

“The Five Reasons A Boycott Of The NFL Is Justifiable

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Henceforth, I ask Mr. Allen, “what does all this have to do with disrespecting the United States of America while its anthem is played?” — [Neutral American](#)

This is not a political piece about why the NFL or NFL players are un-American. I am not interested in taking a political stance on an NFL boycott. Frankly, football was and has always been more fun when it was a refuge away from the daily grind of work and politics.

Despite the fact that I and millions of others continue to tune in almost every Thursday, Sunday, and Monday, it is hard to argue against the dark cloud that seems to hang over many an NFL game. The cloud darkened over the league well before President Trump decided to insert himself into the NFL morality debate. The questions of morality, safety and fairness go well beyond the newly created political and military aspects of the discussion.

There are five more important reasons why fans should question the NFL both as an organization and as an on-field product. When combined, these reasons beg the question: where will the NFL be in 20 years and what can be done to alter the league’s current course?

NFL Boycott Reason #1: CTE

This is the obvious one. Chronic traumatic encephalopathy, known as CTE, was found in 110 out of 111 brains of deceased NFL players in 2017 study in the medical journal JAMA. The study was performed on brains of NFL players who agreed to donate them for scientific research. The stunning results are the latest and most conclusive evidence to date showing the scale and severity of the problem. The study also leads to further questions: how many players are currently dealing with similar damage to their brains, how will these brain injuries affect the long-term quality of these players lives and maybe most importantly going forward, can football be played in its current incarnation without the types of contact that lead to CTE?

Perhaps even more concerning than this recent study is the fact that evidence shows that it is not necessarily the most violent collisions that lead to CTE but rather the constant every-down clashing of heads on the line that are an inevitable part of the current game. Furthermore, there is the added evidence that the hits and head clashes that happen in youth football are far more detrimental on the maturing brain than they are in the matured brain of the players in the NFL. The public now has to consider the fact that football-related CTE might have its origins in youth football. This fact may further slow the already waning popularity of Pop Warner football thus slowing the current production of quality NFL players.

CTE research is troubling because it makes you wince every time you see a player wince. It makes the hits and contact that I used to love difficult to watch. It makes you think about life and health when you are looking for that refuge and escape.

NFL Boycott Reason #2: The League Office

The second reason boycotting the NFL is completely reasonable builds directly from the first. The league, its commissioner and its spokespeople have for years denied the link between football and CTE. This fact alone has shone a light on the league's complete lack of concern for player safety.

The league has also done such a poor job of disciplining players, acknowledging a performance-enhancing drug (PED) presence and implementing a proper concussion protocol that both fans and players alike have lost all confidence that money is not the deciding factor behind many of the decisions that are being made.

The league, and specifically the commissioners' office, currently doles out NFL suspensions. In the case that a player deems that he has been unfairly suspended or that his suspension was too long, the appeal process goes right back to the same people who imposed the original suspension: the league office.

Additionally, for years there has been a strong suspicion that the quality of a player and thus his importance to the league from a revenue standpoint was the determining factor in the length of a suspension. Violent crimes, like the domestic assault committed by Ray Rice, were often treated and punished similarly to marijuana use. Only when the video of the Ray Rice incident was released and the public was able to see what domestic abuse looked like on video rather than in a police report was the NFL forced to take proper action. Violent domestic offenders like Greg Hardy were signed by teams to large contracts or drafted into key roles (i.e.: Tyreek Hill and Joe Mixon) while other players like the Browns Josh Gordon was suspended for multiple years for repeatedly failing marijuana tests and alcohol tests.

Just last week the NFL PED policies were exposed when the league suspended Ravens star cornerback Jimmy Smith for PED use and will now allow him under current league policy to serve his suspension while he is injured and currently ineligible to play at no cost to his team or the league.

There have also been more than a handful of incidents this year in which the NFL concussion protocol has been made a complete mockery of giving further credence to the idea that the NFL does not care about player safety. There was the incident where Russell Wilson was taken under the concussion evaluation tent but came out within seconds having self-determined not to have had a concussion. Multiple other examples exist this year, where players who have appeared clearly concussed on TV only to appear back in the game on the next drive either having skipped the concussion protocol tests altogether or somehow having passed them. A perfect example of this happened this past weekend when Tom Savage of the Texans appeared to have a seizure after suffering a concussion only to re-enter the game on the next drive

Finally, Roger Goodell, the long-time and universally (except by the owners) loathed NFL commissioner has continually misread public opinion and shown a complete inability to sense the current NFL player and fan climate. The recent negotiations for his new contract were made public. Not only did Roger Goodell ask for over 49 million dollars a year but he also demanded lifetime use of a private jet. This all at a time when NFL ratings and viewership are declining for the first time in decades and in a climate where Goodell is despised by fans and players alike.

NFL Boycott Reason # 3: NFL Owners

The NFL owners are the people who benefit the most from all the money that we as fans spend on the NFL. That means tickets, merchandise and most importantly the TV dollars.

This group of 32 billionaires is a group of the most out of touch, hypocritical and greedy individuals ever assembled in one organization. Anyone who decides they no longer wanted to make these people even wealthier through an NFL boycott would be okay in my book. The most recent display of hypocrisy on the part of the owners came when Donald Trump, a president that many of the owners supported both publicly and financially, came out against what they think of as “their” players.

The owners came down to the field in what was supposed to be a sign of unity. This laughable publicity stunt attempting to demonstrate solidarity with the players coincided with a league-wide attempt on behalf of the owners to collude against Colin Kaepernick, the leader, and creator of the very movement the owners claimed to be supporting. While many NFL players, the majority of them African-American, continued to kneel for the national anthem for weeks after the president’s tweets, the owner’s efforts to take the long walk from their owner’s boxes to the field lasted only one day.

The owners took it upon themselves to completely mangle and destroy the essence of the protest, turning a large percentage of the public against the players in the process. The owner’s contribution to the protest culminated with Texans owner Bob McNair referring the players as inmates in what was perhaps the most honest public display of the owner’s views towards the players in recent memory.

NFL Boycott Reason #4: Commercials

Has anyone tried to watch an NFL game without DVR in the past five years? Unless you have multiple games or sports going concurrently or you have decided to get a serious head start on early Sunday afternoon drinking, watching the NFL with commercials can be a nightmare. While the product on the field remains explosive and entertaining, a recent article published on Quartz Media showed that while the average NFL game was over 3 hours, the number of minutes with the ball in play averaged approximately 11 minutes. Furthermore, the article indicated that each game was accompanied by 20 commercials with over 100 total advertisements. Can you really argue with somebody who tells you they don’t want to sit down for 3 hours to watch 11 minutes of action and over 100 ads?

NFL Boycott Reason #5: The live experience

Even though I have made the case against the NFL in the four previous sections of the article, my love for the NFL game, the athleticism and the fantasy and gambling associated with it continue to make it must-watch TV for me. Having said this, even as a hardcore fan, if somebody offered me tickets to the live event, I would probably turn them down. The fact is the drive, the parking, the expense, the hassle and the view all make the in-person NFL experience far inferior to the TV one. While the TV watching experience is filled with commercials, the equivalent time at the live event is even duller. Unless you want to leave your seat, wait in line for 20 minutes and buy a 12 dollar beer, you are most likely stuck trying to update your fantasy results on your phone as the players sit around doing nothing during one of the 20 TV commercials.

The NFL experience has serious flaws both in person and on TV. Both the owners and the commissioners’ office are a disgrace to the sport. Most importantly, player safety remains an extreme

concern with no solution in sight. Despite these five major issues, the weekly entertainment and excitement I get from the NFL has won over in the fight against my conscience.

For the moment, despite its many flaws, the majority of the American public seems to feel the same way. Some are willing to see past the moral dilemma and others are unwilling to acknowledge its presence. My worry is that this NFL boycott conversation is just beginning. If the NFL wants to keep my support and prevent my conscience from taking over, the organization and game need to make some serious changes.”

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