

THE JERRY JONES AND ROGER GOODELL RAMJET BLASTS OFF TRASH TALK

I remember watching the Roger Ramjet cartoon as a kid. It was stupid, but, hey, as a kid it was fun. I had completely forgotten about it since then until I got a call one night that a DWI task force had a high dollar good client of my firm, and friend to boot, in custody and wanting to know if I would like to come retrieve him as opposed to him getting booked. Yes, I said I'd be right down.

So, when I get there, I have a chat with the arresting officer about why client was stopped and how bad he did. The punchline here is, when asked to do a common, but non-standard, field sobriety test of counting backwards from ten, the client performed as follows:

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...Roger Ramjet Blast Off!! (Raising arms in the air on the last phrase)

That was not the, er, first clue to the officers, but cinched the deal. Sorry, I just love this story and had to tell it.

But now we have a couple of other cartoon characters blasting off in the world of sports. Jerry Jones and Roger Goodell. If you have not seen it, there was an absolutely fascinating dive into the Roger Goodell/Jerry Jones spat roiling the NFL currently, done by the excellent Don Van Natta and Seth Wickersham for ESPN The Magazine (and I believe Outside the Lines too):

The line went quiet. Seconds passed. Goodell's decision was an unconscionable violation of trust, Jones later told associates, because he believed that the commissioner had assured him this past

spring that there would be no suspension. Jones saw in Elliott a genuine opportunity, a player so good that he had made Jones believe that this year he just might win a Super Bowl for the first time since 1996. His anger was palpable. Finally, according to sources with direct knowledge of the call, Jones broke the silence. He aimed his words not only at Goodell's decision but also at his role as judge, jury and executioner in the case.

"I'm gonna come after you with everything I have," Jones said. Then he mentioned Deflategate. "If you think Bob Kraft came after you hard, Bob Kraft is a p-y compared to what I'm going to do."

...

For years, America's most powerful sports owner has heaped praise on America's most powerful commissioner for being a visionary, a "grow-the-pie thinker." Jones, now 75, uses a cost-benefit analysis to measure the value of many relationships, and as the NFL grew from a \$6 billion-a-year to a \$14 billion-a-year enterprise under Goodell, their relationship seemed strong. But then Goodell suspended Elliott, and it's only gotten nastier since, with that decision clarifying Jones' long-standing worries about Goodell's leadership, his current total annual compensation of \$42 million, and the approval process for a contract extension expected to pay even more, according to documents and nearly two dozen interviews by Outside the Lines with owners, league and team executives and lawyers, and union leaders. Trust among owners and among senior executives inside the league office has all but evaporated. In early November, when Jones threatened to sue his fellow owners and the league to stop progress on Goodell's next contract, Falcons owner and compensation committee

chairman Arthur Blank told Jones, "This is not how we do things in the NFL."

Trust me, these partial blurbs are just scratching the surface of Van Natta and Wickersham's work here. Go read it, all of it, it is seriously worth it.

I was among a group of people, including several prominent sports lawyers, who followed Deflategate in minute detail (seriously, like hour by hour!), and, more recently, the Zeke Elliot case that stands at the root of Jerry Jones narcissistic and petulant beef currently. But, when you come down to it, the problem is the binding language of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the NFL and the NFL Player's Association. The CBA, especially Article 46 thereof, gives the Commissioner, or his designate, ridiculously broad powers that are, especially after the Brady decision in the 2nd Circuit, nearly unreviewable even by federal courts. Deadspin has a piece that delves into the Article 46 CBA power quite well. And, again, well worth a read if you are still interested.

Jerry Jones enthusiastically cheered Goodell on when the commissioner and league were after Tom Brady and the Patriots. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, he has turned on a dime to lash out like Trump on a 3 in the morning tweet binge. Will be fascinating to see how this plays out, and what the other owners will do.

Okay, off to this week's games we go. But will be framed slightly differently this week. Motorsport is going to lead. If you have been here for a while with us at Emptywheel, and especially Trash Talk, you know Formula One coverage is a staple. I do not follow them as much, but there are actually other forms of auto racing than just F1. There are tectonic changes occurring in NASCAR.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. is retiring. Junior never accumulated the overall record his father did, but he is, without question, the glue that kept

the sport together and making money hand over fist after his Intimidator father passed away. And, let's be honest, Junior has a record most drivers would kill for. 26 wins, 260 top ten finishes and 15 poles. Maybe more notably, he won the Daytona 500 twice...ten years apart. But, most important, he was always an amiable and available front man for his sport, and did so over a period when they desperately needed that. There is no way to not love the guy. Be well and enjoy the next phase of your life Junior.

The next is Danica Patrick. She too is retiring from NASCAR, where she has been since 2011. Danica has nowhere near the record of success as Junior, but has had a truly remarkable and ground changing career. No woman has ever reached the sustained run in major motorsports, popular acclaim and visibility. None. Ever. Danica is a truly transformational figure, and ought be remembered as such. I am getting old now, but to my mind, there are only two other women in the history of auto racing that even come close.

The first is the great Denise McCluggage. You



have probably never heard of her. You should. Denise was a force of nature and one of the truly nicest people ever. She strapped on a white helmet with pink dots, and raced like hell against "the boys" when, back in the old days, that just was not done. And they respected the hell out of her for it. Some of those names are listed in her NYT obituary, which really paints the picture of an incomparable life, including her time as a journalist, founding editor of Autoweek and...skier par extraordinaire. I had the pleasure of being around Denise a few times, what an incredible woman, what an incredible person.

The second I want to note is Lyn St. James. You probably do not know her either. Even including Danica, Lyn St. James is, for my buck, still the most skilled female auto racer I have ever seen. I am probably getting into the weeds here a bit, but it is important to understand just how far Danica Patrick has taken the concept and normalized it. If Lyn had had the opportunities and sponsorship Danica did, the motorsports world would look quite different now. Yes, she was that good.

Lyn St. James is an American former racecar driver. She competed in the IndyCar series, with eleven CART and five Indy Racing League starts to her name. St. James is one of nine women who have qualified for the Indianapolis 500, and became the first woman to win the Indianapolis 500 Rookie of the Year award. She also has two victories at the 24 Hours of Daytona, and one win at the 12 Hours of Sebring. Additionally she has competed in endurance racing in Europe, including the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the 24 Hours of Nürburgring; in the latter, her team placed first and second in class in 1979.

That blurb is from Wiki, and cannot possibly relate what a driver, with breadth of experience Lyn was. She was ridiculously good at her craft. Had she been given truly competitive equipment in IndyCar or F1 at the time, she would have been absolutely capable of winning.

To sum up, Junior and Danica Patrick are seminal drivers in the scheme of things. You cannot equate the two on the track, but off track it is a closer call. There will be generations of girls that will come forth because of Patrick, and she embraced that role. Earnhardt seems retired after Homestead. Danica will race in both Daytona and the Indianapolis 500 before walking off to the next phase. I truly hope she gets the best equipment possible for that attempt. These are both lions that need to be

appreciated for just how significant they are, not just now, but in the annals of history.

So, these are the stories I care about today. Where are you at? This is, as always, an open discussion forum. Thank you for participating.

As almost a PS, Michigan at Wisconsin is important. Not for MI, but if the Badgers want a shot at the playoffs, they have to hold serve here. Shockingly, at this late point in the season, not so many other games that immediately stand out before they start being played.

In the NFL, sometimes the common wisdom is right, in that regard, Pats and Raiders in Mexico City is truly interesting. The other really notable game is Rams at Vikings. Never would have thought it at start of season, but the Rams may be the better team. Not that I am going to sleep on the Vikes at home with that giant Norse horn they blow. In a lesser game, but still important, Ravens at Packers is one to keep your eye on. Ravens are, um, inconsistent. Packers have no Rodgers. Given those things, this is a very fair fight. The Cheesers need this one, and it is Lambeau. If they cannot win here, they are truly done.

Alright, sorry. This ran a little long. Enjoy the games this weekend folks. Hope you all have someone to talk to. And that lovely music message comes this week from the Tedeschi Trucks Band. It is really a great version they do here. Have a great weekend.