been difficult to distinguish criminal conduct within the context of a physical game such as hockey, but the outcome of this case provides more clarity, she tells [AdvocateDaily.com](#).

"This was a non-contact tournament so it makes sense the goalie was charged with aggravated assault — he left the crease and intentionally hit the player," O'Connor says. "It's not as if it was a bump along the boards or a high stick. This was striking someone on a breakaway."

O'Connor, principal of [O'Connor Richardson Professional Corporation](#), says it's noteworthy the goalie was charged with aggravated assault and pleaded guilty to the lesser offence of assault causing bodily harm.

A judge sentenced the 38-year-old man to serve 30 days in jail on weekends and one year of probation, reports the [St. Catharines Standard](#).

O'Connor describes the sentence as "fairly light," and says it is possible the matter could become the subject of a lawsuit in civil court because of the victim's injuries.

The incident occurred in May 2016 during a hockey tournament in Fort Erie, says the newspaper. The goalie was celebrating his birthday and had been "binge drinking" since early that day, it says.

O'Connor says the fact the goalie was intoxicated during the game makes the offence more egregious and raises questions about the use of alcohol at tournaments.

A [video](#) shows the goalie left his crease as a player closed in on a goal, and using two hands swung his goal stick and smashed the player in the face, the article says. The player fell to the ice, bled profusely and was taken by ambulance to the hospital, it adds.

The victim underwent seven hours of surgery to rebuild his face with six plates and requires further treatment, says the newspaper. He suffered a concussion, shattered nose, fractures on both sides of his nose and a fractured eye orbital, it says.

The victim is unable to work as a carpenter and continues to suffer from headaches and difficulty sleeping, says the newspaper.

O'Connor says if there is a civil suit that proves the victim can't return to work, the goalie could be held liable for lost income, the cost to retrain, as well as pain and suffering.

She says it may be prudent for the league to consider not allowing this goalie to play in future tournaments.