

**Commissioner Tagliabue w/ CNBC's Scott Wapner**  
**NFL Office, New York, September 1, 2005**

**Wapner:** Let me start by asking you what's the latest in New Orleans and how it pertains to the NFL and to the Saints?

**Commissioner:** It's a tragic situation, obviously. Like everyone else, we are stunned by the dimensions of this natural disaster, which the President described yesterday as one of the worst in the nation's history. At the moment, we're in conversations with the Saints, and we're looking hard at what the alternatives are for playing the Saints' first few games. The opening regular season game for the Saints is in Carolina, and then they were scheduled to play the Giants in the Superdome. So we are going to take it one week at a time and try to figure it out. First is where should that game be played. We'll look at a number of alternatives.

**Wapner:** Is it realistic to think at this point that they are going to have to play several games away from New Orleans?

**Commissioner:** That is our assumption that they will have to play quite a few games away from New Orleans. And we want to really emphasize above all that sport is a small part of life. It is an important part of life in some contexts, but to the extent that it is important it's because it is part of community. We want to use our visibility and the respect we have with the public and the respect our teams have to support the national recovery program. That's the big thing. So as a league and as 32 teams and as the fans of 32 teams, our focus beginning with our preseason games this weekend and our regular season games next weekend will be to support the national recovery effort.

**Wapner:** What cities are you considering for the Saints at this point?

**Commissioner:** I don't really want to get into specific cities, but I think we are looking at three alternatives, conceptually. One would be to have the game played at the other team's location, in this case that would be Giants Stadium. The second would be in another NFL city. And the third would be in what we would call a neutral city. So all three of those alternatives are under active analysis and we're not leaning in any direction. We will be discussing all of those with the Saints.

**Wapner:** And will you play those home dates at some point in and around Louisiana?

**Commissioner:** At this point you have to proceed on the assumption, just a working assumption that they may be unable to play in New Orleans at all for the entire season. If things evolve in a positive way, then that would be something that we could adjust to. But our assumption is that for planning purposes we should assume that it will be difficult if not impossible to play in New Orleans at all this year.

**Wapner:** Have you spoken with the Saints' owner Tom Benson?

**Commissioner:** Yes, I spoke with him early on Monday and then several times in the last couple of days, including late last night.

**Wapner: And how is he holding up? Are all of his players and their families accounted for?**

**Commissioner:** The players, not just on the Saints, are as upset as any citizen would be as you would expect because many of them have families. Many of the players on teams other than the Saints have parents, siblings, nephews and nieces and in some cases their families living not just in the New Orleans area, but other parts of the Gulf Coast. We've all read expressions of concern from many, many players, including today Marshall Faulk, Brett Favre and other players from that region.

**Wapner: You've donated \$1 million on behalf of the league. Is that just the beginning of your efforts?**

**Commissioner:** I think so. We thought it was important to make it clear that, as with other disasters including last year with the hurricanes in Florida and with 9/11, we will be responsive and try to be a leader in a constructive way. I'm sure our teams will do more. I spoke with Gene Upshaw yesterday, the head of the Players Association. He wants to work with us and have the players, through the Players Association, make a major financial gift. I think, and Gene feels, that one of the key things is to whom should the gift be made and for what purpose at what time? Those are things that will take direction from Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin and others who are down there much closer to the scene than we are.

**Wapner: You are in a unique position with the league because of the reach that you have and the message you can get out, right?**

**Commissioner:** I think we are. Everyone remembers, I certainly remember because I was there, when the Giants resumed play in Kansas City after 9/11. There was a roar of appreciation from the Chiefs fans for the Giants players, and really it was more of a roar of appreciation for the people of New York. And I think that the people of Louisiana, the people of the Gulf Coast region are, in a sense, represented in our league by the New Orleans Saints. I'm sure the fans around our league are going to recognize them and help the people in the region by being responsive to what they see and hear in the NFL through the Saints.

**Wapner: You do have some precedent, obviously as you mentioned, in dealing with crises.**

**Commissioner:** Yes. After 9/11, we set up a Disaster Relief Fund specifically for that purpose. For many decades we have had NFL Charities. Going back to my first days as Commissioner 17 years ago, it was the earthquake in San Francisco where the league and Eddie DeBartolo, then the 49ers owner, led some major efforts in the recovery from that. So that's certainly a big part of the league's tradition and history.