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[Blackhawks prepare for Avery the 'pest'](#)

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*Bruce Bennett/Getty Images*The Blackhawks will try not to let Sean Avery entice them into any retaliation penalties.

By JESSE ROGERS

“The ultimate pest.”

It's the first thing that came to Colin Fraser's mind when the name Sean Avery was uttered in the Blackhawks'

dressing room after Wednesday morning's skate. Avery and his act hit the United Center on Wednesday evening when the Hawks take on the New York Rangers for the only time this season.

Avery is the reigning agitator in the league, and while he's toned down his off-ice antics, not much has changed on the ice.

"He yaps a lot," Hawks winger Dustin Byfuglien said. "You just can't let it bother you. Maybe I'll give him a whack or two."

Byfuglien and his new line mates are sure to see plenty of Avery as he'll skate on the Rangers top line with Vinny Prospal and the leading goal scorer in the NHL, Marion Gaborik. John Madden centers that line and has seen plenty of Avery from his days in the Eastern Conference.

"Agitator," is the way Madden is quick to describe him. "He's going to try and get under your skin, so you have to be very aware out there. Obviously, when you have seen it before, over time, it does get a little easier to deal with. That's just human nature, but at times, he's still able to do that job. You just can't let him be the focus of the game."

Madden was on the ice for the Devils in the playoffs a couple years ago, when Avery famously tried to "face guard" Martin Brodeur during a Rangers 5-on-3 power play. Madden had no idea what was going on behind him as Avery was standing in front of Brodeur, with his back to the play, and waving his stick furiously in front of Brodeur's face. There was nothing in the rule book, at that moment, which prevented Avery from using such a tactic to "screen" the goaltender.

Madden found out what was going on when he returned to the bench and then saw the replays. "I felt like there was no place for it in hockey. But It was well within the rules ... until they changed them."

The next day, the league said screening a goalie in that way would be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and would result in a penalty. It became known as the "Sean Avery Rule." It tells you exactly what he is capable of. Even though Madden has seen him the most, all the Hawks are aware of his style on the ice, but Patrick Sharp wants to remind people he can play the game as well.

"He's a good player," Sharp said. "He'll be chirping out there and try to get under a guy's skin. We have to keep a level head and not let him suck us into any bad penalties. I think what people don't talk about is he can play the game as well, so we're not worried about the stuff he does between the whistles. We're just going to play the game and play it the right way."

Joel Quenneville simplified the whole strategy.

"You want to be smart and play hard against him, but at the same time you have to be careful of retaliation penalties," Quenneville said.

NOTES:

- Marian Gaborik has 21 goals for New York. No other Ranger has more than six. Quenneville said expect Brent Seabrook and Duncan Keith to be on the ice opposite Gaborik.
- Cristobal Huet will start for the Hawks.
- Duncan Keith did not participate in the morning skate on Wednesday but Quenneville said he is fine and will play in the game. Keith played a season high 31:24 in Pittsburgh on Saturday.
- **The Chicago Blackhawks and right wing Patrick Kane will host a toy drive tonight at the United Center to support the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program, Dreams for Kids and the NorthShore University HealthSystem. Fans that bring an unwrapped toy to drop-off locations at Gates 2, 3, 6 and 7 will be entered into a raffle to win an autographed item by Kane.**