

## **Commissioner Goodell on WBBM (Bears Radio)**

Ron Gleason (Host), Jay Hilgenberg & Jim Schwantz (Former Bears)  
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**Gleason: We're joined now by the brand new commissioner of the NFL, Roger Goodell. First of all, congratulations on the job. What have you been doing the last month?**

RG: Thanks, Ron. I've been going to a lot of football games, which is fun. It's great to be here in Chicago, particularly for a great game between two undefeated teams.

**Gleason: You have kind of a tough act to follow. You've only had a couple commissioners over the past few decades. Pete Rozelle made things happen and Paul Tagliabue had tremendous success. Now where do you take it from here? Do we see the league expand some more? Do we see a team in LA? Do we see it going international? What should we expect over the next few years?**

RG: That's the great thing about my experience. I had the good fortune of working for the two greatest commissioners in sports – Pete Rozelle and Paul Tagliabue. That's the great thing about the NFL – we've always found new and innovative ways to bring more football to our fans. That's our mission: how do we get more football to our fans? I don't see expansion on the front burner right now, but I do see us playing more international games. I do see us finding new, creative and innovative ways get more football through technology into our fans' hands.

**Gleason: I understand there is a proposal that may come up in the next month or so about maybe playing two regular-season games internationally on a regular basis?**

RG: We played in Mexico last year in the regular season and it was a great success. We did it successfully in the sense that not only was it well received by our fans in Mexico, but the teams felt it was a great experience for them and it preserved the competitive quality of the two teams. That's something we are going to look to do more often.

**Schwantz: Is that something you are going look to do early in the season before teams start to get into the stretch run of their season? Is that something that would be taken into consideration when selecting teams to play in these games?**

RG: Absolutely. It would be high on our list. It's the competitive issues that are involved when you are taking teams internationally. We played in October last year. My guess is that you wouldn't play (international games) beyond October.

**Schwantz: Is China an area in which you want to expand in future years? Playing more games in different venues over there?**

RG: Yes it is. We have never played a game in China, so this is our first experience playing in Beijing. We think it's a great market for us. There is a tremendous amount of interest in American sports in general, but we think that the NFL is the greatest game in the world. We look forward to bringing our game over there. We expect it will be a great success.

**Hilgenberg: When you were a kid in the backyard throwing around "The Duke" with your brothers, did you ever dream that one day your name would be on that ball?**

RG: No, I didn't. It's funny you say that, Jay. I've been in the league for 25 years and they handed me a football a couple days after I was selected. It was really an incredible moment. I hadn't thought about that much, but it's a neat thing.

**Gleason: You were talking about the NFL being the greatest game. Certainly in Chicago, this has always been *the* franchise. When this team wins, it galvanizes the entire city. What does it mean to the NFL if the Bears are successful?**

RG: It is great for the league. As for the effect we can have on a community, we saw that last week in New Orleans with the Saints coming back and playing in the Superdome. It was just an unbelievable moment for the NFL and, frankly, for our country to be able to see them celebrate in New Orleans. You get the same feeling here in Chicago. My wife's family is from the area. I know how important the Bears are to this community, but they're important to the NFL primarily because of their success and their tradition. When the Bears are good, it's a great thing for the NFL. So we're glad to see them back and playing well.

**Gleason: You bring up the Saints. Of course, that is one of teams people are speculating may move to Los Angeles. How do you see that working out?**

RG: The success we had last Monday night, the people just supported the Saints so well down there. They are going through so much. Certainly there are more questions than answers down there, but our commitment is to do what's right for that community right now and make sure that we doing everything to ensure the Saints are successful down there.

**Gleason: Injuries are always a big story in the league. (Tampa Bay QB) Chris Simms goes down last week with an injury and winds up having an operation to have his spleen removed. There are so many rules that come up every single year, especially to protect the quarterback and other players as well. What more can the league actually do to protect these guys?**

RG: Injuries, as Jim and Jay know, are part of every sport, much less football where you have a great deal of contact. Every year we look at what we can do from a rules perspective to make the game safer for our players, but also from an equipment standpoint. Equipment has gotten better and better. We'll continue to try to find new ways to promote player safety because that's what people want to see. They want to see our great players on the field and we want to make sure we do that as safely as possible.

**Schwantz: Do you see the NFL Europe League as part of NFL's future plans?**

RG: I do, Jim. We've had NFL Europe for 15 years. It's been a great success because it's given players a greater opportunity to play. Anytime you can get guys a chance to play, it benefits the players and the game itself. We're seeing that tonight, because you've got a great player on the Bears who came from the Arena League to make a big impact (WR Rashied Davis).

**Hilgenberg: I have a question about last year's Super Bowl. I know it's an all-star crew that works the Super Bowl. Has there been any discussion about having the top-rated crew work that game to help the communication between officials? I think there were a few plays in last year's game that could have been cleared up by some better communication between officials.**

RG: Jay, that's an ongoing issue that we've been looking at. We've actually started to move back to a crew-based system over the past couple of years in the playoffs. But you have to balance it. Do you really want to put a rookie, a first-year official, out on field who hasn't been part of that experience? So we make a modification to the crew to allow some of our more senior officials to get in there.

**Gleason: I'd be remiss if I didn't bring up some of the off-the-field things that are going on in the league in terms of players. (Cincinnati LB) Odell Thurman was been suspended for the year. There have been a number of arrests recently. Ricky Manning Jr. of the Bears was involved with something here recently. What kind of expectations do you have for the players? I know you met with one of the teams in recent weeks to talk about what is expected.**

RG: Ron, I met with your Bears yesterday and I have met with three teams now. The NFL is held to a higher standard and we should be. We are the NFL. The players have to understand that it's not only a privilege to play in this league, but it's also a great responsibility to behave and be positive role models in the community. For the most part, most our players do that. They are terrific athletes and terrific people. But obviously when you have 2,000 young men, you are going to have some people that find themselves on the wrong side of the law. We're going to deal with that harshly. We have strong programs and policies against that and we'll continue to enforce those very aggressively.

**Gleason: Congratulations on the new position.**

RG: Thank you, Ron.

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