

T-Birds player suspended for attack on Golden Bears captain

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The Canada West Universities Athletic Association is looking into the incident where University of Alberta Golden Bears captain Eric Hunter left the ice at UBC's Thunderbird Arena on Friday night bloodied and concussed. UBC forward Michael Liambas punched Hunter in the head and drove him into the ice after Hunter tripped Liambas late in the second period.

Hunter wasn't penalized, but Liambas received 17 minutes in penalties, including an instigator, which carries an automatic two-game ban. Canada West executive director Val Schneider said the association is still looking at the incident.

"The individual has been suspended for two games and it's subject to further review," Schneider said, referring to Liambas.

Canada West men's hockey convener Bill Seymour said that a committee will meet to discuss whether a harsher discipline will be handed out to the Woodbridge, Ont., native. Liambas sat out UBC's regular-season finale on Saturday, but because UBC failed to qualify for the playoffs, Seymour said there is no need to rush a decision.

"I've spoken with both athletic directors, coaches and referees," said Seymour. "We've started the process and we're going to do what's best for our league."

Both coaches were unable to be reached for comment, but before any possible changes to Canada West hockey, Seymour said the conference's first concern is the health of Hunter.

Still, Seymour is very perturbed with the way he feels the media has swarmed to the idea that Canada West hockey has a violent side.

"I'm upset our game is being dragged down," Seymour said. "We're being black-balled here and I'm angry we're getting dragged all over the fucking country."

This was not the first questionable incident involving Liambas. In October 2009, the former Erie Otter was suspended for the rest of the Ontario Hockey League season after slamming then 16-year-old Kitchener Rangers defenceman Ben Fanelli into the

boards. Fanelli suffered skull and facial fractures and still has not been medically cleared to return to game action for Kitchener.

In 124 career OHL games, Liambas totalled 357 penalty minutes.

Two months later, while playing with the Bloomington Prairie Thunder of the International Hockey League, Liambas received a five-game suspension for a hit from behind on Muskegon Lumberjacks defenceman Jason Lawmaster. The hit sent Lawmaster to the hospital with a ruptured spleen.

The Bears are home to the Manitoba Bisons in conference semifinal action this weekend, but the availability of Hunter -10 goals and 13 assists in 25 games this season -to lace up his skates is uncertain.

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