Issues in the NFL – Position Paper

Even though this is the world’s richest league, and the biggest of the “Big 5” sports in North America, the NFL, just like any other sports league has a lot of room to improve. I believe there are a few expansion opportunities for us to further expand the realms of our league, both internationally and domestically. Then of course there is the ongoing issue regarding management of players and their criminal offences. We have done a good job at attempting to solve the ongoing issue regarding concussions and head safety, but there is an extent to which we can act.

First, regarding expansion, I believe the best option is Toronto. We only have to look towards the NBA and MLB for proof that a Toronto franchise will succeed. The Raptors and The Blue Jays are embraced within the city’s culture. As for the failed Bills Toronto series, I think this is down to the fact that people don’t necessarily have a passion for the sport, but rather a passion for their city. The Bills do not represent Toronto. Regarding the CFL, there are too few teams and not enough marketing for the Argonauts to be successful. The only concern I have is a stadium.

Second, and perhaps most importantly is the issue of player and criminal offences. There is no doubt that as a league we have mishandled during many circumstances, such as the Ray Rice incident. Domestic violence needs to end. It’s been scarring the league for a while now. I propose we give each player one chance. No more “second” chances, meaning if they commit any crime relating to domestic violence they will be banned from having any involvement with the league. A background checks before being drafted/signed onto a team should also be mandatory, to ensure we aren’t signing criminals. Substance abuse has also plagued sports in general for many years now. NFL players inspire millions of kids across the continent. We don’t need them inspiring kids to take performance enhancing drugs. This needs to be dealt with by a strict substance abuse policy- the fines are useless as money means nothing to players. The ban needs to increase in stages, ranging from a couple of games to one season and eventually to a permanent ban.

Lastly, regarding concussions and head safety, I believe there is not much we can do without reducing the entertainment factor. We have already changed the rules to protect defenseless players, by making hits to the head illegal and any contact with the helmet resulting in penalties within the game. However, anything too drastic will take away the biggest aspect of the game- a big hit. Football wouldn’t be the same without hits and ruthless tackles. We need to think like a business, and I believe the NFL as a product is sustainable and can achieve even greater success than it has right now without changing too much regarding concussions and head safety.

In conclusion, reform is necessary for the NFL. We are the biggest of the big 5 sports leagues, and millions of people look up to football players. Substance abuse and domestic violence have plagued the league for a while now, and I believe it is time we cure both these viruses. Expansion is an ever-present opportunity, and with the league’s popularity rising tremendously North of the border, I think it is a great time to start a franchise in Toronto.

For now,

Roger Goodell