

Hockey Website Promotes 'Save the NHL Night Out' on January 20th

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Jan. 4 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Fed up with the current state of the NHL? You're not alone. Thousands of traditional hockey fans are stock piling their picket signs and they have set a date to be heard. On January 20th, fans across North America are being called on to bring personalized signs, to each of the 13 NHL home games, that display their displeasure with "the new NHL." A website, www.hockeyfansunite.com, has been established to promote what is being called the "Save the NHL Night Out."

The goal of the site is quite clear, with content ranging from links to articles about declining television and attendance, polls on what might bring fans back to hockey, suggestions on how to improve current rules, and articulate columns written by contributors to the site.

According to the Night Out promoter, Matt Sigafoose, "Traditional hockey fans have had it with the state of today's game and the NHL is paying the price. [NHL Commissioner] Gary Bettman can feed the average uninformed sports fan what he wants about attendance numbers. But what is truly appalling is that Mr. Bettman would try to convince loyal hockey fans that attendance shot up after a season long strike. That is 100% impossible. It took Major League Baseball years to recover after their strike. NHL television and attendance ratings are down this year and will continue to tumble if the game continues down its current path."

Another rant. Another cry from a loyal hockey fan. Well, yes, but it doesn't stop there. While it is easy enough to complain, the hard part is offering suggestions for improvement. And hockeyfansunite.com delivers. According to Mr. Sigafoose, "The goal is to bring back a more traditional style of hockey. While Gary Bettman thought that the solution to bringing back fans was to increase scoring, he was mistaken. His grand plan of marching players to the penalty box every few minutes for yet another obstruction call disrupts the flow and emotion of the game for fans. North American hockey fans, especially American hockey fans, crave emotion and physical play in their game. These are the characteristics that make the National Football League so popular and these are the characteristics that, years ago, made the NHL popular."

"Emotion" along with "physical" are indeed themes that the site is pushing. [Hockeyfansunite.com](http://hockeyfansunite.com) is adamant that an increase in fights is not what they are looking for. According to Mr. Sigafoose, "It's simple. Pre-meditated, emotionless fights don't belong in the NHL. If players want to drop the mitts to boost their team morale or deter another player from taking cheap shots, so be it. The league absolutely needs more of that. For every one guy that gets hurt in a hockey fight, five guys get hurt for cheap shots. Players know there are rules, like the instigator, there to protect them. So they whack and hack away at other players with their stick and then turn around and dive to draw a penalty when touched. It works in the context of today's rules, yet it sickens hockey fans to watch it."

While it doesn't take long to figure out that the hockeyfansunite.com isn't particularly pleased with the NHL Commissioner's resume, they don't blame him solely. "The Todd Bertuzzi incident was a major black eye for the sport and I think it made the NHL tighten its stance on fighting," Sigafoose remarks. "What non-hockey fans don't understand is, that wasn't a straight up fight. It was a mugging. And it wasn't the mugging that drew attention; it was the end result (a broken neck and ended career for Steve Moore). It's a shame that the success of hockey has paid for such a misguided reaction."

Putting the Bertuzzi reaction aside, hockeyfansunite.com is most concerned with the new rules implemented after the strike. According to the site, there are ways to increase scoring and keep emotion and physical play in the game; the combination of the two is what will ultimately bring back the average hockey fan.

According to Sigafoose, the answer isn't too difficult. "If Mr. Bettman wants to fill seats and boost television ratings, he has to truly mean it when he says things like the league needs rivalries. His actions, to this point, don't support his words. He suspends players for sticking up for their teammates. He has created rules that have killed the emotion in the game. Bring back the emotion, the passion, and the physical play that once defined hockey and he will fill those empty seats. The research and anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. He just has to listen to those that pay the bills... the NHL fans."

To learn more about January 20th's Save the NHL Night Out, visit www.hockeyfansunite.com.

Text provided by the news source.

News issued by: Hockeyfansunite.com

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Original Story ID: (2381) :: 2007-01-0104-005

Original Keywords: Hockeyfansunite, Save the NHL Night Out, loyal hockey fan, improve the current state of hockey, Matt Sigafoose, hockey website, the new NHL, picket signs Hockeyfansunite.com