

Commissioner Tagliabue on Wellington Mara
NFL Network – October 25, 2005

Q: Thank you for joining us Commissioner.

PT: I'm glad to be part of your tribute to Mr. Mara

Q: When was the last time you spoke with him and what did he say?

PT: I spoke to him on Labor Day weekend. We were talking about our negotiations with the Players Association. He asked if I could give him a leave of absence from our labor relations committee, on which he had served since 1968. Specifically we talked about the fact that his son John would represent him during what he hoped would be an interim leave of absence. It was a wonderful conversation. It was about the league and the relationship between the teams and the owners on the one hand and the players on the other hand, about which he felt so strongly. He was anxious to continue to make a contribution, but just as anxious to pass the legacy and the torch on to his son John.

Q: What do you think his lasting legacy will be?

PT: His lasting legacy will be some tremendous teams, some tremendous players, some wonderful coaches, not just with the Giants, but all over the league: Lombardi, Landry and others. When all is said and done I think Wellington Mara is about conviction, integrity and principle. He had a concern for the fans and a passion for the game. That is what really drove him.

Q: What can you tell us about his character?

PT: His character was one of a kind. When he was convinced of something it was hard to shake him. You could never shake him at all when it came to the foundations of the game, the integrity of the game, and the focus on the fans and on the players and the people playing the game on the field. He was deeply religious. It was one of the great parts of his character. His love for his family and his faith in the Lord certainly characterized his life.

Q: What were his concerns over the future of the NFL?

PT: His concerns about the future probably had to do with success and his feeling that the game would be great as long as we were true to the principles of the game and true to our passion for the game of football, but that if we became too big we would probably risk losing some of the focus on the game itself and on the fans – on those blue-collar workers who loved football as an outlet in their lives, loved the players and loved to play the game. He was concerned that too much success could ultimately prove to be the path toward a lack of success on those priorities and those values that he thought were most important.

Q: In the '60s the Mara family had a lot of power in the NFL, but they made a decision concerning revenue sharing that benefited all the owners. Tell us about that.

PT: It was around 1960-61 when Pete Rozelle first became the commissioner and the decision was made for the league to control all of the national television revenue for the regular season and the postseason. The Maras and the Halases and others who were in big markets supported the whole league in the equal sharing of television revenue among all franchises, including the Packers, which were in the then-smallest market in the league. That's been the economic foundation of the league's success in the last five decades and will be the foundation for the league's success well into the 21st century. It was a selfless decision for the good of the league and something that he spoke eloquently about in recent years as we debated the structure of the league – his belief that the sharing of revenue was important whether it was based on need or

not. It created a foundation and structure that would always ensure every fan in every NFL city would have a team that would be representative and worth cheering for.