

**February 2, 2007**



## **AN INTERVIEW WITH: NFL COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Good morning and welcome. For those of you who attended the Prince press conference, I'm not sure I'm going to be able to meet that standard, but I'll do my best.

Certainly we appreciate all of you being here. Your coverage, your interest in the NFL throughout the season is very important to us and we deeply appreciate that.

By any stretch of the imagination, this NFL season was one of the best we've ever had. We're excited about our match-up on Sunday night with the Bears and the Colts. It's sure to be a great Super Bowl for us.

I know we have a number of challenges for the league. I'm eager to get to your questions. But I'd like to recognize somebody who is very important to the NFL and certainly somebody that will have a significant play in our Super Bowl this Sunday. As you know, there are very few people who have attended Super Bowls 40 straight **Super Bowls**. It's even more rare to find a couple that have attended 40 straight **Super Bowls**. Norma and **Lamar Hunt** have attended every Super Bowl together, 40 straight.

As you know, we lost **Lamar Hunt** this past December after a long battle with cancer. He was a very special man. He was a pioneer in sports. He transformed pro football and he also coined the name Super Bowl. So it's a special honor for us to have Norma here. Norma will be joining **Dan Marino** to flip the coin for the beginning of Super Bowl XLI and we're thrilled to have her. I don't know if she's arrived yet. She was stuck in traffic. But there she is. (Applause.) Norma, we're honored to have you here, thank you for being here.

I understand Dave Goldberg has the honors, so let's get this started.

**Q. Congratulations on surviving your first year.**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I haven't made it yet, Dave. They tell me I have to get through this.

**Q. 19 years ago Doug Williams became the first Black quarterback to win a Super Bowl or to really play in one. And an influx of black quarterbacks followed him. About two hours ago Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith stood up by the Vince Lombardi Trophy in a pioneering moment for the NFL. Do you think their presence in the Super Bowl will lead to -- there are still only six Black coaches, more Black coaches, more Black executives simply because they're here?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: The answer, Dave, is, yes. Most importantly, we're proud of Tony (Dungy) and Lovie (Smith) as great football coaches. They have meant a great deal to the NFL. They're people of incredibly high character, and to see the success they're having on the field as NFL coaches is very rewarding for all of us. It is obviously of particular note that they are African Americans, and the success that they are having on the field is something that we're very proud of. And I know they're proud of it as African Americans, but I know they want to be remembered and thought of as great football coaches, and they are, I think, in the NFL's minds.

I think it will lead to greater opportunities, because the whole basis of the **Rooney** Rule was to make sure we had the best possible people in those positions. And whether it's coaching, for an office, or anything associated with the NFL, we want to have a sophisticated process that is open and diverse that will find the best possible candidate for those positions. These are two great examples and it's happening across the league and we're proud of it.

**Q. We know there's going to be a regular season game in the UK next season. Can you shed anymore light on that situation for us?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Yes. Today we're proud to announce that the Dolphins and the Giants will be playing at Wembley Stadium next fall, October 28th. It will be shown on Fox Sports here in the United States. And we think we have a great match-up. And it will be a terrific start or smashing start, as some might say, to our start in London. So we're thrilled to be back.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the CBA. As you know there's a lot of discontent around the league, I've heard it described that there are no defenders left in the league of the CBA. You haven't got revenue sharing, it's squeezed on the small-market teams, even the big-market teams complain about it. Gene (Upshaw) mentioned opting out in '08. Do you think the owners will opt out in '08 and what will happen then?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, I think the first thing we have to do is do a great deal of analysis. We've had a great system with the Players Association for a long period of time. We have a new agreement we're operating under. It obviously has new mechanisms, it has new aspects of the deal we have to evaluate to make sure they're working, not only to the NFL but also for the players.

I think, from our standpoint, I know there's some concern about the cost of the deal. But we have to do that evaluation. So I would urge all of us to be patient, to understand it, do the evaluation. It is our job, our responsibility with the players to strike a reasonable agreement that works for all parties. And we are assured, at least, that we will have labor peace through 2010. So we will have a lot of work to do. We will be in great contact with **Gene** and his team. But I feel confident that we will be able to address the issues as we go forward, because we have a responsibility to do that.

**Q. What is your assessment of the chances of Indianapolis hosting a Super Bowl?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, I've had a lot of discussions with the Mayor, had a lot of discussions with **Jimmy** (Irsay). I know their interest. They're building a tremendous

stadium. They have a great community. And I know they are bidding on 2011, along with Dallas and along with Arizona. And I think they have a lot of positive things that they'll present. It is an ownership decision. It is my job to make sure that the process is done in a fair and open process. And I will do that.

**Q. Talking about the regular season games outside the USA. Why Mexico wasn't considered for the 2007 season?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: It actually was considered. We have had, as you know, we've played our first regular season game in our history in Mexico City last year. It was a great success and it led, frankly, to the fact that our ownership would approve playing regular season games on a more limited basis annually.

We love Mexico. We have a great fan base there. It's growing every day. We are very interested in going back. And we hope to be dealing with the various officials in Mexico to try to get that done for the 2008 season.

**Q. Roger, Gene Upshaw said yesterday that the two of you have a difference on HGH, and he's still not there to blood testing. Do you believe that players should be blood tested for HGH. And what is your overall level of satisfaction with the steroid testing program at that point?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Let me start on the steroid testing. As you know, we announced changes last week to our program. We think this reinforces the fact that we're leaders in this area. We believe that our program is high quality. We have increased the number of tests to 12,000 tests per year. We have added new banned substances with EPO. The players are very proud of the program. And I'm proud of the players that they want to eliminate performance enhancing drugs.

There is no reliable test for HGH right now. We are investing money to develop that test. I don't know if that will be a blood test or urine test. We are going to pursue both. We keep an open mind about the use of a test, whether it be blood or urine. I do understand, though, what **Gene** is raising as far as the complications of blood tests. But again until that technology is developed I think it's premature for us to make any decisions.

**Q. What's it mean to the league to have two tradition-rich franchises back in the big game for the first time in decades?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, I think it's great for the league. My wife likes to tell me that everything starts in the midwest. So it's great to see two midwestern teams doing well. Obviously a team with the tradition that comes with both of these franchises, the Colts and the Bears, is just fabulous. And I think it's gotten the whole country excited and frankly the whole world excited. And from that standpoint we think it's going to be a great matchup and it's been terrific for the league.

**Q. Given the amount of money bet on the league throughout Vegas as well as in the world. And the NBA All-Star Game coming to Vegas, you going to London where there's tons of gambling halls. Can you give your personal view if an owner came to you and said he wanted to move to Las Vegas?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I feel strongly about keeping a very strong line between the NFL and sports gambling, and sports betting. I think it's a real issue. I have my personal views about gambling and I don't think it's in the best interests of the NFL to have any association with sports betting. I think we are working hard with all of our franchises now to stay where they are, to stay competitive and successful in those communities and make those communities even better. I do not, from my standpoint, have any dialogue with anybody about that -- that hypothetical, but we're going to work hard to try to keep our teams where they are.

**Q. Is there anything that the league can do to curtail the off-field incidents that have plagued it this year, especially some teams? And I wonder if the league at any point will hold individual clubs accountable for the misbehavior of some of their players?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, we have to do something about it. I think it's an incredibly important issue. One incident is too many, in my book. I think we need to reevaluate all of our programs. We have a tremendous number of programs that I think have been quite successful to help our players. But I think we've got to do more. We are going to start that process, one, by evaluating our policies; but two, **Gene** and I are going to put together a group of players we're

going to meet with in the next several weeks to give us their perspective on what's really happening and what are the issues, so we can try to learn something first.

But I think our focus has to be on reevaluating our policies, make sure we educate our players to what's out there. We continually tell our players and our coaches that we are raised to a higher standard in the NFL and we have to exceed that standard. I firmly believe that and I think **Gene** does, also.

We have to make sure our players are more accountable, but I think also our clubs have to be more accountable and we will be reevaluating our position to see if there are ways we should make our clubs more accountable in the offseason.

**Q. Given the immense popularity of the league, do you see that these problems that seem to come in droves this year, chipping away at the league's image to where it gets to be, I don't know if crisis would be the right word, but where it gets to be a major problem?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I see it differently. I don't see it in droves. I think there are very few. But a few is too many in my book. I think when you have the outstanding athletes that we have, and we have two of them here today, that won the Walter Payton Award, Drew Brees and LT (LaDainian Tomlinson). These are two of the finest people I know. Not just football players, but outstanding people. (Applause.)

We're proud of our players. We recognize that at times some of our players don't do what we would hope they do. When that happens we will be very aggressive in dealing with that and we have stepped up our discipline this year, and I intend to continue to do that.

**Q. I'm sure you're aware of the stories in the Boston Globe and the New York Times where Ted Johnson said the Patriots rushed him back in practice after sustaining a concussion. I know you haven't had time to look into the specifics. How much does an allegation by a player that's highly-respected concern you and could you talk about, we know that used to be common practice in the league, but where do you think the league is right now in terms of that issue?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I don't accept the premise that it was common practice, but it does concern me. I think from our standpoint we want to make sure that our players have the safest possible environment in which to play. We have spent a great deal of time and energy on the concussion issue. We have had a Concussion Committee that has been studying this issue from a medical standpoint, including 12 doctors -- five are from the outside and seven from the NFL -- that have been looking at this issue and trying to see what it is we can learn about concussions that would be helpful as we go forward. And that's led to new helmet designs, that's led to rule changes, and I think a safer environment for our players. I'm very concerned about it.

I didn't know about the Ted Johnson issue until yesterday afternoon. I would like to know about this, our staff would like to know about this further in advance, so we can identify these issues further in advance.

**Q. California has a slew of stadium problems up and down the coast and this past season the 49ers announced their intention to leave San Francisco and build a stadium in Santa Clara. What are your impressions of that plan and have you had a chance to visit the site?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I have seen the site. I saw it when I was out there last fall, as a matter of fact. The San Francisco 49ers are important to that city. And we would like to have the team stay in San Francisco. The 49ers have worked very hard to be able to do that. It's a reality that that alternative doesn't work for them right now. And we're trying to develop other alternatives with the city and see if it's possible to make sure that that team stays there.

On the other hand Santa Clara has proposed something that has a great deal of potential. It's a great community and it's close to the fan base and it's something we're going to have to evaluate. But we continue to look at the San Francisco alternatives at the same time.

**Q. In your opinion what has South Florida done well as a host community and what would you like to see changed or improved next year in Arizona?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, first of all, we are so pleased to be here. We

think the hospitality that has been provided to us has been extraordinary. It's been a great experience for our fans. I think the one thing we have to keep focused on is how we continue to make this affordable for our fans. We want to make sure that they have the opportunity to come to the Super Bowl, experience all the various events, but it is a price issue that we have to make sure that we are conscious of, which we are.

So the gouging, potentially, by hotels or other outlets, we want to make sure that's maintained, it's controlled in a way that would be good for our fans.

**Q. I'm sure the NFL is aware of the dire infrastructure of stadiums in California. San Diego is no longer in the Super Bowl rotation. San Francisco has lost its status as a Super Bowl site. And Oakland still plays in an older, dual-purpose stadium. With so much money being allocated from the G-3 funds in New York and New Jersey and Kansas City, is there money left in that fund to help California stadiums get built and renewed?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, the G-3 Fund has been exhausted. We used that on our last three facilities, Kansas City and -- two facilities, two New York teams in New York and the Kansas City facility. And that represents a huge investment by the league in trying to get these done.

We have always had a league-wide stadium funding mechanism. I anticipate we will. But this has to be considered within the context of our labor agreement and revenue sharing with the Players Association. They were cooperative and worked with us on the New York stadium and we appreciate that.

But I think there's a much broader, deeper issue that we're going to have to get to, to be able to continue to have the kind of funding mechanisms we've had on the league level. And we look forward to having those conversations. We'll continue to work with the California authorities to see what we can do to work for both the community and the NFL.

**Q. There's been a groundswell in recent weeks and many months from former players, retired players from the '50s, '60s, '70's, a press conference yesterday, where some of the guys are going to donate some of**



their most precious memorabilia, to take care of their not too well-off brethren. How much of a concern is this to the NFL? They say we have to do better on the pension, insurance, and benefits. What are they doing to remedy this situation?

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I think that's an important question. I am very concerned anytime you see one of our former players, and the men that helped make this game great, have the medical issues that they're having. And I think that's something that **Gene** and I have discussed quite extensively over the last several weeks. I think we're going to sit down and see how we can be creative and deal with that.

But it's not good for the NFL to see that kind of an image with our players having the medical problems they have. And I think we need to address that. And I think we have to do it intelligently and thoughtfully. There are players that do have issues that need to be addressed. And we're going to need to address that directly with them.

**Q. Just to follow up on that point, Mike Ditka, one of my colleagues, now, at ESPN, he understands there's a lot of money that the league and the union is willing to cite in terms of how much money is being funded to retired players and the Dire Assistance Fund. But he thinks the union needs to provide documentation, show us the canceled checks, to prove this money is going out to retired players, as opposed to the attorneys fighting the players in that system. Is the league willing to do that?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, I hadn't heard that. I heard a lot of the coach's comments and I have a great respect for him. That's why he's "Da Coach" and I'm the Commish, from my standpoint. I don't necessarily buy his perspective on that. I know he feels strongly about that. And I would be more than happy to meet with him to hear it.

But I think we are very proud of the fact that we have spent an extraordinary amount of money in pension and benefits. I think our owners are funding over 126 million dollars a year to former players, and I think that's an extraordinary effort. I think we have to reevaluate to see what we can do more to address the issues and we'll do that.

**Q. The off-field issues have happened in droves in Cincinnati. How do you explain nine different players arrested in 13 months. I know you had a conversation with Mike Brown about this and sought him out. What can you do with that city, which is the world's biggest small town, and takes this personally?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I think we all take it personally. I think it's something we have to address. From our standpoint we have talked with Mike on several occasions. We have offered services and he has taken those services to try to address these issues. It's part of what **Gene** and I are going to be talking about with the players in the next several weeks to understand a little bit what's happening in these particular markets.

Why is it happening in one market versus another market? What it is that players need as support or what they need as education? And we'll do that very aggressively over the next several months. But I don't know the answer to that, but we want to find it and we're going to find it.

**Q. I would like to know concerning to the stadium situation, once again, have you ever met in your first year with the San Diego officials to discuss the situation of having a city to choose a stadium; and what about projects for Los Angeles that it's a big market, but what about Los Angeles?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Let me take your questions -- I think you have two different questions there. In San Diego I've been in close touch with Mr. Spanos and his management team. I was out there for the playoff game. I have not met with any of the local officials. I have offered to do that if I can be of any help.

But from the NFL standpoint, we want to do whatever we can to support the team in that market. They are working hard to stay in that market. They have, for several years, been focused on various stadium alternatives that they think will work for the stadium and the team. My hat's off to him. I'm happy to play any role in doing that.

On your second question in Los Angeles. Los Angeles, again, we need to find a solution in Los Angeles that works for both the community and the NFL. It's important to us to be in Los Angeles long-term, but we have survived quite well without Los Angeles, Los Angeles has survived

quite well without the NFL. But I think we would be better together. I want to find a way to do that that would be best for all parties.

**Q. I understand that Toronto is potentially in the mix for one of these international games. Can you tell us what are the chances that might happen in 2008? And could you speak to the possibility of what is North America's fifth-largest market for potential expansion?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: We've had a great deal of interest from Toronto to host a regular season game. We agreed with the officials in Toronto and the CFL, because they have a Grey Cup. We've had a long-standing relationship with the CFL and hope to continue that. They are a part of the history and tradition.

We're not in an expansion mode right now. We're making sure our 32 teams succeed at the highest-possible level at their current markets. And Toronto is a great city and would be a great host if they had an NFL team. But that's for another day.

**Q. About the concussion issue, two questions. Would the league consider taking action against a coach if they learned that he overrode the medical advice of a trainer or doctor. Is there concern about the potential conflict of interest having trainers who work for the teams making the decisions whether or not a player goes back into a game or back to practice?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, on the first issue, I certainly hope and we will obviously look into this issue, but -- that our coaches are always looking out for the medical and the well-being of their players. I think they encourage that, also, and they want that.

I don't think competitive issues should ever override a medical issue. And so if there's a medical determination that someone should not participate, they should not participate. It is a touchy issue, particularly concussions, when evaluations have to be made about the severity of a concussion. And we don't know an awful lot about them, despite our study for the last ten years. We've learned an awful lot more.

I think it's difficult to have specific rules, because a medical evaluation has to take place. It should be medical and it should not be football or anything else.

So from our standpoint we'll continue to work with our Medical Committee to develop policies, procedures. I don't see a conflict of interest with trainers. I think they're out there doing a wonderful job in the best interests of the health of those players. And I think our medical teams are the best in the business. And I'm sure that they're getting great care, but we want to make sure that we can do more for them.

**Q. Is the league planning to review the overtime system and try to adopt it like college to make it attractive as Boise State- Oklahoma?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: We actually think our overtime rule is attractive. But on the other hand we continually and annually evaluate our overtime rules to see what we can do to improve them. I think our system is designed to make sure that teams win the game in regulation. I think Herman **Edwards** said the idea is to win the game. And the idea is to win the game in regulation.

If teams go into overtime they obviously know the risk involved with the coin flip. But we'll evaluate the rule. We'll evaluate changes that could occur in that. But I don't see us adopting the college system.

**Q. In the context of the two coaches in the game this weekend and the progress that has occurred, within the Rooney Rule, could you address in terms of this year's hirings, one minority hiring had a defensive orientation and I believe four head coaches that were not and were hired had offensive. What is the league, if anything, doing to address the fact that there are still very small numbers of offensive coordinators and quarterbacks coaches?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I assume you mean African-American offensive coordinators? I think it's all part of our system of programs that we've designed through coaching fellowship programs, through giving more people opportunities, and to get them training and to get them greater opportunities to jump into offensive coordinator positions from positional coaches.

But I don't know if I necessarily agree with the premise that all future head coaches are going to come from the offensive side of the football. We've had great defensive coaches, defense still wins. And I think that it's about what the head coach brings to the table in running a football

team. And I think you saw that in Mike Tomlin this week. The Rooney Rule worked very well for Dan **Rooney** and the **Steelers** because they went out and they saw a very wide, diverse group of coaches and they found one that they might not have been looking at. And I think that's been a great success. And I think -- from everything I hear, I spoke to him the other day, he's going to be a great football coach, regardless of which side of the ball he comes from.

**Q. To follow up on the HGH question, WADA is working with the laboratory, and they're planning to have an HGH test available later this year for distribution. If that happens, one will be available and the league would have to make a decision whether to use it. Based on your consultation with scientists, what is your belief on whether that will be valid and would you push to have that adopted by the NFL?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, it's hypothetical, because they're saying they will have a test developed. We're working to develop a test, also. We think it's important to have a test on this level.

But in the meantime we're developing a more sophisticated test that I think is going to be very helpful, the Carbon Isotope Test, which gives us the ability to understand the levels and check testosterone at low levels. We're going to test it aggressively this year.

As technology and science develop, we want to take advantage of that. We think we have the best program going right now, so we're not looking to take someone else's drug program.

**Q. Given the success the Saints had this year, do you see New Orleans as a viable NFL market right now and in the future? I know you've made several trips down there after Hurricane Katrina?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I think the whole New Orleans Saints and the Gulf Coast region has been a great story for the NFL this year, not just because of the Saints success on the field, but also because of what you're seeing the team has done for that community. It's obviously a community that was tragically impacted. It is still going through a recovery period.

But we're very proud of the fact that Tom Benson brought his Saints back there very early last year, before we even knew we had a place to

play. And the league, Tom Benson, and the rest of us participated in trying to get that stadium back and running, which was identified as one of their primary objectives in New Orleans by the governor. And we're proud of the fact that we got that facility open. It created new revenues for that community, it brought hope back to that community. The Saints brought hope back to their community, and people like Drew Brees and his wife, have done great work there. We're proud of what the Saints have done and our hats are off to Tom Benson and his group for doing it.

**Q. You talked about the progress of the Rooney Rule since its inception, have you thought at all about suggesting an expansion of it to front offices to key coordinator positions?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: It's a good question. We've thought about it an awful lot. The great thing about the Rooney Rule is that it's worked. And that people are seeing the value of going into a much more sophisticated, open, diverse process and considering more candidates. And I think when that happens you find better people. And likewise that's been good for the franchises that have gone ahead and gone through that process, because they have better people running their franchises or participating in their franchises.

The great news about the Rooney Rule, I hope some day it's not going to be necessary. And I feel the same way about the front office. Clubs are doing it voluntarily, because they believe it's paying dividends for them and they're benefiting. And most importantly, it's the right thing to do.

**Q. Just a few minutes ago apparently the Sun-Herald in Biloxi, Mississippi is reporting that Brett Favre has decided to return for next season. If that is, in fact, the case, what are your thoughts on that?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Brett hasn't called me recently (laughter.) I think he's obviously just been an incredible performer for the NFL and if it's true it's great news for the league.

**Q. A few weeks ago at the playoff game in New Orleans you discussed with some media members the issue of having some players suspended during the season and**

those same players winning league honors, whether it was a Pro Bowl berth or whatever. It was a complicated issue, because of the contractual ramifications, but is it something that you've had further discussion on? Have you assessed the feelings of the Competition Committee and how big a priority is that for the league?

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: It's a huge priority for us. It's part of the discussions we've had about changes to our drug program. **Gene** and I have had several discussions about it. I think we'll pick those discussions up soon after the Pro Bowl.

But I think the thing that makes me proudest about that is the fact that our players are the ones that have stood up and said, "We don't want this in the game". And we also don't think that someone who violates this policy, whether intentionally or not, should be awarded a postseason spot on the Pro Bowl roster. And I think that's terrific and we're proud of that. I'm optimistic that we'll be able to reach some conclusion sometime in the offseason.

**Q. There is obviously a huge interest in other countries to host NFL games and I can tell you also in Germany. And also you have an interest in raising the awareness of American football abroad. So I was wondering if there is any plans to give out even more games to other countries and if you would support such plans?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, I just met with the Lord Mayor of Dusseldorf just last week and he has a tremendous amount of interest from doing this game. We also do it from Berlin and Frankfurt.

We understand the growing popularity of the game on a global basis. But we think this has to be done on a limited basis. We have tremendous fans here in the States also, that it's difficult to take a game away from a home team. So we're doing that on a very small basis out of concern for our fans here in the States.

On the other hand, I think there are new technologies developing or new technologies where we can share our game with fans throughout the globe. And hope to get to many of your readers in Germany.

**Q. One of the things that people seem to be talking about is the players and the**

coaches in front, but they haven't said anything about the officials. Have you made some kind of precaution or something where there will be some way that the people who are calling the football game, those in the striped shirts, have made mistakes. And one of the mistakes was the comment that was made in Sports Illustrated, which showed a picture. They called an improper procedure penalty on the quarterback of the Seattle team. And he was the one that threw the ball, he ran and he tackled the person, which was legal, according to the rules. But there was a 15-yard penalty called on him for that action, which gave Pittsburgh, to me, 15 yards farther. I think --

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Let me assume you're a Pittsburgh fan?

**Q. No, that's very funny, but, no, I live in San Francisco. I thought that penalty they called against him shouldn't have been called. It gave him 15 yards and then in the next play he ran the play, the touchdown pass to Hines Ward. Can you all have someone up there to look down on this and somehow or other stop a thing like that which causes Seattle to lose the ballgame, I thought. And a lot of people thought the same thing.**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Let me try to answer your question. First off, we're very proud of our officiating. It has been something that we have had a tremendous amount of focus on to make sure we have the best officiating in sports. We think we do. We have also worked very aggressively to expand our minority officials and get more African-American and Latino-based officials in the league. And we actually have a record high number of officials this year, I believe it's 22 is the count that I had.

As far as the broader issue of officiating, we do have a system, it's called instant replay, that is able to look at the errors that might be made. They are, fortunately, very limited, and we have a system that does that without trying to make a tremendous impact on the pace of the game, but allowing the game to flow and allowing the teams to be able to challenge when something happens.

It can't cover all ills. It can't cover every penalty. But we think the system, while we'll continue to evaluate it, has been very effective.

**Q. I had the pleasure of performing at a**



**Colts and Falcons game two years ago in Tokyo.**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I remember. I was there.

**Q. I was wondering, all the NFL fans, including myself in Japan would love to see more Japanese players in the league. Do you think that will happen?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: We would, also. We have had a number of programs that have been designed to try to get younger players in Japan and otherwise throughout the world to get an opportunity to play our game at a younger age with better fundamentals, so they can learn the game, play the game and hopefully be able to go on to the NFL. And we have programs developed with our NFL Europa programs and a number of limited spots on the NFL rosters to give international players a chance to develop their skills. I hope that game comes soon.

**Q. You've given us the state of the NFL, could you give us the state of yourself? What has your transition been like when someone is annually named the most powerful person in sports.**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I've been working for the NFL for 25 years. I think I understood the business. I was fortunate, as I've said many times before, to work for the two greatest commissioners in sports, Pete Rozelle and **Paul** Tagliabue. The transition has gone very smoothly. I'm fortunate to have great staff. I'm fortunate to have a great ownership. And I'm fortunate to also understand the issues. I don't worry as much about the transition now, I worry about the challenges ahead.

**Q. It's been a great week for minorities with Coach Dungy, Coach Smith, but today the biggest minority in the United States is the Latin minority. When do you think Juan Castillo or Ron Rivera, how important is it for the Commissioner to see a head coach that is Latin?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: We would love to see that, and I think there are a number of coaches that have Latino backgrounds that will be head coaches. You've mentioned Ron Rivera, we've had Tom Flores in the past with Latino background. And I think we'll find more of

them as we continue to develop our game on a broader level in that marketplace.

So we're very proud of our relationship with Mexico, with the Latino market in general, and look forward to having more head coaches. And Ron Rivera is a great football coach.

**Q. With the 2007 enshrinees of the Hall of Fame being announced tomorrow, I've got a Hall of Fame question. Should candidates be considered solely for their on-field efforts when they are being considered for the Hall of Fame or should their off-field exploits be a part of that, as well?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: Well, it's a fair question, but I'm not on the Selection Committee. I've got a big enough job right now as Commissioner. I think we have a Selection Committee that has its bylaws and has its focus on its charter and I have not been involved in that in any way. But I'm sure they'll do a terrific job on that.

**Q. Tell us about the NFL Network, and what's the availability of games on the NFL Network going to be next year. What is your response to fans who say they were cheated out of those eight games this year?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: First off we're very proud of the NFL Network. It has been extremely high quality programming. We think it's been terrific in giving fans another perspective of football that they wouldn't ordinarily see, because it's 365 days, 24 hours a day. That's what we're trying to build giving fans an opportunity to experience football in ways that they haven't been able to do in the past. We think it's going to be extremely successful.

I think I'd point out for the fans that it's part of our building process, but we show every one of our football games on live, free television. And that's important. And we will continue to make sure that that's an emphasis going forward.

**Q. When do you see New Orleans being a viable option hosting a Super Bowl again?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I've heard various officials talking about having a Super Bowl going forward. I know the Saints fans would rather be in a Super Bowl than host a Super Bowl. This is something the community is

evaluating.

As we said earlier, they're trying to recover from a terrible tragedy. It's a question of priorities and where the Super Bowl fits in.

**Q. The NFL has obviously done the best it can for revamping the substance testing. It's a very major issue with the NFL. How frustrating is it for you to realize daily that some players will simply not stop trying to circumvent the rules until they're flat-out caught?**

COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I think that's the reality of the world. When you establish rules, people try to get around them. As I said earlier, I think our players have a tremendous conviction to eliminate it from sports. And I think there is always somebody looking for an edge.

And I think it's important that we have a strong testing program, which we do. We evaluate it on a constant basis to figure out what changes we can make to improve it and we'll continue to do that.

Before I leave you, and I appreciate this morning, I'd just like to give one thank you to the people of South Florida. Our host, Wayne Huizenga has done a terrific job. The improvements you'll see to the stadium that are ongoing, we know are going to be terrific, when we're back there three years from now. We appreciate the hospitality that Wayne has given to us, and **Rodney Barreto** and your team from the **Host Committee**. We are thrilled with the hospitality that we have provided to us. The number of people that go into putting on a Super Bowl, and I can assure you whether it's law enforcement, the hospitality industry, they've worked tirelessly at trying to make that happen here and we're very grateful for that. Thank you.

End of ASAP FastScripts.....