

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Tuesday, August 31, 2021

Sam Flood

Tony Dungy

Drew Brees

Rodney Harrison

Mike Tirico

Press Conference

CHRIS McCLOSKEY: Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you so much for joining us today for our Football Night in America conference call to preview the 2021 NFL season.

As we announced yesterday, Football Night in America, which is the most watched studio show in sports since its inception in 2006, has a slightly new format this year. At the desk in the studio is going to be Mike, Tony, and Drew. Also in the studio will be our new cohost Maria Taylor alongside Chris Simms, and then at the game site we're going to have host Jac Collinsworth, along with Rodney Harrison who will be stepping outside the studio for the first time.

Mike Florio will continue to provide updates on the biggest news of the NFL that day. Another new element for football night this year is that will be streaming all season long for the first time on Peacock.

Also of note for this call, Mike and Drew are our game callers for Notre Dame Football along with sideline reporter Kathryn Tappen, so Fighting Irish questions are welcome on this call.

The season begins and ends on NBC this year as we have NFL kickoff next Thursday, and Super Bowl LVI in February. Before we begin here today, just a quick reminder that we will have a transcript of this call a few hours after its conclusion. You can find that at our media dedicated website, [NBCSportsGroupPressBox.com](https://www.nbc.com/sports/group/pressbox).

Let's begin now with opening remarks, and first up is Sam Flood.



SAM FLOOD: Well, thank you all for joining us. We're really excited for the season. This past Sunday night, I was in Atlanta and got to spend time with Tony, Rodney, Mike, and Drew, and the energy of getting back inside buildings and the season ready to roll was fantastic, and seeing this group together, fired up to get the football season going is a lot of fun.

Mike has turned off his Tokyo Olympic hat and turned on his NFL brain, and he's ready to go with the season. Really fun seeing everyone there, and we're so excited knowing we get to start and end the season, as Chris just mentioned. Nothing better than that, and the Super Bowl in Los Angeles is going to be spectacular. To that, to the guy who spent way too much time in Tokyo and is now back stateside and getting comfortable in this time zone, Mr. Tirico.

MIKE TIRICO: Thanks, Sam. Hi, everybody. I'll be brief so you can get to your questions and hear from our team of analysts. Like both guys said before, it's always great when you know you're going to bookend the season, and to start it in Tampa and to then end it at the Super Bowl with Super Bowl LVI at SoFi Stadium will be a great experience I think for all of us. Most of the team is back together, as we've been together for the last few years working with Rodney and Tony and Chris Simms and Jac joining us last year. We're super excited to have Maria Taylor. Maria worked with us on our late night show, our prime plus show at the Olympics, and we really enjoyed spending the two and a half weeks working with Maria, and she'll be an awesome addition to our team.

And Drew, you know, I spent 20-some odd years talking about Drew Brees back when he was a backup at Purdue for Billy Dicken at the Alamo Bowl that I called in 1997.

And then over the years, whether it was Chargers or his decade and a half Hall of Fame run with the Saints, it was always a pleasure to go down there and cover Drew and get to know him and his family. He's going to be a perfect fit with Tony, who is the absolute best, and Rodney.

I've learned so much football the last couple years sitting amongst that group, and to add Drew to that mix will be great.

The last thing I'll say is that hour fifteen that we're on the

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air is as fun a 75 minutes as any host can have on TV, surrounded by Hall of Fame analysts, games are going on, games are finishing, putting all the plays of the day in context, showing the best highlights, giving analysis, getting ready for Sunday Night Football.

The schedule is awesome, as usual. Just talking about this has me ready for the kickoff game here in nine days and then our first Sunday Night and our first Football Night on September 12th.

TONY DUNGY: I'm excited, too, about this year, having Maria and Drew with us is going to be fantastic and working the new people in. But I'm also excited because of the way this has taken place, getting fans back in the stands. There's so much buzz down here in Tampa where I live for those fans to be back. I think that's going to be great for us, the schedule that we've got.

But I'm also excited because I don't know what's going to happen this year. I've never been through a preseason like this where everybody is a little different, nobody is playing a lot of their guys. Usually you can look at that third preseason game and say, well, I know this team is going to be good because when their regulars got in we saw this, this, and this.

I don't really know how these teams are going to be, so I think it's going to be an exciting year.

And then to finish with the Super Bowl is going to be fantastic. Looking forward to seeing the unknown, and I think it's going to be fun to broadcast it.

With that, I'll turn it over to Rodney Harrison.

RODNEY HARRISON: Hello, everyone. As Coach talked about, I'm extremely excited about this opportunity heading to my 13th season with NBC. I really enjoyed watching the preseason games. I felt like guys played with a sense of urgency, and I believe that because of the one less game.

Unfortunately the guys that didn't get a lot of reps in the preseason, I think you're going to see a lot of mistakes early on and you're going to see a lot of sloppy football.

However, I love our schedule. I think our schedule is fantastic. Looking forward to that week 4 game with the Patriots and Tom Brady coming back.

With that, I'm happy to hand it off to my former teammate and future Hall of Famer, Drew Brees.

DREW BREES: Thanks, Rod. It's been a while since I've been a rookie, but here I am stepping into what I think is

the absolute best team, and I get to join Rodney again, as he mentioned. He was a veteran that helped show me the way during my rookie year and second year in San Diego. Great to join him.

Also the opportunity to broadcast games with Mike Tirico for Notre Dame Football I'm extremely excited about, and obviously to be in studio with Mike, Maria, Coach Dungy.

I'll also say all the people behind the scenes. I think it's been such a welcome to join what I think is the absolute best in the business, and that is just not the people you see on TV, but also the people behind the scenes. It's been an incredible team to join, and I'm really excited about this season.

CHRIS McCLOSKEY: Thank you, Drew. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Just wondering, is Sam on the call, too?

SAM FLOOD: Right here.

Q. Hey, Sam. Just wondering what your thoughts are with the league this year in terms of the embracing of gambling more. I saw yesterday that your partner PointsBet got approved as one of the Sportsbook operators from the league, and just with the evolution the past couple years, do you think there will be increased talk during broadcasts or on pregame shows, or how do you handle that balance?

SAM FLOOD: Well, the running rules are still going to be established by the NFL. They're moving into this space and being very smart about it, making sure they go through the right processes and they're working with us, letting us know what they feel is inbounds and out of bounds.

So we're working with them and understanding their running rules to make sure we accomplish what's needed for them and for us.

It's a brave new world. I think we all know it'll be a walk before they run, and we're doing the same thing. Let's figure out what works.

Let's also make sure we're engaging the audience the right way. We're the No. 1 show in studio television, and we want to make sure we're inclusive to everyone that's watching. We don't want to alienate any fans, so we've got to walk that line and work the right way to make sure we engage the audience properly and make sure everyone feels welcomed the whole time.

Q. For Mike, is your understanding that maybe the

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rules about gambling talk and stuff, there's more of an inbounds? As a host how do you try to marry the two?

MIKE TIRICO: I'm sure before we get going we'll have a full read on what exactly the parameters are. Obviously there have been times where in the booth or in the studio you make a reference to what happens in a game relative to the spread or the total, and people who need to get it get it and people who don't, don't.

Remember, not everyone is watching because of gambling. A lot of people do have interest in the game, but they also have their Fantasy Football interests. You've got to serve the majority of the viewers, and I think for the majority of the viewers they want to hear from Tony, Drew, Rodney, Chris Simms about what happened in the game and why.

I think if you wagered on a game legally, or illegally, you can figure out the impact of the score on your bet. I don't think we need to necessarily discuss it all the time.

When we know what the exact parameters are we'll use them as we see fit. I don't think it's going to become, or any of the pregame shows are going to become these full-out tout shows that you used to see on Saturday afternoons on syndicated TV. I don't think the NFL pregame shows will go to that length of conversation around betting.

Q. Since Chris invited Notre Dame questions, I just wanted to ask Drew, I don't know how much you've gotten to see of Jack Coan yet or from his past performances, but how do you think he will fit in in that role?

DREW BREES: Yeah, so I followed Jack obviously in his time as starting quarterback for Wisconsin. I had a chance to be at one of the Notre Dame spring practices in April to watch him and the team. By all accounts, and in speaking with the coaches as well, I think he's really assimilated himself into that team and the system very well.

They say he's got great leadership ability. I think the team is really responding to that. I think he brings a level of poise and experience that obviously the other younger guys who were competing alongside him don't necessarily have quite yet.

Ian Book being a three-year starter and then departing, it kind of left that void. He seems to be filling that role. They're excited about him. I think it's unique, as well, I didn't realize this, but I guess Jack was quite a lacrosse player coming out of high school and was actually recruited to Notre Dame to play lacrosse, and obviously he goes on

to Wisconsin and plays quarterback, and here now as a graduate transfer. He's making his way back to South Bend to play football.

But interesting backstory there.

Q. Coach Dungy, I was just curious about you spoke to the team when you were here for Hall of Fame weekend. Just kind of what precipitated that. Was it because they had such a loaded roster? They say your message was basically about chemistry. Have you had any takeaways of Coach Stefanski, and what impressed you about him while you were talking?

TONY DUNGY: Well, I actually was invited there by Coach Stefanski. He and I became friends when he was with the Viking. We were talking a lot about culture and creating that winning atmosphere before practice, and he asked me if I wouldn't mind speaking to the team and addressing them.

So it was a lot of fun. My son Justin is a huge Browns fan, so I got to collect some autographs for him and some pictures, and he was pumped up about it. But I really enjoyed talking to them because I feel like it is a group that is bought in to what Coach Stefanski is bringing to them, and that is that atmosphere that we have to be together, we're in this as a unit, we're going to be physical, and that's how we're going to play.

It was kind of exciting to watch. I think they're going to be a very, very good football team. Obviously my Steeler roots, it was tough being there in the midst of the Browns, but I enjoyed it, and I think Coach Stefanski has really brought something special there. They're going to be very tough.

Q. Obviously you knew him, but what he was able to do in a year, how impressive was that?

TONY DUNGY: He's got everybody to buy in. They're on board. We talked last year, he told me that the one thing he wanted to get to the offense was being physical, knocking people down. They kept charts of who got people off their feet on defense. The leaders of that race were the wide receivers.

When you get guys like Jarvis Landry buying into going down the field knocking people down and then the running backs see this and the linemen see this and everybody is on board, that's what you see. I see a team that really believes in their head coach, and that's why I think they're going to be good.

Q. Drew, another question about the sports betting

space. I know you've recently partnered with PointsBet. How do you see sports betting as something that grows fan engagement?

DREW BREES: Well, I think as Mike alluded to, there's many reasons why people will want to watch, people will be engaged. Obviously so much of our country loves sports. They love competitive athletics. They love college football. They love NFL football. They're going to watch it because it's entertaining, it's fun.

What Fantasy Football brought years ago was just this kind of heightened level of interest based on being able to build your teams, made up of players from different teams, different positions, and competing against friends, competing against others.

Now you add another level, which is the gambling element and the opportunity to win and that sort of thing, I think you've just added another level of where you can engage more people or even a heightened level of interest in the outcomes of these games.

Q. For Drew, you're going to be a Hall of Fame quarterback; obviously had a great career. Why did you want to be an analyst? What motivated you to say, you know what, that's what I want to do after my career on the field?

DREW BREES: Yeah, so listen, I love the game of football. It's been a huge part of my life for a really long time, and obviously coming off being an NFL player for 20 years I figured the transition from being a player to, I guess, being a civilian was going to be a bit of an adjustment.

You figure the ways you can still be involved and engaged in the game that you love and continue to foster those relationships and maybe even develop a different skill set, which I think what I'm learning going through this process is certainly that's something that broadcasting and being in studio will do for you.

It allows me to stay involved with the game. It allows me to show my love and passion for the game in a different way and develop a skill set and develop other relationships.

I've had the opportunity to be around guys like Mike Tirico for a long time, and Coach Dungy, obviously, playing on the other side of the field from him quite a few times, but being able to go deeper with these relationships and being able to sit side by side in studio or in the broadcast booth, and, again, like I said earlier, be involved with a network like NBC that sets you up for success, and I think it does a tremendous job of pulling people together and putting forth

a show and a broadcast that we can all be very proud of and that our fans can be very proud of.

I always felt like this would be a potential transition for me. I had the opportunity three or four years ago to attend a Purdue game in Lucas Oil Stadium as they were opening up the season at Louisville, and I was actually invited into the broadcast booth just to talk about the upcoming NFL season. But when I threw the headphones on I started being asked questions about what was happening on the field at the time, and in a very impromptu manner for about five minutes I became a broadcaster. I had never done that before, and in doing that, I think I immediately got the juices flowing and my mind thinking that this would be something that I would love to do when I was done playing.

Q. Sam, is there a strategy in terms of how you're trying to develop Drew?

SAM FLOOD: Yes. We're giving him the great opportunity to learn. We've done a lot of coaching, a lot of meetings out west, whether at his house or at stadiums or team practices or in Atlanta this past Sunday.

It's a process. It's a training camp, no different than what Tony and Rodney did with us back in 2009 when they came on board to Football Night in America.

It's a training process, getting ready, learning new skills and learning how to make television and tell stories and get people to care. The one word we ask them all to do is tell us why, why are things happening on the field and take us places we can't go otherwise. That's the strategy with Drew. We did it, and we loved what we did with Tony and Rodney. They enjoyed the process back in their time, and now it's Drew's turn.

Q. Drew, it's about the 49ers' quarterbacks and a possible rotation to some extent with Garoppolo and Trey Lance. Obviously you can speak from experience on that. I'm sure as a starter you didn't always love seeing Taysom Hill come in, but as an analyst, to this situation specifically, do you see the wisdom in that, and what do you view as maybe the possible benefits and even potential pitfalls?

DREW BREES: I'll say this: As a starting quarterback, and I'd say this applies more so maybe in my last four to five years with the presence of Taysom Hill, and that is whatever we needed to do to win the game, to put ourselves in the best position to win, I was all for that.

So if that meant Taysom Hill being able to come in and take two snaps at quarterback or 10 snaps at quarterback, if that gave us the best chance to win, I was all for it.



As that situation plays out in San Francisco, we had a chance to -- or I had a chance to view joint practices between San Francisco and the Chargers actually just a week ago. So I had a chance to see both Jimmy Garoppolo and Trey Lance up close. Had a chance to talk with the coaching staff and observe. It's obvious Trey Lance is a great talent. The 49ers have quite an investment in him. When you look at what they gave up to move up to that third spot to grab him.

I think that they're in a very good position right now because I think you have an established starter in Jimmy Garoppolo. Keep in mind, these guys were in the Super Bowl two years ago, in large part because of their defense but also his ability to execute that offense.

I know a lot of that team was hit with the injury bug last year, including Jimmy, but as I look at that team I think they're going to be a real contender in the NFC this year, and I think Jimmy Garoppolo is going to be a big part of that.

I'm not sure exactly how they see Trey Lance's development thus far. Personally I think they should not be in a rush to get Trey Lance on the field. I think that there is a development process that will take place with him. Let's remember that this guy only played one game last fall, and he only started for a year before that.

You've got a guy with a ton of these expectations but who's played a limited amount of football over the last two years. He's stepping into an environment where there's a lot of pressure and a lot of expectations.

I think all that's doing is setting him up for failure. I think you have the opportunity to bring him along slowly. Different than the situation with me and Taysom Hill. Taysom Hill came on the field for us, you didn't know what position he was playing when he was on the field. In most cases he was playing tight end, maybe receiver, kind of this F- or H-back type position where he was doing something else other than quarterback.

When Trey Lance comes on the field in a game you know he's playing quarterback. From a game plan perspective or the threat that that poses to an opposing defense, I don't think it's in the same realm as a Taysom Hill. All of a sudden playing quarterback and launching the ball 60 yards down the field or running over you in a short yardage situation.

I'm not sure how that ends up playing out at this point, but I think in my opinion and in watching it, I think Trey Lance is still a little ways away from being in a position where he's

really going to be able to provide value at the quarterback position for them.

Q. Do you feel like especially with a guy like Jimmy Garoppolo, do you feel like that could harm his confidence, because this is a guy that, yeah, he's played, and when he played they won a lot of ballgames, but this is kind of a guy that his confidence kind of goes up and down. Are you afraid that if they start rotating quarterbacks maybe his confidence is affected?

DREW BREES: Well, I think competition brings out the best in everybody. I can certainly draw on my experience back in 2004 when the Chargers drafted Philip Rivers with the fourth pick to basically come in and take my job.

Q. But you're a Hall of Famer; Jimmy Garoppolo is not.

DREW BREES: But I think he's playing really well right now based on everything that I observed, and everyone who I talked to during those joint practices, they say Jimmy Garoppolo is playing some of his best football right now.

Listen, we'll see once the season rolls around if he doesn't start playing well and two or three games into the season he hasn't put forth the production that they want. Is he on a short leash? Maybe. But I still think Trey Lance is a ways away from being a full-time starter for San Francisco.

Where they're positioned right now, they've got a great team around them. They've got a great defense, great defensive line, great offensive line, a good run game a good scheme. Those are a quarterback's friends. At the same time, I think Jimmy gives them the best chance to win right now and let's see how it plays out with his performance.

Q. Drew, the Broncos' new quarterback, Teddy Bridgewater, the 11th starting quarterback since Peyton retired, but he was your backup for a couple years there in New Orleans. I'm wondering from your perspective what kind of a player the Broncos are getting in Teddy, and what do you think about the talent that is around him on offense?

DREW BREES: Yeah, so I think Teddy is a great fit for Denver. You're talking about an experienced quarterback. He's got a lot of starts under his belt. I think wherever he's been the players have loved him. He's really endeared himself to the team. He's got great leadership ability.

I think that he's -- they obviously were bit by the injury bug on defense last year, losing Vaughn Miller early and

others, so if they can stay healthy and play the type of defense that I know they can play, I think they're poised to have a good season.

Listen, they're in a division where they've got to play the Chiefs twice and they've got to play the Chargers and Justin Herbert and the expectations that come with that team twice, so it's not going to be an easy road.

And yet at the same time I think they've made an upgrade with him obviously going in there competing, winning the job, winning over the team, and now being in a position to help them win some games.

Q. I was hoping both Rodney and Drew could answer this question if possible. I'm just curious what each of your thoughts are on Mac Jones and what you make of the Patriots' decision to make him the starter and cut Cam Newton today.

RODNEY HARRISON: Well, I guess I'll start it off. I think first and foremost, I believe, and I said it the entire time, that I felt like Mac Jones was ready. That he was everything that the Patriots wanted and needed as a quarterback.

I think when I watch him play, sometimes I sit back and say, what if that zero that's on his jersey was a 2? Then he would look just like Tom Brady. He would look just like a young Tom Brady. The fact that they had so much trust in him early, to put him in a no-huddle, to give him different things, their offense was never limited with Mac Jones.

People say, well, the lack of athleticism. Well, they've got four or five running backs that can run the football. They need somebody that is going to take care of the football that can take control of the offense, not only know the offense, but also be able to know the defense and be able to get the offense into the correct play. I think Mac Jones can do that.

Now, did I think that Cam was going to get cut? No, but I understand why. Number one, maybe it's because he wasn't vaccinated, and that has to be a concern with most teams, with all teams. If your leader, if your quarterback is not vaccinated it's going to affect the dynamic of the team. But I thought Coach Belichick, everything that he preached as far as doing what's best for the team, making every guy earn his spot.

And I was disappointed with Matt Nagy. I was disappointed earlier with Coach Belichick when he named Cam Newton and he said Cam Newton was going to be the starting quarterback. I didn't believe that because I believe everyone should compete, and that's exactly what he

promised when I came in in 2003. He puts up a chart and says, hey, you make the depth chart. It's not about giving someone a job, it's about earning a job.

When you have a young guy like Mac, you don't want a 10-year veteran or however many years Cam had played behind him looking over his shoulder, and I think that was ultimately what led to Cam's demise. But Cam will be fine. He's made a lot of money. He's done some wonderful things in his career.

But in order to give the Patriots the best opportunity to win, this was the best decision. If Coach Belichick would have made a different decision I would have been highly disappointed in him.

DREW BREES: So as I was watching the draft, the minute the Patriots took Mac Jones at 15th I said, that's the steal of the draft. It's probably the guy who is most ready to play NFL quarterback right now, of all the guys who were taken before.

His level of execution last year at Alabama, and I know we can sit here and argue he's got the best players on the field on his side, on both sides of the ball, but in watching the National Championship game, that's where it became very evident to me.

This guy's level of execution, his understanding of offensive football, his timing, his rhythm, his ability not only to make the routine throws, but to make throws that you're need to make at the next level in order to win games and take care of the football the way he did, I felt like he was the most NFL ready.

And to couple that, he goes to a team who has a culture and a foundation already established, different than the top three quarterbacks taken in the draft who unfortunately typically are in situations where there's a reason those teams were drafting at the very top. They had the worst records, they probably have the most rebuilding to do in regards to building the culture and the foundation, getting the pieces in and around him.

For all those reasons I think Mac Jones is going to have the most success of any rookie quarterback, not just this year but probably for the next few years.

Q. Rodney or Drew, just wondering with the investments that the Ravens have made at the wide receiver position, but there again being a run-first smashmouth team, what do you guys see being the right balance to strike in the way that passing trends are happening, but also how good we saw the Ravens working offensively two years ago during that MVP

season?

RODNEY HARRISON: Well, I think the Ravens, their goal is to win a Super Bowl, and they're not going to win a Super Bowl just running the ball and thinking they can play good defense. They're going to have to push the ball down the field.

Talking of Coach Harbaugh, he was really excited about Sammy Watkins, Rashad Baseman, Marquise Hollywood Brown. But the key is those guys have to be able to stay on the field, and if they're continually getting hurt, especially with a quarterback that's not the most accurate quarterback, you need that time on the field with your quarterback. You need that communication. You need that timing.

I played against Peyton plenty of times and I'd still see those guys an hour or two before the game working on timing routes.

Yeah, I think Lamar is going to have success, but the most important thing for them is offensively they've got to get healthy at the wide receiver position. I don't doubt that they're going to be able to run the ball.

And J.K. Dobbins is a huge loss because he came in, he gave them energy, he gave them power, he gave him quickness, he is a guy that can take the hands off and go 60, 70 yards for a touchdown. That's a huge loss for them.

Now it's going to be a little bit more responsibility on Lamar Jackson to be able to step up, make the plays down the field outside of the tight end position to the wide receivers. But unfortunately some of these guys, they have a history of injuries. Sammy Watkins, he's a really good player, but everywhere he goes he's injured.

That's something that they're going to have to strongly consider.

DREW BREES: That Baltimore Ravens team, and I'd say the success of that team, is built around the run game and defense and their ability to -- more importantly on offense, if you execute the run game the way you should, that's what opens up the opportunities in the pass game.

The design of that scheme is not just to drop back and beat you throwing the ball. The design of that offense is to dent you with the run game to make you play extremely disciplined defense, because in many cases Lamar has the opportunity to pull the ball at any moment and with his legs create an explosive play; but at the same time you've got to be able to tackle the runner if he hands it off. And then, oh, yeah, by the way, I'm going to pull it and then I'm going to

launch one in the play action game.

That's what creates the problems for opposing teams and opposing defenses when you play them. But they've got to be able to run the ball. I think they've been very consistent playing great defense, or a style of defense that is very opportunistic, that focuses on pressure, that focuses on taking the ball away.

Their success is very much predicated on their ability to run the ball.

RODNEY HARRISON: Let me just jump in. There's no question that a big part of their success is about running the football, but we're talking about getting to the next level. Okay, I was there when they got their butts kicked by Buffalo in the playoffs because Lamar couldn't push the ball down the field.

Yeah, there was some weather, but at the end of the day we know they're going to run the football. They're going to have success running the football. For them to get to the Super Bowl, and that's the goal, to win a Super Bowl, they're not going to run, they're not just going to run to get in the Super Bowl. Their defense is going to be a good defense, I don't think it's going to be a great defense. They still have question marks of who's going to be the pass rushers.

When I look at it, Drew, in order to get to the Super Bowl you're playing against Kansas City, you're going to be playing against the Chargers, you're going to be playing against a team like the Patriots, and they're going to pass the ball.

All these teams can run the ball, but you've got to pass the ball to get to that next level.

How are you going to beat Kansas City if you can't sack Patrick Mahomes and you can't throw the ball down the field? I just don't see it.

Q. Coach, you tweeted that you did not like the NFL getting into business with all these sports betting companies. Can you tell me what is your objection, and why do you think the NFL changed its stance after so many years?

TONY DUNGY: Well, I don't know why the NFL changed its stance, and my objection is just personal. I don't think we should encourage people who are watching the NFL to gamble, especially young people. I've got boys, and I want them to enjoy the game for what it is, the headiness of it and those kind of things. It's a great game. I know people gamble. I know it's legal. I just don't want to see the NFL

promoting it.

That's just my personal opinion. I know a lot of people don't agree with it. They say it's money, people are going to gamble anyway. I understand all that. Just my personal opinion, and I know when I came into the league we didn't. We were counseled about it. You couldn't be involved with the gambling process.

Now it's different, and I understand times change, but again, for me it's just a personal opinion.

Q. I was wondering if any of your colleagues share your objections.

MIKE TIRICO: I do think there should be a little bit more of an understanding that there's a percentage of the audience we're talking about. It's not everyone. So it doesn't have to be every conversation related to what happened to the NFL.

I think at the end of the day the higher percentage of a team's fans, let's say Lions' fans in Detroit, they'd be happy if their team won and was making the playoffs as opposed to their record ATS.

I think we need to be reminded that this is something that is new in terms of how prevalent it is in conversation.

As for personal opinion I do see Tony's point, and in some ways agree with him. Maybe not 100 percent. I think the gambling process has been going on for quite some time, whether in back channels, illegally, however you want to describe it, for people not going to Nevada to wager on a game. So that's been happening.

So the fact that it's now legalized in some ways may just legitimize the process a little bit. But I do think it is having an influence on or can have an influence on younger fans, and I think we need to be wise of that in general.

It's another part of a society where you have more options to do things, and with more options come more consequences.

I hope that the people who are wagering are wagering wisely, like they say in the commercials, but that's not always the case. I think the balance of not making it the preponderance of our conversation covering National Football League is appropriate for that reason.

CHRIS McCLOSKEY: I know we have a few questions in the queue, but this does end our call for today. I really want to thank everybody for joining us. Don't forget, tune in next Thursday night, 7:00 p.m. eastern, NFL kickoff,

Cowboys-Bucs; next Saturday Toledo-Notre Dame exclusively streaming on Peacock; and for the first Sunday Night Football game, the Bears-Rams from SoFi Stadium. Coverage begins with Football Night in America at 7:00 p.m. eastern on NBC. Thank you, everybody, for joining us.

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