Dear Roger Goodell,

These past two weeks have been difficult for us both. The fallout from the Ray Rice debacle has forced you into the uncomfortable juggling act of (on the one hand,) needing to defend the integrity of the league's handling of these types of cases, while (on the other hand,) needing to strongly assert a humanistic position against domestic violence. And while you struggle to perform this very public juggling act, I, as a fan, and as someone who teaches young adults about professional football, have been placed in a similarly uncomfortable situation: trying to reconcile my appreciation for the game's charisma, with my outright disgust of the league's recent culture of ambivalence toward domestic violence.

I'm writing to politely ask you to quit the juggling act. Please dispense with your interests in defending the league, and focus your efforts squarely on making football something that all people --all men, women, and children-- can take pride in.

I'm an instructor at Indiana University, and I teach a statistics course where students perform analyses using datasets of football stats. But in these past two weeks, I've been embarrassed to have any association with NFL football. I've been embarrassed to showcase the performance of NFL players, teaching young men and women about their on-field successes, when considering the culture of ethical improvidence that seems to have permeated the league. I've been embarrassed because it's not merely isolated instances or a few bad apples; the problem is systemic. The forgiveness that's been eagerly granted to players who've commit despicable acts (and the disproportionate policing of far less consequential matters) is deeply flawed. This must change.

The NFL has to be held to a higher ethical standard. You have successfully flooded our TV channels, or restaurants, our childrens' playgrounds, and (partly by my doing,) our classrooms with NFL capital. As you (hopefully) are learning from the current media firestorm, this exposure comes with a responsibility that the league doesn't seem to have fully accepted. I expect that the player who is featured on our billboards, who is applauded in my classroom, and whose jersey is worn by my son and daughter will not be an abuser, a batterer, a racist, a criminal, or a monster. This is not unreasonable—in fact, it's the *least* that an NFL fan might expect.

The league needs a zero-tolerance policy. As an academic, please allow me to encourage you to do your research: Domestic violence is not a one-time slip-up. There is no clear evidence that any batterer treatment programs reduce recidivism. Currently the best known prevention for domestic violence is heavy monitoring and extremely harsh consequences. Please quit the charade: there is no reasonable defense for anything other than zero-tolerance here. The league will find far more success by accepting this truth, than by continuing to play a disgusting balancing act.

I hope that you can help to protect our pastime. Please take this opportunity to make the NFL an organization that commits itself to a culture of, at minimum, human decency. If it cannot achieve this very small goal, it is not worth watching.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Motz  
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