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## **Parent attacks official;**

# **HOCKEY VIOLENCE: Police say no charges will be laid against a Kitchener man who went after a linesman during a game in London last weekend**

**BYLINE:** BY JOE BELANGER

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Police say no charges will be laid against a Kitchener hockey parent whose attack on a linesman during a game in London was caught on video and posted on YouTube.

The head of a referees' association says the violence in the video on the popular website is part of a disturbing trend this year involving not just parents, but also players and coaches, and general "disrespect" of on-ice officials.

"The violence we're seeing against (officials) is on the increase," said Gary White, president of the London Referees Group, who declined to comment on the incident since it's being investigated.

"This year is one of the worst in the last three or four years -- players, parents, coaches. We're getting the same reports from everywhere. I don't know what it is, whether it's people worried about their jobs or what."

In Saturday's game at Medway Arena, officials say a Kitchener player was injured when checked from behind by a London player, which sparked a fight.

The game was between midget AA 15-year-olds -- the London Junior Knights and the Kitchener Junior Rangers.

When the referee went to announce penalties -- the London player was thrown out and suspended for three more games -- the linesman was attacked while leaving the ice.

The video, recorded and posted by someone named 'michelleveritt,' who couldn't be reached, shows an unidentified man grabbing the linesman and a struggle as other officials and people in street clothes move in to break it up.

Parents, mostly women, can be heard screaming and yelling in the background.

The linesman can be seen restraining the man, then walking away.

There was no indication of punches being thrown.

"I was very proud of the linesman and how he handled it," said Joe O'Neil of London, who sits on a committee of the Minor Hockey Alliance of Ontario.

"He's a big strong kid who played in our system and he just pinned the gentleman to the glass and calmed him down. The man then went outside afterward to cool down and when he came back, he expressed remorse and regret."

O'Neil said he expects the Alliance and the Kitchener Minor Hockey Association to take action against the parent, likely a ban from Alliance arenas for the rest of the season followed by a review.

London police went to the arena about 9 p.m. to respond to a "disturbance."

"We were called, but no charges were laid," Const. Amy Phillipio said.

"Both parties were spoken to. Everyone was satisfied with the outcome."

The attack is just another sign of the spread of violence throughout the game, said Peter Jaffe, a London anti-violence expert and hockey fan.

"You can't keep looking at these attacks as isolated incidents. They are part of a loss of respect for the players and officials and the game."

Jaffe will be among the presenters at a Violence in Hockey Symposium in London scheduled for Feb. 24.

Hockey is the only professional sport where fighting is allowed and even encouraged, he said.

"Violence is part of the culture of hockey and we have to say stop."

O'Neil said he understands that parents will get emotional when their child is lying on the ice with a serious injury.

"I think we have to put ourselves in the position of the parent whose son is lying on the ice," he said. "They snap and I can see irrational acts coming from that."

O'Neil said problems, such as verbal abuse or violence, usually occur when parents "cross the line from being a parent to becoming a fan."

"Your job as parent is to go to the arena with your child and support them, love them unconditionally whether they play poorly or not and ensure they're having fun," he said.

"If you pay to go to a professional hockey game, you can scream or cheer all you want. But you have no right to scream at a young person playing in a minor hockey league. Verbal abuse is prohibited at London arenas. It's a city bylaw. The signs are posted."