

Roger Goodell Press Conference 12.14.16

Commissioner Goodell: We had an excellent meeting today and got a lot of things covered. We probably spent five hours in the meeting room. We spent a lot of time talking about the season to date. We've had an incredibly competitive season. At the current pace today, our average margin of victory will only be rivaled by a season that was closer in margin of victory - the 1935 season. So that goes back a long way in our history. We have seen very close games, and I think in fact 70 percent of our games going into the fourth quarter have been within seven points which also goes back into the early thirties. That's two very healthy signs for us as far as the competitiveness of the game, which is what we want for our fans.

We also had a report on our labor agreement on how things are working. You've probably seen it, but our cap growth for the fourth consecutive year is now going up over \$10 million per club this year. That's a very healthy sign that the game continues to grow and revenues continue to grow. This is great for the players, great for the clubs, and great for the game. It's probably a very strong indication, too, that the labor agreement is working. We'd like to correct things and we'd like to make it better but I think the agreement that we structured with the players and teams in 2011 has been incredibly successful and so as I mentioned to De on several occasions, this is healthy for us. We should continue to find ways to continue to extend that, extend the agreement, and make sure that we address things that we think we can make better, which, both sides obviously do.

Then we talked an awful lot about stadium proposals, including Oakland and San Diego, and I'm sure you'll have questions about that, so I'd be happy to take them.

Is there a reason for optimism in, with the Oakland situation, the San Diego situation, could you characterize or at least bring us up to speed on those?

Goodell: These issues have been going on for an awful long time and the challenges of getting stadiums built is something that we've worked very hard on. We've made tremendous progress. We have not made great progress in Oakland and San Diego. There is not a stadium proposal on the table that we think addresses the long-term issues of the clubs and the communities. We need to continue to work at it. We feel strongly that we want to keep our teams where they are. Relocations are painful and that's something we want to avoid at all costs. But that is something that we have to continue to work with those communities. We will, and we're committed to continuing to work with those communities to finding those solutions.

Having said that about your desire to continue to work with those communities at what point do you just say, enough is enough?

Goodell: Those are decisions that the clubs have to make. I think everyone knows that the San Diego Chargers have options. Dean Spanos and his family worked tirelessly over the last year to present a referendum to the voters. They obviously didn't approve of that referendum. But that's not the first effort. They've been working for 15 years in their community. They're a big part of that community and they believe in that community. They want to be a part of it, but it's Dean's option by January 15 to make a determination of whether he thinks he can make it work in San Diego or whether he decides to take the option in Los Angeles. The Raiders, of course, if they decide that they can't make it work in Oakland and they decide that they want to file for

relocation, that window is open when their post season, regular season is over until February 15.

What more can the league do to help in San Diego?

Goodell: We'll help, and I've said this to the mayor as recently as yesterday that we'd like to help, but ultimately it's for the community to decide. We increased our stadium funding from \$200 to \$300 million for San Diego and Oakland and that's unprecedented. We have worked to try to get the referendum passed. We'll continue to work with the local officials but ultimately they have to determine what it is they want to do with the community, what can work for the community and for the team.

And it was a long shot this measure, that even the Chargers would acknowledge, would there come a point that you would be willing to do more, you mentioned 300 million, and would you compel the Chargers to work with the city?

Goodell: I think the Chargers have. I don't think you could put a referendum together like that, and as I said before, this is not a new issue. Mayor Faulconer mentioned this to us last year and he said 'several mayors have failed to get a proposal across the table and that's a failure on behalf of our community, and we're going to make this work.' Unfortunately, the effort didn't work this year in the referendum, but we'll continue to work with the mayor, as I said to him yesterday.

In the Giants-Steelers game played earlier this month it was determined that there were a couple of footballs that were used by the Steelers that were below the minimum inflation rate, PSI. Can you talk about where the league stands on this? This is obviously a big deal with New England and what happened there, and what the protocol was, and what the communication was between the Giants, the Steelers and the league?

Goodell: We went back to look to make sure that the protocols were followed properly. They were. The Giants had asked us about it during the game. We went back. We checked that. They were properly followed. All of the league protocols were being properly followed and there's no further follow up on that. The teams didn't follow up and we didn't follow up any further because we were comfortable that the protocols were followed.

Ezekiel Elliott has been under investigation through the personal conduct policy since training camp. How does the league balance being fair to the player involved and also being thorough in the investigation?

Goodell: The best way to be fair to a player is to be thorough, take your time and to get it right, and so that is what we're working at. We have professionals that are working on this. We're not putting a timetable on them. We want to make sure that they get it right, they get all the facts, and when they reach a conclusion, we'll all know about it.

You and other league officials recently met with Aldon Smith regarding his potential reinstatement. First of all, how would you describe the meeting, second of all, is it realistic to think he could be back on the field either for the regular season or for the playoffs?

Goodell: I'm not going to speculate on where we are and where it's going to go. I will tell you that I think it was good for us to be able to meet with Aldon, to hear from him directly and to hear

from his representative. The union was also represented there. We were going through all of the information to make sure we have it all absolutely accurate and that we all understand exactly where he is in the process of trying to get himself in a position where he's got his life in order enough to resume an NFL career. It was good for me to hear from him personally. But when we get to that decision, we'll certainly announce it.

How concerned are you having two teams in the LA market after just returning there last year?

Goodell: We crossed that bridge a year ago when we gave an option to a second team going there. We also made it very clear that anyone who was going to get the LA opportunity was going to have to accommodate a second team in the stadium. That was a requirement of the decision we made last January. It's a great market. We know we have millions of fans there, but it's also a challenging market. They demand to see that we're doing everything possible to create a winner and to put the best product on the field. I am convinced that the stadium project itself is going to be world renowned. The entertainment aspect of it, the stadium itself, and the development around it is going to be absolutely extraordinary and something the fans will love.

If I understand the protocol correctly for testing the PSI of footballs is they do it before the game, they do it at halftime. So when an issue is flagged like this did the league subsequently after the game test those footballs were they under inflated, and if they were underinflated, to what do you attribute that?

Goodell: What you do is you test the balls before the game, and the officials always maintain of those footballs from that point on. We went back and we checked with the officials to make sure they checked the proper inflation. They did that. The balls were retained in their control from that point on. So the protocols were followed all the way.

So there was nothing further because apparently the giants tested the balls on their sideline which means they were out of the Steelers control and they were out of the referees control at that time.

Goodell: That's why you don't rely on somebody else testing them. They are using a different device. Somebody else is testing them. They have to be tested by the officials who use the same device to make sure there is accuracy in that.

How much research has been done on the Las Vegas market? Is there more of a positive sense about that market among the owners and yourself or do you still have some serious reservations?

Goodell: We had several market studies going on. We heard from one of independent analysts today. I would tell you I think there are some real strengths to the market. It's clear that the Las Vegas market has become a more diversified market and more broadly involved with entertainment and hosting big events. There's a growth to the market. You can see the trajectory when you look at the market data and where it's going. There are some very positive things in that. We have some more analysis we have to do. We look at it from everything from season-ticket holders to suite holders to the type of market that we see today versus what we're going to see going forward. It was very good research and it was very good analysis.

The Cowboys expressed some frustration with Randy Gregory's suspension and they thought he was going to be able to practice last week and then they were told he was not going to be able to practice. Where does that case stand and will you guys look at anything with the drug policy you talked about with De? Will you guys look at and change some things?

Goodell: We have made changes. I believe it was 2013 off the top of my head when we finally concluded with the HGH testing 2 years later. We do look at the policies and we made other changes to our drug policy at that same time, so yes, we will clearly make changes. I don't know the specifics on the Cowboys issue. I had not heard that so I don't have an answer for you on that specifically but we'll get it for you.

You say protocols were followed but the Giants got control of the balls enough that they tested them. How does a team get control of the ball away from the officials so they can test it?

Goodell: My understanding of it was that it was a turnover, and there were two turnovers so they had the ball and they were keeping the ball which happens frequently. So when they did that, I believe somebody from the equipment staff used a device to check the pressure at that point in time.

Can you describe your level of concern about TV ratings post-election?

Goodell: We had a report on that this morning. It's clear that the election had an impact. Since the election our ratings are about 2 percent down compared to double digits prior to that. There's no question going head-to-head with debates you're going to get that kind of impact particularly with an election that may have been more followed than any election in our history. From that standpoint, there's no question that's had an impact and we've seen that in the rebound of ratings. But we're not stopping there.

I've said before and I said this before the season that we're evaluating every aspect of the game presentation on television, on media platforms, and also in the stadium. How can we take out time where we think there are unnecessary delays where we think there are things that can be done to speed up the pace focus on football? Reduce the number of interruptions including commercial interruptions? Can we change the pods in a way that would be we think is better from a fan standpoint? We're working with all that and we're collecting on that data. We're focusing on several initiatives we think can address those issues most of which we will have to do in the offseason and some of which we will experiment with this year.

It's also why Thursday night has been so important to us. Thursday night happens to be the fourth-rated show in primetime this year. We need to understand the changing media landscape and get the partnerships so we can reach the fans the way they want to be reached, which is different now. We're seeing that. It's one of the reasons we had Twitter in last week to talk about the learnings from this year. What are fans doing? The engagement with fans is actually up this year. Holding the fans and making them watch longer is something we have to continue to work on. We think that's in the quality of what we're presenting. That's why every aspect of that is going to be evaluated. As the media landscape changes, we're going to continue to be involved with where fans are and how they want to communicate and engage with the media. We've seen some very healthy things in the last few weeks but we still have a lot of work to do.