

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. This is Greg Aiello. The League Meeting has now become a lot more interesting with the Commissioner's announcement on Monday. Before we get to Rich McKay and your questions, let me give you some background information on the meeting starting with a few telephone numbers that you might want to jot down. First is the hotel, the Hyatt Grand Cypress phone number is (407) 239-1234. The NFL office number at the Hyatt will be (407) 238-4355. And finally, the media workroom number is (407) 238-4370. That workroom is located in the Regency I and II rooms on the lower level, and it opens at noon on Sunday.

The credential pickup desk will be handled by Brett Diamond. He will be stationed at a desk outside our office which is called the Palm Room on the lower level where the conference rooms are located. Brett will be there on Saturday starting at 11:00 AM until 7:00 PM, there all day Sunday from 8:00 to 7:00 and from Monday from 7:30 to 2:00.

The Competition Committee met for three days in Indianapolis at the Combine last month and also met for four and a half days last week in Naples, Florida. The committee will reconvene again late Saturday afternoon in Orlando.

On Sunday afternoon there will be presentations for club executives on the implementation of new TV contracts and also on the operation of the extended collective bargaining agreement. That's not an ownership meeting, although owners are invited. It's a presentation for club executives.

The meeting officially opens on Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. with the Commissioner's annual report to the clubs as required by our constitution and by-laws. The meeting will conclude by Wednesday afternoon.

We can expect the Commissioner to hold an initial press conference on Monday, probably at the lunch break. We'll keep you posted on that. Also, that afternoon we will make the Competition Committee co-chairs available to you as we always do, Rich McKay and Jeff Fisher, to discuss the Competition Committee report.

The annual coaches' breakfast will, again, be Tuesday and Wednesday morning, AFC coaches media breakfast, 7:30 a.m. Tuesday in what's called the bus portico area outside the conference room area on the lower level, the same

place we've done it for previous meetings at this hotel.

And the NFC coaches will be Wednesday at 7:15 a.m. at the same place, and please note the earlier start time on Wednesday, which is due to the coaches' annual meeting with the owners and Commissioner that starts at 8:15 that morning. All 32 head coaches are scheduled to attend this year's meeting.

We're also arranging for once again Mike Pereira and Larry Upson to conduct their annual session for you on rules and points of emphasis for 2006 similar to the presentation they will be giving the head coaches at this meeting, and we'll do that no earlier than Tuesday afternoon, possibly on Wednesday. Details will follow when we get to Orlando.

You are, as always, invited to join us Monday evening at our NFL reception at the hotel from 6:30 to 10:30. Dress is resort casual, and your families are welcome if they are going to be with you.

As for the agenda, the Competition Committee report will be distributed on Monday morning, but there will be no voting until at least Tuesday afternoon, possibly Wednesday morning as stipulated under our meeting procedures. Competition Committee-related issues on the agenda next week include player safety, including quarterback safety, possible modifications to the Instant Replay system, false starts, and on-field communication. There are a couple of proposals that are formally on the agenda proposing to extend the playoffs from 12 to 14 teams, and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are proposing to extend the scope of Instant Replay to include all penalties subject to review.

Rich McKay will discuss these subjects in more detail in just a minute. In addition to our Competition Committee, other items on the agenda include discussion by the owners and Commissioner on the process for selecting the next Commissioner, review and discussion of the extended CBA and League-related economic issues, a report from the Broadcasting Committee on the implementation of the new television contracts that take effect this year, and a report from the Los Angeles working group on the process and timeline for making decisions on the proposed stadium projects in the Los Angeles area.

Before turning it over to Rich here, the

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other members of the Competition Committee along with the co-chairs Rich McKay and Jeff Fisher of the Titans, it's Charlie Casserly of Houston, John Mara of the New York Giants, Ozzie Newsome of Baltimore, Bill Polian of Indianapolis, and Mark Richardson of Carolina. Those are the voting members. Marvin Lewis of Cincinnati is a non-voting member of the committee, and he's also part of the coaches' subcommittee, which is chaired by Tony Dungy of the *Colts* and includes Andy Reid of the Eagles, Jack Del Rio of the Jaguars.

Now, Rich will make several comments on the overall state of the game, and then we will turn to your questions.

**RICH MCKAY:** As Greg said, when we met both in Indianapolis and then again in Naples, as we have for a lot of years other than last year, we were interrupted and went to Hawaii, we also in Indianapolis spend a day with the players and the union and go through their concerns, talk about the rules that have been brought to the table, and get their views on those rules.

But it all starts with a survey that we do at the end of the year where we survey all the clubs, the coaches, the GMs, the owners, and ask for their input, and that really is what is the basis of the rules proposals that we will put forth when we get to Orlando.

This year looking at the game overall, obviously the thing that stands out is from a playoff system standpoint we had a 6th seed win the Super Bowl. That's the first time that's ever happened obviously, and also the first time that a 6 seed has made it to the Conference Championship Game. So that was quite an accomplishment, and something we're obviously happy to see from the balance of competition.

With respect to the traditional markers that we look at every year and what's the state of the game, the game remained in very solid shape. Margin of victory remained basically in the same place it's always been, which is about 45 percent of the games were decided by seven or fewer points, and 24 percent of the games were decided by three or fewer points.

Points per game remained above 41. It was 41.2. 40 is kind of the magic marker for us. We don't ever like to see the game go below 40 points per game. It was 41.2 this year. Length of game was three hours and 7 minutes and 6 seconds. That's down about 40 seconds from last year. We'd still like to see that get lower, but that's pretty much where it's been since replay in its current form was implemented.

So we look at the state of the game, and we see the state of the game being in good shape. Clearly there were late season playoff issues with officiating from the media standpoint and written about and talked about a lot. We did not see it as that. We actually looked at it from the standpoint that there were 39,000 plays this year in the league, and we thought the officials had a very good year. There's no question that there were a couple calls in the Super Bowl and/or the playoffs that we wish we had back, but by and large, it was a very good year.

With respect to the rules we propose, as Greg said, the focus for us this time came around to player safety. We always focus on player safety, but I think this year we've got a number of rules, five to be exact, that are all directed at player safety. The first one and the one that I'm sure will get the most talk will be about the quarterback, low hits on quarterbacks, putting a little more burden in the proposed rule on the defensive player. And in trying to change the language with respect to that, we're trying to protect the snappers on field goals. If you've watched on tape and seeing the snappers that snap the ball on short snaps, they get hit awfully hard. We're trying to protect them by not allowing anybody to line up head up on them. We're looking at blocks in the back on punts, and some of the things that are going on don't look very safe. So we're trying to change that rule and prevent the kicking team from being able to push or block in the back if the ball is in the air.

We're trying to propose again, as we have before, but were defeated probably six, seven years ago, the pro rule that would prevent loading up on the on-side kick. We would adopt a college rule if we could that would make sure that each side has at least four players to a side so you can't just load up on one side.

And we also are going to propose and talk about the broadening of the horse collar tackle rule to include the inside of the jersey beyond just the shoulder pad we saw. And only a few calls this year and a few fines, and yet when we watched the tape, we were not comfortable with a number of players that were made and the number of tackles and the effectiveness of those tackles and seek to potentially broaden that rule.

Replay, we propose two changes in replay under our proposals. Number one would be that you could now review down by contact. As you know, we proposed that last year, were not successful, and we'll propose it again. In that same proposal, we will also seek to limit the referees' review from 90 seconds, move to down to

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60 seconds. Just trying to save a little time and trying to move replay along at a little faster pace.

With respect to false starts, the penalty is becoming extremely high, penalty meaning in total number of fouls. We're trying to find ways to limit that. One of the things we will propose is allowing eligible receivers to reset so instead of killing the play, the receiver will be given the opportunity to replay and there will be no stoppage. That would not apply if the receiver took a step and had a complete false start, then they'd have to shut the play down. [We think this is the way to cut the number of fouls significantly if we deal with that area in false starts.

Likewise, we'll have a little recommendation to the membership concerning the coach to defense communicator. We'll propose this year that one defensive player be given the same apparatus that the quarterback has, so signals can be given that way. We think it's a more efficient way. We think it helps the defense in the sense that I don't want to accuse the offenses of stealing signals, but let's assume that they're borrowing the signals. We think it would be good for the game to give the defense that ability.

With that, that's a lot of the rules that we propose, and that's about all I have. I'll leave it up to questions.

**Q. I don't want to put you on the spot, so let me phrase the question this way: It's about a new Commissioner. Other than coming from a football family, what would be the good qualities for the best Commissioner to have?**

RICH McKAY: I appreciate the question. I think the best way to answer that is when the Commissioner lays out the plan for how the league will go about it, then maybe at that point they'll set forth the qualities that he will look for.

I hope those qualities in some way mirror the qualities that Paul brought to the table because we all know what he accomplished. I think for me it's better that I leave that question to that committee and/or the Commissioner to answer.

**Q. Two questions, one on the replay thing you just brought up -- the communication with the defense. Is that going to be a designated by position like the quarterback is, or can the coach designate a player on every play to be different, or does it have to be the middle linebacker?**

RICH McKAY: Very good question. The answer is the way we write it is the team can

designate one player on defense and that player cannot change during the game, and if that player were to be injured, then that would be the end of that communication for that game for that team. The system will not be designed the way we proposed it to, to be able to put on more than one player. We get concerned about that and we get concerned about the effects of that, so we made it so that we could -- the Atlanta Falcons -- -- and as long as Keith Brooking is in the game the communication system is up and running. Whenever Keith is out of the game you have to go back to hand signals.

**Q. Will you give us the LBJ answer; if elected, would you serve?**

RICH McKAY: I am invoking the lawyer in me that says it's a hypothetical question, which I will object to the hypothetical question. But I appreciate the question. I mean, as I told Greg when we talked about this before, I appreciate the fact that anybody would even mention my name, but by the same token, it's a long process, it's only pure speculation, so for me to say much of anything, I'm not sure that's appropriate.

**Q. The proposal to expand the playoff field, is that something the Competition Committee takes a position on, or is that outside what you guys do?**

RICH McKAY: We do take a position on that. We don't traditionally disclose that here. We do it when we get to the meeting. I will say one thing; it probably took us more time to discuss it and all the different aspects of it this year than any year I can remember in the past.

But it is one that has drawn a lot of media attention, and I think the league and the teams have talked a lot about it. We certainly talked a lot about it, and then we get to Orlando, we'll obviously tell you what our position was. But for now I'll just say that it is one that's definitely sparked some interest.

**Q. You spent more time talking about it this year. There's been fairly strong sentiment against it. What changed this year?**

RICH McKAY: I don't want to lead you down the path of the fact that there are -- there's sentiment for it or against it. I would just say that this year I think that because the sixth seed went as far as the sixth seed did this year, I think there are a lot of things to discuss with respect to the television implications and otherwise. I'm not sure that the sentiment has changed a lot, but I think

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that it is one that was discussed at length.

**Q. On the issue of officiating, internally you guys might think they had a good year, but the perception is completely opposite. Is the league worried that the perception of the officiating keeps getting worse?**

RICH McKAY: Well, I worry that the perception of the officiating is not good because I know what the perception is driven by. Basically it's one of those things that if you have just a couple, a handful of big plays in big games, then that's going to drive perception. And that is very tough.

We liked the Instant Replay system in the sense that it gave fans a little feel good that there could always be a second chance, but that doesn't apply to everything.

So it is disappointing that that's the perception, but it's very hard for us to control that perception as a league because quite frankly, that gets to the announcers that are announcing the game and questioning a call, whether they're right or wrong, once they question it, then that proverbial snowball begins to roll.

I think we need to do a good job as a Competition Committee and as a league in promoting what our officials do and how difficult a task it is, but I think the perception has always been a little tough because that's the way officiating goes.

I'll give you an example. I know we did a study Commission Committee-wise four or five years ago and we went back and we were able to find -- I don't know the number, but it was like out of 15 years, at least 10 times in those years there had been major market articles saying it was the worst year for officiating ever. And the reason is it had been driven by some call in some game, when in reality officiating as you know has been pretty consistent.

But I will say that it's one we don't like that perception, we don't like what happened in the playoffs and certainly followed by the Super Bowl because all of a sudden that is the snowball that says officiating didn't have a very good year when in our perception that is not the case.

**Q. The follow-up on the replay, including only pass interference as a reviewable call, how much discussion was that there with that?**

RICH McKAY: There wasn't. We mentioned the penalty aspect and we'll discuss that in Orlando, but we didn't discuss certain penalty. I realize where you're going, given the

severity of the penalty, should that be something that's looked at.

But remember, it becomes very hard when you have pure judgment calls, and there are a lot of judgment calls in our game, but pure judgment calls that you're going to allow replay to enter into. It's difficult, but I understand given the severity of the call, the thought that maybe that should be reviewable, but we didn't discuss that singularly.

**Q. On officiating, was there any discussion of why some crews call a lot more penalties than other crews?**

RICH McKAY: There sure was, and that's a good point, and that's something that I know is important to Mike Pereira and Larry Upton and those guys because what we're trying to do is create consistency, and when you get the swings that you get in some of the crews, what we talked about, and I think what Mike's focused on is trying to make sure that during the season, we're paying attention to those trends and that we're communicating with those crews in understanding what they're seeing and why they're calling it and seeing if we're all on the same page. I think we always have to strive to bring those numbers closer. They'll never be the same and they'll never be within five percent, but we'd certainly like them to be closer than they are. It was discussed.

**Q. Also, you said the perception because there were a few playoff calls, but when you look at players, they make reputations in playoffs. The stakes are big here, and I just wonder, in the playoffs, maybe you should tell these guys, make sure as a point of emphasis that these calls have to be obvious, like the holding call. Maybe technically you are holding, but should that call be made in that situation? Should there be any point of emphasis on hey, guys, make sure it's an obvious call and not a questionable call?**

RICH McKAY: Well, make sure it's a good call should apply in all games, but I understand exactly what you're saying about the Super Bowl and about the importance of the game.

But I would say to you that we've talked before as a committee and with the Officiating Department on the fact that we don't really want to see a different standard in the playoffs than apply in the regular season, because in the regular season guys become accustomed to what is going to be called and what isn't going to be called, and they know where the lines are drawn, and we just don't feel comfortable that all of a sudden you go to

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the playoffs and that line moves. It doesn't mean we want calls when they're not there, but I think we were a little uncomfortable that we would change the standard.

**Q. Maybe the standard in the regular season then -- fans don't go to the game to watch the officials. Maybe there should be a point of emphasis to make sure -- it's a penalty, rather than the way you think it is.**

RICH McKAY: I'll give you an example. We're trying to eliminate some pre-snap fouls that in our opinion don't affect the game like false starts, and then in blocking where we've got a big section in our book that will be on blocking clarifications and dealing with holding, really, and really just rewriting the rule, not changing the way it's officiated, but rewriting the rule so everybody has a clear understanding as we tried to do with defensive pass interference a number of years ago.

One of the things we emphasized in there was seeing the entire foul. If you do not see the entire foul, you cannot call holding. That's specifically applied when players go to the ground. Because what often happens is you see a player, a defensive player on the ground, the offensive player is on the ground and you see a flag, foul it. If you don't see the entire action, you cannot assume that it was holding that caused that player to go to the ground.

I see your point. There will actually be a segment in our report, and I understand your frustration, but we don't look at it as though we want people just to put their flags back in their pockets because at that point then all the rules become a little gray, and we do need to consistently as a committee and as a league make sure we know what the rules are, make sure we know how they're going to be called, and make sure the players know so there's a clear line. We didn't like the fact that the number of fouls this year was 17 whatever it was, not up dramatically but up a little bit, and we'd like to see that go down.

**Q. So you are redefining -- not redefining holding calls but you're saying make sure they see the whole play?**

RICH McKAY: Not go-to-the-ground penalty, which is basically a flag that you see a lot of times when two guys end up on the ground, it's offensive hold -- what we said is we want the officials to see the entire action, to make sure that they saw the holding and the restriction that caused the player to go to the ground.

**Q. Do you think the guy that made the Locklear call saw the whole play?**

RICH McKAY: You know, that's one call. I'm not going to be the one to -- I leave that to Mike Pereira.

**Q. You may have answered this, but I was going to ask how much you guys studied the key plays in the Super Bowl?**

RICH McKAY: We went back and looked at the playoff penalties. There was a defensive pass interference call or no call in I think the Denver game, I think in the Pittsburgh/Indy game and we looked at them all and went through them all and it wasn't a 100 percent success rate. We all noted that in the room.

By the same token, we're not talking about ten calls or 12 -- it wasn't overwhelming; it was just a couple calls that didn't -- probably didn't get right, and as we say, what bothers us is when those don't go right in the magnitude of the game, then all of a sudden there's almost an indictment of the system, which we weren't comfortable with, either.

**Q. Which ones were the ones that didn't go right?**

RICH McKAY: I would leave that to Mike, and I don't think that's one as a league that we spend a lot of time going back and saying, but I think everybody acknowledges that the tackle, if you will, or the low block was one that just shouldn't have been called, a tough one to call because he went right in front of the blocker, but still shouldn't have been called.

Beyond that, there's a lot of close calls, and I'm not sure I'm comfortable being the one that says which way they go. But I am comfortable in saying we reviewed them all with the officiating department and got the understanding of why they were called and how they were called and what the results were.

**Q. Last question. With a game where you've got so many millions and millions of people around the world watching, how do you balance having, obviously having questionable calls that looked like they could have gone either way with saying officials had a good year?**

RICH McKAY: I still look at it from this standpoint. There's 39,000 plays that go on. I have no question with the magnitude of the game, having been in one, it's the most important game we play, no question. But I just don't like when the trickle-down effect is that means we didn't have a

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good year.

Maybe we didn't have a good game or a good quarter or a good play as far as officiating goes, but I just don't buy into the theory that that means that officiating as a whole didn't have a good year.

**Q. What kind of light can you shed on this Bucs proposal, and is it the first time you've offered up this kind of proposal?**

RICH McKAY: I think it is the first time. I don't remember a proposal on Instant Replay that sought to open up all penalties for review. I don't remember that one.

So it was an interesting one, we talked about it for a good while. As I say, we're not one to give our positions at this time. We'll give them to you when we get to Orlando. But it's an interesting one. It does go to the idea that early on when we were talking about this system, the big thing in the system was to limit the number of challenges, but yet try to open up the areas you could challenge.

I mean, that was one of the driving forces of the system because we felt if we limited the number of challenges, then you would have a system that couldn't get out of control, couldn't interrupt the game too much. I see it in that regard, but I still think there are issues that go with it with respect to any time you review penalties, but it's the first time I've seen it proposed.

**Q. Last time there was a Commissioner vacancy, it was a long, drawn-out process. No matter how this thing ends up, what's your feeling about the timing on this issue?**

RICH McKAY: Well, I'm going to leave it to the committee and to what the owners decide and the Commissioner decides with respect to the process and the length of time. I think anybody that ever even gets mentioned in a top list of 500 isn't going to get real caught up in it. I think that you're going to stay on tap and stay on what you're doing, because in this league if you're working within the league, there's plenty to do on a daily basis other than worrying about what may or may not be.

I don't know what to make of the timing of it. I'm sure there will be some light shed on that when we get to Orlando, and I think they're going to do that maybe Monday afternoon. So we'll see after that.

**Q. Do you think it's likely Paul will sail off into the sunset in July?**

RICH McKAY: I think with respect to this, he can sail off whenever he would like. But I don't

know when that is. I don't know if that's July, I don't know if that's post-season. I'm sure he's going to have a lot to say about that, and I think the owners in setting up their committee and timetable will have something to say about that, but I don't think there's anything that sheds light on when that is.

**Q. I'm just wondering, on the false start penalties if there's any talk -- I've heard some defensive guys complain about football players using their hands when they're in the shotgun.**

RICH McKAY: Yeah, there was some talk of that and some talk of potentially limiting that, where they use their hands. Their hands cannot move in a quick, sudden manner that would simulate the start of a snap, so yeah, there has been talk of that.

**Q. I apologize if this is off-topic, but I wanted to ask you about the Abraham deal.**

RICH McKAY: We've got a press conference scheduled this afternoon at 5:30. But I know how these things work, so until I see the signed papers, then I'll believe it when I see it. I think we have agreements all across the board, but I don't think I've seen the papers signed yet. As we've been talking, I think I've had three or four people come in here and saying still not signed but working on it. I think we're getting closer.

**Q. This has got nothing to do with this, but an incident at the Combine where one of the player's Wonderlic score was released. I wonder if the league is going to do anything as far as that personal information, which as you know can be damaging.**

RICH McKAY: Yeah, and really it's unfortunate. And I hate to use a phrase I've used too much, but unacceptable situation. I think that Jeff Foster, who now runs the camp, the Combine, if you will, he works through the Competition Committee, did a great job this year. I think he's got some ideas on changing the way the tests are conducted, the privacy of those tests, how the information will be released, and I think that that will help alleviate any of the problems that may have occurred this year.

**Q. Can you give us the name of the person that runs that?**

RICH McKAY: *Jeff Foster.*

**Q. I've got a quick question for you here. I'm just wondering if there was any kind**

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**of word yet on when the NFL schedule will be released for 2006?**

GREG AIELLO: You should look for it the first half of April.

**Q. Can you elaborate on the quarterback safety thing and what kind of play Palmer played in the playoffs and what you're looking at.**

RICH McKAY: I don't know that the Palmer play was the driving force, but it was certainly a force, and it could cause us -- every year we look at all the injuries. We look at a tape that virtually looks at every major injury at every position. We definitely this year spent a lot of time looking at the quarterback tape and the quarterback injuries, and that's what we did.

And we tried to look at how they occurred and we tried to look at is there a way to deal with modifying the language, and came to the conclusion that we should at least try because we felt like, again, the quarterback position is a defenseless position when his feet are on the ground and he's throwing the football. We have to find ways to try to protect him. In this proposal that we're making, we're going to put a little more onus on the defensive player when the defensive player has an opportunity to avoid, he must take that opportunity to avoid. We'll see what the membership thinks, but again, we think it's very important to us, we know how important it is to the franchises and the stability of the franchises and what quarterback injuries have done to certain teams over the years, so we just felt it was time to try to see if we can change and modify the rule a little bit.

**Q. Are the Bengals being pretty vehement on this?**

RICH McKAY: No, Marvin has sat in our meetings, and he has made his suggestions and given his two cents. But no, I don't think the Bengals are -- I think they did the right thing. They raised the issue and realized under the old rule maybe the language needs to be modified a little bit, and we tended to agree. But I don't think it was just driven by Carson Palmer.

**Q. I don't know anyone who disputes that the NFL is king in this country right now as our No. 1 league. In your opinion, is there anything you can think of either on or off the field that could make this league better than it is right now?**

GREG AIELLO: Falcons as *Super Bowl* champs. I know one thing about the league is it

has been a great league for a long time. Its popularity gets stronger and stronger every year, and I think one of the reasons it is because we've done a good job of preserving the game and all the businesses that have been around it. And the Commissioner and the people in the league all did a great job of developing all those businesses, but they did it while preserving the game, and I think the fans appreciate it both watching it on TV and watching it in the stadiums, and hopefully it continues to grow. I don't know what's next for the league as far as that goes, we'll see.

**Q. I have one for Greg and one for Rich. Maybe tell us a little about the structure of the process for picking the next Commissioner. At this meeting could a timetable be set? Who's on the committee to pick a Commissioner? Will the committee be expanded?**

GREG AIELLO: There is no committee that's been formed yet. The Commissioner will lead initial discussion with the owners on the process on Monday afternoon. In fact, he sent the owners a memo yesterday outlining that and saying that a new committee will be established to conduct the Commissioner search process. But no existing committee has the responsibility at this time, so that's what we discussed.

The size, structure and role of the new special search committee, as he referred to it, will be matters for discussion next Monday. And the timetable is we don't have any other than the July date. And the last time we went through this, it took six months, and it was a protracted struggle and it took six months. I would think people going into it with perhaps a better process this time would anticipate getting it done sooner than that.

**Q. Back to the perception on officiating. Every time for ages and ages officiating issue comes up, it seems like fans always focus on the issue of full-time officials, and every time I talk to anybody really in the league, that really doesn't seem like it's on the radar for X, Y, Z, many reasons, but it's not feasible and this is a much better system. But would you agree that the issue -- is that frustrating to you, that the issue of full-time officials is one that never goes away, and do you agree that it's really not on the radar of NFL people?**

RICH McKAY: It doesn't frustrate me that it stays on the radar, because sometimes in our league that's how good changes have occurred. I

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think Lamar Hunt has proven that if you continue to pound away at submitting some type of proposal, you might get it and it might be in the league's best interest, whether it's a two-point conversion or whatever. With respect to this year, though, what's interesting is I don't think in the survey that we did, I'm not sure one team raised it. In fact, I'm pretty sure it was not raised. So it's not something that is on the radar screen.

A number of years ago it was in the sense that I think as a committee we talked long and hard, I think we might have spent a day and a half just talking on this issue all the pros and cons. I think the Commissioner, if I remember right, he even put together a little committee that involved former coaches to talk about it and give us some ideas, and we came to the conclusion, as you say, that the value of it was hypothetical and wasn't really going to be there at the end of the day, and we don't have a way to replicate games. We can't get practice in that way.

Instead of focusing on trying to have full-time officials, we've got to focus on trying to get coaches, players and officials on the same page, because I think when there's clarity you've got a better chance for consistency. That's really where we got to, as opposed to saying let's have people on the payroll all year and maybe that will make better officials.

**Q. The Troy Polamalu non-interception in the playoff game against the Colts seemed to under score some confusion as to what is a catch and not a catch. Was there much talk about that in Naples?**

RICH McKAY: Just the talk as there was the week after the game, that that call was not right, that the reversal was incorrect because of the fact that he had possession of the ball, he had gone to the ground and maintained possession of the ball; and the fact that the act of getting up was a separate act could have entered into the call. Nothing beyond that.

We've looked at those calls. One of the things that happens with the completion of a catch is it has become a much more difficult call from the standpoint that in replay, you can literally go frame by frame and see the ball move on contacting the ground. Accordingly, that becomes an incomplete pass. To the naked eye and the official on the field, that is very hard. I mean, you're looking at the act of the receiver catches the pass, going to the ground, you look, don't see the ball come out and that's a catch. But of course when you look at it on replay, you see the ball move a little bit. Whether that was the Tampa Bay playoff game

against Washington or whatever it may have been, that makes it hard. But we did not talk about changing the standard of completion of a catch but rather -- to your question, we did talk about the Troy Polamalu play.

**Q. I had a question about the horse collar rule and re-examining that, can you tell me the reasons for that? And did you feel it went uncalled?**

RICH McKAY: Well, I don't know that it went uncalled, because the way we wrote the language last year was so narrow that you really had to see the hand inside the shoulder pad and inside the collar of the shoulder pad, and we knew that was going to be difficult.

We thought what we would get is the potential for maybe some calls, not very many, but maybe the ability to fine players in the event they saw that. But in reality it was hard to do that, too, on tape. One thing we did see, we saw a lot more tackles done this way, both in college football and in pro football, and it concerned us.

So all we're proposing for discussion and trying to see if we can get past is the jersey now be included in the description, not just the shoulder pad. And we'll see, and I know that we'll hear from some of the defensive coaches with respect to that expansion. But it was very concerning.

When you watch the tape and you watch the manner in which these players are tackled when they're tackled from behind up near the shoulder pad or the jersey and pulled immediately to the ground, it was not a good-looking sight. It looks like it's the potential for a lot of injuries, so that's why we're suggesting it.

**Q. With the play that Ben Roethlisberger got hurt against the Chargers early in the season, was that one of the plays that you talked about kind of like with Carson Palmer? And also, I'm just wondering with regard to quarterback injuries, were there any other ones that you're concerned about besides those shots at the knees?**

RICH McKAY: Well, those are the ones that stood out to us. It was the low hits that stood out, that created the bad injuries, if you will. We did look at the Roethlisberger play against San Diego. I'm not sure you can read the language and decide for yourself, but I don't think that the way we've tried to rework the language that that would be a foul. I don't think it would be because there are instances in the rule we've proposed that says if you are blocked into or

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2006 NFL Annual Meeting**



fouled, meaning you're held or whatever into the quarterback, then if you have no opportunity to avoid, there's no penalty. But there are plays where we believe players are coming off a block, have an opportunity to avoid the low hit and do not, and we would like to see those called. But I don't think the San Diego play was one of them.

But we did look at a series of plays. I'm going to say we might have looked at -- maybe there were 15 plays, and we went through them play by play and tried to look at the idea of No. 1 was player blocked or fouled into the quarterback, and No. 2, could he have avoided the hit that he made because you've got to remember, the quarterback at that point with his feet in the ground, he's really defenseless. He can't really do anything to defend himself. That's what we looked at.

**Q. How many of those 15 plays do you think that the new rule would affect, penalize --**

RICH McKAY: That's a good question and you're testing my memory because I spend half my days on the phone trying to make a trade during that same day. I'm going to say the answer to that was probably eight to ten.

**Q. With the horse collaring, when you look back through the tapes, was the number of these types of tackles -- whether they were called or not, any different from the year before?**

RICH McKAY: I think there were more this year. I think there were more players comfortable with the tackling tactic than I've seen in years past. That's for certain.

**Q. And that's apparently watching the tape?**

RICH McKAY: Again, we don't want any more fouls. We just want people to think about other ways of going about tackling as opposed to allowing a player to get in front of you and then grab from behind and immediately pull down because when you do and your weight falls on the back of that player's legs, he's in a very bad position.

**Q. Previously there were so many high-profile injuries because of that. Were there any this year?**

RICH McKAY: I don't think they were the high-profile injuries. There were definitely injuries, one of which I know happened on our team, but there were definitely injuries. I don't think the high profile nature of them happened as much as the to

play and other plays, but there were definitely a number of injuries, and I don't think they were as severe as the years before, either.

**Q. You're curious on the false starts you're talking about, do you have numbers -- I'm curious if there was any percentages looked at, how many false starts are just those flinches you talked about as compared to guys getting a clear advantage by really moving before the snap.**

RICH McKAY: No, we don't have a way to differentiate that. We looked at it and we looked at a lot of things. That's not necessarily broken out in the numbers.

But when you look at the numbers, and I'm going to go off the top of my head because my book is on its way to Orlando, but when you look at the numbers, I think false starts total were in excess of 800 this year. We believe a lot of those are the flinches. We became uncomfortable in trying to expand it at this time to the offensive line, although we've talked about potentially this year expanding that to the offensive line in NFL Europe and trying to experiment over there and seeing how it would be officiated and seeing how players would play if we modified the rules.

We've looked at the outside receivers and said we've got a number of calls and a number of plays shut down where literally nothing happens other than a slight flinch, a couple-second delay and then the ball is snapped, but we shut the play down because we've told the officials it's a false start. We don't want to predict the number of fouls, but we think it is a big number that we think we can save some time and save some shutdown of the game for a penalty that does not have any effect on the game. We'll see the true numbers, but as I say, we don't break it down by flinch and then true false start.

**Q. When you say reset, does that just mean the officials would be instructed not to call it?**

RICH McKAY: That's correct. They don't shut the play down and the receiver has the opportunity to reset. Now, if the defender immediately reacts, it's on the offense. I mean, it's not a free pass. If you've got, for instance, a slot receiver and the slot receiver literally wiggles his back and nobody reacts and the quarterback snaps the ball, two seconds later, no foul, and the play moves on. So that's all we're trying to talk about. We're trying to inch our way into trying to limit false starts.

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2006 NFL Annual Meeting**

**Q. When I went to the new division setup you said the league looked at things over a several year period to see if there were any trends. I'm curious if there's been anything looked at in terms of I think it's three and four years where a wild-card team had a better record than a division winner but of course played that first game on the road. Has that been looked at?**

RICH McKAY: Yes, and that was talked about at length in our meetings this year, and that's the idea of do you want to see teams as opposed to allowing the division winner to have an automatic home game. There was no real recommendation by any team this year proposed and none suggested by the Competition Committee, but I would say a couple teams sent it in on the survey. We sat and talked about it and I think there are some teams that are continuing to talk about it and look at the numbers, and I think that is something that will be brought up in years to come.

**Q. Last thing, Greg, could you clarify on when it gets to the point of electing a Commissioner, something in my memory says that that was different than the three-quarters, that it might be two-thirds?**

GREG AIELLO: You're right, it's two-thirds, which in this case is 22, 22 of 32 required to approve the next Commissioner.

RICH McKAY: Also, the number of false start penalties last year was 850.

**Q. So that's 224 games, so that's an average of somewhere a little over four a game?**

RICH McKAY: 256 games.

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