

NFL commissioner announces plans against anthem protests

By Trévon Austin
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In a letter to team owners, National Football League (NFL) Commissioner Roger Goodell announced a plan to “move past” the controversy surrounding players protesting during the national anthem. Goodell claimed the NFL respects its players’ right to express their views on “critical social issues,” but said they shouldn’t take a knee during the anthem.

“Like many of our fans, we believe that everyone should stand for the national anthem,” Goodell wrote. “It is an important moment in our game. We want to honor our flag and our country, and our fans expect that of us.”

Claiming the protests were “threatening to erode the unifying power of our game,” Goodell stated that the league has worked with players and team owners to work out a plan to “help to promote positive change in our country.”

The letter came hours after President Trump made a tweet essentially threatening to punish the NFL by revoking its tax breaks. The tweet read: “Why is the NFL getting massive tax breaks while at the same time disrespecting our Anthem, Flag and Country? Change tax law!”

Since last month, Trump has called on the NFL to punish players who don’t stand during the national anthem, claiming it was “disrespectful to the flag.” At a speech in Alabama last month, Trump suggested that owners fire players who kneel in protest during the anthem.

On Sunday, Vice President Mike Pence left a football game between the Indianapolis Colts and the San Francisco 49ers, after 20 players on the 49ers knelt in protest and some players on the Colts carried out acts of protest as well.

After the game, Pence tweeted, “I left today’s Colts game because @POTUS and I will not dignify any

event that disrespects our soldiers, our Flag, or our National Anthem.”

Goodell was initially critical of Trump’s comments last month, stating they were disrespectful to the league and its players. But it seems he has now fallen in line.

On Monday, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, who knelt with his players just two weeks ago, also proclaimed his new willingness to go along with Trump’s demands.

“If there is anything that is disrespectful to the flag then we will not play,” Jones told the *Dallas Morning News*. “You understand? If we are disrespecting the flag then we will not play. Period.”

Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, who also previously supported his players’ right to kneel in protest, announced his new support for Trump’s demands, stating that Trump has made the controversy “about patriotism.” Dolphins players will be required to stand during the national anthem, or remain in the locker room.

Former NFL coach and ESPN analyst Mike Ditka claimed the social issues surrounding the NFL protests were blown out of proportion, telling a radio interviewer on Westwood One, “there has been no oppression in the last 100 years that I know of.” He only retracted the statement after a deluge of calls, emails, texts and tweets protesting his ignorant whitewash of lynchings, other Ku Klux Klan killings, and the struggles of the civil rights movement.

The protests began in 2016 when 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick refused to stand for the national anthem in protest of police brutality and the treatment of black people in the United States.

Police brutality is a burning issue within the United States. According to killedbypolice.net, 938 people have been killed by police in 2017 so far. Just last

month, former police officer Jason Stockley was cleared of all charges in the 2011 shooting death of 24-year-old Anthony Lamar Smith. This is commonplace within the US. Far from being about “patriotism,” Trump is demanding a clamping down on any public display of opposition to police violence.

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