

## **NFL Commissioner Goodell's Comments on George Martin & Retired Players**

After newly appointed NFL Alumni Executive Director George Martin addressed NFL owners at the fall meeting in Boston on Wednesday, October 14, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell held an annual meeting news conference and reiterated his commitment to finding solutions to the problems facing retired NFL players. Below are Commissioner Goodell's comments as well as Q&A's with reporters.

**Commissioner Roger Goodell:** Good morning. We had a two-and-a-half hour session this morning to finish the meeting as scheduled. I think this morning was highlighted by George Martin and his NFL Alumni presentation which was about a half-an-hour. It was a continuation of our meeting last May and to introduce George as a new CEO of the organization, an independent organization representing retired players. It is something I've spent a great deal of time on particularly over the last year or so. In meeting with retired players last fall and earlier this year, they wanted that independent organization and I think it's a great development that George is now in place and running the organization. I think he will do a terrific job. He did a very good job this morning talking to the owners about his background, his priorities and what he brings to the job. We are encouraged that this will give us an organization we can work with to try to address the issues for the men that helped us build the game and lead to a new level of cooperation with the retired players.

### **Do you think the problems between retired players are a result of having many fractured groups of retired players?**

To a large part. One of the things that George stressed that is one of his priorities is unification of the retired players so that they can speak with one voice. One of the things that I heard very clearly coming out of my meetings with various retired players last fall and earlier this year was that we want an independent organization that is focused entirely on the retired players understanding those priorities. It goes to the University of Michigan study. It goes to those meetings that I had with retired players. Now we can have an entity that's independent that can identify the issues that are priorities for the retired players that we can meet with and address those issues in a responsible fashion. Second of all, and I know George believes in this and I certainly believe in this, is that retired players are an asset. They are wonderful ambassadors for the game. They mean so much to our fans and to the NFL and the history of our game and the tradition of our game. And to be able to cooperate with them to provide opportunities for them that can go back and benefit the retired players who may be in need. This is a great development for us. And that's what I heard from the retired players as I continue to speak to them.

### **Was work stoppage part of George's presentation?**

It wasn't part of the presentation. It didn't come up. I don't think it would affect the retired players.

**On George's role in future owners meetings:**

We made that commitment early on when they identified the NFL Alumni as the entity they wanted to get behind. I committed at that point that I would meet with them and that I would bring them in front of either committees or the membership. The timing of George's hiring last week made sense for him to come here and be able to talk with our owners.

**On balance between responsibility to retired players and fact that they've left the game:**

People who helped us and contributed to the success of the NFL deserve our respect. They deserve our cooperation in helping them transition into a new career. No player comes into the NFL and that's their lifetime career. Your career in the NFL is limited. You have to be prepared to go on and have another career and to care for yourself and your family and be productive in another career. I think that's what we want our players to understand. Come in, have a productive career, develop as a human being and transition into a new career at the end of that and continue on in a productive fashion. It's a great start having an NFL career, no matter how long your career is. It's a terrific start. Not just financially, but also the exposure you get and the leadership qualities that you're exposed to. Obviously to play in the NFL, you have to have a formal education. That all benefits individuals in making that transition successfully. But the individual player has to focus on that and recognize it's going to come to an end. That's a hard to tell a young man when he comes into the NFL.