

September 24, 2006



An interview with:

**ROGER GOODELL
ROBERT KRAFT
DICK EBERSOL
REN JUN**

PETE ABITANTE: Good evening, everyone. We thank you for joining us for this important international announcement. I'll begin by introducing our participants.

First, the Chairman and CEO of the New England Patriots, Robert Kraft. Joining us from NBC Universal, its parent company General Electric, the Chairman of NBC Universal Sports and Olympics, Dick Ebersol. We want to offer a special welcome to Ms. Ren Jun of the Beijing Sports Bureau, who represents a contingent of 32 who are here for tonight's game from Beijing.

To begin our press conference, the Commissioner of the National Football League, Roger Goodell.

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: Welcome to everybody, certainly Robert, Dick, most importantly Ms. Ren. We're happy to be here tonight. You're going to hear from everybody up here on the stage.

Let me make the official announcement that we're all here for today. The National Football League is very proud to be able to announce that we will be playing Wednesday, August 8th, in Beijing at Workers Stadium with the New England

Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks representing the National Football League.

This is an exciting day for us to be able to announce this. It comes after many years of work. But it's also historic in many ways. Primarily two reasons:

The first is, of course, it's our first game in China for the NFL. The second is that this date, August 8th, marks one year from the beginning of the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008.

The site of the game will be Workers Stadium. This is an exciting venue for us. It is an Olympic venue, it is not the Olympic stadium, which will be under construction, but it's right in the heart of Beijing and something we think will be a great venue for this game.

Kickoff will be in prime time in Beijing at 8:30. It will be broadcast back here in the United States at 8:30 in the morning, the next morning, on NBC live. It will be in China in prime time on CCTV, our broadcast partner in China.

We certainly would not be here without the tremendous support and partnership of Dick Ebersol, representing NBC Sports, but also the broader family of GE, which is back in partnership with the NFL. We couldn't be happier about that partnership. Without their partnership, it's clear we would not be putting this game together for next season.

Of course, to Ms. Ren and the entire delegation from Beijing, we are thrilled to be partnering with her in Beijing in putting on this terrific event for the NFL and hopefully for Beijing.

We have gone through quite a process over the last several months to select two terrific organizations to represent the National Football League. We think that we have accomplished that. We had a tremendous amount of interest from our teams in being able to play in Beijing, but we have

been able to secure the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriots for a variety of reasons. One, their tremendous success in the National Football League in the United States, of course, but also because we think they represent the best of the United States and the best of the NFL both on the field and off the field. So we're thrilled.

Of course, tonight the Seahawks are playing against the Giants, so we weren't able to have any representatives of the Seahawks. But to represent the New England Patriots, the man who has created a tremendous success with his organization, three out of the last five Super Bowls, I'd ask Robert Kraft to please speak.

ROBERT KRAFT: Thank you, Commissioner.

I'd say on behalf of our family and our organization, we're honored and consider it a privilege to be chosen to play in the first China Bowl. Our family has been doing business in China since the late '80s. We are currently the No. 1 exporter from New England to China. We had always hoped and planned that one day this might be possible. We were the first National Football League team to start its own Chinese website, which we started in 2004 under Jonathan Kraft's leadership.

We've been looking forward to this day. Really, the thing that makes it special is to have Dick Ebersol and his leadership with NBC and General Electric. He puts the Olympics on, as the Commissioner said, one year to the day, having that same kind of expertise behind this game. We hope we bring you a very special game in China, and the Patriots win, developing a special legacy there (laughter).

DICK EBERSOL: For us, this seemed like a natural from the time we began talks with the NFL to renew our partnership more than a year-and-a-half ago. I can remember speaking with Roger at the various early stages of our negotiations to come back to football, how much we would like to be involved in brokering a game in Beijing. We have been very fortunate to be the partners of the Beijing Organizing Committee now for more than five years. Through them we began to get to know the fine people of the Beijing Sports Bureau.

This seems like an absolute natural to take the No. 1 sport in the United States of America to the greatest growing new society, it's hard to call China a "new society," but to so much of us it has become a new society. We look greatly forward to doing this.

I want to state as an American who has been doing business now in China for a period of time, this is truly a big honor for this game to be one year before the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games. Nothing is as important as I've seen in China as the Olympic Games. For them to have picked the National Football League to be their signal event to the world exactly one year before the games begin is a great honor to the National Football League.

We will carry this game on the morning of August 8th, '07, at 8:30 in the morning. The Today Show will precede it. Parts of The Today Show will emanate from China on that morning. We'll make it an extra special event.

We personally are very thrilled to be doing this game with both the Patriots, who are longtime partners of NBC, and our new friends at the Seahawks, who we will be televising next week.

PETE ABITANTE: Ms. Ren, would you like to say some words?

REN JUN: (Presentation in Mandarin.)

PETE ABITANTE: Questions for anybody on our panel this evening.

Q. Mr. Kraft, clearly this is an opportunity for the National Football League from a marketing standpoint. How do you see this from a marketing standpoint for the NFL?

ROBERT KRAFT: If there's any country we should bring our game to, it's the most populous country on earth where there's a great business environment and a great love of sport. We believe that over the next two to three decades, they're just looking for things American. In the end, I know some people have spoken about the social part of this, but there's nothing that brings people together like sport. We believe this is a great way to bring our two countries closer together.

Q. When did the planning for this all really begin? Can you any of you remember when the idea was first brought forward?

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: As I mentioned earlier, we really began a focus on this in 1999 through our partners that we have, not only domestic partners here, but also our international partners. We believed this was a great opportunity for the National Football League to grow the popularity of our game. We thought that Beijing, China in general was a great place for us to be

able to do that. So we have been focused us on it last several years.

Commissioner Tagliabue was over there just a year ago to meet with various officials. Our partnership with GE, I think, was the thing that probably put it over the top the last several months.

Q. What kind of familiarity is there in China with the NFL? Besides the actual football game, will the teams be in China for a while? What kind of things are you going to have the teams do besides the actual football game?

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: Let me address the first question for you.

From our perspective, the most important thing for us is to be able to build the game of football in China. We're not concerned where the popularity is now as much as where it will be in the future. We think by playing an American Bowl game in this market, it will give the Chinese an opportunity to really truly understand why it's America's passion and why we believe it will continue to grow in popularity in China.

We're excited about the opportunity to be able to do that, and we have two great franchises to be able to do that.

ROBERT KRAFT: We think this will be a life-changing experience for many of our coaches and players to have the opportunity to do this. We're working very hard. The coach has a pretty rigorous schedule he usually sets up. We hope there will be some opportunities that they can enjoy the cultural part of this trip.

Q. Mr. Kraft, most coaches don't like to change their lives during training camp. How do you make this a smooth trip for your team to handle it?

ROBERT KRAFT: Well, this will be an extra game, so really the way it's structured, we'll go out to Seattle, I believe it's Thursday night, and then go right after the game to Beijing and play there on Wednesday, then come right back. This will be a fifth game.

Our football people were part of it. We consulted with them on this. They were fully made aware of it, that this was in the NFL's and the New England Patriots' best short- and long-term plans.

DICK EBERSOL: Also, traditionally, if a team plays a fifth game in the NFL preseason, they're entitled to go to camp a week earlier, too. That's part of the regimen.

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: This is our 42nd international game. We have a great deal of experience about what a football team needs to do to prepare for a season. We've had tremendous experience doing that. I think we'll be able to provide what both teams need to make sure they're properly prepared for the 2007 season.

ROBERT KRAFT: Just going back to something else. The strength of our game is that we've been able to grow revenues, grow the sport. The players and the coaches and the organizations have been the biggest beneficiaries. If we don't do things like this, I think we'll lose our preeminence in U.S. sports.

Looking at the macro view, that's a very important reason that this game is as special as it is and should get the support of everyone associated with the National Football League.

Q. Commissioner, are there any sort of numbers about the Super Bowl's popularity on Chinese television? Anything that gives you a sense of where you are now to where you think you're going to be?

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: Yes. One of the most exciting developments is that we are now going to have each of our Sunday night games that are broadcast by NBC here in the United States broadcast in China on CCTV, which is the largest broadcaster in China. We have had television coverage in the past. It's been primarily focused on a limited number of games and our Super Bowl.

But this will be on weekly basis and will be used obviously to help promote our game and help give people a better understanding of the game. We think the broadcast coverage, our flag football we've been playing over there for the last three years, are all starting to bring along a great deal of attention and focus on the popularity of our game.

DICK EBERSOL: CCTV will televise tonight's game early tomorrow morning in Beijing, and the full halftime that will take place here tonight with the tribute to the China Bowl, the acrobats, the introduction of the Chinese Olympic mascots tonight, will be seen, I'm sure, throughout China by literally hundreds of millions of people.

ROBERT KRAFT: It's actually live. It's tomorrow morning, but it's live. We should also point out that the first game ever televised in China was Super Bowl XX, which the New England Patriots were in, but we didn't put out the

performance (laughter). But our family didn't own the team then. We hope we create a better image for the brand.

Q. What kind of impact have you seen in the past from American Bowl games? What is actually putting a game there do versus just marketing the sport?

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: It's a form of marketing the sport. When you're able to allow the people the opportunity to go to a stadium and experience not only the excitement of the game but the pageantry around the game, it just creates a spark and an interest for the game that we have seen very successfully launch our games overseas. We've done this in, I believe it's 12 different cities now. Forty-Second game coming up next year in Beijing.

It's had a great deal of impact not only on the television coverage but the ability of people to truly understand our game and truly grow our fan base.

Q. Any tailgating at Workers Stadium?

COMMISSIONER GOODELL: I sure hope so (laughter).

PETE ABITANTE: Thank you all for coming.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports