

THE WALKING WOUNDED THE NFL TREATS LIKE DISPOSABLE TRASH

The bad news: Due to technical difficulties beyond our control, arrival of your Trash Talk thread has been delayed. The good news: The pilots have slept off most of their intoxication and managed to stumble into the cockpit and are ready for take off! I don't know why, but it just seems like football, both pro and college, is in a weird doldrum recently. Boise State's hard knocks overtime loss to Nevada took a lot of the anti-BCS anarchist intrigue air out of the balloon – although, to be fair, TCU is still there in that role I guess. Doesn't seem the same though. And in the NFL, there just are not a lot of overly compelling story lines right now, although I think that will change when we get down to the last three weeks of the regular season.

Before we get down to the weekly game talk, there is a serious side of the business of football, a part that is not a game, that needs to be discussed. The long term health concerns of the players. As seemingly well paid and glamorous a job professional football player seems to be, the fact is when their career is over, these men are still relatively quite young chronologically but much older, physically compromised and beat up physically and, far too often as we now know, mentally too. The video from former NFL player and current NFL Player's Association staff member Nolan Harrison describes player injuries as they relate to health and safety on the field and once a career is over.

The National Football League is insanely profitable. The average NFL game attendance league wide is 67,519. For every game of a 16 game schedule, and if you were not aware, teams

make customers buying season tickets also buy tickets to at least two, sometimes three, preseason games at full regular season face value as part of the season ticket package. That is before you even get to the otherworldly television broadcast packages the NFL has negotiated, which are the most lucrative, by far, of any in the entertainment/sports industry. For the period of 2006 to 2013, the broadcast rights fees generated are: CBS \$622.5 million/yr, Fox \$712.5 million/yr, NBC \$650 million/yr, and ESPN \$1.1 billion/yr for a total yearly broadcast revenue of \$3.085 billion per year. That is without delving into perhaps the most profitable income streams for NFL owners, the ancillary modalities such as merchandizing, advertising and concessions. There is a lot of money being made here, total revenue for the league was estimated to be over \$6 Billion a year five years ago; it is undoubtedly significantly higher now.

With NFL owners threatening a lockout unless players agree to major concessions, the NFL is headed for a labor dispute that would leave stadium seats empty, TV screens blank and the Emptywheel Blog Trashless next fall. The knee jerk reaction may be that it is hard to get too worked up over a battle between billionaire owners and millionaire players, but keep in mind that the average NFL player is not Tom Brady or Peyton Manning, has a average salary of well less than a million dollars a year and the average NFL career is only 3.5 years. That is pretty limited compared to the owners who have a lifetime license to sit back print money.

So, when the expected shutdown and lockout by the fat cat NFL owners occurs next season, keep in mind the disparity between the owners and players, and the very real long term health issues the players face as a result of earning the owners all that money and providing Sunday enjoyment for the rest of us. Beneath the high dollar glossy surface, it is still a fairness in a dangerous workplace issue with a union trying to better the conditions for the rank and file

workers. Oh, and also keep in mind that the owners have negotiated TV deals that guarantee them revenues approachng \$4.5 billion *even if games are not played in the 2011 season*. Coupled with the elimination of \$4.4 billion in player salaries and benefits during a lockout, it could make a 2011 season without games still very profitable for the owners.

[Am going to add more substantive content shortly, but wanted to get this up for the peoples to yammer on in the meantime since both Quackers-Beavers and two chumps from the pay to play SEC Conference are currently in action]