

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



243 The Curious World of the National Football League

I've been a pro football fan for decades and I can't remember a time when so many people were all mad at the National Football League at the same time. I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll chew on that, next, on The Extra Point.

Since Roger Goodell became NFL commissioner in 2006, the league has been mired in one controversy after another. From his decisions on player discipline, to botched handling of two cheating scandals featuring the New England Patriots, to the continual and some would say the mindless tinkering with rules, to a running battle with Donald Trump over guys taking a knee during the national anthem, to a steady decline in the quality of officiating, which was on full display this past weekend in both of the NFL's conference championships.

Goodell doesn't attend public functions any more because he is roundly booed when he does. In the dozen years he has been the top man in the league office, it's tough to recall a time when he wasn't under heavy criticism.

People are upset with the NFL, and it's not just in New Orleans and Kansas City, where the home teams lost a chance to go to the Super Bowl. Casual fans and even non-fans have a negative opinion, after the uproar caused by referees' decisions in those two games. People are upset, and maybe, just maybe, Goodell and his bosses — the team owners — couldn't be happier. I'm just going to drop that point right here for moment and we'll come back to it.

For all of the other mistakes during his tenure, fans would likely get off Goodell's back if the officiating improved. Both games last weekend featured multiple plays that were mishandled, and all four teams could make a case for how that impacted them.

Messing around with rules has made it almost impossible to determine what is a catch, what

is pass interference, the fine line in what is okay and not okay in making contact with the quarterback, and a bunch of other things that make up judgment calls — and those calls are often enforced unevenly by referees who throw a flag one time, and the next time, nothing. It makes the players, coaches, and fans confused and angered over this inconsistency. Fans take to forums and social media and scream for Goodell to be fired, some threatening to stop watching the games. Few will follow through.

It's possible the NFL leadership and ownership are ecstatic and why is that? Because anger is passion and it shows that people are highly passionate about the NFL. In the world of marketing, that's what you want. If fans had just yawned over what took place in the two games, smiled and went on to the next thing without so much as a raised eyebrow, that would be cause for serious concern.

The NFL owners are rolling in money as league revenues have skyrocketed under Goodell's watch, and that's why his contract was renewed. They pay Roger almost \$50 million a year for the fans to boo him.

What will happen now? They'll tinker a little more with rules, add a technological wrinkle or two which they say will help the refs do a better job, and in the end maybe things will improve. Or, maybe, next year at this time we'll again be yelling at our TVs, wondering why they still can't get it right. It'll be music to the NFL's ears.

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

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