

April 29, 2006



**COMMISSIONER PAUL TAGLIABUE
WITH RICH EISEN, NFL NETWORK**

Q. We are pleased to welcome to our set the Commissioner of the National Football League, who just got a very warm ovation from the fans. They don't cheer too many people at the draft, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: That depends on what they are looking for on offense and defense. (Laughter).

Q. What are your thoughts now that you are done with announcing the last first-round players at an NFL draft in your career?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I don't know. We're talking about, the April surprise, come back tomorrow and be selected as Mr. Irrelevant.

Q. Might you come back tomorrow?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: We're thinking about it. We're thinking about it. What could be more irrelevant than an ex-commissioner? That's the perfect definition of the 336th pick.

Q. That's redundant, right?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Right.

Q. What are your memories of the draft if you look back on your career?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: it's where so many incredible careers have started. I was over here talking to Michael Irvin, when you think about the players that have come through the draft since I've been commissioner, it's been phenomenal.

I said earlier, it's the starting point of all the great careers. The other great moment is giving the Super Bowl trophy. And maybe the third great moment as commissioner is the Hall of Fame

weekend because that's the ultimate. But this is where the connection between college football and NFL football is and where the dreams begin and the greatness continues.

Q. And the NFL may be at its height in the history of any professional sports league in the world. When you leave after the stewardship of all these years, what are you most proud of?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think a lot of things. Obviously, the growth of the game. For me probably the thing I'm most proud of is a lot of letters and phone calls I've had in recent weeks from coaches who said to me that even as the business has grown as much as it's grown, you've kept your focus on the game, you've kept the league's focus on the game and on the fans. The Collective Bargaining Agreement is a big part of that and the competitive balance, the toughness of the competition, and the fact that it's strong for all of the fans on all 32 teams.

Q. I've got to applaud you on the job you've done; I've benefited from the job you've done as a commissioner. The biggest question I would like to ask is what is the challenge in replacing somebody like Pete Rozelle?

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: I think the biggest challenge is the league had lost its relationship with the Players Association, the Players Association had decertified. They had the replacement games in '87, the strike in '82, and to get beyond all that acrimony, it took the efforts of a lot of people. It took the Commissioner, a lot of people, and along with Gene Upshaw and his side of the table, we got it done and we're continuing well into the second decade. To me that's the biggest thing, that's what the game is about, it's the relationship of the players to the team and the fans.

Q. Last question, can you believe there's two networks covering one draft?

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COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: It's hard to believe, but then again, you know, maybe there will be a third somewhere along the line.

Q. NFL Network 2.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: But it's great to be here. And then to have our own network, I look back at some of the things I said during that commissioner selection process in '89, and one of the things I said was that I thought the next commissioner would oversee the birth of an NFL Network. And so here we are and it's a lot of fun, and you guys do a great job and it's going to be great for the sport.

Q. Thank you for everything. You can tell the fans here in New York City, they also appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER TAGLIABUE: Well, they haven't always been that way, but they are this weekend, which is nice. Thank you.