

KILLER FOOTBALL IS TRASHING ITS REAL CAPITAL

So we are on to week two of Trash Talk for the nascent NFL season, and week three for the NCAA. There is a ton that could be unpacked as to the particular players, plays and whatnot but, as was the case with the first week, I have little inclination to do so anymore, at least not at great length. Maybe just a little later on, but there are more pressing matters at hand.

Football is hard to turn away from, it is great pageantry and spectacle. It is incredibly compelling sport. But the game is at a crossroad as to its deadly nature and its decimation of its real capital: the players. A stunning article came out yesterday from PBS Frontline:

A total of 87 out of 91 former NFL players have tested positive for the brain disease at the center of the debate over concussions in football, according to new figures from the nation's largest brain bank focused on the study of traumatic head injury.

Researchers with the Department of Veterans Affairs and Boston University have now identified the degenerative disease known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, in 96 percent of NFL players that they've examined and in 79 percent of all football players. The disease is widely believed to stem from repetitive trauma to the head, and can lead to conditions such as memory loss, depression and dementia.

In total, the lab has found CTE in the brain tissue in 131 out of 165 individuals who, before their deaths, played football either professionally, semi-professionally, in college or in high school.

Wow. We have known for quite a while about CTE and its debilitating, and sometimes deadly, effects on football players. But the starkly presented facts portrayed in the PBS piece are really eye opening. And people are talking about it. It is in the regular news rotation at CNN this morning, and you know how much it had to pain the programmers and producers at CNN a LOT to eat into their All Trump, All The Time philosophy.

But the NFL is being a good corporate citizen and proactively protecting their players, right? No, maybe not so much. While Roger Goodell and the NFL paint a happy face on their "improvements", the real fact of the matter is that their "progress" is mostly just another Roger Goodell and NFL PR shitshow. Do take a look at the above trailer for the movie "Concussion" set to be released in December. It looks fantastic.

Again, from the PBS Frontline article we started out with:

The film, *Concussion*, starring Will Smith, traces the story of Bennet Omalu, who in 2005 shocked the football establishment with an article in the journal *Neurosurgery* detailing his discovery of CTE in the brain of former Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster. At the VA lab and elsewhere, CTE has since been found in players such as Hall of Famer Junior Seau, former NFL Man of the Year Dave Duerson, and Colts tight end John Mackey, a past head of the player's union.

While the story is not a new one, for the NFL, it represents a high-profile and potentially embarrassing cinematic interpretation of a period in which the league sought to refute research suggesting football may contribute to brain disease.

From 2003 to 2009, for example, the

NFL's now disbanded Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Committee concluded in a series of scientific papers that "no NFL player" had experienced chronic brain damage from repeat concussions, and that "Professional football players do not sustain frequent repetitive blows to the brain on a regular basis."

In the case of Omalu, league doctors publicly assailed his research, and in a rare move, demanded a retraction of his study. When Omalu spoke to FRONTLINE about the incident for the 2013 documentary, *League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis*, he said, "You can't go against the NFL. They'll squash you."

"THEY WILL SQUASH YOU". Yes, that is exactly the consistent message from the oh so "fan friendly" good 'ole NFL of Roger Goodell, and the billionaire owner baby tyrants he works for. Little different than coal mine owners, the NFL cares primarily about their bottom line. First they look at the purse. This is why the Brady/NFLPA case is so important. And why Bountygate, Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson's cases before it, were all so important. And, yes, even the disciplinary travails of James Harrison. They all reflect the ad hoc, arbitrary and capricious, and self serving nature of the treatment of labor by owners and management in the NFL.

You may see them only as millionaire malefactor petulant football players out doing bad things and think they deserve what they get. And maybe that is true in most cases. Ray Rice absolutely assaulted his fiancé and now wife Janay. Adrian Peterson, engaged in punishment of a child that was pretty common when I was a kid, but is entirely medieval by today's standards.

Say what you will, where there is wildly disproportionate power between ownership/management and labor, and where there has been a collectively bargained agreement to

protect labor, that must be jealously protected. That is exactly why Tom Brady is so critical. Brady is no gangster nor domestic abuser. He is the furthest thing from it; indeed, Brady is Mr. Clean Cut GQ All American. If Roger Goodell and the NFL he represents can arbitrarily, capriciously and imperiously take out Tom Brady – on trumped up junk with no credible evidentiary basis whatsoever – and can do so in a biased and unfair process, then all of labor loses. Not just high flying football players, but teachers, autoworkers, miners, and rank and file employees of all stripes and colors.

I digressed a little from today's CTE issue, but the labor issue is intertwined. The players need more honesty, more protection, and more complete future medical coverage from the NFL because of the disease that is CTE. That, my friends, is a labor issue, and a huge one. And Roger Goodell and the NFL are already acting in bad faith in their "settlement" efforts as to long past players. It is simply pitiful.

So, what about this week? I dunno. The Broncos looked like toast through 7 of their first 8 quarters of the season. But, the Donks are 2-0. If Manning and Kubiak can find a mutual equilibrium, watch out, because Von Miller, Aqib Talib and the defense are some flat out ball hawks. Yak all you want about Peyton's decline and fall, and maybe it is true. But do NOT sleep on these guys.

Cowboys, Gents or Iggles? Yeah, I have no clue there either. 'Boys looked best week one, not sure I buy it. Why is RGIII still on the active roster of the Washington Professional Football Franchise? Seriously, the Washingtonians are like the Duggars of football; it is on public view, but it is all horrible. The Eagles? Hmmm, Chip Kelly's troops better show up this week or else the great hype is dead.

Aaron Rodgers is a renaissance man (this is a fantastic article). Oh, and Go Pack! against those pesky Seasquawks. This time it is at Lambeau in title town. There are other games of

note too, including, of course Bill Bel and the Brays at the Wagon Circling Bills. That is shaping up to be some big fun.

So, go whoop it up and have some fun. The game goes on, even if a reckoning is necessary. The music number today is First I Look At The Purse by the J. Geils Band, and is in honor of the craven Roger Goodell and the NFL I described above.