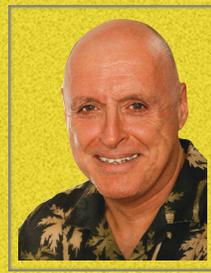


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



88 The NFL Policy on Protests Makes Sense

The National Football League's new policy on player protests and why it makes sense. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's today on The Extra Point.

In my Work Zone column in the May 29th Guam Daily Post, I discussed how the NFL's recently announced policy to govern the protests that dominated football conversation last season, was justified from a business standpoint.

The new ruling states that players will no longer be allowed to kneel during the national anthem. If they are on the field they will stand for the anthem. If they prefer not to do that they will remain in the locker room, out of public view, and then come on the field. Protesters and liberal media screamed that the new rule stifles their freedom of speech and that the players should have been consulted.

That's interesting, since the players didn't consult the owners before initiating the protests. The players conducted them in the workplace, without permission from the owners, in a company uniform and on television, under contracts arranged by the league. They leveraged the owners' assets for more effective protests and set off a chain reaction of events that weakened the NFL.

Here's the business issue. Customers didn't like the protests. FoxNews reported in January that NFL TV viewership declined by 10 percent last year, which angered its television partners and sponsors. Those sponsors don't want their brand associated with a product that is said to disrespect the anthem, the American flag, and the military. They have a lot of options on how to spend their money and if TV ratings had continued to go down this season, there's no telling what it might have cost the NFL to keep their rich TV deals in place.

Merchandise sales also took a hit and NFL stadiums had a lot of empty seats. None of this was likely to improve, especially with President Trump geared up to continue his assault on the league over the protests.

As for the protesters and their supporters, they were overwhelmed that their issue had been largely pushed aside. The numerous shootings of African-Americans, often unprovoked, at the hands of police, now was the secondary matter behind the focus on their patriotism, Trump's attacks, and the political firestorm that didn't let up. Their next step was to accuse the owners of collusion in the case of former star players Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid, who were not offered positions with any team, and the claim they are being punished for their roles in the protests,

Make no mistake, social injustices need attention and none of us are free from the responsibility to see that everyone's rights are protected. That said, from a purely business perspective, the NFL did the right thing.

They've taken the protests out of the view of customers who oppose them. If players want to continue to protest they can take to the streets and do that. There is no doubt the media will follow these well-known athletes to cover it. Players will have their voices heard, customers will not be offended, and the business that feeds owners and players alike won't be damaged in the process. I don't see how the owners could have decided differently.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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