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**Jacksonville Jaguars Kobe Baida**

**Position Paper for the National Football League 2016**

**Topic I: Expansion**

Jacksonville encourages the league’s expansion from 32 teams to 34. The cities that the NFL has chosen for possible expansion have little to no effect on Jacksonville’s market. The three proposed international locations; London, Mexico City, and Toronto have negligible effect on the Jaguar fan base. None of these teams would be located within the same division as Jacksonville, AFC South, leading to minor concern of their possible inclusion. Nevertheless, each location raises its issues that must be discussed. The expansion to London will stress the league due to its incredible distance from the established 32 teams. If the NFL were to continue its current policy of giving teams a bye week after playing in the UK, it would require the season to be prolonged by the minimum of one month. The rescheduling could cause the Jaguars to play regular season games through the month of August, in which temperatures are regularly 33°C. A team in London would also entail a 9-hour flight for Jacksonville, causing severe jet lag for the players and giving London a significant advantage when playing at home. Due to worries over player health and wellness, London is not a desirable location for expansion in the eyes of the Jacksonville Jaguars. The second proposed city is Mexico City, a considerably closer destination than London, a short 6-hour flight from Jacksonville. The major issue facing this expansion is the security of the teams. If the NFL could ensure stronger safety protocols at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City, then the Jacksonville Jaguars shall endorse it. Toronto, the last proposed city, raises no concern to the Jaguars Corporation due to its temperate climate and proximity to the rest of the league. The domestic options for expansion that include; Salt Lake City, Oklahoma City, Portland, Las Vegas, and San Antonio do not raise any concerns for Jacksonville as they are all located in external markets. The Jacksonville Jaguars approve of all expansion locations with the exception of London.

**Topic II: Concussions and Head Safety**

Jacksonville believes that the NFL must work to ensure that players remain safe and that the image of the league is restored. Concussions are considered a mild traumatic brain injury and have only begun to have their long-term effects studied. Many players from around the league have had career ending and life changing concussions. Awareness of the consequences of these injuries must be increased to improve the image and the finances of the NFL. In 2015, the league reached a settlement in a class-action lawsuit that contended that the NFL chose to mislead players about the dangers of head trauma, costing the league $765 million. Although the NFL did not admit guilt, it has tarnished its reputation and could affect the future talent pool and market. Maintaining this violent image has no benefit for the league or any of its teams. Jacksonville acknowledges the steps taken by the NFL to improve its concussion protocol to prevent players from returning to danger after a traumatic brain injury, as well as its rule changes to protect the heads of defenseless players. The cultural view of the NFL being a hard-hitting league must be modified to protect current and future players, as well as the leagues' revenue. This culture can be combated by advisements shifting away from massive hits and moving towards more skilled play, alongside further rule changes to protect players from head trauma. It must admit that head trauma, such as concussions, lead to neurodegenerative disorders. They must assist players in making more informed decisions about their health. The Jacksonville Jaguars suggest that the league moves away from physicality and towards a greater skill based game to improve player safety, the public image of the league, and the financial future of the NFL.

**Topic III: Players and Criminal Offences**

Jacksonville encourages reform of the Personal Conduct Policy along with the Program for Substance Abuse and their enforcement. The illegal and abusive actions of some of its players have damaged the image of the NFL and its teams. 713 players have been arrested since 2000, 85 of which were domestic violence offences. The current policy of the league is to instill those found violating the Personal Conduct Policy with a punishment ranging from a fine to banishment from the league. In 2014, NFL introduced a separate system when dealing with domestic violence cases. It carries far heavier penalties than the standard policy violation. Substance abuse follows similar guidelines to the Personal Conduct Policy. The Jaguars Corporation believes that enforcement of offences is fundamentally flawed. The NFL must institute a system based on precedent instead of a case-by-case basis. This new system would ensure all offences are treated equally while also creating a less biased appeal process. Testing for substances should be increased from one mandatory test at the beginning of the season and a random one throughout the year. Adding a necessary midseason and end of season test will ensure that players who are randomly tested early on in the season are not using substances after their second, and now final, test. The Jacksonville Jaguars recommend a case based system when dealing with offences alongside more frequent drug testing in hopes of showing the public that the NFL is tough on punishment for its contact violations.