

Committee: National Football League 2016

Topic: Expansion

Position: Detroit Lions

The NFL is being confronted with the decision to form more teams to expand the National Football League, it has several different options of where to go or where to move to. However, the Detroit Lions believe there is only one logical solution: expand and form a franchise team in London, England.

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. If London were to maintain these numbers with a permanent franchise, it would place them as having the second-highest average attendance in the league, behind only the Dallas Cowboys. Furthermore, due to better economic in ticket revenue, the average ticket price at Wembley is \$127, whereas the average ticket league-wide is \$84.43. On top of this, NFL tickets in London are more expensive than many NFL franchises, with the three games in 2014 producing \$32 million, thus giving sufficient reason to introduce a 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 Week” was to be preserved, the season would need to be extended by several weeks.

The Detroit Lions recognizes the many cities and sites (San Antonio, Portland, Las Vegas, etc.) that are possible candidates for a larger NFL franchise, which would expand the number of teams in the league. The NFL plans on changing the location of certain NFL teams and/or creating new NFL teams in different locations of the United States. However, the Detroit Lions believe that the NFL is attempting to solve this conflict in a manner that is not necessarily incorrect, but is exhausting on the NFL’s time and resources. Instead, the Detroit Lions would like to propose to manufacture a new contract with London which would allow the NFL to create and commence a new NFL franchise team once our current contract expires. Some may say that this would be risky loaning, and that NFL would decrease its profits instead of increasing. However, recent reports have shown that NFL stadiums produce an average of about \$8,700,000 to \$9,400,000 just in seating tickets, while the Wembley Stadium (London) produces a little under \$11,000,000 in tickets. Among investors, there is a slight doubt that the NFL will attract enough attention in England to support an NFL franchise; however, reports have also shown that the last few games which have been played in London completely sold out. In addition to this, Europe’s drinking laws, which allows younger civilians to purchase alcohol, would have a higher amount of profit than any football stadium in the United States. Once the NFL expands to London and increases its funds, we can move on to several other international locations such as Mexico City or Toronto, which have shown to have a large enough fan and financial base to support a healthy and profitable NFL franchise.

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Committee: National Football League 2016

Topic: Concussions and Head Safety

Position: Detroit Lions

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). Concussions are not only becoming a severe hazard to the mental health of players, but are also producing a myriad of lawsuits.

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 effects on sport. In regards to the NFL specifically, the issue of head safety, concussions, and player safety is having diverse effects. The present concern has financial, image, and gameplay ramifications. The financial costs to the NFL of mTBI and concussions have been severe. 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 in 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. A class action lawsuit, filed by former player Ray Easterling in 2011, was settled in 2015. The lawsuit contended that the NFL had willfully misled the players about the long-term health impacts of head injuries. 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. 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 as a result of cognitive injuries. Payments will be different based on the degree or severity of cognitive damage. Up to \$75 million will be placed towards medical testing as well. 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.

Reports have shown that the main cause of concussions or mTBIs is repeated and continuous severe hits to the head. Therefore, the Detroit Lions would like to propose a three step solution towards decreasing the number if concussion acquire in the NFL. The Detroit Lions propose to start by implementing stronger education for referees and coaches on symptoms of concussions, since they are the main people that recognize a concussion in the moment. Then using the NFL's funds and profits, possibly provided by league expansion, to purchase and provide the NFL teams with helmets that will reduce the amount of shock to the head when playing. Lastly, the Detroit Lions would change the procedure followed when a concussion diagnosis. Once a concussion is diagnosed, the player is immediately taken out of the game, then is not allowed any strenuous physical activity for two weeks, when they begin rehab and practice, and, finally, they need to be cleared by an independent doctor.

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Committee: National Football League 2016

Topic: Players and Criminal Offences

Position: Detroit Lions

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. This has greatly affected the NFL, because fans have begun to boycott the NFL and its products when decisions are made that are not widely accepted. Therefore, the Detroit Lions proposes to implement behavioral clauses making each player responsible for their own actions, regardless of circumstance.

Many believe that the league is not dealing with offenders in a fair and just manner because they are bias towards their players. Because of this, it is pivotal that the NFL implement more severe punishments on offences committed by players so to decrease the amount of offenses overall. Since 2000, there have been around 700 arrests of NFL players. Domestic violence in the league has recently taken the spotlight in 2014, when the 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 the league was pressured into suspending him from the league indefinitely. Soon after the conflict, the NFL implemented a new domestic violence policy, in which first offence could suspend a player up to six games, without pay, and the second offence leading to a lifetime ban from the league itself, with the option to petition and be reinstated after one year. The NFL offers any players who have broken any laws 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 can also be paid for by the league. When the situation is appropriate, the league can make assistance available to the victims in the case. 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 basis.

The Detroit Lions see this conflict of social issues in the NFL as the most constant and continuous conflict that negatively affects the NFL's image, specifically its income and reputation. The Detroit Lions believe that the NFL is wrong in helping the players and then the victims. This is because we are then taking charge for the players' mistakes, and, even though we are helping the victims, we are also helping the players, which is very commonly misinterpreted by the public. This then causes a disruption in between fans, in which some may support the decisions made by the NFL, while others may not, leading to boycotts of the NFL. The Detroit Lions believes that instead of taking matters into our own hands by being our own judicial branch, the NFL should instead make players responsible for their own actions. The Detroit Lions proposes to do this by implementing a clause in all player contracts that would hold them accountable for their own actions in a court of law, and at the same time continue to help the victim family in a case. This would help the NFL greatly, because then we wouldn't be at fault if the fans don't agree with a decision on punishments, and our profits would not be affected.

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