

March 9, 2015

Mr. Roger Goodell, Commissioner, NFL

Mr. DeMaurice Smith, Executive Director NFLPA

Dear Sirs:

At this time of increased public scrutiny of the "heinous underbelly" of professional football and of the "greed which places profits above the health of its players" (Steve Almond 9/16/14), we, the undersigned wives of members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, wish to raise yet another example of the dark side of the NFL, that being the complete lack of pension parity for ALL pre-1993 players. These Hall of Famers and other great "guardians of the game" (David Baker, 9/16/14) will see 30% of their comrades suffer permanent brain damage in the years to come. With or without this affliction, many more will find themselves living in poverty without the ability to seek adequate health care or everyday decent living conditions.

Since 1993, the National Football League Players Association has voted a yearly cost of living increase dependent specifically upon the actual calendar years played, to the pension of all players active after that date. A pension is defined in the dictionary as "a payment to a person who has fulfilled certain conditions of service." A hero is defined as "a person regarded as a role model." We cannot believe that the pre-1993 heroes have not met the conditions of service to the NFL, the NFLPA and to the public. They did so almost unanimously without besmirching their personal integrity or that of the game that they loved to play. They had to have loved it because their compensation, in light of today's mega-million dollar salaries, benefits and team profits, dims by comparison. A simple cost of living increase would have doubled the pensions of these players by now so that even those players who took their pension early would be getting funds commensurate with their needs and well-being.

Neither the Players Association nor the owners will address this slight, in spite of Mr. Baker's call to recognize "a cause greater than ourselves – to serve our teammates." While Commissioner Goodell has professed an interest in improving the benefits of former players, the NFL as a whole has stood mutely on the sidelines and thus is primarily responsible for the deplorable living conditions of many former players. Writer Rich Gosselin has stated that football enables a player to learn the concepts of teamwork and trust, but how can the pre-1993 players trust the very people who have basically cut them from the team? Who apparently hope that these noble men will just die off? Mr. Baker wants to "honor the heroes of the game" and "celebrate excellence everywhere." Where is the celebration and honor in this scenario?

The pre-eminence of professional football in our American culture today dictates that its leaders must strive diligently to deliver a product worthy of such public adulation. While you attempt to deal with the growing violence in pro football, on and off of the field, please do not forget the hundreds of men who played their hearts out pre-1993 only to have been forgotten by those whose pockets they lined. The NFL, the owners and the NFLPA have the ability to right this particular wrong. It just might be easier than trying to stem the now increasing flow of public recognition of the arrogance, ignorance and violence connected to the words “National Football League.”

The pre-1993 players shouldn’t have to appeal to the court of public opinion in order to be validated for what they did for the game of professional football. As Mr. Baker has also stated, “together we can meet the challenges that face us as we grow in character and become better for it.” Yet the NFLPA only pretends to exalt “one team, one community” while in reality, it has excluded the players upon whose backs the game was built. Pension parity should be the smallest form of appreciation given to the men who made the NFL a billion dollar business and the national pastime that it is today. These heroes deserve your respect. What a concept in light of much of the publicity given to the National Football League at present.

We, the undersigned, representing all players who played the game prior to 1993, request that the Owners, the NFL League executives and the NFLPA Union agree to a meeting with our representatives wherein mutual respect and appreciation of the contributions of every player can lead to a resolution of the tremendous disparity in NFL pensions. Even a small, annual pension increase (3%), could be a game changer in the lives of the pre-1993 players.

Sincerely,

Pre-1993 HOF Wives on behalf of all Pre-1993 players who played the game!

Jacci Barney

Pat Bethea

Angela Biletnikoff

Pamela Dean

Gerri DeLamielleure

Debby Dierdorf

Jeri Fouts

Evelyn Hanburger

Linda Babl Hendricks

Gustie Houston

Gisela Johnson

B J Kelly

Ann Lilly

Rosie Little

Anne Mack

Sylvia Mackey

Gwen Mitchell

Susan Olsen

Liz Renfro

Patsy Shaw

Patty Stenerud

Gayle Wehrli

Vicci White

Merle Wilcox

Barbara Youngblood

Colette Culp

Attachments

cc. David Baker, President, Pro Football Hall of Fame

Hall of Fame Players web site: <http://www.hofplayers.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/HOF-Players/195248819026>

Twitter : <https://twitter.com/FBallHOFPlayers>