

**Transcript of Press Briefing by Rich McKay,**  
**NFL Competition Committee Co-Chairman,**  
**Regarding Jersey-Numbering System**  
**From 5/23/06 League Meeting at Westin Tabor Center, Denver**

“Today we just engaged the owners on (the fact) we have had two conference calls on this issue of jersey numbering. There have been a number of requests, not just by the rookie drafted in New Orleans, but by a number of players. And we get them every year to discuss potential modification of the jersey-numbering system we have in place. We’ve had two (conference) calls, and at this time we’ve kind of come to the recommendation that we will make no change at this time.

“Number one, nobody’s comfortable with there being an exception made to the policy, because the exceptions just create a problem for every team.

“Number two, we’re not comfortable recommending any change at this time, also, because if something were adopted at this time, meaning at this meeting, you would have the difference between the way a rookie’s being treated and the way a veteran’s being treated, because there’s so much in the pipeline with respect to jerseys that there’s no way the veterans would be in any position to be able to change their jersey number.

“And, lastly, there’s no real sentiment yet on the Committee that there will ever be a change of the system or that there’s any need to have a change. So what we’ll do is we’ll have a conference call in a couple of weeks to go through and decide whether there’s sentiment to recommend a change down the road. If there would be, we’d talk about that change in October. And if there were such a change, that would be the opportunity for all players in the league to be treated the same.

“There’s no big change you can talk about anyhow because we have a lot, for instance, on eligible numbers, ineligible numbers and the like. But there are always some things that could be talked about.”

**(How drastic would this ever be? Mario Williams was No. 9 in college. Would you ever have defensive linemen with that number?)**

“No. No, there would be no sentiment to that because, again, we’ve got a couple of objects of ours. One is fan identification so fans know, when they see numbers, who players are and what position they play. Secondly, we’ve got eligibility issues and the eligibility issues really come into play on special teams. And when you start letting various players wear various numbers, it creates real problems with officials with respect to special teams, so we would not see, in our mind, a change such as you described.”

**(Is it safe to say what was done today was the Competition Committee or just the NFL, itself, decided there will be no change?)**

“The Competition Committee decided to recommend no change. Let’s look at it that way. There was nothing for the membership to vote on because we really didn’t present anything. The membership has the right to send in playing-rule proposals and changes, I think, all the way through, I’m going to guess and say mid-February or the end of February for the upcoming season. That time has long since past. But there have been times where the Competition Committee, as a standing committee, has recommended a change later in the process that has been adopted for the next season. But in this instance, that’s not the case. We decided not to do that.”

**(When you said there’s no real sentiment yet for any change to be made at any time, is that just because it was kind of dismissed as “now’s not the right time”?)**

“No, don’t say it was dismissed. Two conference calls about two-and-a-half-hours apiece doesn’t mean dismissed. It means a lot of time spent, not everything to do with that topic but that was one of the topics. So there’s been plenty of time spent on it. I don’t sense there’s overwhelming sentiment that that’s going to happen. I think what you have to do, and what we’re trying to do, is say, ‘If we change any category, what are the unintended consequences of that happening?’ Because you’ve got to look at all those teams that retired numbers. You’ve got to look at all the categories to make sure there’s enough available numbers so that all the players that play a certain position would have access to numbers that we like. We’re not focused on having a quarterback wear No. 86. And, like a 1 through 20 for a running back wouldn’t be a positive. So we’re trying to make sure that we pay attention to all those rules as you talk about modification.”

**(When you allowed receivers to go into the teens, was that just because you were running out of 80s?)**

“Yup. We had the retired 80s and we just kept running out of 80s because some teams were going to seven receivers and they were going to four tight ends, so the 80s were getting eaten up. So we felt we had to open up 10 to 19. What has happening before was we were letting overflow happen during training camp and then changing the number when they got to the regular season, and that really wasn’t necessarily good, so we opened up 10 to 19.”

**(When did you go with the teens for receivers?)**

“Two off-seasons ago.”

**(When was the numbering system changed for the whole league?)**

“’73 was the big change.”