

**Commissioner Tagliabue Press Conference
Special League Meeting
Dallas, Texas
March 8, 2006**

We just concluded two long days of meetings. Last night we went until about 1 a.m., and this morning we started around 7 a.m. and finished at about 6:59 and 59 seconds before the 7 p.m. deadline. The membership approved the Collective Bargaining Agreement and accepted the offer of the Players Association for the six-year extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement by a vote of 30 in favor and two voting against.

It was really a tremendous effort by owners across the entire spectrum of the league, no matter how you define the spectrum – whether it's in terms of longevity, whether it's in terms of big-market, small-market or high-revenue, low-revenue. Everyone came together after these two full days of discussions and reached a consensus not only on the Collective Bargaining Agreement, but on some major new revenue-sharing features to support the ability of all teams to function well under the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The consensus was forged really by all 32, but nine teams worked this afternoon to take two different concepts that had evolved over the last two days and meld it into one concept. The first concept had been developed in the last two days by the New York Jets and the New England Patriots, Woody Johnson and Jonathan Kraft. The second concept had been developed by the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Baltimore Ravens, particularly Art Rooney and Ravens President Dick Cass. Then over the luncheon hour, three other owners spoke with me about a concept for putting together the two proposals, the two different sets of ideas, and a process to take the Jets-Patriots concept and the Ravens-Steelers concept and blend it into one. Those three owners were John Mara, Jerry Richardson and Pat Bowlen. Then when we resumed this afternoon, all of those owners plus Jerry Jones and Arthur Blank played a critical role. We ended up with one single resolution that brought all of the different ideas together. It was sponsored by the nine teams that I just mentioned: Giants, Steelers, Patriots, Ravens, Falcons, Panthers, Broncos, Jets and Cowboys. And that's what we presented to the membership and explained it. Once it was all explained, we had the vote and it was adopted without any changes. The blending of the two proposals into one, which was developed this afternoon between 3:15 and 6 p.m., was accepted on the basis that it was presented and developed by those nine teams. In addition to Art Rooney, Dan Rooney was involved in that process. In addition to Arthur Blank, Rich McKay was involved in that process, plus all the owners I've already mentioned. I'll be glad to take questions.

Q: Can you discuss the new revenue sharing agreement?

PT: The revenue sharing basically is a commitment of almost \$500 million over the first four years of the deal and then several hundred million additional dollars over the last two years of the deal. I think the total amount over the life of the deal gets to over \$850 or \$900 million of incremental revenue sharing to be funded in some significant degree

by the high-revenue clubs. “High-revenue” includes the top five, the next group, six through 10, and to a lesser degree the clubs who rank 11 through 15. All of those clubs in differing proportions ended up making the alliance or the commitment to fund the revenue sharing.

Q: How will those funds be redistributed among the membership?

PT: The lower-revenue teams will draw from that fund. The overall concept was geared to the idea that when a team spends to the midpoint between the salary cap and cash over the cap on an average basis, to spend to that level a team should not have to spend more than a specified percentage of its own revenue. So there is an objective standard in there.

Q: What number, percentage-wise, is fair or equitable?

PT: The target in this concept was 65 percent maximum, as a percentage of your own revenues. Of course, the players are getting an unprecedented high level of total revenue, approaching 60 percent of the total.

Q: What will the salary cap be for the 2006 season?

PT: The salary cap for 2006 will \$102 million and for 2007 be \$109 million.

Q: When will the free agency period begin?

PT: Free agency is going to begin after a 48-hour hiatus, so that clubs can use the additional funding within this cap to re-sign players rather than release players, if that’s the way they choose to proceed.

Q: Can you describe some of the other landmark changes that are included in this new CBA?

PT: There are several major features, a lot of major features. There is a significantly expanded post-career medical coverage for players. They already have five years post-career. There is a healthcare-IRA-type element set aside that the players will get funded in proportion to the length of their career. It’s quite a significant improvement in benefits.

The franchise player rules basically stay as they are with some minor tweaking. For the first time a player is tagged and the second time a player is tagged, then in the eventuality, which is very rare, that a player would be tagged a third time, the structure has been modified so as to virtually ensure that in the future there would not be any three-time tags, that players and clubs would be able to work out multi-year agreements, including signing bonuses, either the first time a player was tagged or the second time a player was tagged.

Another change is that drafted players in rounds two through seven will have a maximum contract length of four years. Some clubs have been signing players to five and six-year

contracts. That had become an issue with the Players Association in this negotiation relative to the concept of free agency after four years. We agreed there would be a maximum contract length of four years for players drafted in rounds two through seven. The first round can still be negotiated with longer deals.

Q: Any changes in terms of club disciplinary procedures and forfeiting signing bonus?

PT: Yes. There are also provisions in there that modify the ground rules in terms of forfeiture of signing bonuses. There are also a number of areas that the discipline provided at the league level for the most part becomes the exclusive form of discipline, whether its suspension or fines, such as with the drug program and with other areas. League discipline would become exclusive.

Q: Any changes in the amount of the rookie salary pool?

PT: No. We had a lot of discussions about the rookie pool, but in the end I don't think we've made any changes.

Q: On the discipline aspect, you're saying that what Philadelphia did to Terrell Owens could no longer be an option?

PT: I'm not saying that. I'm saying that in certain areas we've modified what teams can negotiate. In certain other areas, we agreed that league discipline would be exclusive and that individual club contracts would not be individually negotiated departures from the league disciplinary pattern. That would not be permitted.

Q: You've said all along that this would get done at the 11th hour and 59th minute. It almost sounds like it was orchestrated.

PT: Do you have another question? Harold Henderson heads our Management Council and he had been hearing me say for several years that this would get done at the 11th hour and 59th minute. Frequently over dinner he'd say, "11th hour and 59th minute before what?" And I would say, "I don't know. It's just going to be at the 11th hour and the 59th minute."

Then the other night on Sunday when we had the second break off of negotiations and we were able to talk to Gene Upshaw late at night that his proposal would be presented, I think we got it done after 11 p.m. Then Harold finally said to me, "Now I know what you mean when you talk about the 11th hour and the 59th minute. We're now at the 11th hour and the 24th minute." So I say, "Wait until we get to Dallas. If we have more than 60 seconds to spare, it will be a miracle." And that's the way it turned out.

Q: How important is this new agreement to game of football and the league?

PT: I think it is important. Time will tell how important it is, but it was certainly an opportunity to continue building what we've been building. I think it's great for the fans. I think the quality of the game is at a tremendous level. The spread of talent around the league, the ability of teams to become competitive relatively quickly and to do what Marvin Lewis has done and what other coaches have done, it's a great thing. This preserves all of that. It continues with the elements that we have with the Players Association on the shared cost of constructing new stadiums. It continues a lot of our initiatives, Youth Football and other areas. So I think it's a very positive thing for the fans and the league generally even though it's a stretch from a financial standpoint for many, many teams in terms of the cost.

Q: Does this agreement affect the G-3 funding program for new stadiums?

PT: There are some changes in the G-3 funding program, yes. Basically it's an improvement.

Q: Are debts of some of the high-revenue teams addressed in this agreement?

PT: Not in any way that I could explain right now. We didn't get to the point of micromanaging the way teams operate. We set targets in terms of what should be a reasonable target that a club would have to spend on players to be competitive relative to its own revenues. Once we had that target agreed to, then we did a calculation, or thousands of calculations. Once you translated that target and tried to figure out how it would play out over the next six seasons, the question was, "What is the resulting revenue-sharing obligation that had to be funded?" And that is what we funded.

But we didn't get into micromanaging what teams do in order to generate revenue or to figure out how to net out the costs of stadium construction, except in some of the structural elements of the agreement. There is a concept of TFR, which takes account of stadium construction costs, there's a G-3 credit that takes account of that, but we didn't micromanage what teams do. We want to have the right incentives for teams at every level, the right support through the league and to give great incentives for low-revenue teams to pick their revenue up, be it through new stadiums or other things. But it's not micromanaging.

Q: Beforehand, you had thought that revenue sharing did not necessarily have to be a part of this deal, but it is now part of the package. Can you discuss that?

PT: I always thought it would be part of the package. That was always my expectation.

Q: How pleased are you that this is done?

PT: I'm pleased, and more than pleased, I'm relieved.

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