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Fri, October 3, 2008

CFL takes hard line on foul playBy **JONATHAN HUNTINGTON**

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The Canadian Football League's head office is receiving mixed reviews from the Edmonton Eskimos on its new aggressive stance on foul play.

The new rule of mandatory suspensions for illegal acts that create an unnecessary risk of serious injury is applauded by Eskimos head coach Danny Maciocia.

"I have got no problems with it," he said on the disciplinary rule changes announced yesterday.

"They are looking out for the well-being of the players. There has been a lot of helmet-to-helmet hits. We need to take a look at the big picture here and make sure we don't lose anybody to a career-ending injury.

"I am very respectful of the memo."

As of yesterday, the CFL declared that spearing to the helmet or facemask - outside of the accepted standard - will bring a suspension.

HELMET TOSSING

The same goes for tossing a player's helmet in dangerous fashion and kicking, punching or kneeling a defenceless player.

Of course, the helmet-to-helmet hit delivered by Edmonton's Agustin Barrenechea to Winnipeg's Kevin Glenn last Friday gave the CFL a black eye this week.

The CFL head office felt it couldn't suspend Barrenechea this week because of previous rulings that just resulted in fines.

So, Barrenechea was slapped with a \$1,000 fine and is allowed to play in the rematch tomorrow.

But Kamau Peterson - one of the Canadian Football League Players' Association reps with the Eskimos - has an issue with the CFL head office announcing changes yesterday without agreement from the CFLPA.

"I understand where (CFL commissioner Mark Cohon) is coming from (on the changes)," said Peterson.

"I do think the league and the PA have to come to some joint mutual feeling on this that is going to work.

"As far as (the CFL head office) working unilaterally (on these announced disciplinary changes), I don't know if that is necessarily the best answer.

"A couple of years ago the NFL put that big fine and suspension system (in place) for helmet-to-helmet (hits) and it cut it down pretty quick. In light of the fine this past

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week (to Barrenechea) I think you will see defenders changing the way they hit.

"At the same time, I think the two (CFL and CFLPA) have to work in conjunction. I am not necessarily for someone calling it upon themselves to say this is how we are going to do things.

"That is why we have a players' association."

As one of two CFLPA members with the Eskimos - Shannon Garrett is the other - Peterson wasn't consulted by the CFL head office on the changes announced yesterday.

The receiver first learned of the new player safety standards just moments before meeting reporters on the Commonwealth Stadium grass field yesterday afternoon.

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