

National Football League 2016

Chair:
Jonathan Glustein

Vice Chairs:
Joseph Kates Rose
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NOVEMBER 10-13, 2016 | MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC



National Football League 2016

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the hardest hitting committee at SSUNS. Get ready - it's going to be four straight days of Sunday night football. My name is Jonathan Glustein, and I will be your Chair for the weekend. I am a third year Economics and Political Science student from Toronto, and I am an avid football fan. In this committee, we will be discussing pertinent issues facing the league today, of which there are many: league expansion, drugs and alcohol policy, player health and ticket sales. Team delegates will be given autonomy over their own team, including rosters, and executives will have significant ability to shape their portfolio. So if you have a better idea for the direction of the league than Roger Goodell (and at this point almost anyone does) then be prepared to bring your A-game on November 10th. This is the best committee in the *league*, and we're looking forward to sharing it with you. Joining me on the committee are vice-chairs Joseph Kates Rose and Daniel Cohen, who are both excited to meet you and see what ideas bright young minds have for the future of football.

Until you touchdown in Montreal,

Jonathan Glustein



Topic 1: Expansion

The NFL is the world's richest sports league, with \$12 billion in revenue last year, up 16% from the previous year.¹ While there are already 32 NFL franchises, the league is rife with expansion opportunities. It is likely the NFL will expand to 34 teams or more in the next few years. Delegates will discuss both the logistics of expansion and potential targets. Team delegates will have an important role in ensuring expansion teams do not infringe on their market access, and professional delegates will need to prove their expansion selections will be economically successful. Delegates will also have to consider whether to expand within the United States or internationally, or some combination of the two.

International Opportunities

The NFL International Series has been extremely successful thus far in London, England, with Wembley Stadium being the exclusive venue host. Since 2007, there has been at least one NFL game played in London every year, and in 2014 and 2015 three games were played per year at Wembley. Games almost always sell out at the stadium, with an average of 83,523 spectators attending the NFL International Series in 2015.² If London were to maintain these numbers with a permanent franchise, it would place them

¹ Isadore, Chris. "NFL Revenue: Here Comes Another Record Season." CNNMoney. Cable News Network, 10 Sept. 2015. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

² Kerr-Dineen, Luke. "London Proved Once Again That It Really Wants an NFL Team." USA Today. Gannett, 1 Nov. 2015. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

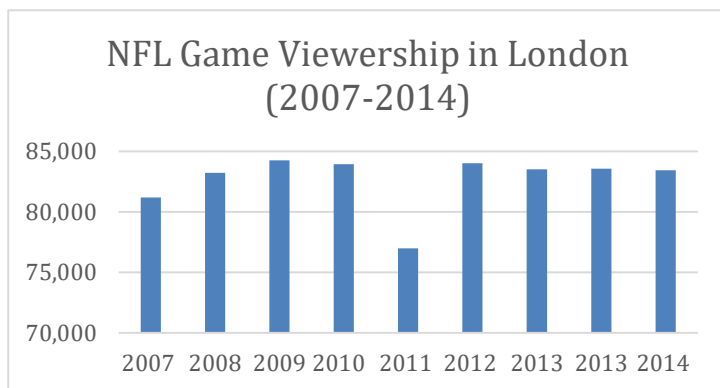


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as having the second-highest average attendance in the league, behind only the Dallas

Figure 1: Chart of Results of NFL Games in London

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2007 | 81,176 (Giants 13-10 Dolphins) |
| 2008 | 83,226 (Chargers 32-37 Saints) |
| 2009 | 84,254 (Patriots 35-7 Buccaneers) |
| 2010 | 83,941 (Broncos 16-24 49ers) |
| 2011 | 76,981 (Bears 24-18 Buccaneers) |
| 2012 | 84,004 (Patriots 45-7 Rams) |
| 2013 | 83,518 (Steelers 27-34 Vikings) |
| 2013 | 83,559 (49ers 42-10 Jaguars) |
| 2014 | 83,436 (Dolphins 38-14 Raiders) |



Cowboys. Furthermore, due to better economic conditions, NFL tickets in London also sell

for more than many NFL franchises, with the three games in 2014 producing \$32 million in ticket revenue.³ The average ticket price at Wembley is \$127, whereas the average ticket league-wide is \$84.43⁴. However, there are of course many challenges to putting an NFL franchise in London. The city is 3,459 miles away from the US mainland, meaning

athletes need time to recover from the flight and jet lag. Currently, the NFL remedies this problem by giving teams playing in the International Series a “bye” week immediately following their game at Wembley. However, if London were to receive a team and the bye was

to be preserved, the season would need to be extended by several weeks. A potential solution is for a London team to play in four-game blocks, spending four weeks in the US

³ Barrabi, Thomas. "NFL London Ticket Sales: \$32M Revenue From Wembley Stadium Sellout Crowds, Report Says." International Business Times. IBT, 10 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

⁴ Greenberg, Jon. "2014 NFL Cost Index." Factbook. TeamMarketing, 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

and then four weeks in London, and repeating. The obvious candidate for a move to London would be the Jacksonville Jaguars, who are attracting a full 25,000 less people to their games than the University of Florida team.⁵

Mexico City

In 2016, the NFL will play a game at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City, another potential expansion venue.⁶ The last time the NFL was in Mexico City was 2005, when 103,467 people attended the first non-US regular season game between the Arizona Cardinals and San Francisco 49ers. This game set the attendance record league-wide until 2009.⁷ In addition, the furthest NFL team from Mexico City is only a 5-hour flight away, compared to an 11 hour one from London. A Google search trend analysis revealed that Mexico City has the 7th-most NFL fans of any metropolitan area in the world - compared to Toronto at 15 and London at 33. Through a similar method, it was estimated that Mexico City has an estimated 1,490,000 fans, more than enough to fill stadiums for games and to build a large

| METRO AREA | COUNTRY | METRO POP. | PERCENTAGE NFL FANS | ESTIMATED NFL FAN BASE |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| New York | USA | 20,660,000 | 26% | 5,450,000 |
| Los Angeles | USA | 15,250,000 | 24 | 3,660,000 |
| Chicago | USA | 9,240,000 | 29 | 2,700,000 |
| Philadelphia | USA | 5,530,000 | 34 | 1,860,000 |
| Dallas | USA | 6,080,000 | 28 | 1,700,000 |
| Houston | USA | 5,570,000 | 28 | 1,560,000 |
| Mexico City | Mexico | 20,300,000 | 7 | 1,490,000 |
| Miami | USA | 5,820,000 | 24 | 1,420,000 |
| Washington, D.C. | USA | 4,790,000 | 29 | 1,380,000 |
| Phoenix | USA | 4,170,000 | 33 | 1,370,000 |
| Atlanta | USA | 4,850,000 | 26 | 1,260,000 |
| Boston | USA | 4,500,000 | 28 | 1,260,000 |
| SF-Oakland-San Jose | USA | 6,000,000 | 20 | 1,200,000 |
| San Diego | USA | 3,080,000 | 34 | 1,030,000 |
| Toronto | Canada | 6,350,000 | 16 | 990,000 |
| Seattle | USA | 3,210,000 | 29 | 940,000 |
| Denver | USA | 2,540,000 | 34 | 870,000 |
| Baltimore | USA | 2,260,000 | 38 | 850,000 |
| Minneapolis | USA | 2,680,000 | 32 | 850,000 |
| Detroit | USA | 3,740,000 | 22 | 840,000 |
| Tampa | USA | 2,590,000 | 25 | 650,000 |
| Las Vegas | USA | 2,030,000 | 31 | 630,000 |
| St. Louis | USA | 2,190,000 | 25 | 540,000 |
| Cleveland | USA | 1,770,000 | 28 | 500,000 |
| Pittsburgh | USA | 1,740,000 | 29 | 500,000 |
| Orlando | USA | 1,980,000 | 25 | 490,000 |
| Green Bay-Milwaukee | USA | 1,600,000 | 30 | 490,000 |
| Sacramento | USA | 1,840,000 | 25 | 460,000 |
| Cincinnati | USA | 1,650,000 | 28 | 460,000 |
| Virginia Beach-Norfolk | USA | 1,490,000 | 30 | 440,000 |
| San Antonio | USA | 1,880,000 | 23 | 440,000 |
| Indianapolis | USA | 1,560,000 | 27 | 420,000 |
| London | England | 10,150,000 | 4 | 410,000 |
| Charlotte | USA | 1,310,000 | 31 | 410,000 |
| Kansas City | USA | 1,580,000 | 24 | 380,000 |
| Austin | USA | 1,490,000 | 24 | 360,000 |
| Columbus | USA | 1,420,000 | 24 | 330,000 |
| Portland | USA | 1,960,000 | 16 | 310,000 |
| Buffalo | USA | 930,000 | 33 | 310,000 |
| New Orleans | USA | 910,000 | 32 | 290,000 |
| Jacksonville | USA | 1,140,000 | 26 | 290,000 |
| Montreal | Canada | 3,470,000 | 8 | 280,000 |
| Vancouver | Canada | 2,180,000 | 13 | 270,000 |
| Oklahoma City | USA | 1,260,000 | 21 | 270,000 |
| Honolulu | USA | 830,000 | 28 | 230,000 |
| Nashville | USA | 1,030,000 | 22 | 230,000 |
| Memphis | USA | 1,100,000 | 20 | 220,000 |
| Paris | France | 10,980,000 | 1 | 100,000 |
| San Juan | Puerto Rico | 2,170,000 | 4 | 80,000 |
| Manchester | England | 2,560,000 | 3 | 70,000 |
| Essen-Dusseldorf | Germany | 6,770,000 | 1 | 60,000 |
| Madrid | Spain | 6,180,000 | 1 | 50,000 |
| U.S. market without NFL team | | | | |
| International market without NFL team | | | | |

Figure 2: Metro Areas By Estimated Fan Number

⁵ Perry, Alex. "Three Problems with a London NFL Franchise." ESPN.co.uk. ESPN, 10 Oct. 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

⁶ "NFL International Series." NFL.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

⁷ Parolin, John. "Remembering past Games outside the U.S." ESPN. ESPN, 25 Sept. 2013. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

Where There Are NFL Fans Up For Grabs

Estimated fans by metro area, expansion and relocation markets

| METRO | TOTAL NFL FAN BASE | FANS FOR MOST POPULAR EXISTING TEAMS (IN THOUSANDS) | UNALLOCATED FANS |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|------------------|
| Los Angeles | 3,660,000 | OAK (590), SD (590), DAL (490) | 1,990,000 |
| Mexico City | 1,490,000 | DAL (130), PIT (130), DEN (80) | 1,150,000 |
| Toronto | 990,000 | DAL (90), BUF (50), DET (40) | 810,000 |
| Las Vegas | 630,000 | DAL (90), OAK (50), SF (50) | 440,000 |
| London | 410,000 | PIT (30), NE (30), DAL (30) | 320,000 |
| Orlando | 490,000 | MIA (80), TB (60), DAL (50) | 300,000 |
| Montreal | 280,000 | NE (30), BUF (10), DAL (10) | 230,000 |
| Honolulu | 230,000 | SF (20), DAL (20), SEA (20) | 170,000 |
| Virginia Beach | 440,000 | WAS (130), DAL (80), PIT (70) | 160,000 |
| Portland | 310,000 | SEA (100), SF (30), DEN (30) | 150,000 |
| Vancouver | 270,000 | SEA (100), NE (30), DAL (10) | 130,000 |
| Memphis | 220,000 | DAL (50), TEN (30), PIT (20) | 120,000 |
| Oklahoma City | 270,000 | DAL (120), NO (30), DEN (30) | 90,000 |
| Paris | 100,000 | NO (10), DAL (10), NYG (<10) | 80,000 |
| San Juan | 80,000 | NYG (<10), GB (<10), DAL (<10) | 80,000 |
| San Antonio | 440,000 | DAL (270), HOU (60), NO (50) | 60,000 |
| Sacramento | 460,000 | SF (210), OAK (130), DAL (60) | 60,000 |
| Essen-Dusseldorf | 60,000 | DAL (<10), NYG (<10), NE (<10) | 60,000 |
| Madrid | 50,000 | MIA (<10), DAL (<10), NE (<10) | 50,000 |
| Austin | 360,000 | DAL (200), HOU (80), NO (40) | 40,000 |
| Manchester | 70,000 | PIT (10), NE (10), DAL (10) | 40,000 |
| Columbus | 330,000 | CLE (130), PIT (90), CIN (80) | 30,000 |
| International market without NFL team | | | |

FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

SOURCE: DEMOGRAPHIA, GOOGLE TRENDS

Figure 3: Metro Area By Unallocated Fan

base of support.⁸ Additionally, of all expansion opportunities available, Mexico City has the most unaligned fans, with about 1,150,000 fans without an existing allegiance to a franchise. The most popular ones in Mexico City are Dallas (130,000 fans) Pittsburgh (130,000 fans) and Denver (80,000 fans).⁹ The GDP per capita in Mexico City area is \$30,000, and in the city proper that number rises to \$50,000, putting it on a comparable economic level with many US cities.¹⁰ Potential drawbacks include a language barrier, cultural differences, and security

concerns.

Toronto

Toronto is one of the fastest growing cities in North America. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA)'s population is projected to increase by 42.9%, or over 2.8 million,

⁸ Silver, Nate. "The NFL Should Expand To London. But First: Canada, Mexico And LA." FiveThirtyEight. N.p., 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Mexico City." Princeton University. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.



by the year 2041.¹¹ The city has a higher percentage of NFL fans – 16% – than other potential expansion markets, and the city has already been exposed to football through both the Canadian Football League and the Bills Toronto Series, where the Buffalo Bills played a series of regular season games in Toronto, a move which was not met with much commercial success. Rogers Communications paid \$78 million for the original contract in 2006, a sum larger than the Buffalo Bill's entire operation income that year.¹² The Toronto games only sold out twice however, and the series itself was cancelled midway into the contract. Prices were high, averaging C\$183 per ticket, and demand was low. Before the first game in the series, workers sprinted around the Rogers Centre in Toronto handing out free tickets, some of which had a value of \$255.¹³ A bad Canadian Dollar also means an expansion would be more expensive for Canadians. Toronto also does not have a stadium suitable for an NFL team.¹⁴ Despite all this, the city remains an attractive option due to a large corporate presence and a history as a strong sports city.

Domestic Options

Other options for national expansion include Salt Lake City, Oklahoma City, Portland, Las Vegas and San Antonio, all large cities that have supported big-market

¹¹ "Ontario Population Projections Update, 2015–2041." Ministry of Finance. Government of Ontario, Spring 2016. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

¹² Kryk, John. "4 Reasons the Buffalo Bills Sacked Toronto Series." *Torontosun.com*. The Toronto Sun, 3 Dec. 2014. Web. 7 Sept. 2016.

¹³ Fitz-Gerald, Sean. "Toronto's Dream of Landing NFL Fading Fast." *Thestar.com*. Toronto Star, 08 Jan. 2016. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.



college football teams.¹⁵ Delegates are invited to conduct their own research into market opportunities presented by these cities.

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¹⁵ "Top 10 Cities for NFL Expansion." @NFLRT. NFLRT, 05 Mar. 2016. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.



Silver, Nate. "The NFL Should Expand To London. But First: Canada, Mexico And LA." FiveThirtyEight. N.p., 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2016.

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Topic 2: Concussions and Head Safety

Introduction

Head safety has become an increasingly important issue facing the NFL, affecting the league in a variety of ways. Concussions are now considered a form of mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). There is currently a growing focus on mTBI and its long-term effects aimed at full contact sports such as American football and hockey, where head contact is frequent, and concussions have been historically common. Although research is still being conducted, concussions have already been shown to have a variety of short-term and long-term health effects, many of which can be quite severe. While concussions are not a recent phenomenon, they have only recently been taken seriously as an important aspect of player safety. This issue has grown in significance such that it is now having direct affects on sport.

In regards to the NFL specifically, the issue of head safety, concussions, and player safety is have diverse affects. The present concern has financial, image, and gameplay ramifications. The financial costs to the NFL of mTBI and concussions are widespread.



The NFL has been the target of litigation, while the damage to the league's image has the potential to lead to long-term financial loss. In an effort to combat this, the NFL has begun a policy of rule changes aimed at reducing concussion rates, and limiting the opportunity for concussed players to be exposed to another head injury. However, many are still calling for more changes, and it is hard to say whether or not the NFL has done enough, and on an appropriate timeframe. In the meantime, the continued focus on concussions has made head safety one of the most important issues facing the NFL as a corporation.

History and Timeline of Events

It should be noted that concussions are not a recent phenomenon, and that only the public attention on them is. Many sources have put together timelines of important events in this ongoing saga. PBS, in their compilation and production of the documentary *League of Denial* has put together one of the most complete timelines. The following timeline is a concise version drawing from mainly from the PBS timeline, a link to which can be found [here](#).¹⁶

1994 - Then commissioner Paul Tagliabue creates the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MTBI) committee. NY Jets team doctor Elliot Pellman, who has no experience with the brain, is appointed chair.

Star Quarterback Troy Aikman is concussed and must spend a night in hospital.

¹⁶ Ezell, Lauren. "Timeline: The NFL's Concussion Crisis." PBS. October 8, 2013. Accessed June 05, 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sports/league-of-denial/timeline-the-nfls-concussion-crisis/>.



Commissioner Tagliabue dismisses concussions as an issue.

1997 - The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) states repetitive concussions may lead to brain damage, suggests return-to-play guidelines

1999 - Steve Young is concussed, ending his career.

Former player Mike Webster claims football led to his dementia; files a disability application with the NFL. The application is accepted fully.

Dr. Pellman says serious brain injuries are rare in the NFL.

2000 - Researchers at the AAN present findings that concussions lead to neurological problems.

MTBI members criticize the AAN's return-to-play guidelines.

2002 - Dr. Bennet Omalu discovers evidence of CTE in Mike Webster's brain.

This is the first observation of CTE in the brain of a football player.

2003 - The MTBI committee begins publishing papers in major neuroscience journals.

2004 - MTBI publishes controversial articles in major journals.

2005 - Dr. Omalu publishes his results showing CTE in the brain of Webster.

A study done by Dr. Kevin Guskiewicz suggests dementia symptoms could be tied to football and concussive events.

2006 - Dr. Omalu publishes a study on the brain of former player Terry Long, also finding CTE.

The MTBI calls for the retraction of Dr. Omalu's papers.



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It should be noted that neither player, Terry Long or Mike Webster, were ever diagnosed with concussions while playing.

2007 - More research by Dr. Guskiewicz suggests increased risk of depression in concussion sufferers.

Dr. Pellman resigns. Dr. Ira Casson, and Dr. David Viano replace him.

The NFL hosts its first concussion summit.

2009 - Dr. Ann McKee presents CTE cases in football to the MTBI committee.

A NFL-funded study finds former players are 19x more likely to develop Alzheimer's and dementia. The NFL criticizes the study.

Drs. Casson and Viano resign as heads of the MTBI.

The MTBI is renamed the Head, Neck, and Spine Committee. Dr. H. Hunt Batjer and Dr. Richard G. Ellenbogen are co-chairs. Dr. Guskiewicz is added as a member.

The NFL admits a correlation between concussions and long-term problems.

2010 - The league begins warning players of the risk from concussions.

The NFL donates large sums of money to brain trauma research.

Linebacker James Harrison is fined for what is deemed an illegal hit. The NFL still goes on to sell pictures of this hit on their website.

2011 - Former player Dave Duerson commits suicide, asking that his brain be studied. He is diagnosed with CTE.

The NFL changes its kick off rules in the hopes of reducing injury.



Former player Ray Easterling files a class-action lawsuit against the NFL.

The suit contends the league misled players.

2012 - Former players Ray Easterling and Junior Seau commit suicide; both will be diagnosed with CTE.

The NFL begins funding the Heads Up Football program, a youth concussion awareness initiative.

Dr. McKee's research is criticized by FIFA.

2013 - The NFL Players Association (NFLPA) commits \$100 million towards a study on health issues in football players.

The league implements new concussion safety measures.

The NFL denies wrongdoing in the ongoing legal case against it.

The leaguer announces more rule changes.

The NFL agrees to a settlement in the case with the former players.

However, the judge denies the settlement, and the case continues.

2015 - Linebacker Chris Borland retires in his prime, the first player to do for head safety reasons.

Concussions and CTE

As defined by the Mayo Clinic, “a concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way your brain functions [...] Concussions are common, particularly if you play a



contact sport.”¹⁷ A concussion is more commonly referred to as a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) within the scientific community. mTBI have varying degrees of with different short and long-term effects. There are many unknowns with regards to mTBI, and accurate diagnosis has proven difficult. However, concussions are an active area of current research.¹⁸ This research aims to improve understanding of mTBI, while also aiding diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. The specific fear with concussions is permanent long-term health effects, such as depression or CTE.

CTE, or Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), is a progressive neurodegenerative disease. The disease was first discovered in boxing, and is the result of repetitive cranial trauma.¹⁹ More recently, it has been found in football players and other athletes who sustain regular head injuries. CTE results in memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, depression, and finally, dementia.²⁰ CTE has been found in 76 of the 79 former players’ brains in which it was looked for²¹ - though

¹⁷ Mayo Clinic Staff. "Concussion - Definition." Mayo Clinic. April 2, 2014. Accessed May 21, 2016. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/concussion/basics/definition/con-20019272>.

¹⁸ Mayo Clinic Staff. "Concussion: Mayo's Multidisciplinary Approach." Mayo Clinic. Accessed May 22, 2016. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/medical-professionals/clinical-updates/neurosciences/multidisciplinary-approach-benefits-research-care-patients-concussion>.

¹⁹ "What Is CTE?" CTE Center. Accessed June 4, 2016. <http://www.bu.edu/cte/about/what-is-cte/>.

²⁰ Mayo Clinic Staff. "Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy." Mayo Clinic. April 20, 2016. Accessed May 22, 2016. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-traumatic-encephalopathy/basics/symptoms/con-20113581>.

²¹ Breslow, Jason M. "76 of 79 Deceased NFL Players Found to Have Brain Disease." PBS. September 30, 2014. Accessed May 23, 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/76-of-79-deceased-nfl-players-found-to-have-brain-disease/>.



it should be noted that there is an extreme selection bias in this statistic, as those brains that are donated are much more likely to belong to people who have noticed symptoms, and thus will test positive for CTE. The understanding of this disorder is still growing, but at this point it can confidently be stated that concussive impacts lead to CTE development.

Lawsuits

A class action lawsuit, filed by former player Ray Easterling in 2011, was settled in 2015. The lawsuit contended that the NFL had wilfully misled the players about the long-term health impacts of head injuries.²² The case had been settled at least once before, with the judge denying the settlement on financial grounds. At its peak, more than 5 000 players were a part of the litigation. At the time of settlement, over 200 players had left the case, to keep open the option of further litigation.²³

The final settlement is valued at \$765 million dollars. The NFL also is covering the complete legal costs of the plaintiffs in the case. A rough breakdown of the settlement goes as follows: \$675 million will be paid to former players, and sometimes families, who have suffered, or suffered as a result of cognitive injuries. Payments will be different based on the degree or severity of cognitive damage. As well, up to \$75 million will be placed

²² Bandini, Paolo. "NFL Concussion Lawsuits Explained." The Guardian, August 29, 2013. Accessed June 4, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2013/aug/29/nfl-concussions-lawsuit-explained>.

²³ Almasy, Steve, and Jill Martin. "Judge Approves NFL Concussion Lawsuit Settlement." CNN. April 22, 2015. Accessed May 26, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/22/us/nfl-concussion-lawsuit-settlement/>.



towards medical testing. The remaining funds will be split between research, education, and covering fees involved in paying out the settlement. It should be noted that the settlement does not involve an admission of guilt, nor does it entail an apology on behalf of the NFL.

More information on the litigation can be found [here](#), and more information on the settlement [here](#).

Notable Cases

As with many instances of issues in sport, the concern was originally raised due to several notable cases involving either extreme circumstances or star players. A list of a few of the most notable and newsworthy cases can be found below:

- Troy Aikman is concussed midgame in 1994 and taken to hospital. Afterwards, Aikman tells reporters he has no memory of ever playing in the game at all. At his eventual retirement, Aikman cites the dangers of concussions.
- Steve Young is knocked out during a game in 1999. He lies unconscious on the field for an extended period of time. This would be the last game Steve Young plays in the NFL.
- Mike Webster, a former player, claims that football gave him dementia. The NFL grants him full disability pay. Upon his death, he becomes the first NFL player to have CTE diagnosed.



- College player Owen Thomas is diagnosed with CTE. Thomas had never played in the NFL, nor had he been diagnosed with a concussion. The diagnosis causes concern over the effects of multiple subconcussive impacts.
- Dave Duerson, another former player, commits suicide by shooting himself in the chest. In his suicide note, he requests that his brain be studied. He is diagnosed with CTE.
- Ray Easterling, the former player who brought the class-action lawsuit against the NFL, commits suicide. He is diagnosed with CTE.
- Junior Seau, a well-known and well-liked player, two years post retirement, commits suicide. He is diagnosed with CTE. His family has pulled out of the NFL's settlement.

Rules Changes and Public Image

In light of the continuing concussion problem, the NFL has begun a series of changes in an effort to make the game safer. The league has begun to implement new rules and safety protocols. The NFL does have a history of rule changes, and a full list of major contact and safety-based changes can be found [here](#).

The main focus of a majority of these rules is on the idea of defenseless players. Defenseless players are players who, in their execution of their role or play, are unable to adequately defend themselves from being hit. The rules forbid contact to the head of a defenseless player. As well, rule changes have been made to forbid hits using one's helmet



as a primary point of contact. Finally, the NFL has introduced concussion and return to play protocols, with a renewed focus on making it difficult for concussed players to return to danger.²⁴ This is all an effort to reduce the potential for repetitive head trauma.

The effort to reduce the danger to players is made challenging by the cultural, and marketable aspect of the “big hit” present in football. Large, violent hits are a key part of football’s advertising strategy, and one the league does not want to lose. Simultaneously, the NFL understands the financial risks inherent in football having an unsafe image and reputation. Specifically of concern is the idea that football participation rates will decrease as parents note the inherent dangers in letting their children play. It is thought that the reduced participation would lead to a decreased talent pool and market for the NFL. The question of whether football is safe has been brought to national attention by influential public comments. Both Barack Obama and LeBron James have made public statements about letting their children play football.²⁵ The NFL is also aware of its image in regards to its stance on this issue. As evidence mounts, the NFL has been forced to concede certain points. Recently, a representative of the NFL affirmed that there is a clear link between football and neurodegenerative disorders.²⁶ The NFL’s attitude in this saga has been

²⁴ NFL. "2015 NFL INJURY REPORT POLICY." NFL Operations. August 14, 2015. Accessed May 26, 2016. <http://operations.nfl.com/updates/football-ops/2015-nfl-injury-report-policy/>.

²⁵ Dockterman, Eliana. "LeBron James Explains Why He Won't Let His Kids Play Football." Time, November 13, 2014. Accessed May 27, 2016. <http://time.com/3584387/lebron-james-youth-sports-football/>.

²⁶ Belson, Ken, and Alan Schwarz. "N.F.L. Shifts on Concussions, and Game May Never Be the Same." New York Times, March 15, 2016. Accessed June 28, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/sports/nfl-concussions-cte-football-jeff-miller.html>.



compared to that of tobacco companies who long denied the connections with cancer. This is a comparison that the NFL wholly denies and rejects.²⁷ The NFL is seeking to maintain a balance between an entertaining game that can be sold to fans, while also maintaining the image as an attractive, national pastime. As delegates in this committee, it is your task to ensure that the NFL's status as a safe league is restored, whether by implementing new rules, new advertising campaigns or other methods. The league's reputation lies within your hands.

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²⁷ National Football League. "NFL Statement on New York Times' Concussion Research Story." NFL. March 24, 2016. Accessed June 28, 2016. <http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000647297/article/nfl-statement-on-new-york-times-concussion-research-story>.



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Topic 3: Players and Criminal Offences

History

Over the past few years, there has been an increased spotlight on the National Football League and how they handle players who have committed criminal offences. Many believe that the league is not adequately dealing with offenders and that they should take a stronger stance on offences committed by players. Since 2000 there has been 713 arrests of NFL players, 85 of which have been domestic violence offences²⁸. Domestic violence in the league has recently taken the spotlight in 2014 when then-star Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice was seen in a video assaulting his then-girlfriend and current wife Janay Palmer in a hotel elevator. Rice was initially only suspended for two games before being suspended from the league indefinitely with Commissioner Roger Goodell claiming that he had not seen the entirety of the assault video and was not aware of the whole situation. Goodell admitted after that the league had mishandled the case and implemented a new domestic violence policy, with the first offence leading to a six game ban without pay and the second offence leading to a lifetime ban from the league itself²⁹, with the option to petition and be reinstated after one year.

²⁸ Martinez, Michael, and Priscilla Riojas. "NFL's past Penalties for Domestic Violence 'a Different Story'" CNN. Accessed August 01, 2016.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/09/us/nfl-players-domestic-violence-accusations/>.

²⁹ Sharp, Katie. "NFL Announces New Domestic Violence Policy." SBNation.com. 2014. Accessed September 01, 2016. <http://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2014/8/28/6079465/nfl-announces-new-domestic-violence-policy>.



Domestic Violence in the League

Under the standard of conduct portion of the NFL Personal Conduct Policy it states that “criminal offenses [include], but [are] not limited to, those involving: the use or threat of violence; domestic violence and other forms of partner abuse; theft and other property crimes; sex offenses; obstruction or resisting arrest; disorderly conduct; fraud; racketeering; and money laundering³⁰”. According to this policy, anyone who has broken any of these rules will firstly be offered a formal clinical evaluation paid for by the league itself. Any follow-up education, counseling, or treatment programs that are put in place by the evaluation will also be paid for by the league³¹. When the situation is appropriate (for example in domestic or child abuse cases), the league will also make assistance available to the victims and families, as well as the employee.

When the league office becomes aware of a possible violation of the Personal Conduct Policy, an investigation will occur, the timing and scope of which will be on a case-by-case basis³². While conducting investigations the league will make every attempt to try and maintain confidentiality. The league is able to conduct its investigation with information given by law enforcement agencies, court records, or individual investigations that the league itself has commissioned.

³⁰ National Football League. "NFL Personal Conduct Policy." 2015. Accessed September 01, 2016. <https://nflpaweb.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/PDFs/ActivePlayers/PersonalConductPolicy2015.pdf>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.



In terms of discipline there are a few different scenarios that one must become aware of. Even in cases where an individual was not charged, or charged but not convicted, it can still be found that one has broken the personal conduct policy and can face discipline by the league. "Initial decisions regarding discipline will be made or recommended by a disciplinary officer, a member of the league office staff who will be a highly-qualified individual with a criminal justice background. The disciplinary officer will follow the process outlined below and will make the initial decision on discipline pursuant to a delegation of the Commissioner's authority, subject to any appeal. In cases involving league staff, decisions may also be made by senior Human Resources executives consistent with the terms of this Policy". Discipline for violation of the policy can include a monetary fine, a suspension, banishment from the league for an indefinite or fixed period of time, community service, and even requirements to attend counseling or ongoing treatments³³.

All this being said, the public has already seen this new domestic violence policy as ineffective with the recent controversy surrounding former Carolina Panthers, and current Dallas Cowboys, player Greg Hardy, who was initially given a ten-game suspension, before arbitration brought the suspension down to just four games. The biggest problem here is that although teams have taken a much more proactive stance on players and criminal offences, usually opting to release or cut the player, many seem to think that the league itself needs to be tougher, especially in the case of domestic violence. In

³³ National Football League. "NFL Personal Conduct Policy." 2015. Accessed September 01, 2016. <https://nflpaweb.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/PDFs/ActivePlayers/PersonalConductPolicy2015.pdf>.



debating this issue, delegates should try to come up with a new policy that will be followed by the NFL in order to try and limit the amount of offences that the players commit each year, as well as deter events like this from happening again. There is a problem with the league and the way player conduct and misconduct is handled and it is up to the delegates to find a way to fix this so that the sport of football is not forever tainted and associated with violent actions.

Substance Abuse

The NFL has a long-standing problem with substance abuse; drugs have become more and more prevalent in the current NFL. There are actually two different policies in place in regards to substance abuse, the “National Football League Policy on Anabolic Steroids and Related Substances”, and the “National Football League Policy and Program for Substance Abuse”³⁴. The former deals with everything that would normally be considered ‘performance-enhancing’ and is around 28 pages long, whereas the latter deals with all recreational substances and non-approved medical drugs. Both policies outline the types and the frequencies of tests that players can expect while being employed by the NFL. The tests themselves are all urine tests, as the players union has fought adamantly against blood testing and needles.

³⁴ Schotthey, Michael. "Breaking Down How the NFL Substance Abuse Policy Works." Bleacher Report. December 4, 2013. Accessed September 01, 2016. <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1875478-breaking-down-how-the-nfl-substance-abuse-policy-works>.



A player can be tested for anabolic steroids and related substances upon being drafted or signed to a new team. During the offseason a player can be tested up to six different times, and during the preseason all the way until the end of postseason ten players can be randomly tested each week. According to the substance abuse agreement however, each player is tested during the preseason and any other testing happens based on what was agreed in the individual player's contract, meaning that it varies for each player. Once either of the two policies is broken however, the player must be ready to be tested at any time mandated by NFL officials³⁵.

The substance abuse policy has different stages to it, the first being an intervention program in which there are three stages for players who have failed a drug test, have questionable behaviour (arrests or psychological signs of substance abuse), or refer themselves. The penalties for recreational drug use is also set up in stages, the first involving a monetary fine that is set up in the player's contract based on their earnings. In stage two the penalty increases the monetary fine and adds in the possibility of suspension. In the final stage the player is banned from the league for exactly one calendar year³⁶.

After a player has tested positive, there is a secondary testing phase where they split the sample into two different tests and then retest them individually to make sure that both

³⁵ Schottey, Michael. "Breaking Down How the NFL Substance Abuse Policy Works." Bleacher Report. December 4, 2013. Accessed September 01, 2016. <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1875478-breaking-down-how-the-nfl-substance-abuse-policy-works>.

³⁶ Ibid.



results come back positive before handing out any punishments. As well under both agreements the player has the right to confidentiality during the whole stage one process³⁷.

Why Reform is Necessary

As an internationally followed sporting league, it is the job of the NFL to follow the rules and present an ethical front to the general public. Our players and personnel are public faces that are seen by many and looked up to by millions, and we believe that there needs to be a reform in the way our disciplinary system works, as clearly it is currently ineffective at pre-emptively stopping violations.

Delegates will be debating different types of deterrence factors that they could implement as well as ways to show the fan base that they are tough on criminal offences and that these players are held accountable for their actions. The players are role models for many people and the league cannot be allowing this type of behavior for much longer, it is time that they take a tough stance.

Helpful Resources:

- [NFL Policy and Program on Substance Abuse](#)
- [NFL Policy on Performance-Enhancing Substances](#)
- [NFL Personal Conduct Policy](#)
- [NFL List of Prohibited Substances](#)

³⁷ Ibid.



- [More information on policies](#)

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