

**Commissioner Tagliabue  
Press Conference, Annual League Meeting  
Orlando, FL – March 27, 2006**

Good afternoon. We got a good start this morning on our Annual League Meeting. As per tradition, I started off with a review of the state of the league, talking about the accomplishments of the 2005 season, some of the new and unexpected things we've had to deal with. On the new side, we talked about the regular-season game in Mexico City. On the unexpected side, we talked about Hurricane Katrina, the devastating impact it had on the Gulf Coast Region, and the tremendous efforts of the Saints to play the full season against that backdrop. We talked about some of our priorities going forward and the fact that we have twin objectives: (1) continue presenting great football and pursuing all of our other goals, and (2) simultaneously managing the commissioner search process.

We are renaming the official gameball (and calling it) "The Duke" to honor Wellington Mara and his tremendous legacy to the National Football League. The ball had once been named "The Duke" after Wellington on George Halas' recommendation in the '40s. Then with the merger in 1970 of the AFL and the NFL, "The Duke" name disappeared. It will be reappearing in 2006 and for the future as a tribute to Well Mara. This afternoon we're going to be talking with the owners about the search process, about Los Angeles, and about other subjects.

Before we adjourn for lunch, I advise the clubs of the opening weekend's playing schedule, which has become a traditional part of the annual meeting since there is always so much interest in not only who the Super Bowl team will be playing against as it begins the defense of its championship, but other games in that opening weekend. The schedule will be as follows: the Steelers will begin defense of their Super Bowl championship on Thursday night, September 7, on NBC hosting the Miami Dolphins. On Sunday, September 10, the FOX national game will be Jacksonville hosting the Dallas Cowboys. CBS will have a strong lineup of regional games on Sunday, September 10, and then the first NBC Sunday Night broadcast game on Sunday, September 10, we'll have the Giants hosting Indianapolis. On Monday night, ESPN's *Monday Night Football* coverage will begin with a doubleheader, (including) a September 11, 7:00 P.M. game with Washington hosting Minnesota, and a 10:15 P.M. EST game with the Raiders hosting San Diego.

The other games that I told the owners about this morning are the Thanksgiving Day lineup, which of course will continue with the traditional games in Dallas and Detroit on CBS and FOX. It will also be the launch of the third Thanksgiving Day game to rotate in the future, and it will be the launch of live games on the NFL Network. The lineup for Thanksgiving will be as follows: on CBS at 12:30, the Lions will host the Dolphins; on FOX at 4:15 on Thanksgiving, the Cowboys will host the Buccaneers; and on the NFL Network on Thanksgiving night, the Kansas City Chiefs will host the Denver Broncos. We expect to have the rest of our regular-season schedule in early April, but we informed the clubs of those games today.

With that, I'll be glad to take questions.

**Q: Do you expect to come out of these meetings with a search committee?**

PT: I certainly think we'll have the point fixed with the owners that there will be a search committee. I don't know yet whether we'll name it at this meeting or later in the week or early next week.

**Q: Have there been any talks about playing a (regular-season) game outside of the U.S. again, like in London?**

PT: No. We had quite a few discussions on that since the Super Bowl up until the past couple of weeks. At this point, it doesn't appear that we will have a regular-season game in '06 outside of the United States. We're still going to pursue that. We're going to try to get conversations going and make that a long-term priority so that could become institutionalized.

**Q: How involved will you get in the search for your successor in terms of recommending candidates or what type of qualities a candidate should possess?**

PT: I'll be managing the process. We'll have an owner, or owners, chairing the committee. We'll have to see how that evolves.

**Q: Are you going to recommend somebody?**

PT: No. That's not my function.

**Q: There has been talking of splitting the commissioner's duties into two jobs. What are your thoughts on that?**

PT: I think that the commissioner has to be in charge. My feeling is that any CEO position is a one-person position. We are bigger, obviously, than we have been in the past, but we heard this morning from the CEO of GE/NBC Universal, Jeff Immelt. It's just the question of having the right governing structure and having the right management team. But I think ultimately one person has to be in charge.

**Q: Just one question about the ESPN doubleheader – is that going to be a one-week event? Or will there be more of those during the season?**

PT: Certainly it's not going to be a regular thing. I think we have another doubleheader towards the end of the season on ESPN. I'm not quite certain.

**Q: Do you think it's possible for a CEO from another organization outside of football to come in and deal with the 32 teams, the common goals of the league, and also the disparate goals of the individual teams? Or do you think you need somebody with the kind of experience that you had?**

PT: I think that certainly outside candidates need to be considered. The right kind of outside candidates could do the job. I think internal candidates and outside candidates need to get in-depth evaluation.

**Q: Are there certain qualities you view to be of supreme importance?**

PT: I think the qualities for the next commissioner are pretty much the same qualities you'd be looking for in the leadership of any major organization: vision, intelligence, persuasiveness, work ethic, integrity, and the ability to put together a strong leadership team and keep it together. I think that those qualities are the qualities that you look for in a leader. When you go beyond that, you need certain things that are more specific to sports or to the NFL, the particular experiences that bear on the business, an understanding of sports business and the related media and television businesses. But I think the basic attributes are common to a lot of leadership positions.

**Q: Are there lessons that were learned during the search that led to you that can be applied now?**

PT: I think so. I think that one of the things we would intend to do here is to have a search firm interview all 32 owners very early in the process to get their perspectives on what the structure of the league, in terms of management, should be in the future. What are the key positions? What are the key qualities that you are looking for in a commissioner and in a management team? So I think that we'll start with the recommendation of getting confidential input from all 32 owners, factor that in through a committee, and then come back to the owners, making sure there's a good process of feedback and that it's an open and transparent type of process, so there could be some improvement over some of what was done in '89. I think it reflects the changing nature of the position, the growth of the league, and a number of other factors.

**Q: How large do you expect the committee to be? Do you have final say over the composition of its members?**

PT: Under our bylaws, the commissioner will appoint committees, does appoint committees, including this committee. I don't yet have a point of view of how large it will be.

**Q: Will there be any kind of outside consulting firm that will assist in this search process?**

PT: I'm sure there would be. Yes.

**Q: This loophole that's been created in the transition tag, is that something you'd like to see addressed?**

PT: I think the issues that have been raised by the offer sheets made by Seattle and Minnesota needs to be addressed. I think this is not what was contemplated. It's a similar set of disputes to what we had when the deal first came in place with the Will Wolford contract. We will be addressing it with the Players Association directly, and I'll be talking with Gene Upshaw about it next week.

**Q: Why do you think similar contracts haven't been drawn up in the past?**

PT: They have happened. The mind of creative people has no limit. As time goes by, the unlimited mind creates new innovations. But it's not in the spirit of the deal, nor was the Wofford offer sheet back in '93, so we need to address it.

**Q: Has this issue been addressed in the past? Was it simply understood that this wasn't what was intended?**

PT: We talked about it at some length with the Players Association during the negotiations, and then when we finalized the offer from the Players Association to be presented to the ownership, it wasn't specifically addressed. But we will address it.

**Q: How difficult was the seven-month process for you back in 1989 when you were selected to be the next commissioner?**

PT: It didn't matter to me at all. I was fully employed in a job that I was enjoying, so it could have been seven years as far as I was concerned.

**Q: Do you envision this narrowing down, as it did in 1989, to two main candidates?**

PT: I have no idea.

**Q: Do you foresee a mechanism that will prevent similar situations that have arisen with Seattle and Minnesota with these contracts?**

PT: If I tried to answer your question, I would be talking about things that I don't know anything about. So I'm not going to try to answer your question. By the time I meet with Gene Upshaw next week, I'll know all about the subject and all about the solutions that have been proposed. But I haven't had the time, except to speak with Peter Ruocco and Harold Henderson briefly yesterday about some the issues and about how we'll address them next week.

**Q: Would you be surprised if you have a new commissioner by the time this meeting adjourns?**

PT: That would be a surprise. And that's an understatement.

**Q: Would you be willing to go through the entire season (as commissioner), if the process takes that long?**

PT: Ask me in September.

**Q: Some of the differences between clubs that became apparent during the revenue sharing debate, do you think that could be a factor that could hinder this search?**

PT: I don't think so. I've spoken to many owners already. Many of them have called me last week, and we've had some conversations here. I think that there's really a strong consensus that what's needed is a pretty effective leader and someone who can be around for a good, long period of time. We need to look five years from now, 10 years from now – what do we want the

National Football League to look like? Who's a leader who can shape that future with the owners? I think that whatever differences people have on specific issues will be pretty well submerged as they unite to and find the right type of talent to lead the organization.

**Q: Do you know the formula yet for the distribution of the new money that will be reallocated through revenue sharing?**

PT: I think all of the basic terms on the revenue sharing are in place in terms of the target funding levels and the objective of ensuring that qualifying teams don't spend more than a certain percentage of their own revenue on players when they are spending to the midpoint between the cap and the maximum. We are going to have ongoing discussion on the issue of qualifiers. I'm going to be appointing the eight-owner committee that we talked about a couple of weeks ago in Dallas. Our expectations are that this committee will meet at least twice between now and our Denver meeting and report on the subject of qualifiers to revenue sharing. That in turn will be a factor in the formula that gets defined to determine what gets distributed and to whom. That process will go forward between now and the May meeting in Denver.

**Q: So you've agreed on the basic form?**

PT: Yes. We agreed on all the concepts, and now we're going to work through the different elements, and eventually that will produce some type of formula.

**Q: Looking ahead to revenue growth and the increasing value of franchises, does it become a possibility that corporate ownership becomes a part of the NFL?**

PT: I would think it's very unlikely. That conversation has been going on for many years. There was – in the early days of my involvement around 1970, 72 – there was a committee – I think Edward Bennett Williams and Art Modell co-chaired a committee – on corporate ownership in the NFL and filed a report earlier in the '60s. CBS had owned the Yankees in baseball. I think our experience in recent years is that there's been a deep pool of good individual potential owners and family ownership groups, and that that's a real attribute for the National Football League in terms of the passion of the owners for the game, for the sport, and to be involved in managing the league. I don't think that's in jeopardy.

**Q: The decision to expand to Jacksonville was very popular in that area of Florida. Had you ever been to the city before? Since they've had some problems selling tickets, have you ever second-guessed the decision?**

PT: No. I think that we felt then, as I said at the time, that the southeast was an important area to continue to increase the presence of the NFL, and the decision for Jacksonville was made on that basis. We have to keep working at it to make sure that it works.

**Q: Had you ever been (to Jacksonville) before the expansion process began?**

PT: I think I was there. Yes. I've been there so many times since. I think the answer to that is "yes," but you can probably go back and check a prior answer and be more accurate than what I'm giving today. I've been to a lot of cities in the past 17 years.

**Q: How concerned are you about the declining attendance in California franchises? What can be done to help reverse the trend?**

PT: Some of it has to do with winning – that's a traditional thing in sports. The attendance is robust when you win. It tends to flag when you lose. So I know all those teams are working hard and trying to turn that around. To some degree, it may have something to do with stadiums. We don't have the best stadiums in California, and we're trying to work on that. So, yes, it will be a priority for those owners and for the league.

**Q: With the reluctance from the public to contribute funds towards new stadiums in California, is there anything the league can do to help the process?**

PT: Yes. We've had our so-called "G-3" program in place since '99. It continues under the collective bargaining agreement with the players, and one of the things that we're going to be discussing here is how that will evolve and change over time. Certainly that will be one of the things we'll have to look at real hard as we try to get new stadiums in California.

**Q: Will the Jacksonville-Dallas game be a 1:00 P.M. or 4:00 P.M. game?**

PT: I don't know. Doubleheader games are normally 4:00 P.M. I would assume it's late in the day if it's a doubleheader.

**Q: Are you satisfied with the progress in New Orleans? What do you think needs to be done there over the next couple of months to ensure that the Saints are able to play there as early as planned?**

PT: I'm going to be in New Orleans the first week of April – next week, I guess it is. Yes. We are satisfied that progress is being made in the critical areas. I spoke to Tom Benson this morning. I spoke to Sean Payton this morning. They're both very positive about the additions that have been made to the team -- Drew Brees and others. We've just got to keep working at it very hard, and I intend to do that, starting with the visit down there next week.

**Q: What will be done at this meeting about Los Angeles and the stadium situation there?**

PT: We're going to have an in-depth presentation, maybe this afternoon, and then the question for the owners to decide will be: how do we want to target decisions on that for the May meeting? Should we have more elaborate presentations on behalf of the Coliseum and Anaheim in the next four to five weeks before we get to our meeting in Denver? My guess is that we will be going forward with those kinds of presentations on behalf of the Coliseum and Anaheim so that we can make some decisions in Denver. But that's just a guess at this point because we haven't had the discussion yet with the owners.

**Q: What's a reasonable estimate for when there will be an NFL team in Los Angeles?**

PT: I'll answer that after we have the Denver meeting, assuming that we're going forward on the timeline that we are anticipating.

**Q: What would those decisions entail?**

PT: A decision to select one of the stadium projects and to go forward with the process of identifying a team and building a stadium.

**Q: Is the formula in place for a salary cap minimum under the terms of the new CBA?**

PT: Yes. One of the elements of the agreement is that the per-team minimum will increase. I think the per-team minimum under the old deal was about 84 percent of the cap. In year one of the deal, '06, it will be higher than that. The last I saw, the understanding we had with the Players Association was that the minimum team spend would increase to about 90 percent of the cap over the life of the deal.

**Q: For the teams that are cash over cap, is that a two-year process or a one-year process? Would '08 be the first year they could face additional cap charges?**

PT: I don't know what the current discussion on that is. I think that, the last I was involved with the discussions, the maximum team spending arrangement was over the trigger mechanism, not over the cap, over the so-called "maximum," then the teams that principally contributed to the overspending would have that piece of the overspending amortized against their cap over the remaining years of the deal.

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