

NHL Teams Shun Pride Jerseys, But for 'Other' Reasons

The Chicago Blackhawks have joined a cluster of NHL teams refusing to wear LGBT-themed jerseys during the 2023 season, citing security and safety concerns for Russian players.

The Blackhawks are the fourth team to forego the jerseys, according to the New York Post. The other teams are the New York Rangers, the New York Islanders and the Minnesota Wild. It was not the players but the front office that made the decision to nix the jerseys, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

LGBT-themed jerseys have been a contentious topic since the beginning of the year, when Philadelphia Flyers defenseman Ivan Provorov refused to participate in his team's Pride night. The 26-year-old athlete cited his Russian Orthodox religion as the reason for his boycott.

"I respect everybody and I respect everybody's choices," he said at the time. "My choice is to stay true to myself and my religion. That's all I'm going to say."

 Additionally, San Jose Sharks goalie James Reimer refused to wear an LGBT-themed jersey, citing his Christian beliefs. In a statement, he explained he wouldn't wear the jersey because of his "personal convictions, which are based on the Bible, the highest authority in my life."

"For all 13 years of my NHL career, I have been a Christian—not just in title, but in how I choose to live my life daily," he said. "I have a personal faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for my sins and, in response, asks me to love everyone and follow Him."

Mark Reimer posted this on Facebook about his brother's choice to forego wearing a pride jersey on the ice:

“Much has been made about James Reimer’s decision to not give approval to those who practice sin. I would like to highlight that his statement is an echo of Galatians 2:20: ‘I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’ How can a man stand against the angry mobs of this world? By having been crucified to this world and being made alive in Christ. He is a man bought by the blood of Jesus. The angry mob crying out for his blood didn’t die for his sins. Only Jesus did. The wrath of man is but for a moment, but the reward of heaven is for eternity. ‘And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith’” (1 John 5:4).

Evangelist Franklin Graham said on Facebook: “The National Hockey League’s San Jose Sharks announced they were hosting an LGBTQ Pride Night at their Saturday night game—but their goalie James Reimer said he wouldn’t be wearing their pride-themed warm up jersey. He said, ‘I am choosing not to endorse something that is counter to my personal convictions which are based on the Bible, the highest authority in my life.’ I appreciate that he is not afraid to stand with his Christian convictions and won’t let an agenda he doesn’t agree with be forced on him. What would you do?”

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