

An interview with:

RICH McKAY GREG AIELLO

GREG AIELLO: Thank you, good afternoon, everybody. The purpose of our call today is to preview the league meeting agenda for your advance stories on the meeting. Let me give you some quick facts and figures on the meeting, then we'll go to your questions.

The attendees will arrive in **Palm Beach** on Saturday, some on Saturday, most on Sunday. Here are some telephone numbers that you might want to take down. The Breakers main number is 561-655-6611, where the meeting is taking place.

The **NFL** office number at the Breakers will be 561-653-6521.

Your media workroom, which will be in something called the Gold Room, will be 561-653-7968. That opens at noon on Sunday.

The Competition Committee met for two days in **Indianapolis** at the combine back in February, and then for nine days last week in **Naples, Florida**. The committee will reconvene late Saturday afternoon at the Breakers, then Sunday there are a series of other committee meetings throughout the day.

Also on Sunday from 12:30 to approximately 5:00, there is an annual meeting overview session for all club personnel on various operational matters. Those would include Competition Committee report preview, the reports on our steroid policy, NFL network, NFL satellite radio deal, and the **NFL Europe** deal. Owners do not generally attend that session.

The meeting officially opens at Monday morning at 9 a.m. with the Commissioner's opening remarks on the state of the league as required by our constitution and bylaws. The meeting is scheduled to conclude early Wednesday afternoon for the owners.

The Commissioner will hold an initial press conference on Monday at the lunch break. Later that afternoon, we'll have a press conference with

Rick McKay and **Jeff Fisher**, the Competition Committee co-chairs, to update you on those Competition Committee matters.

We will have our traditional head coaches media breakfast, the **AFC** coaches media breakfast will be at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning on the Beach Club patio. **NFC** coaches will be the following day on Wednesday, starting a little bit earlier, 7:15 a.m., for an hour, at the same place. Please note the earlier start time on Wednesday, which is due to the fact that the coaches annual meeting with the owners and the Commissioner starts at 8:15 that morning. All 32 head coaches are scheduled to attend this year's meeting.

Also on Tuesday, at a time to be determined but probably in the afternoon, **Mike** and **Larry** will conduct another session for you as they did last year on rules and points of emphasis for 2004, and it will be similar to the presentation they will give the head coaches at this meeting.

You are, as always, invited to join us Monday evening at our **NFL** reception which takes place from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. on the Ocean Lawn at the Breakers. Dress is casual. Your families are invited, as well, if they are going to be with you.

As to the agenda, the Competition Committee report will be distributed on Monday morning, but there will be no voting until Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning as stipulated under our meeting procedures. Some of the key Competition Committee-related issues on the agenda next week involve instant replay, our tampering rules as they relate to interviewing assistant coaches and key front office executives during the playoffs, expanding the practice squads, international player development, and our formats involving overtime and the playoffs.

In addition to the Competition Committee, other items on the agenda include brief status reports on our network television contracts and on discussions with the **NFL Players Association** toward another extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, discussion and a vote on the proposed Master Agreement on league and club licensing, sponsorship and related business arrangements, and also reports on league economics, the **NFL** network, the status of stadium projects in **Los Angeles** and several other committee reports.

Before we turn it to **Rich McKay** in **Atlanta**, let me give you the members of the

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Competition Committee. **Rich McKay** and **Jeff Fisher** are the co-chairmen. The members **Charlie Casserly** of **Houston**, **Mike Holmgren** from **Seattle**, **John Mara** from the **Giants**, **Ozzie Newsome**, **Baltimore**, **Bill Polian** from **Indianapolis**, and **Mark Richardson** from **Carolina**. The coaches subcommittee of the Competition Committee is chaired by **Tony Dungy** of **Indianapolis**, and also includes **Mike Martz** of **St. Louis**, **Andy Reid** of **Philadelphia**, and **Mike Sherman** of **Green Bay**.

Rich McKay will now make a few comments on the overall state of the game and then we will take your questions.

RICH McKAY: Thanks, **Greg**. As most of you may know from years past, the Competition Committee begins to operate, if you will, in November, December when we send out a survey to all the clubs and try to set up what our agenda will be based on the input of the clubs and the ideas or suggestions that the clubs present. We did that again this year, got a lot of good input, kind of did frame our discussion, it will frame the points of emphasis that we will make this year in officiating and discuss at the committee meeting.

When we look at the game in general, I think '03 was another very good year from a statistical standpoint. Certain things were down probably in the passing game that were a little more down than we anticipated. But overall the game was in very good shape.

I think we look back to 2002 and realized that was a very big year for us as a league. We changed our scheduling format kind of in a very substantial fashion, and we changed obviously our divisional format, going eight divisions of four teams. I think after two years, the results that we have seen are excellent. You've got what we want in this league, you have a league that is extremely competitive top to bottom. I think that the emphasis of common opponents in the scheduling has shown itself to be very effective as opposed to the fifth place schedule we used to have. It's shown again this year when we had new teams enter the playoffs, we had two new divisional champions and obviously two new conference champions that went on to the **Super Bowl**. In that regard, we're very happy with where the game is.

From an agenda standpoint at this meeting, we'll go through all the major markers, if you will, from a statistical standpoint at the meeting with the membership. The two that I would point out to you are just average game time this year went down over a minute and a half, which is a

good sign. That was one of the things as a committee we were pretty focused on last year, trying to find ways to get time back. We got it back I think through a simple tweak of allowing the networks to go to commercial during replays, specifically in the first half. That alone saved us some time which is valuable, as most of you know.

Then points per game this year ended up at 41.7 per game. Our target has always been 40 as a league. Any time we're at 41 or above, it's a good sign for us as a committee. So we were happy with that.

Otherwise, the markers are within normal ranges and really nothing that jumps out at you.

Rules-wise, agendas-wise, the dreaded instant replay is back for vote. We voted on this two times as a single-year proposal. We then voted on it in a three-year format. All three of those being successful. The format has been in place for five years. The committee will recommend this year that we vote on it as a permanent rule. Hopefully we'll be successful in that so that we don't have to come back and discuss this on further future calls.

We also will recommend, although it's not unanimous in that recommendation, we will recommend a potential tweak to the system, that being if a team were to be successful on two or more -- I should say two -- on their two challenges, then they would be granted a third challenge. Only in that instance would they be granted a third challenge. They'd have to get both of the first two right, then they would get a third, and they cannot get a fourth. We think it gives the team a little more flexibility to use the challenge when they see it, but it still requires they use them on big plays because there's only three of them in total.

We also have a rule that will go before the membership on sportsmanship. If you remember, years back, we had a rule that was put in place that was put in through a by law that dealt with player celebration. It dealt with two or more players that engaged in, you know, premeditated or choreographed celebration, if you would. The way we put that in was to use that as a mechanism for the league to fine those type of actions. That has not worked as effectively. The fines have not worked as effectively as we would like.

At the urging of the high school associations and the college, the **NCAA**, we got letters from both, urging us to look at sportsmanship. We will propose this year that that be an on-the-field penalty in hopes that we can in some way curb that activity.

We also will try to codify the

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Commissioner's memo of two years ago dealing with the foreign or extraneous objects, aka Sharpie, and make that an on-the-field penalty. It has been called as a penalty, but we just want to put that in the rule, and that will be in a single-rule proposal to the membership.

As **Greg** said, we have the anti-tampering rule back up for vote, because that was passed on a one-year basis that, dealt with the issue of allowing playoff team coaches to be interviewed. We'll recommend that that be extended and somewhat modified.

Those are the major items. We'll obviously have some points of emphasis specifically dealing with down field officiating, the amount of contact that may or may not be allowed down field on receivers.

That's kind of where the Competition Committee is. As **Greg** said, the report will be passed out Monday morning.

GREG AIELLO: We'll take your questions.

Q. Rich, could you elaborate a little bit on the modification, somewhat modification of the anti-tampering rule. How is it going to be modified? Also could you explain the celebration thing again?

RICH McKAY: Sure.

Anti-tampering, somebody is going to have to clue me in on the celebration, because I'll forget, but anti-tampering is a proposal that's being recommended by the Competition Committee. But the diversity committee, likewise, has to meet and discuss this proposal, and they will I think on Sunday.

What we recommend as a committee is that it be modified in two simple things. One is that the interview period be extended for two days. The way the rule was written, and I'm not sure we intended it this way, but the way the rule was written, you were not able to -- that wildcard weekend, you were not able to interview these coaches on Saturday or Sunday. The interviewing stopped on Friday.

We just suggested that you be allowed to do it on Saturday or Sunday because, if you're familiar with the rule, the rule provides that the team that has the coach, they decide when you can interview. So we just wanted to give that team more days to choose from, not the team seeking the interview, it's the team granting the interview. That's a very minor tweak.

The other tweak we recommend is that this be extended to apply to what is defined in the anti-tampering rules as high-level employees, i.e.,

general managers or presidents. There were some teams that were interested in interviewing playoff team candidates for general manager spots, but because of our rules, they were not able to do that in this window. It only applied to head coach candidates. We recommend that that be added, they be added as a category.

Q. During the wildcard week? With the GMs, what days during the wildcard week?

RICH McKAY: Same thing. Same rule as applies to coaches.

Q. Which is?

RICH McKAY: Which would mean that, you know, it would be that wildcard weekend or if the team were in the wildcard game, then it would be the next weekend. It would be the next week, I should say, before the divisional games, the way the rule reads.

Q. Then the other one?

RICH McKAY: Celebration is simply we had a rule or bylaw that was passed a couple of years ago by the membership that said, and I don't have the exact language before me, but I have a summary of it, if two or more players engage in a prolonged, excessive, premeditated or choreographed celebration, then those players will be subjected to unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

That same language was in the player conduct policies before, and was used -- we used it to fine players for all those group celebrations.

In our fining of players traditionally it has gotten the conduct we wanted out of the game. Fining for instance, when we began to fine players over the fighting issues, entering the fight area, all those things, basically fighting went away from our game. Last year I'm not sure we fined more than one player or two players for fighting. That has not been the case with this area in the preplanned celebrations. So we are proposing it be an actual rule, and you give therefore the ability for the official on the field to call a penalty.

GREG AIELLO: There were no fighting fines last year, **Rich**, or the year before.

RICH McKAY: That's where the fines have worked effectively for us. I think our fines this year were up maybe threefold.

Q. I'm the second vice president of the Pro Football Writers of America. We've been writing about medical information. There was a growing belief among some teams that the decision by some franchises to release limited

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medical information was creating a competitive imbalance, specifically the *Dolphins* and *Jets* have been talking about limiting their medical information. Is this an issue that the Competition Committee plans to address?

RICH McKAY: Good question. No, I don't think we do. We talked about it briefly, and I think our feeling was we might talk about it again before the May meeting. But generally I would say teams don't necessarily view this information as a competitive advantage or disadvantage because we basically go on the premise that everybody's going to play. We don't necessarily buy into what the team may list as that player's condition. We go with the assumption that the player's going to play.

Now, the problem, of course, is that from a media standpoint we do see your issues, which are that if you're not given any type of specific data, then you spend the majority of your time trying to hunt it down. I think there may be something done, but I'm not sure it's from a competitive standpoint because I don't think teams view the fact that a guy is described as having a leg injury and not a high ankle sprain. I don't think we view that as a competitive issue, and we haven't at least as a committee. But we did say we might have to talk about this again in the May meeting.

Q. Basically the tampering rules, when it comes to players and contracts in free agency, has there been any talk amongst you guys about that? Seems like so many teams were already talking about players and getting deals done before the signing period began.

RICH McKAY: You really think so? Yes, we did discuss in the committee the potential of creating a window where permissible contact would be allowed prior to the opening of free agency, potentially, you know, a two-day, three-day window so you could level the playing field, if you would, for everybody prior to that window. You wouldn't be able to fly the player in. You wouldn't be able to do anything with respect to contract.

However, that did not -- that proposal did not have enough support within the committee to propose a rule. I think it is something we will bring up at the owners meeting with the football people and ask them if they're interested in pursuing that, if there's something else we should be pursuing, because I think it is a perceived problem.

Q. Do you think that is one of the reasons that the contracts in free agency this off-season have been so staggering in terms of different positions compared to recent years?

RICH McKAY: No, I really don't. I don't think that is the reason. I think the reason is because a lot of teams entered this marketplace with a lot more room than teams had entered the marketplace in years past. That created kind of a buyer's frenzy that tended to drive the market up.

GREG AIELLO: Next question.

Q. Rich, could you be a little more specific on the choreographed celebration thing. What are you looking to take out of it and is there anything in this that would lead us to believe there are no more touchdown dances or the ball must be handed to the official?

RICH McKAY: No, you don't have -- don't start writing we're the no fun league. It has nothing to do with an individual player's celebration. It has nothing to do with the Lambeau Leap, the spike, the throw it over the goalpost, the sac dance, any of that. All of that rule remains the same as long as it's not taunting, as long as it's not done in the face of another player, it will be allowed.

This has to do with two or more. This has to do with the group celebration, the five guys circling around, all falling to the ground at the same time. This has to do with those type of planned acts. It does not have to do with the individual, spontaneous celebration.

GREG AIELLO: The issue was under the previous policy, those would not result in penalties, right?

RICH McKAY: That's correct. They would result in fines. I think last year, I don't know the exact number, I'd say it's more than 50 players were fined under this category. I think it's gone up the last three years and it became one -- we have letters from high schools and colleges saying, "Throw flags." We thought they made a good point.

GREG AIELLO: What the committee is proposing is that in addition to the fines, the officials also throw flags during the game.

RICH McKAY: That's correct.

Q. That's the change being proposed?

RICH McKAY: That's correct. It's not a change really in the policy as much as it's a change in allowing the officials to throw flags.

Q. It's a change in the approach to enforcement?

RICH McKAY: Yes.

Q. Is that a live ball or dead ball infraction?

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RICH McKAY: It's a live ball infraction. Come on, we're not taking touchdowns away.

Q. I'm just asking.

RICH McKAY: I know.

GREG AIELLO: Is that clear, *Larry*?

Q. I think I can live with this.

GREG AIELLO: Next question.

Q. Greg, first of all, can you explain what the NFL trust is or what local revenues are shared as part of the NFL trust? Then I have a follow-up, too.

GREG AIELLO: The trust refers to the agreement among the clubs to have the league serve as the licensing agent for their club trademarks and logos. It's something that the principles of it have been in place since 1963 when NFL Properties were formed. Those principles were formally ratified into a legal entity that was called the **NFL** trust in 1982, and that trust is expiring at the end of this month, March 31. So for the past year, the clubs have been engaged in discussion as to how to formalize the structure of the licensing and sponsorship business going forward.

A couple of points on that is that it really will have -- this issue, and it's part of the reason it hasn't generated a lot of public interest, it doesn't have a significant impact on fans or any impact on fans in the sense that the merchandise and programs that are out there reaching fans will continue to be out there. It's simply a matter of deciding going forward who serves as the licensing agent for league, club logos and trademarks.

Secondly, the revenue involved in the licensing and sponsorship businesses of the league and the clubs is a relatively small piece of the pie. Just to give you a couple of numbers, the **NFL** properties businesses last year generated roughly \$4 million per team versus about \$80 million per team through the television contracts.

Another point is that the proposed Master Agreement would formalize going forward the way our licensing and sponsorship businesses have been conducted in recent years with more rights going to clubs, with the league focusing on licensing the **NFL** logo. A couple of big sponsorship deals that reflect that were in soft drinks, Pepsi, and beer, **Coors**, where those sponsors have the right to the **NFL** logo and are the official sponsors of the **NFL**; meanwhile, the clubs have the local rights and can sell soft drink sponsorships to other companies and beer

sponsorships to other companies, as they have done.

So that's how it's been working in recent years. The Master Agreement would essentially formalize that structure, and it would also -- the proposed master agreement would preserve the revenue-sharing structure of the licensing and sponsorship business that has been in place in recent years.

Q. Rich, Greg mentioned the overtime and playoff formats. There was a lot of discussion about that last year. Can you update us on what's going on with that?

RICH McKAY: Sure. In overtime, there was the proposal that **Kansas City** made last year. They have again made that same proposal. It will be voted upon. The Competition Committee did not recommend passage of that. I think the numbers are still up with respect to the issue of one-possession games. I think it's at about the 30% range.

But the committee just felt like the numbers have come back down a little bit, and we don't recommend change.

Q. One possession?

RICH McKAY: One possession. That was **Kansas City's** proposal. I'm sure they'll talk about it and we'll vote on it.

Last year I think we were split on that issue. This year I think we're a little more one way, that being against it. With respect to playoff expansion, last year the Commissioner asked us at the March meeting to do a competitive study of our playoff system and look at it from a competitive standpoint. Should the playoffs be expanded? We did a pretty in-depth study, spent a lot of hours, spent a lot of hours writing that report. We recommended at that time no, that we wanted to see how this format worked for one more year at least. And then we also looked at the history of the playoffs, the five and six seed, how competitive they will be and the like.

We really feel like this year, again, that the system worked well, that the playoff number at 12 is a good number, and we don't -- for competitive reasons, we don't recommend expansion. There may be other reasons to do it. We just don't based -- they're based on competitive reasons.

Q. Who is bringing this one forward?

RICH McKAY: **Kansas City** I think also is bringing that one forward. Is that right, *Greg*?

GREG AIELLO: That's right. Both of

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these proposals are by **Kansas City**, and they're both on the agenda for this meeting, the one to change over time to guarantee an offensive possession for both teams, and also to expand the playoffs from 12 to four teams. They're both being proposed by **Kansas City** on the agenda for this meeting.

Q. Rich, one follow-up, put your other hat on for a second. In light of what's happened with two of your former stars this week, I wondered if the Falcons had any interest at all in Warren Sapp and John Lynch while they were on the market? Were you surprised how things worked out for those guys?

RICH McKAY: I think Greg is going to make me stick to the Competition Committee. He's a very tough guy.

GREG AIELLO: That's right. Blame me (laughter).

Q. Rich, a couple of high-profile cases in the last three weeks of free agency, veterans leaving teams, awkward situations, very sensitive issues. No good way to do this. Is there anything that's being proposed or maybe talked about in these types of situations, very unique situations in terms of salary cap relief?

RICH McKAY: I would leave that to smarter men than myself. In the prior negotiations of the **CBA** and the initial negotiations of the **CBA**, I know that there were discussions of, you know, is there any way to create an exception, the veteran exception, if you will. I know that people like myself on the Competition Committee, at least those who were asked questions certainly said, "We hope not and we do not want there to be," because our feeling all along was any time you create an exception, smarter minds will prevail, and that exception will become multiple exceptions. So that's why I think the cap as it is one that we should stick to and we should not try to create exceptions.

It makes very hard situations, as in **Tampa's** case with **Warren Sapp** and **John Lynch**, as it was in **Tampa's** case when I was there with **Hardy Nickerson**.

But I get very nervous when you start talking about exceptions because if you look at the **NBA** salary cap, I believe it's almost a cap of exceptions as opposed to a cap with an exception.

Q. I was curious, Jeff Fisher talked earlier this year that he was hoping on the

replay issue if the team won a challenge, they would immediately get one challenge back for that. Was there any discussion of that? I'm curious if you would let us know if there was more opposition to replay this year, what the vote was by the committee?

RICH McKAY: The vote by the committee was unanimous in support. That does not mean that one of the committee members will not have his team vote against it. That could happen. But the vote was unanimous.

With respect to your first question of an additional challenge, yes, it was discussed, the idea of if you win a challenge, you get a challenge back. But then we went back to the basic premise of the system, which was, when we put it in, it was to correct the obvious error on the big play. And accordingly, there are a number of us that would get very concerned when you go to a system that doesn't have limited challenges. In a some such as this when you have one for when the challenge in our mind would be unlimited. It would give you the ability to challenge what we all fear, which is the little five-yard out. The question is whether the guy caught it or not caught it. We don't really want you to use the challenge in that instance. We want to use it for big plays. That's why we've stayed away from the idea that you would get the challenge back if you're successful.

We did want to, as we say, we will recommend and there will be for discussion and potentially a vote the idea of giving you a third challenge, but that would only come if you got the first two right.

Q. Has there been serious discussion of extending the practice squads, particularly in light if the under classman rule doesn't end up standing and you have to absorb more players from that avenue? The other question is about the celebrations. I know Jeff Fisher said after the Joe Horn incident that maybe it was time to look at suspensions as well. Is that the next step? Joe Horn actually was penalized on that play. I'm wondering if you're going to wait to see how this works.

RICH McKAY: Good question. The practice squads, as a committee, we have been in favor of expansion of the practice squads since the committee was formed. It seems like it's been 10 years. Every year we've recommended that there be consideration of expansion of the practice squads basically because we think it gives you a better opportunity to, number one, develop players by keeping them within the **NFL** system; and

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number two, by helping you prepare for your opponents the next week when you realize the number of injured players you're practicing with every week.

This year the **Players Association** I think brought the issue to the table themselves. When we meet with the **Players Association** as a Competition Committee in **Indianapolis**, I think it is something that will be discussed at this meeting. And I think, likewise, it will be discussed in the **CBA** extension negotiation. So we would support it, and hopefully it is something that can be done.

With respect to celebrations, yes, we did discuss the issue of suspensions. But, again, our feeling is that we can curb the conduct by flags, because I don't think players want to see 15 yards thrown on their team as a penalty, and I think, likewise, they don't want to have to come to the sidelines and face the coach when that flag has been thrown. So hopefully this will curb the conduct, because suspensions certainly are something we do as a last resort as a league.

Q. A couple of questions about the overtime and playoff proposals. Are those the identical proposals that were brought up last year?

RICH McKAY: Yes, I think they are.

Q. Last year at this time you gave us an exact number. I think it was 38% of one-possession overtime games. You said it was about one-third this number.

RICH McKAY: I don't have those sitting right in front of me because my version of the report actually got thrown away last night. My new version won't be here until tomorrow. I think it went down to 30% this year.

GREG AIELLO: We'll put those numbers up on nflmedia.com. We've got them. But specifically last year, the numbers on playoffs.

Q. In regard to overtime, I recall last year the Commissioner talking about a proposal idea. I'm wondering what happened to it. Was the idea of treating the fifth period like the second or fourth period, where the team with the ball at the end would just maintain possession, did that have any legs in the meeting?

RICH McKAY: The answer I think would be no. We talked about -- I tell you, let me put it this way to you. I think when the issue of overtime was brought up, there was no real support that we were going to talk about it for a long time because

there's no real support for changing it once we looked at the numbers, saw that the numbers had come down. We talked quickly, I mean quickly, over the various alternatives that were discussed, one of which as you say is an extension of the game. I think all of us agreed the present format was better than making some major change such as that.

Q. Rich, during the Super Bowl week, Charlie Weiss and Romeo Crennel were affected most by the tampering rules this year, called for bigger changes allowing a second interview during the playoffs or allowing them to take a job, or if that couldn't happen, have a moratorium on all assistant coaches across the league taking jobs during the post-season. Any support on the committee for bigger changes to the tampering rules?

RICH McKAY: No, there really wasn't. They were discussed at length. Seems like every year we discuss the tampering rules in some way, shape or form. This year we discussed all the issues you put forth because of the high-profile nature of those coaches and their situations.

The problem you have in this area is very simple. It's a balancing act. You have teams, organizations and literally cities, fans, players, they're getting ready to play their biggest game of their lives. You want everybody focused on trying to win that game and giving all their best effort to win that game. Then you've got to balance against that the fact that this coach, this assistant coach, may have his opportunity to become a head coach somewhere. So it's a problem.

For years the position of the Competition Committee and the position of the league was that as long as your team's playing, you're not going to be allowed to be interviewed at all, because we don't want any distractions. And we felt like it was a very big step for the league to open up the windows that we opened up. And there was no real sentiment whatsoever to open up the second window, because at that point the feeling was that the focus should totally be on the **Super Bowl** and in trying to win, as I say, the biggest game of a lot of people's lives, and certainly the franchise's existence in most instances. We just couldn't see that happening.

With respect to allowing the coach to be hired, we felt like it's the same issue, which is, number one, you can't have a coach under contract to two different teams. Number two, you don't want that coach having to spend all his time worried about hiring his staff for when he's going to

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take the next job in, let's say, 10 days as opposed to getting ready for the **Super Bowl**.

It's not one that has a good answer or an easy answer, but it is one we think we've tried to find a middle ground and create a window, albeit it's not perfect. I think it's not perfect because the balancing act doesn't allow it to be perfect.

Q. I was talking to Tony, and I don't know whose doorstep it falls at, but the officiating being different regular season, post-season. Is that a Competition Committee issue? Where does that fall and how do you see their concerns?

RICH McKAY: It was something that was raised at the committee, discussed at the committee. It will be talked about, and it will be, I believe, in our report. But, yes, it is something that was raised. Historically the numbers are very close, but there is a number differential with respect to officiating.

But, you know, the only thing the committee recommends is, again, that the games be officiated as they would in the regular season. There's no rule change required here. There's nothing beyond that. But it was something that was discussed.

Q. Greg, is there any scheduled discussion on the northern climate Super Bowl issue? What's going on with that?

GREG AIELLO: No, not at all. The **Super Bowl** is not and the agenda at this meeting. The next **Super Bowl** to be awarded is 2009. And right now, we expect that **Super Bowl** to be awarded no earlier than next October's league meeting and no later than next March of 2005. There are no official candidate cities yet for that game, but we know that **Houston, New Orleans, Tampa** and **New York** are possible candidates, but not DC, I don't believe, because of the inauguration of 2009.

There's no schedule yet to award the 2010 **Super Bowl**. The bottom line is it's not a subject at this meeting, not on the agenda.

Q. Terrell Owens Sharpie thing or a Joe Horn thing could be penalized to individuals as well as group things?

GREG AIELLO: That's correct.

Q. The second question was, did the Marvin Lewis, John Fox success come up this year, because they were the coach three or four years ago that were kept from interviewing because they were in the Super Bowl?

RICH McKAY: Yes, it was brought up. It was brought up as showing that even though in the first instance they didn't get their shot following the **Super Bowl** year, they did get their shot the next year.

GREG AIELLO: The **Joe Horn, Terrell Owens** instances of extraneous objects, those results in flags because they were -- they're deemed taunting, is that correct?

RICH McKAY: They are deemed taunting, but they became flags because the Commissioner put such a policy in place two years ago and we have honored that. That's been the rule for the last two years. All we're doing this year is codifying it, putting it in the rule book. But, yes, they are deemed taunting and they are flagged, and they have been.

GREG AIELLO: But the group demonstrations have not been.

RICH McKAY: That's correct.

GREG AIELLO: They have not resulted in penalties, and that's the change being proposed. I know we're repeating ourselves, but we just want to make this clear.

RICH McKAY: That's correct.

Q. Can you be more specific about what high schools and colleges contacted you about this? Is there a concern about the way that pass interference is called in terms of penalties in the playoffs?

RICH McKAY: Yes, with respect to the contact from the high schools, I think we got two letters, one from -- don't ask me what the high school association is, but whatever it is, the national association, they were concerned with sportsmanship and recognized it. We can give you copies of those letters probably when we get to **Palm Beach**.

The second was from the **NCAA**. They commended us on trying to make sportsmanship a focus, but felt like we hadn't gone far enough, and thought flags were recommended. That, too, came in writing in a letter.

With respect to down field calls, I think that illegal contact will be a point of emphasis. That's the contact that occurs after five yards. It's been a point of emphasis before on the committee. Specifically in '94 it was a big point of emphasis by us, and I think this year will likewise be a big point of emphasis. That's all the grabbings of the jerseys, all the rerouting that's occurring beyond the five-yard area will be a point of emphasis in officiating, and that was talked about.

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Q. Enforcement of celebration, 15 yards on the ensuing kickoff, is that correct?

RICH McKAY: That's correct.

Q. The Commissioner was pretty outspoken about this at the Super Bowl, in regards to the extraneous objects. How does the Competition Committee see this? Do you think it's a major concern? Are these isolated incidents? In regard to the letters from the association, were those in response to the Joe Horn incident, particularly?

RICH McKAY: I think it's more than the *Joe Horn*. They're concerned beyond just *Joe Horn*. Probably, you know, *Joe Horn* may have prompted the letters. I think it goes a little deeper than that when you read them and realize they're concerned about these celebrations, if you will.

You know, it's an area that we felt needed addressing because of the fact that they've become more sophisticated, more prolonged and more preplanned as opposed to choreographed, I'll use a simpler phrase, than they've ever been. That is why we were focused on a penalty as opposed to just a fine.

Q. The unsportsmanlike conduct for the Sharpie and cell phone, is that a new rule this year or not? The other thing is, when you say a legal contact would be a point of emphasis with officials, what exactly does that mean?

RICH McKAY: With respect to the Sharpie, no, it is not a new penalty this year. That has been a penalty for the last two seasons following the Sharpie incident, as it's known. But that was done by Commissioner memo. All we're doing is putting it into an actual rule into the rule book.

With respect to a point of emphasis, what that means is we will spend time with the teams, when the officials go to visit the teams in the spring, and then again in training camps. We'll show them tape and we'll show them what we, meaning the Competition Committee and the league, want called in the area of down field penalties. We will likewise do that with the officials so that we all understand that now will be called. Hopefully the conduct will correct itself that way. Typically that means we'll probably have more fouls on early on in the process, and then typically the conduct begins to change itself based on the flags.

GREG AIELLO: Sharpie will be very pleased with this conference call.

RICH McKAY: Yes, I think they will.

Q. Greg, regarding the NFL Trust, while it's generating properties roughly \$4 million a year, how much concern has been raised from a revenue-sharing standpoint that this might create (inaudible) playing field? Number two, can you tell us how advanced the status of CBA extension talks with the unions are? Number three, do you have an estimate on when the schedule, the regular-league schedule, will be released? Number four, regarding expanding playoffs to 14 teams, doesn't that really create such an overwhelming advantage for the No. 1 seed to be unrealistic?

GREG AIELLO: I'll take the easy one first. The schedule, we expect the schedule to be released sometime in April when it's completed. Secondly, on the *CBA*, it says we will begin discussions on another extension by April 1st, but preliminary discussions have already begun with the union. We'll be working on our fifth extension of the '93 agreement.

So in *Palm Beach* at the meeting next week the management council will basically review the process and the timetable for trying to complete this extension, and the management council executive committee's involved in the negotiations. Management council will be working with the clubs to identify issues and to discuss the relevant issues with the union and work towards an extension.

Then as far as the revenue-sharing issue, it's certainly part of the *NFL* trust discussion. But the Master Agreement that has been developed with the clubs, and this is something that has been discussed at a series of league meetings for the past year, and there is strong -- there is a lot of clubs interested in this agreement going forward. It essentially preserves the business models in place and the revenue-sharing structure that is in place and would watch the business as it develops. If significant revenue disparities begin to occur, then certainly that issue would be discussed.

Rich, do you want to take the other one?

RICH McKAY: Sure.

With respect to expanding the playoffs to 14 teams, it's beyond question that, yes, it was discussed that that would create potential unreasonable advantage for the No. 1 seed having that one bye by themselves. When you looked at the advantage created by the bye for the one and two seed, you certainly see it with the participation throughout the playoffs and making the *Super*

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Bowl. To then give that to the No. 1 seed alone was definitely a concern for a lot of us.

But there are other issues that went into our recommendation also, but that is one of the items we considered.

Q. For the Competition Committee, any plan to discuss or have you discussed compensation for the Ravens in the Terrell Owens situation, the committee's thoughts in how that was handled?

RICH McKAY: That's a tough one because **Ozzie** is on the committee. **Ozzie** discussed competition, I can tell you that. No, he did not.

We did not discuss that issue. We obviously were living the issue because as we were meeting, that was going on with respect to the negotiation and the arrived-upon settlement. I'm assuming the arrived-upon settlement is a final settlement, and I don't expect anything else to come from it. At least if there was, nothing that I've heard of.

GREG AIELLO: I just want to go back one second to the **CBA** for background purposes. The current agreement has the final cap year being 2006, then an uncapped year in 2007, then the agreement would continue through the draft of 2008. So that's where we are right now. We will be working with the **Players Association** to extend that agreement further.

Q. Greg, I just wanted to get, kind of clarify what the exact proposal is in regards to the NFL trust. Is there any set number of years going forward? When will that vote take place?

GREG AIELLO: The proposal -- the resolution that is on the table that has been sent to the clubs has a term of 15 years. So it would be a Master Agreement on the licensing of sponsorship rights for 15 years. Yes, it is scheduled to be voted upon.

Was that the question, will it be voted on?

Q. Yes. I just wanted to make sure what date that vote will be taking place. From what you said earlier about moving forward, the agreement in place moving forward is what's going to be discussed.

GREG AIELLO: Right. So as far as the exact date for the vote, that hasn't been set. The Commissioner will make that determination, but it would either be -- the meeting is Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. I mean, the meeting is Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The vote would be one

of those three days. I would tend to doubt it would be on Monday. But the Commissioner will make that decision.

Thank you.

RICH McKAY: Thank you.

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