

Commissioner Tagliabue Press Conference
Los Angeles City Hall
November 10, 2005

Good morning. I certainly appreciate everyone being here. We had a meeting with the mayor and talked about the progress that's been made on agreements for the NFL to return a team to the Coliseum. And the basic points that I emphasized were that in the last year, a very significant progress has been made. We have reached agreements on term sheets for the NFL to have a team at the Coliseum. That in the next several months we'll be working very closely with representatives of the Coliseum, the city, the county and the state to convert a term sheet into definitive agreements and all the related approvals that will eventually be required for us to present this our ownership at our annual meeting, which starts in March and then resumes in May.

We also talked more broadly about the importance of having a team here in Los Angeles that will have deep roots in the entire community. For an NFL team to be successful in an optimal way, it needs to connect to all parts of the community and all ages, be supportive of youth sports and education for young people, and all of the other things that a well run, well respected sports franchise can bring to a community.

And finally we talked about the other critical piece, which is business community support and the importance of a team having mutually beneficial relationships with the leading businesses in the community. Also, of course, the one piece of discussion was that the agreements that would eventually be presented would include arrangements for USC to continue to play in the Coliseum on terms that would be more than satisfactory for that great university and its currently stellar football team.

That was the scope and focus of the discussion, and I'll take questions...

Q: So is the Coliseum the leader?

I would say that obviously it's known we've been talking to Anaheim and to the Coliseum. We're looking at this not as an either/or, there's the potential that we would have teams in both places. But I feel right now that the focus is on the Coliseum as an opportunity, and we'll be meeting today with Mayor Pringle in Anaheim, and those conversations will recognize that it's not necessarily an either or situation.

Q: What's your timeline? Has it fluctuated?

If my timeline has been fluctuating, it's because the only one who can create a timeline here and stick to it is a person who has more foresight than I have. These things aren't driven by timelines, they're driven by good-faith discussions

and they're driven by developing an understanding of the mutual benefits of having a team, benefits to the NFL, benefits to whatever city or community we're dealing with. I think the critical thing now is we're at the point now where it's recognized certainly by us and the mayor emphasized this that the timing to get something done is right. With the progress we've made on term sheets, I think we can bring this to fruition.

Re: Calling the Saints report “nonsensical”

What I said was nonsensical, which was reported in the Washington Post, is that we were currently discussing that as a priority. We're not currently discussing the Saints in Los Angeles as a priority. We're discussing the Saints in Louisiana as a priority. I made that clear a couple of weeks ago in my visit to Baton Rouge and my meetings down there with Gov. Blanco. In those meetings down there with the governor and with Mayor Nagin and others, it is understood and it has been discussed that there are great uncertainties right now in the Gulf Coast region. Those uncertainties are going to have to be addressed with respect to the NFL and all of the other businesses that were robust in the New Orleans area and the Gulf Coast region. I think that everyone down there recognizes that decisions made on one set of subjects by state government, local government, federal government will impact decisions on other subjects. So there are uncertainties. But we're going to try to work through those uncertainties and keep the Saints, if we can, in Louisiana.

Re: Rose Bowl

Is the Rose Bowl still a viable option? There's an initiative there, there's litigation there. I think the answer to the question depends on the outcome of some of those activities.

Q: Are the Saints an option?

I've said all I'm going to say on the Saints today.

Q: If your focus is on the Coliseum, what will you say to Mayor Pringle?

I said my focus is on the Coliseum. We have to get agreements finalized. The agreements have to include arrangements for USC to use the stadium on terms that are satisfactory to USC. So we'll be pursuing all of those things, and we will simultaneously be pursuing agreements with Anaheim. But those agreements are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Q: So would you call Anaheim a dark horse?

No, I said we were going to working with both communities to finalize agreements. But the agreements are no mutually exclusive. If and when we finalize agreements, and I'm optimistic that we can, then we'll make decisions.

Q: Existing team or expansion?

We have not really had any in-depth discussions about the team, other than the fact that it could be either an existing team or an expansion team, but that's always the case.

Re: Notion that the NFL uses LA to leverage other cities into building stadiums for their own teams.

I think it's mostly a rhetorical idea that sells newspapers and gets people excited, but I don't think that there's much reality to it. I think that most of our teams have demonstrated for many decades that they want to continue their operations where they are. They have deep roots in those communities where they've been, usually including ownership roots, and they've gotten things done without having to talk about Los Angeles.

Q: Why is it important to be back in LA?

I think it's important for the NFL over the long term to serve all of America. We are the No. 1 professional sport in America, and if you want to continue to be No. 1 you need to serve the entire nation. That means both good television arrangements, which we currently have, and that means teams on the ground with service in communities, and that includes Los Angeles and the entire state of California. I've said before that one of our priorities is to not only get a team here, but to get better facilities for our teams in San Diego, Oakland and San Francisco. If you're going to be No. 1 in this environment you've got to have great electronic distribution, and strong teams in the major population centers of the nation, which are also the most diverse parts of the nation and the parts of the nation where there's tremendous energy, activity.

Q: What's the likelihood of getting a stadium deal done at Coliseum and Anaheim?

What's the likelihood? I'm optimistic we can get both things done.

Re: How much closer are you to a firm plan for an LA or Anaheim franchise?

The key point that we made this morning with the mayor, and we also discussed it yesterday with the governor is that in the past year very significant progress has been made. It's the first time we've had agreements on term sheets which cover all the key points that could lead to having a team here and/or having a

team in Anaheim. So, yes, we are one step closer, two or three steps closer, you can characterize it however you want.

Whether it's 2009, 2010 or 2000-whatever, our goal as we discussed with the mayor this morning and the governor yesterday, our goal is to have definitive agreements on all the key subject matters done well in advance of our league meetings in March. We've discussed the desirability of getting that done by early February. There are some optimists who think it might be able to be done in time for a regularly scheduled Coliseum Commission meeting on January 11. There are others who feel it might be more realistic to have that done by mid-February. What I've told both the mayor and the governor is that the goal is to have as many of the key agreements done as possible well in advance of our March meeting, which starts on March 26.

Q: How much support from owners to have teams in both places?

I can't answer that question because I haven't discussed that with them. That's what we're going to be discussing in March and in May.

Q: Are you going to speak with the county or coliseum commission?

No. Not at this time.

Q: If everything is in place, will the owners vote?

That would be the objective.

Q: What would they be voting on?

They'd be voting on the alternatives we present to them.

Re: The number of different venues in the area.

I don't think the number of venues matters. What really matters is to have the right kind of facility, and just as important, maybe more important, is to have the right kind of approach to making the team attractive, making the team an asset throughout the entire region. And also to have the right kind of relationships with the business community.

Q: It's hard enough to get one stadium built, has something changed?

Yes. I think what has changed is our discussions with the city of Anaheim about a potential stadium there have been very productive and look like they could produce a realistic alternative.

Re: Pete Carroll.

It's more just a courtesy to meet with Pete Carroll. I've known him for many years, going back to the days when he was a defensive coach with the New York Jets. He and other members of our staff who are here with me today have had a terrific relationship, including when Pete was with the Patriots. In some ways I just want to meet him and see if some of his gold dust that produces success can rub off on us.