

February 3, 2006

SUPER BOWL XL

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

COMMISSIONER PAUL TAGLIABUE SUPER BOWL XL PRESS CONFERENCE

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Good morning and welcome to **Super Bowl XL**. Thank you for being here. There's been a lot of reflection this season and especially this week on four decades of **Super Bowl** history. The first 39 **Super Bowls** were filled with great performances, tremendous competition, unexpected outcomes and so many memorable moments.

You all have your favorites, your bests, your most exciting, as do football fans throughout America and throughout the world.

By today's standards the **Super Bowl** had modest beginnings. But it has always been about football, the players, the coaches and the game between the best two teams still standing after an entire NFL season.

The **Super Bowl** now takes on a magnitude that almost defies the imagination, and it is due to many things, among them the passion of the fans, how the game completes each season of terrific competition and crowns the champion. And there's no second chance, no second or third game, no rematch. It's over when the game clock hits zero.

So on behalf of the entire League, I want to thank the players, the coaches, the teams and the host communities, the fans and the media for making the **Super Bowl** what it has become, an unofficial mid winter national holiday.

This weekend the Most Valuable Players in almost all prior **Super Bowl** games are with us here in **Detroit** to celebrate **Super Bowl** history. They will be introduced during pregame ceremonies on Sunday, but many of them are also here this morning, and I would ask them to stand and be recognized. You can recognize most of them, I'm sure. Men, stand up. (Applause.) We are thrilled to have you here, and really appreciate what you have meant to our game and to America in terms of its values and its passion for sports. Thanks.

Much has changed for the City of **Detroit** in 25 years since the **Super Bowl** was played here last. The energy of the city and the revival of downtown **Detroit** are evident.

What has not changed is **Detroit's** place as one of America's most important and historic cities. To Mayor **Kilpatrick**, to **Roger Penske**, to the entire **Host Committee** and to all of the people of the **Detroit** area who have worked so hard on this **Super Bowl**, we thank you. You have done a fabulous job. Your town is a wonderful host and the hospitality exceeds most everybody's expectation.

We wouldn't be here if it were not for the Ford family, who led the way in developing **Ford Field** as a catalyst for the redevelopment of downtown **Detroit**, including the return of the **Super Bowl** to **Detroit**. And the Ford family's leadership has certainly been a big part, not just of the NFL and NFL history, but of **Detroit** and our nation's history.

Our 2005 season covered the spectrum from triumph to loss, on and off the field. Our players, coaches, and teams can take pride in the way they met some very difficult challenges this year -- from the **Giants** to the **49ers** to the **Colts** and to the **Saints** and their fans. Like the rest of the nation, loss is also on our minds here this weekend with the recent passing of two revered national leaders, **Corretta Scott King** and **Detroit's own Rosa Parks**.

Our challenges as a League going forward are to maintain the strength of our business partnership and its structure and to adapt it to meet the new realities of the 21st Century. We have our television contracts set for the next six years, and our future television programming will include many new features for fans that reflect the dramatic changes in the world of television and digital media.

Now we have to work just as hard on many other initiatives, including, as a priority, the extension of our collective bargaining agreement with the players, something that will have to accomplish two things: No. 1, continue to guarantee superb competition on the field among 32 teams; and No. 2, continue to reward the players at very high levels.

We also need to ensure that our League and its 32 teams have deep appeal and strong ties to the thousands of diverse and different communities that make up our great nation -- from the biggest cities to the smallest rural towns and everywhere in between. To do this, we must be true to the values of our game and our sports meritocracy in all that we do, including in the hiring

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and promotion of coaches, executives and other talent.

The mark of our League has always been competitive excellence. Earlier today we honored a player who represents excellence, both on and off the field, **Peyton Manning**, the winner of the **Walter Payton** award as the NFL Man Of The Year.

I was just chatting with **Peyton** earlier and **Archie Manning**, I don't know if they're here or not. Here's **Peyton**. Stand up again, **Peyton** (applause.)

I want to thank **Peyton** and his family for the work that he and others in their family did this past year to help the people of the Gulf Coast deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. But what he and his family did is typical not only of **Peyton**, but of so many other NFL players who serve their communities, not just when tragedy strikes, but throughout the year. Thank you, **Peyton**, for what you do and for what all your fellow players continue to do year in and year out.

Finally, obviously, congratulations go to the **Steelers** and the **Seahawks** who fought their way here by winning a combined 20 of their last 21 games. It's a contrasting matchup, as many of you have noted. The newcomer, **Seahawks** from the Northwest versus the tradition of the **Steelers** from industrial America, where our game and our League were born. From **Holmgren** versus **Cowher**, the **Bus** versus the League MVP, Roethlisberger opposite **Hasselbeck**, we have the ingredients for a 40th **Super Bowl** to remember. Dave Goldberg, I'm sure you have a question, and there will be many others to follow.

Q. Given the success of Tony Dungy, Marvin Lewis, Lovie Smith this year, and given the fact that there were nine openings, none of which were filled by a minority, other than the trade of Herman Edwards, do you think the Rooney Rule is working or is there still the old realities in play?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think the Rooney Rule is working, but I think a lot of additional things need to work. We need to continue to be aggressive on this issue of hiring, not just for head coaches, but for the front office in many, many different ways.

And I said several weeks ago that during the season I was encouraged by what was going on, because as you mentioned, the **Colts** were 13-0, **Lovie Smith's** Bears were turning it around, **Marvin Lewis** was bringing the Bengals to where they hoped they could be, **Denny Green** has his great track record, and **Herman Edwards** and

Romeo Crennel have been successful. I thought we were getting beyond the stereotypes where they were getting accepted as coaches, not just African-American coaches, and I thought that would carry over in a positive way to the hiring process. It didn't.

We're going to redouble our efforts. We're going to work with John Wooten and his colleagues and be aggressive. The most important thing for me, I think, is in terms of your question about are we back to the old realities, is that we're not. Everyone understands the priorities here and everyone understands the need to be aggressive, to continue to blitz this issue, and as I said once before, not to go into a prevent defense. We need to be measured by what we do and what we achieve, not by what we say in this area. And I think that's understood in the League.

Q. Gene Upshaw yesterday characterized the state of CBA negotiations as one step forward, five steps back. I wonder how you would characterize negotiations, and do you anticipate having a new collective bargaining extension by the time the owners meeting in March?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I said a couple of weeks ago I thought it was one step forward and two steps back, so he stepped back further than I thought. I don't think the negotiations are going very well, I guess is how I would put it. I think that there needs to be an additional dose of reality on both sides of the table. I think that to some degree positions are hardening when they shouldn't be hardening.

We have serious economic issues that we have to address and resolve. We have some serious system issues, performance-based pay and other related issues we need to resolve. But I don't know whether we'll get something done by the beginning of the League year. I don't know if we'll get something done by the annual meeting in March right now, because it has been one step forward and at least several steps backward on a lot of different issues.

I don't think we'll be in litigation. I don't think we'll be decertifying the Players Association. I don't agree with some of the things that **Gene** said along those lines, but we are not making the kind of progress that I think is necessary.

Q. Regional question for us, do you think the Bay Area will ever host another Super Bowl? Does it hinge on a new stadium in San Francisco and is Oakland any sort of a viable

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option?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Well, you look at down the road, that's for sure. I think the Bay Area certainly would be a very attractive place to be the host of future **Super Bowls**, eventually both in San Francisco and in Oakland. But I do think that it's contingent upon state-of-the-art stadiums, new stadiums. Those stadiums are among the oldest in the League. I think they're the only pre-1970 stadiums that haven't been thoroughly renovated. I think there's a lot of work to be done, but eventually we should get there.

Q. You've had a year to look back on the Jacksonville experience last year, getting feedback from the League. I wonder how you view that game now, and do you think there's a chance that you will play another game sometime in the future in Jacksonville?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It's beginning to sound like we're going to play this year's **Super Bowls** before I get finished talking about everyone's prospects about the future **Super Bowls**. I see Sid here and he's about to start talking about playing one in Minnesota when they get their new stadium. I think on a year's reflection the experience in Jacksonville measured up very well. It was very positive from a fan standpoint. Big cities have positives, and we learned in Jacksonville a smaller community can be positive for the **Super Bowl**.

But I do think that with only one game a year we need to be very realistic how frequently the game is going to be back in cities that have had the game.

Q. Sorry to keep hammering the same point, Denver has a new stadium. They've got a lot of things to do there. What are the prospects of Denver being considered very seriously in the future?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I was with Pat Bowlen at the AFC Championship Game and he told me it was 52 degrees and with the sun overhead it was actually 62. I saw **Dan Snyder** last night. He told me it was 67 in Washington last night. I saw Jack Steadman, he told me it was 62 in Kansas City.

So the point that's being made is that we can play **Super Bowls** all over America, but unless you're naive as to how the weather is in this country, it does still get cold in the winter. We have to be realistic. We're not going to play the game all over the country. We will concentrate on northern city games in domed stadiums, and there will still be a heavy array of games in the southern

climates. I think the next four fit that description. But at the same time we are going to move the game around to a large number of cities in a realistic way to help give back and to thank those communities that partner with the NFL, support the teams for many, many decades, and also work with us to get stadiums built.

Q. Can you discuss the reason why the vote of the owners for Super Bowl selection, for the cities, is done on a secret ballot. And secondly, is there any concern about apparently the increased use of perks or gifts such as the use of yachts or hunting and fishing expeditions in trying to lure a Super Bowl to certain cities?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It's done by a secret ballot because in a sense owners are competing on a business issue, which is not ordinarily something that owners are doing. And everyone feels they should be in a position to vote the best interests of the League and not have to be lobbied or forced, in a sense, to do something that might be a favor to another owner. I think the secret ballot has to do with doing what's in the best interests in the League.

On the perks and hunting trips, some of that was facetious, some of it was real. I still think what's important about the **Super Bowl** is the game, the NFL Experience, all of the community events that we do together with the host city. I was over yesterday at the Youth Education Town that the City of **Detroit** and **Wayne County** and some very generous individuals here support which the Boys and Girls Club are building, the biggest ever. I think those are the important things, and not whether you're quail hunting or bass fishing.

Q. This question I want to ask you, 24 years ago we were hearing the tickets cost \$60. This year the tickets cost six and seven hundred dollars. I was trying to find out in 45 Super Bowls, five from this year, will there be a cap on the price that people have to pay to see the Super Bowl, \$600 is a lot of money for even a rich man to pay to see a football game?

A. That's true, but a lot of things are more expensive today in America, especially when they're more valuable things than they were 40 years ago. We think that our pricing is actually pretty restrained and conservative. We don't put tickets up on the Internet, but people are paying, from my understanding, \$3,000 for a ticket on Internet sites.

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Q. 37 hundred.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: 37 hundred dollars. So I don't think that the pricing of the **Super Bowl** tickets, when you consider it in the totality of the event, four days, a weekend, is in any way out of line compared to other entertainment and leisure time activities in America.

Q. To get back to my colleague's question, Gene Upshaw used really incendiary rhetoric yesterday. He says he sees it as a bigger fight within your ownership than between your side and his side. What reason do you have for optimism that you'll make progress in the CBA, when so little has been made in the last year?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Well, a lot of things in life get done at the 11th hour and the 59th minute. I wouldn't say **Gene** was incendiary, I think he's been pretty firm. He's been very firm over the years. And some of things he said about what the union has done in the past to pursue its goals were just factual. They're not anything other than that.

But as I said, we do have serious issues to resolve. I do think that there needs to be some more outreach and more reality on both sides as to where the middle is. And I don't think I said I was optimistic. I'm not optimistic. But that's what a difficult negotiation usually entails.

Q. I have to ask you about Kansas City possibly getting a Super Bowl. That's a big issue. There's a ballot in April, if it's approved we're told Kansas City will get the Super Bowl.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Our League's membership has already voted to put a **Super Bowl** in the renovated stadium with the iconic rolling roof that's being proposed. So I think in the weeks ahead we'll be talking to **Lamar Hunt** and trying to see if there is a way of being more specific as to the time table. I think when the membership approved that game, subject to certain conditions back in November, we talked about **Super Bowl 49** or **Super Bowl 51**, which reflects, among many other things, Lamar's role in creating the current NFL and as a founder of the American Football League, which brings us the **Super Bowl**. So I think you're already well ahead of the game and we'll continue to work with the Chiefs to try to make that a reality.

Q. The NFL hosted a very successful regular season game in Mexico this year. You've had preseason games in Toronto in the past. Do you see a regular season game

coming back to Toronto, and how do you view the Canadian market?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: We do think the game in Mexico was very successful and we do think it's a springboard for doing additional regular season games outside of the United States, and certainly Canada would be high on any short list. And we've had discussions with individuals in Canada and also discussions with representatives of the Canadian Football League, including the commissioner, to make sure that if we did do that it would be consistent with the goals and the growing aspirations of the Canadian Football League.

But right now I think it's going to be difficult to play a regular season game outside of the United States in this upcoming 2006 season. We're still exploring alternatives, but I would think over time we would do it in Canada in the right way, in the right place.

Q. There were a few controversial officiating calls in these playoffs, or at least Joey Porter told me so. I was curious if you feel like any of the coaches have lost faith in the instant replay system and feel like it needs some modification.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't think so. I think what happened on the **Troy Polamalu** play, which is the most controversial of all, which is something, unfortunately, people who understand officiating and people who understand human frailty understood what happened. George Young always said when he was a member of the Competition Committee and when he was head of Football Operation that one thing replay does is multiply the chances to make errors. And on that particular play that's what happened.

But it's perfectly clear that in the overwhelming number of cases it eliminates mistaken calls. It gives the officiating crews the ability to see things that they can't see with the human eye in real time. I think there's going to be very strong, continuing support among coaches and others for replay. But that one play is going to go down in history as a classic example of the fact that when you multiply decisions, you can also multiply mistaken decisions.

Q. Could you please update us on the progress of bringing the NFL back to Los Angeles, and which site might be the leading candidate, the Rose Bowl, the L.A. Coliseum or Anaheim?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think

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we're making the kind of progress that I anticipated in November when I was out there to meet with the mayor and the governor. At that time I said we were looking to have two clear-cut alternatives, focused on the **Coliseum** and Anaheim, to bring to our membership at the March meeting and I think we're on track to do that. As to which one is in the lead I think is something we'll be talking about at our March meeting.

Q. Could we get on that Super Bowl list, as well, Orlando?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Everyone is on it except my home town of Jersey City, so you might as well add your name.

Q. A lot of owners in other sports, particularly the NBA, complain about guaranteed contracts. I'm wondering how important do you think nonguaranteed contracts are to the NFL's financial health.

A. I don't think they have much to do with the NFL's financial health. I think they do have a lot to do with performance and the views that I have really come from having been immersed in the League for over 35 years and listening to people like Wellington Mara and so many others who have been around the game for lifetimes, and coaches and others, that a very significant element of pay should be for performance.

And in that philosophical framework guaranteed contracts, within the context of a salary cap, just take money from a player who is playing and gives it to a player who is not playing. So it's not a financial issue, it's an issue of pay for performance. About 50 percent of our player compensation today is guaranteed. We have about 3.4 billion dollars of player costs each year, and about 50 percent is guaranteed because it comes in the form of signing bonuses, which are unconditionally committed. So I think we have a good balance right now in that area.

Q. About that Super Bowl -- just kidding -- I wanted to ask quickly about the future condition of the New Orleans Saints. Is there any thinking about that team leaving New Orleans if it doesn't rebuild quickly enough?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: No, I don't think so. Our commitment is a multi-year commitment. We know that this year is going to be difficult. We are working extremely hard to have all eight of the Saints' regular season games played in the Superdome, but we have a very short period of time to get all the renovations done and we really need to get moving on that very quickly.

We soon expect to be announcing at least some key elements of the Saints' regular season playing schedule, elements of their preseason playing schedule, which will involve games outside of New Orleans in other parts of the Gulf, and also in the next couple of weeks we expect to announce a first of its kind New Orleans Business Council to support the Saints. And I think that the business people in New Orleans understand and can see that the team coming back, the Superdome coming back, can be a magnet for other businesses. It can be a symbol of resilience and vitality. So I think that we have a very good shot of making it work, although this year will be difficult for our League, as it will be for tens of thousands of other individuals and businesses in the region.

Q. Given your new contract to telecast games on the NFL Network, do you believe the League will have greater control over its image and message on games telecast on that station. Do you believe this is the first step toward the League ultimately taking greater control over the broadcast of its games on its own entities?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: The first part of your question, I do think that it gives us the ability to have greater control over how we present our game and what we present about our game, about our players, about our coaches, much in the same way that NFL Films, going back to the early '60s, gave the League that ability to show the greatness of the athletes, to underscore that these were individuals and not just gladiators, that they were involved in the community, all the things that **Pete Rozelle** strove to do with NFL Films, we can do by extension with the NFL Network.

But I don't think that it foreshadows the NFL being the dominant presenter of NFL football, either in traditional media or in digital media. There are going to be so many hundreds, even thousands of outlets for the NFL in the digital media space that lots of people will be presenting it independently.

One of the key things, I think, that went into our decision to put those eight games, out of a total of 256 games on the NFL Network was that it gave us the ability to control how those eight games, that Thursday, Saturday, late-season package, complements what CBS, Fox, NBC next year, ESPN and DirectTV will be doing with the bulk of our schedule. So I think there is an element of control and an element of flexibility. But the main reason for that will be to complement what the others are doing for us. And they really

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do continue to do a great job, which goes out saying.

Q. Next to *Detroit* being the most popular locale for the big game this year, Las Vegas certainly has a tremendous passion for what goes on with professional football and with the *Super Bowl*. I wanted to get your take on Las Vegas, on gambling, legally, on the NFL, and also, too, if the League is against it, which I surmise it might be, what the take is about legalized sports books being right near the stadium in Mexico City where the game was played. And also, too, that one of your partners in broadcasting the games, ESPN, on its website, ESPN.com actually lists point spreads, and links to off-shore betting sites that include those numbers.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think our record on this whole issue has been pretty clear, pretty consistent, going back to the '60s. Certainly we and others, as you know, the NCAA and many other organizations, worked very hard in Washington, with the Congress in the early '90s to have the legislation passed which outlaws sports betting in the United States, except in Nevada where Congress saw fit to grandfather what had been a factor in Nevada since the late '30s.

We are continuing very strongly to support legislation that would ban Internet sports gambling. So I think the most articulate statement of the reasons for the policy, for our policy, were put forth by Bill Bradley, who was, as we all know, a great NBA player, and also a United States Senator, when he said it's the responsibility of sports leagues and sports teams to focus on the game and to divorce that from gambling. We all know the history of games that were influenced in college sports. I played in a basketball game in college that was fixed, quote, unquote, by the opposing team.

So there are insidious elements of gambling that have led us, and will continue to lead us, to have a very clear separation, to the extent it's within our means, between our game and gambling on sports. We don't, on the other hand, run everything in America.

I've said publicly many times, I'll repeat it here today. As a personal matter, I do not like, and I wish it did not exist, video poker on ESPN. But that's their decision, not mine.

Q. Could you talk about the current practice of the hiring of assistant coaches and you've got guys making two million, the same as other head coaches and you've got a

defensive coordinator who was a head coach in Canada, and is now coaching defensive backs in Washington, and the fact that this could erode competitive balance throughout the League, if you could address that in any way.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't pay coaches, I pay employees in the league, and we don't have too many backups making two million dollars in my office, so that's for owners to decide what coaches get paid.

I think it is becoming an issue in terms of whether we continue to have a level playing field among the teams in the League, in terms of the financial resources that some teams have available and others don't. But, you know, I think that the history of the game is replete with coaches who were great and they had people like Bart Starr and people like *Doug Williams* and *Marcus Allen* and *Terrell Davis* playing for them. And those coaches weren't too good when the Bart Starrs' and the *Marcus Allens*' and the *Terrell Davis*' went on and there were different players on the field. So I'm sure it's something that will be debated for a long time. How much coaches win football games, and how much do high-paid coaches do better than low-paid coaches. The jury is still out.

Q. Just a follow-up question regarding the one with the eight games on the NFL Network. Toward late in the season, it's a more tense time than ever. As far as scheduling, how much notice are they going to expect to get to change plans, travel plans, et cetera, and obviously change their game plan, because if they're playing a game on a Thursday as opposed to a Sunday, that's quite a switch for most teams.

A. The games that will be on Thursday night and Saturday in the NFL Network package will be fixed prior to the season when our schedule comes out in April. And those games are not going to be subject to the flexible scheduling rules that we will have.

A second key thing is that although the package in some years will kick off on Thanksgiving night, we will continue to have the traditional Dallas and *Detroit* games on CBS and Fox. We'll have another game in a different city as the opening -- as the third game on Thanksgiving -- and our goal there would be to start a new tradition, which is to have a third game on Thanksgiving that would rotate around to different cities in the League who have been anxious for many years to host games.

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But the flexible scheduling, and the change of the dates and times of games will not affect the Thursday/Saturday package. That's been worked through with the Competition Committee to make sure that there is no competitive unfairness to those teams that will be playing Thursday and Saturday games late in the season.

We already had that in the past. Obviously, we've had the Thanksgiving games in **Detroit** and Dallas, and years back we had some other Thursday night games in our ESPN package, and maybe in our TNT package, so the scheduling principles that will apply going forward will be similar to what we've already used in the past, which worked quite well.

Q. There was a study published this week, I believe, by Scripps Howard, suggesting some linkage between obesity and NFL players and early mortality. The League has always supported studies of this kind. Are you familiar with that study and will the League continue to provide impetus for such studies?

A. I know the study was released. I haven't had a chance to look at it and I haven't had a chance to have our Medical Committee evaluate it and give me their views.

But the answer to your question is, yes. As you know, we have in place for some years a committee on what we call cardiovascular health. It includes obesity, it includes all elements of cardiovascular health, sleep apnea and everything else. And the one thing that is clear to the physicians and researchers on our committee is that not enough data has been gathered about individuals who are the size of NFL players, who are the size of an increasing number of college football players, and who are the size of an increasing number of high school football players.

So we need to gather data. We're going to do it in a very effective, peer-reviewed way and continue to press the issue, press the research.

Q. Can you do an overview of what that game in Mexico City meant to the League? Was it a good business decision, and what can the Mexican fans expect in the coming years?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I said when I was in Mexico, I think that the game, the regular season game, validated and gave credibility to what we have been trying to do with our preseason games, and with other football programs in Mexico, including having Mexican players like Marco Martos play in NFL Europe. It showed that we were serious about bringing regular season games to the growing Mexican fan

base, and I think the ripple effect of that in future years for interest in the NFL and for the development of football in Mexico will be very, very powerful, and we're going to keep working on all of those fronts.

Q. The Kansas City Chiefs have talked about proposing an expansion of the playoff field. And part of that argument is since the field was last expanded there's been expansion and realignment. That being considered, what's your position on expanding the field by perhaps two teams?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: My job is to be open-minded and not to reach conclusions until I've listened to the arguments. But the last time I was open-minded and listened to the arguments, I didn't find them very compelling. But we're going to revisit the issue and see what additional arguments there are.

One of the things that was a key part of the mix when we looked at this two or three years ago was that we needed more experience with the eight-division format and with the playoff structure that exists under the eight-division format. So we do have a few more years under our belt now. So we'll look at it. I think I would have to say that I'm skeptical.

Q. Do you have any plans at all to meet with San Diego politicians on the stadium issue?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Not right now, no, but we have had some internal discussions about whether that might be timely in the first part of this new calendar year, and I'm sure it's something we'll continue to address with the Chargers and with those public officials.

Q. You've talked about a possible expansion to L.A. and I'm wondering if you do go to two teams where does Canada stand on your radar screen?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: What I said about possible expansion to L.A. is that to me that the only possibility in the foreseeable future for an expansion team would be Los Angeles. I could not see, at least now, a decision that would involve a two-team expansion. So if there is expansion I would think it would leave us with an odd number of teams for some period of time, which we have had in the past, most recently when we had Cleveland back in the League, but not Houston. We had 31 teams and that's been a pattern that has been in the NFL in the past. So I don't see

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expansion in Canada as being related to what we might do in Los Angeles.

Q. Given the state of the CBA negotiations, what sort of influence will that have on presenting the business agreements to the owners in March and also are you satisfied with the design plans in both Anaheim and at the Coliseum?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: On the second piece, I haven't seen the design plans. I know our people have been out there working on those designs with specialists and representatives of the **Coliseum** and Anaheim.

But on the first piece of it, I think that if we don't have a CBA extension it's going to be a considerable complication because without an extension, issues of how to ensure the stability of the team, how to ensure the proper private financing for a stadium and related issues will be very difficult to resolve.

As you know, one of the elements of our program for private financing of new stadiums in a number of League cities has been that it is part of the economic relationship we have with the Players Association under the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the theory being that new stadiums grow the pie for everybody, and therefore the costs should be shared. That would be in jeopardy if we didn't have a long-term extension of the CBA, among other things.

Q. I did not get to the rental car place in Detroit before two locals told me they had bets on the games, and they didn't make them in Las Vegas. I think Las Vegas understands the integrity of the game and you have to protect that and all that kind of stuff. But what they don't understand is what kind of research the League has done that life would be worse and integrity would be questioned any more than it is right now with all these off-shore sports books, if the NFL had some sort of at least cooperation or friendship with the City of Las Vegas? And also I want to know what you think of a 6th seed being favored over the 1 seed?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It depends on who the 6th seed is. The 6th seed this year was 15-1 in the regular season last year. They lost a couple of games this year when their quarterback was hurt. So it obviously depends on who the 6th seed is, and a lot of other things.

In terms of Las Vegas, I don't have anything against Las Vegas. I said before, it's not my job to establish the mores of America. And

we've tried to be very narrowly focused on sports book and sports gambling. And in terms of research, I've been before Congressional Committees on many, many occasion, and heard from the members of the House and Senate both in committee hearings and in other contexts how they feel about our policies. I think it was reflected when Congress passed the legislation they passed back in the early '90s.

So we'll keep looking at the facts, we'll keep looking at data, but I think we have a pretty good sense of what the public's expectations are, overall, for where our League should be on this issue. And I think we are where we should be.

Q. To kind of follow up on the health issue, the doctors are studying, as you said, the issues, but we all know, it's been proven that obesity is dangerous in and of itself. And there was a four-part series in the New York Times about the danger of weight-related diabetes. It might bankrupt the healthcare system of the United States. At the very least, are you concerned, before there's a long study, about the health of the players, and simply maybe the image it presents to America, that it's clearly getting overweight.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: You know, this is a health issue. Health issues can be affected by images, but you can't take that too far. I look healthy, but I'm not, so that image is misleading (laughter.)

A person with diabetes who is obese has got issues that **Jonathan** Ogden doesn't have or Art Shell doesn't have. The one thing that's clear is that obesity has to be related to all of the other elements of a person's health, including cardiovascular health and what they do and how big their parents were and what they've done to get as big as they are.

So, yes, we're concerned about unnecessary risks to our athletes, whether they're large or small. We're concerned about the perception that kids may emulate large athletes. On the other hand, we don't grow these kids from the age of five up. They come to us.

New York, I read recently, has a school in Manhattan that the offensive line averages, in a high school, about 290 pounds. We had nothing to do with raising those kids. They are in our society. For the most part they seem to be healthy. They can run fast; they can play sports. They can do what Art Shell and others have done. They play football, basketball, track and field over the years and they have to be viewed in the context of a

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distinct set of health issues, not as part of the broader issue of obesity in America, that comes from people sitting on their duff not doing very much.

Q. The NFL Trust was reapproved two years ago for the distribution of massive generator revenues, but obviously there has been growing distrust between owners and employers about the local revenue sharing issue. Some think the well is over-abundantly filled with water for a few. Others believe that more water should be added and more allowed drawn from it for many. How frustrating is this for you, because it seems that your job has become or is becoming like your predecessor's was in the late 1980s, more about dealing with litigation, more about dealing with all these ancillary issues, as opposed to primarily dealing with football. Is it something that sometimes gets harder to deal with than even you realize?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't think so. I think we have a marvelous record of having very little litigation in the last 15 years. And so we certainly have not been spending our time in the courts. We certainly have been spending a lot of time on the greatness of the game, and I think the current system has the game in a place where it is outstanding today.

The economic issues on the structure of the League, those are things the leagues have had -- this League has had to deal with -- since the '30s when the owners decided to share ticket receipts, and in the '60s, late '50s, and early '60s, where they decided to share television revenue equally. And there are issues that are going to have to be resolved and discussed and debated every year and every decade going forward because they have to do with the structure of the League.

We have the best structure, but it can't be static, it can't just stay the way it's been. It's not as great as it is -- it is as great as it is because it's changed. So we're going to have to keep changing it.

Q. College football has had tremendous success with the rivalry weekend. Has the NFL given thought to the first week of December, week 13, week 14, a rivalry weekend for the NFL, Chicago, Green Bay, Washington, Dallas. I know there's some teams that don't have traditional rivals. But ten years from now this may be the weekend you look forward to the first weekend in December, instead some of

the dog games that are available on the NFL schedule.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: The answer is yes to all of the above. (Laughter.) We've looked at scheduling that has to do with rivalries, but it really doesn't work. A number of the teams have preseason games, I think the Chiefs have the Governor's Cup Game with the Rams. Other teams have preseason games that represent rivalries. But for the most part in our League the rivalries have been built around the divisional structure, AFC West, NFC East. They don't have to do with geography; they don't have to do with the fact that there's a bunch of alumni on one side of the town that went to one university, and a bunch of alumni on the other side of town that went to another university. So I think we have the best scheduling for our League and for the profession and for the game.

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