

October 11, 2005

NFL Media Teleconference

An interview with:

COMMISSIONER PAUL TAGLIABUE

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Good morning. Last week was historic in the international development of the National Football League and the NFL Europe League. On the NFL side, we had a first-ever regular-season game outside of the United States played in Mexico City on Sunday, October 2. It was attended by an NFL regular-season record crowd of more than 103,000 people.

On the NFL Europe League side this past Thursday in Detroit, our 32 teams voted overwhelmingly to approve a five-year business plan for the NFL Europe League.

As you know, the league is already 13 years old, so this decision by our teams will bring us to 18 years when we finish this next five-year cycle. This is a relatively short period of time to develop a sport outside of its original boundaries, but it's a long-term commitment by our owners to developing our game in Europe. I think the support for the resolution and for this decision demonstrates the NFL team owners' commitment to Europe and to the development of playing talent from Europe.

Overall, this has been a very exciting year for us around the globe. Our Super Bowl television ratings in Europe were improved. The NFL Europe League season had the highest average attendance in more than a decade and we had a great crowd at the World Bowl game. I visited China in May, and then we had our Flag Football Youth World Championship in Beijing in August. We had a successful American Bowl game in Tokyo. Now in the last two weeks we had both the success in Mexico City and most important of all the decision to continue the Europe League for five more seasons.

With that background, I know many of you might have questions focusing on Europe. I'll be glad to take your questions at this time.

Q. Can you tell us about the vote. Was it a unanimous vote for the NFL Europe engagement?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It was one vote short of being unanimous. We had 31 teams in favor and one team had reservations, and therefore was opposed. This was quite a strong endorsement. Several years ago, there were additional teams who had reservations. Those reservations have been addressed with the continued improvement in attendance and continued support of businesses, and also I think that the activities of our NFL Europe League Advisory Board were found to be impressive by our team owners.

Q. What influence had the successful start of the Sea Devils on the decision?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: That was an important point. We reviewed for the owners the performance of each of the six teams, and of course in the case of Hamburg the Sea Devils had the fastest and most successful launch. That was impressive. Also the continued strong performance in other German cities and a strong performance of Amsterdam in winning the championship. All of these individual situations were reviewed and were positive factors.

Q. Could you maybe briefly outline a little bit the business plan for the next five years, what you're looking forward to achieving in this period.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think it centers on several things:

One would be strengthening our ties with each local community, starting with the elected officials, the mayor in most cases, as well as the business community supporting each team.

Secondly, we want to focus on player development, both non-US players and also I'd like to have a program for US players to have the ability to return to Europe League teams and become a more permanent part of a team, with more of a connection to the fans.

The third area would be to continue to develop our television programming, both for the Europe League and for the NFL. We feel some of the television arrangements that we've recently negotiated are positive in this area. We have a new four-year deal with the North American Sports

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Network. We have another deal with our long-time partner Premiere, which allows weekly coverage of NFL regular season and playoffs. We're currently in negotiations to have Super Bowl aired on a major free-to-air network.

Obviously, we feel the stadiums we have now are strong, state-of-the-art facilities. In 2006, we'll be moving our season up a couple of weeks to adjust to the conditions of the World Cup centered in Germany.

Q. You just mentioned the advisory board. Can you give us a little insight, what exactly the advisory board is doing and how they contact the owners of the US teams.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: The advisory board has been meeting periodically with me and other league executives, giving us a very good, in-depth perspective from European businessmen about sport and the youth entertainment in Europe. They have been active in meeting with our owners. The chairman, Jürgen Weber, also one of the other board members, Utz Claasen, attended the Super Bowl in Jacksonville in February and met with a number of our owners.

We have issued to the owners here in the States a report based upon advisory board meetings talking about the program to get local businesses more deeply involved with the teams. And then finally, two of the advisory board members, Fred Irwin, who is the president of the American chamber in Frankfurt, and Michael Klein of CitiGroup, attended a meeting with a group of owners in Atlanta in the second week of September, and also Michael Klein attended our owners meetings last week to give a perspective on economic conditions throughout Europe, including Germany, and potential for the continued development of NFL Europe in that economic environment. Dr. Claasen was scheduled to attend the meeting we had in Atlanta in mid September, but had to cancel because of a late unexpected conflict.

All of the board members have been quite active in those types of meetings and discussions, attending other games and events in Europe, and even in the case of Dr. Weber, appearing on telecasts of NFL Europe League games here in the States to talk about his point of view on the future potential of our form of football in Europe.

Q. Your agreement for five years, does this agreement guarantee the league as a whole or also certain franchises at certain places?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It was focused on the league as a whole and did not impose any specific requirements in terms of individual teams. But, as I mentioned earlier, we did review for the owners the performance of each team and the evolution of the success of each team in Europe. Our owners found it to be quite satisfactory and quite impressive.

Q. I'd like to know if there are any expansion plans for the next five years? There was talk about two additional teams in Germany earlier this year.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: On that point, I was going to mention that the resolution does not speak one way or the other about expansion. It does not set forth an expansion plan or expansion target, nor does it prohibit expansion. It leaves that decision to me as the commissioner, or to our Europe advisory board and to what we call our NFL Business Ventures Committee. This committee oversees all of our business activities, including international development.

If we have any recommendations for expansion, we would review it with that committee, which consists of representatives from about a dozen of our 32 teams. That's, in effect, a delegation to this committee to consider expansion, and then if we had specific plans, we could take those up with the entire NFL membership.

Q. Is it possible that we have an American Bowl or an NFL game in Germany in the next five years?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Certainly that's possible. As you may know, Mayor Erwin attended the regular-season game in Mexico City 10 days ago, as did representatives of cities in Canada and Japan. Certainly we're looking at an American Bowl game as one possibility, but also looking at the idea of additional regular-season games outside of the United States, including in Europe.

We also expect to have a decision shortly on the location of the World Bowl game for this next season, 2006, and we should have an announcement on that before the end of this month.

Q. In an interview with the NFL network in June, you talked about looking over the period of five years working closely with German business, that they manage and present the teams in their local areas. Could

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you go a little deeper on that, what this could look like?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: This would be a structure for the Europe League that would have two key aspects: one would be the league element, which would be the NFL continuing to put together the football teams, the coaching staffs, continuing to develop players outside of the United States, trying to grow the number of non-US players on each Europe League team. That would be one aspect.

The second aspect would be some type of a licensing or contractual relationship with local businesses or regional businesses or national businesses which had a strong local presence, under which they would associate their company's name and their company's product or services with the team.

They would also be responsible for local management, local promotion, selling of tickets, and all of the other aspects of integrating the team into the community. In this way, we think there could be a much-enhanced local presence and also an additional element to the rivalries between the teams representing the various cities in the league.

This would grow out of discussions we've had with the advisory board and would be an extension of the type of support that we received last year when **Baden-Wurttemberg** was the presenting sponsor of the World Bowl with the Yellow Strom brand. This model we talked about would extend to support of individual local teams.

Q. You mentioned the development of non-American players in the NFL Europe League. In other American sports like basketball and baseball, you have international stars, meanwhile the NFL is still a pure American League. Why is that so and how important would it be to have international stars in the NFL?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: We have a growing number of non-US players from around the globe playing in the NFL. Many of them came to the States at a time when it was possible for them to participate in high school or intercollegiate sport here. As you probably know, we have Constantin Ritzmann, who came from Germany and played at the University of Tennessee, is now on the practice squad for the Buffalo Bills. We have eight other European players on practice squads in the AFC West and the NFC South right now.

I think over time a pattern can develop where athletes playing our form of football can come over here to participate at the intercollegiate level, which has been the case with athletes in track and field, gymnastics, swimming, basketball for many decades.

I think as we go forward, you can expect to see a pattern that could follow the way other athletes in other sports took advantage of the opportunity to play in the States to become a world class performer in a sport which had most of its roots in the States. I think you can see this is happening in reverse, in other sports, such as soccer that have had their roots elsewhere but are now seeing an increasing number of American athletes participating along with world-class athletes from other countries.

Q. If you look to the future, is it possible or thinkable that in addition to the AFC north, AFC north and NFC west, that you have AFC Europe?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Long-term I think we could expect to have teams outside of the United States in the NFL. I think we could also expect to see national leagues develop in addition to the Canadian Football League. In Mexico we have been very impressed with the development of intercollegiate football among universities and technical schools at the university level. All of these things will take time and they will take strong support from local fans and local officials and businesses.

I think you look back at the history of other sports, you can see that over a course of four, five or six decades these kinds of developments have taken place.

Q. Regarding the near future, the TV airing of next season of the NFL Europe, are there any contracts or contracts with free TV channels, in Germany especially?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: There are discussions going on. Also we are well aware of the mandated conversion to digital television in Germany in the latter part of this decade. I think in the weeks ahead David Tossell and others in our offices in Europe could keep you posted on any specific developments.

As I mentioned, the only discussions that have recently concluded relate to German television coverage of the NFL, and those seem to be the most important. We have not had any specific developments on coverage of the Europe League.

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We are in discussions here in the States with FOX and with our own NFL Network for broadcast plans next season. I'm sure they will be very strong since NFL Europe League programming has a growing audience among our fans here during the springtime.

Q. How much of a *European* aspect do you see in the near or not too near future in the *NFL Europe League*? Will there be new teams from outside of *Germany*?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I spoke about expansion earlier. I mentioned the resolution that was adopted did not either mandate expansion or prohibit it. It leaves it for further development based upon my recommendations and discussion and recommendation of our NFL Europe Advisory Board and our NFL Business Ventures Committee.

One of the things that we did make clear in connection with this five-year extension of the Europe League is that it will be a very important goal to transform it into a league that has stronger local ties, local roots, and this would include both players and team operations by German or European businesses, and also television. We want to continue to make the league ever-more responsive to our fans in Europe, with greater participation by European players and coaches.

Q. *Jurgen Weber* from the advisory board talked about telling you one of the most important things would be renaming the league and giving the league a more *German* title. Is this still an issue?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't know that it's an issue. It's certainly a discussion that we will be having in the future. We have started to look at different possible names for the league itself. The question of additional teams in Germany or outside of Germany also will be a subject of discussion.

But for the 2006 season, we'll have the same format as we have had during 2005. It's worked successfully. Any changes that we would contemplate would be made either for 2007 or beyond. We feel that the model we have now, the structure we have now, is working well and has the best chance of continuing to succeed, especially in the context of the World Cup in Germany during 2006.

Q. When will there be a decision with the coaches in *Cologne* and *Dusseldorf*?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: We expect to have those very shortly. Our football operations group has been talking with our people in Europe. It should be a matter of weeks to announce those decisions. We also would be planning to have another meeting that I would attend in Europe with the advisory board certainly sometime between now and mid December at the latest.

Q. Could you give us your expectation of what the *NFL Europe League* will look like in 2010 when this cycle of five years is over.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: My expectation would be that we would have additional teams and that we would have a growing number of non-US players and also that we would have growing attendance and increasing television coverage.

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