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**COMMISSIONER
PAUL TAGLIABUE WITH CHRIS
BERMAN AT THE 2006 NFL DRAFT**

Q. Joining us now the Commissioner of the *National Football League*. He's been in this job since 1989, that would be Paul Tagliabue. Nice to see you?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Good to see you.

Q. We gave you the toughest name in all those years at the podium for the end – the Giants' pick.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I'm blaming Ernie Accorsi.

Q. You should. I know he'll get a memo and note about the socks up high. Let's just talk about this day or this weekend, Paul, the NFL Draft. You look back, do you have a memory or two? Could be a kid that you talked to, it could be a situation; on this day, is there something that sticks out in your mind through these years?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It's all the fans. They have been here for so many years. But I met a lot of them coming in this morning outside the building, a lot of them came up on stage, and some of them are family members or friends of family members. Some of them are just fans that are here.

There's a lot of great memories and they seem to have appreciated what we've done.

Q. Can you believe you've used the "R" word, "retired"; has it hit you?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't know if it's hit me. I think I'm ready for it. I don't think I'm retiring as much as I'm moving on to another stage of my life and passing the baton to someone else in the National Football League. I think it's the right thing to do at the right time and I

think it should work well for everybody especially the league and the teams and the fans.

Q. Passing the baton, how much will you be involved in choosing your successor?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I'll be involved, I guess, since I'm kind of in an administrative role mostly. Mostly the owners are on the committee. The owners have the votes. And at this point the process has been driven by Dan Rooney and Jerry Richardson as the co-chairs of the committee. So whatever they think I can do that's constructive, I'll do, and do it as well as I've tried to do everything over the years.

Q. What advice would you give -- well, we haven't selected anybody yet. But what does that person, man or woman, need more than anything else to succeed at this job?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think it's -- one is obvious; it's integrity and it's conviction to be fair and balanced to every constituent in the league, the 32 teams and all the other constituencies. We're balancing a lot of constituencies in the National Football League.

I think being passionate about the game and being passionate about being the best. It's really important having a work ethic as strong as the work ethic of our teams. I think that's a big part of it. If you have that commitment to be the best, you'll end up being the best.

Q. When you have a chance to look back, what would be your proudest achievement or proudest accomplishment of the league under your rule?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think part of what I'm proud of is that I've gotten a lot of notes from a lot of coaches and football people saying that as much as the league has grown in the 17 years that I've been commissioner, I've never allowed the focus to leave the game. The game is still at the heart of everything the National Football League does, and of course that's for the

fans. To me that's a nice compliment and it's a wonderful compliment.

Q. It's universally felt. As Commissioner of the National Football League, I know you have dibs on some helmets, I don't know if you have one of these or whether it's going to fit in your home in Maine or in New York, but signed by all of our commentators and just in case you get covering a kick sometime, we want you to wear the ESPN helmet.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Thank you very much. And ESPN is one of the great partners and the others are great friends and I look forward to continuing those friendships.

Q. As a friend and network and as a human being since we got to know each other in '89 it's been a heck of a run, wear that proudly, congratulations and enjoy.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Thank you. I will.