

Commissioner Tagliabue Press Conference
League Meeting, Palm Beach, Fla., 3/30/04

I'm going to briefly recap the day, at least from my perspective. First, the membership passed instant replay for another five years and added a third challenge if the first two challenges are upheld. Secondly, the membership approved the Master Agreement on business ventures. Thirdly, we had a report from the Jets and a short video summarizing the status of the new stadium agreements announced last week by Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Pataki.

We had an excellent report on NFL Network from Steve Bornstein and several of his key executives. Then we had a very brief legal report on the argument today in the Claret case on the stay motion. The court indicated that rather than address the stay it would rather transfer the case to the merits appeal panel and hear the argument on the merits before the draft. Further argument was set on April 19. The court could issue a decision before the draft.

So those were the highlights. There were other aspects discussed like the Competition Committee report that had to do with Kansas City withdrawing its proposal on expanding the playoffs and other things we'll take up in the morning, including the recommendations for penalizing unsportsmanlike conduct.

Q: On changes to the Master Agreement...

PT: Certainly the widest consensus was on the fact that ratifies the way we do business now and have been doing business for the last several years. There was also wide consensus – universal I would say – that the way we're doing business now is very effective in terms of the relationship with league sponsorship and promotional arrangements and team sponsorship and promotional arrangements, including television advertisements.

Q: On proposed contract extension for the Commissioner ...

PT: I told Dan Rooney I'm receptive and I told him I don't intend to work forever. But beyond that, it's something we're going to sit down and talk about.

Q: Concerning the Master Agreement resolutions and abstentions during the voting process...

PT: Jeff (Lurie) did abstain. There was no reference in the final resolution to revenue sharing. The draft we presented had some conceptual language about revenue sharing. It did not create any new revenue sharing program. After all the clubs had spoken to the issue, I suggested that we delete anything on revenue sharing other than forming a committee which had been suggested by Wayne Weaver and Bob McNair and others as far back as the meeting we had in

Orlando on February 12. So the resolution included a provision that said the Commissioner would appoint a special committee of at least nine owners to study in-depth key financial aspects of club operations on both the revenue and cost sides, including the costs of building new stadiums. And that the committee would include at least three owners who are current members of the Management Council Executive Committee, three owners from the Finance Committee and three owners who are not members of either committee.

Then that committee would develop both an understanding of our revenue and cost structure and all aspects of our operations under the Collective Bargaining Agreement and it would try to develop alternatives to some of the revenue and cost-sharing arrangements that we currently have in the league to see whether some of the alternatives would have wider support than some of the current arrangements.

Q: On the disparity of suite prices between the most expensive to the most inexpensive...

PT: Those are the kinds of comments we put off for future meetings. If we had gotten everyone's opinion on those kinds of subjects we would be here until July 3rd.

Q: On the Maurice Clarett case and whether a reversal by appeals court would mean that Clarett and Mike Williams would be barred from the 2004 draft?

PT: I think you would be better off talking to Jeff Pash, who is somewhere in the building. I think under normal legal ground rules it would probably be the case that if the court ruled on the merits and ruled in our favor then they (Clarett and Mike Williams) would not be entitled to be in the draft. As I said that would be a general rule. But I think you should talk to Jeff Pash before you accept anything as definitive.

Q: Why would that be the general rule?

PT: That's why you should talk to Jeff Pash. There are a lot of general rules and a lot of exceptions. That's why you should talk to Jeff Pash. I'm not practicing the law, he is.

Q: More on the Clarett case ...

PT: I'm referring this to Jeff Pash. I've said all I will say about the Clarett case. It's a legal matter. I'm not practicing law.

Q: On the Jets stadium issue and what role the league will play in making this a reality...

PT: It would depend on what role people thought we should play. The whole project is a major urban redevelopment project that goes way beyond the Jets stadium – to the convention complex, Javits Center and other elements in developing the west side of Manhattan, including the possible extension of the subway system. We will take our direction from the Jets and from the Mayor and the Governor.

Q: On the Jets stadium and hosting future Super Bowls...

PT: As I said, Woody Johnson and Jay Cross made a short presentation this afternoon and it included reference to Super Bowls, the timeline for opening the stadium and the concept that was reflected in the letter from the Governor and Mayor that I read to the owners and Woody and Jay referred to also. It is conceivable we might take this up tomorrow. I need to talk to Woody and Jay and see if we need further discussion now or if they feel we can wait for the May meeting in Jacksonville.

Q: On an American Bowl in 2004 ...

PT: I don't believe we're going to have an American Bowl game this year. We were looking at the possibility of playing a game in Berlin in the renovated Olympic Stadium, which is being completely renovated for the 2006 World Cup Final. But we came to the conclusion that it wasn't really ready either from a stadium standpoint or getting the teams ready and promoting it properly.

Q: On the objection to making replay permanent...

PT: Some of the discussion was taped and will be shown on the NFL Network so you can see it there. The point that was made in the meeting by a number of people, including the Competition Committee and Red McCombs, was that some people are still concerned about replay. They are concerned about the old George Young concept that all replay does is add another layer of human error on top of a layer of human error. So there are still some people who have that concern about replay, obviously not nine because if we had nine objections we wouldn't have replay. But we accomplished two things by limiting it to five years: One, we have a further period of time to see how troublesome it is. How much error is there in the replay process when you lay another layer of decision on top of another decision? Secondly, the thought was if it still needs 24 votes five years from now it might give the Competition Committee and league office incentive to be more aggressive in improving it and making it better with new technology, digital technology, high definition technology or whatever.

There was a very large number of people who wanted to vote it in permanently and if we had continued the discussion it might have been voted in permanently, but there was a substantial number of owners and I would add myself to the

group who felt that the five-year vote was very positive and there was some value to keep the pressure on and to keep making it better and better.

Q: More on the Instant Replay vote ...

PT: The discussion got to be so complicated in terms of the existing rule on a permanent basis, the existing rule on a five-year basis, the existing rule for the third strike or the third challenge rule, that at one point we were so wrapped up in our parliamentary procedure if someone had called the question quickly I'm sure we would have voted replay out inadvertently. So I don't remember the votes. All I know is someone was keeping close count. At one point we had 11 against something and 17 in favor of something. Which would mean nothing could pass and everything could be blocked. We got ourselves out of that mess and got it approved. How we did it, I don't quite remember. I do know Mike Holmgren came over and said 'Do you realize where you are? You're at risk of having nothing approved and everything disapproved.' I said I know but we'll get out of there fast.

Q: Did you gain some support that you didn't have before?

PT: Absolutely. Mr. Bidwill voted for replay for the first time in recorded history with the support of his coach and Rod Graves.

Q: Does the Jets stadium issue complicate the Giants Stadium issue...

PT: Everything in life complicates everything else in life. But you work through complications. Especially when you have a 32-team league.

Q: What will further discussions on the Jets Stadium issue include tomorrow?

PT: If we take it up tomorrow it will be to further discuss the interest of the Jets, city and state in being a Super Bowl host city early in the life of the stadium. If we put it off to May it would be a report of some kind from the Super Bowl Advisory Committee, who would look at the Jets and Giants situations and situations in other cities who are interested in future Super Bowls.

Q: Another question about Jets stadium discussions tomorrow...

PT: I don't envision anything specifically tomorrow because I haven't made a decision on whether we will even raise the subject. I said I have to talk to Woody and Jay. The only thing I envision tomorrow is that the sun will come up and we'll have another meeting. We have a meeting with coaches and owners at 8:30 and I have to figure out what we're going to do at that meeting. I know it'll be a great meeting because every year we have a great meeting with principal owners and head coaches only and that's tomorrow morning.

Q: On media access to players and coaches...

PT: It's usually one of the things we discuss in this meeting – media access to players and coaches. Mr. Aiello and Mr. Browne usually make certain that it's one of the things that we emphasize.

Q: On the morning meeting ...

PT: It's a good session. It's a unique session. It's the only time of the year that we really do get the undivided attention of the principal owner and the head coach. For teams to be successful those have to be close partnerships. We've had some terrific suggestions coming out of these discussions. Last year, Bill Belichick made a suggestion that we review the procedures before the season that have to do with a lot of different things. We did that. This is a good session. It's a leadership session. Leadership at the ownership level and head coaching level. Leading in a lot of areas, including things that go way beyond each team's responsibilities, such as youth football.

Q: On the challenges the Commissioner faces in the future if he accepts the proposed contract extension...

PT: Basically everything we're doing we can do better in some respect or another. Nothing that we're doing is perfect. That's a constant challenge – keep making things better and better. To continue to adapt to the changes that are out there. We're in an environment where lots of things are changing, including television technology, fan interest and how they receive their sports. You showed me last night your little video camera which you had my picture on. At some point a device of that size will be a place to which we are televising live games on Sunday afternoon. You'll be able to have you video in one hand and a television receiver in the other, sit at the pool and watch Sunday Ticket. How we deal with that with Nielson and other people is complication upon a complication.

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