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## April 19<sup>th</sup> NFLPA Media Call

George Atallah: [00:00:00](#) All right, let's get going. Appreciate everybody joining us today. I'm George Atallah from the NFLPA joined by Demaurice Smith, JC Tretter from the PA as well. We've got a couple of our staff members also on the line who are here to answer the factual questions. We really wanted to make sure we were available to you guys, given the public push that you've seen from our members to make a decision to not attend in-person, voluntary workouts, consistent with our recommendations.

We know that you've seen those trickle in on social media. We also know that you guys might have some questions as it relates to your individual markets and what's happening in your team's cities. I wanted.. We've often started these calls in the past during the pandemic, which is still ongoing with some facts and figures. I think many of you have seen reports that in all 50 states we've reached a milestone of every 16 year old and above can sign up now for the vaccine. That also comes on the same date that we've had, the largest number of people diagnosed with COVID-19 across the world. So we're still not out of the woods yet. Dr. Mary, you want to say a couple of things to get us going about where we are with the pandemic?

Speaker 1: [00:01:29](#) Yeah, As George said, this is certainly not a time to take the foot off the accelerator when it comes to understanding that we're in the midst of a novel and emerging pandemic, we know more than we did, but the fact of the matter is there were 79,000 new cases two days ago with a rolling average of 70,000 a year ago, that was 30,000. So more than double the new cases, despite the advent of the vaccines, which we support people, getting educated and making a reasonable decision on, but this is it. I know we're all tired and I know that we all want it to be over, but it is not over.

George Atallah: [00:02:10](#) Thanks for that. And D or JC, any opening remarks on the process that we've got, or should we just jump into questions?

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ASSOCIATION

Demaurice Smith:

[00:02:20](#)

The only thing I would open up with is just to level set where we came from and where we are now. Off season voluntary.. I'm sorry, all off-season training activities are completely voluntary. We talk to our membership about where we are with COVID, talk to them about the decisions and how they were made last year about having an entirely virtual off-season. We had conversations with the league about an entirely virtual off-season. The league did not want to have a completely virtual off-season and we made the decision that while we will continue to talk to them, we wanted to make sure that all of our players were aware of their CBA, right, to make an informed individual decision about whether to attend OTAs. That has been a great conversation with our leadership, great conversation during all player calls, a number of conversations with teams and our NFLPA president, which always helpful.

But at the end of the day, we have always, as a union made a decision that focused on our myopic approach to what's in the best interest of the players. And I know that in our football ecosystem, you don't get too far in this job with people talking about the game, or the impact on the game, or other issues that might come into play. We're both blessed and probably sometimes cursed by only having a myopic approach to what's in the best interest of the player. And that's what our conversations have been. And then it's about players just making their own individual decisions.

George Atallah:

[00:04:29](#)

Okay, why don't we just jump right into questions then, and make this as efficient as possible. Clarence Hill, you're up first. How you doing Clarence?

Clarence:

[00:04:42](#)

How you doing? I appreciate you guys having us today. Can you talk about the conversations you guys have had with the Cowboys in their players regarding boycotting or taking part in the not participating? I guess the word in the off-season program, number of them have showed up today. Certainly they have the amount of players of the de-escalator, their contract. What are those conversations like? And are they as a team not going to join the boycott so to speak?



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Demaurice Smith:

[00:05:13](#)

Yeah, let me take that one. You know how we care about language? This is not a boycott. This is not a strike. This is not a labor or action. Players have the right to make their own decisions about what to do with respect to off-season training activities. We made it clear that if players have money on the line, whether it's in the form of bonuses, that they will get by going to OTAs or in the form of de-escalators money that they have. And won't get, if they don't go to OTAs, we are never going to stand in the way of a player making a financial decision about what he can do and what he should do. So with respect to any team, we've had a lot of conversations with those teams. And at the end of the day, players are going to decide as they should, what they should do with respect to their own situation.

George Atallah:

[00:06:25](#)

Are you going to say you follow up or is that okay?

Demaurice Smith:

[00:06:31](#)

We can't hear you.

George:

[00:06:39](#)

Okay. Clarence we'll come back to you. Rob Demovsky.

Jonathan:

[00:06:45](#)

You got me, George. Okay. JC, as you know, from being in green bay, not a lot of guys spend their off-season here. There was some report over the weekend that the Packers have said that the first four weeks of their phase, one will be virtual. I'm curious if that is indeed true. And what you guys feel as far as at least a starting point for a better off-season program.

Speaker 1:

[00:07:16](#)

Yeah. As of now everyone for their per diem, just the guys that just get paid, I believe it's two 75 a day. You will get credit for solely being at the meetings. So for those guys, everything is virtual for the first four weeks. That's all you have to do is show up to your virtual meetings for the workout bonus guys. That is a team by team decision on how they will grant those workout bonuses. So I do not know for certain what green bay is doing, but some teams are allowing them to get credit just like the per diem guys for getting their virtual meetings done. And that will count for credit for your workout bonus. Other teams are making them be at the facility in order to get credit for their workout bonuses. But our stance is that the entire thing could be virtual, just it was last year when we had a lot of success and it worked out for the betterment of everybody



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Jonathan:

[00:08:09](#)

And in JC, or George, or D, I don't know if you can answer this. Do you know guys know for sure that that is what the Packers have told their players is that they will be virtual for at least phase one?

George:

[00:08:25](#)

We'll follow up with you on that, Rob. Because we're trying to track team by team. Some teams have not communicated with us and with their player reps, and we've got sort of a daily.. If not, hourly check-in. So it's been different team by team. And frankly, for everybody on the call, that's one of the reasons why we attempted to get an all virtual off-season in place. To create consistency, to level the playing field. So that teams weren't making their own decisions based on what was best for that particular market.

I think another reason why we went to back in March and wanted to really focus on having a consistent uniform policy for everybody. And instead what we're seeing, and obviously from the questions already is an inconsistent, confusing application of the protocols that we're trying to track. So I'll get back to specifically on the Packers.

Jonathan:

[00:09:30](#)

Thank you. Appreciate it guys.

George:

[00:09:32](#)

Of course. Jonathan Jones, you're next in the queue.

Jonathan:

[00:09:37](#)

Thanks George. And as for D, and whomever may want to take this, the language around the vaccines from the union has I think in this call. And I think also the last time we did this has been players get educated and make the best personal decision for you. Back in February during the super bowl, it was more.. We're excited, the vaccines coming, we're going to encourage players and encourage the league to get players vaccinated. Why sort of the slight change in semantics or messaging and is the union encouraging players to get vaccinated?

Demaurice Smith:

[00:10:16](#)

Yeah, I'll take that one. I don't really see it as a change in any of their semantics or anything else. I think it's important certainly for as many Americans to get vaccinated as possible. I think that means that people need to understand and become educated about the vaccine. If they have some sort of concern about it. I don't think there's any difference between the way I would treat informing the public or informing our



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

players about the vaccine. I think people should get it. The league has made it clear that they are not going to mandate it. You and I both know there's people in our general community who feel a certain way about the vaccine. I'm positive there's going to be players who mirror of some of the same concerns or questions that people have in the community.

So at the end of the day, we're going to have a vaccine. That's not going to be mandated. We're going to provide all the information, any information that players would want. And as you know, some players including other NFLPA staff have already said things publicly about the importance of reaching her immunity with the vaccine. I don't assume that's going to change in any way should perform either. So I look at it as entirely consistent. I think the only change I believe is that at the super bowl, we didn't know what the leagues position was going to be about mandating it or not. And now we know,

- George: [00:11:59](#) Yeah. I guess just to finer point on it. It is the union's message players. We were encouraging the vaccine, or is it players, we want you to get educated and make the best decision for you because those are not necessarily the same thing.
- Demaurence Smith: [00:12:16](#) No, but they're also not necessarily different either. Right?
- George: [00:12:19](#) Depending on perspective.
- Demaurence Smith: [00:12:21](#) Yeah, I mean, look, I think if I were going to sit down with somebody that I met in my community, I doubt I'd start off the conversation saying, "Man, you need to get this vaccine." I would probably start off the conversation by saying, "Do you have any questions about it?" This is the science behind it. Here are some of the things that you may have heard about the vaccine that may not be true. Here's what happened with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Here's the difference between what was said in public versus some of the real science behind it. You and I have heard a lot of people talk about the impact on their DNA, right. So, I don't think.. It seems to me that the right way to approach anything like the vaccine is to do it in a non-demanding, nonthreatening, information-based way. And I think that's what we are all trying to do.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

- Jonathan: [00:13:30](#) Good deal. And then one final follow-up and maybe this is for George. Are there any numbers or will there be any numbers of percent of players vaccinated at any point?
- Demaurice Smith: [00:13:44](#) I don't know the answer to that, but we'll get it to you. We'll figure it out and get it to you.
- Jonathan: [00:13:50](#) Thank you.
- Speaker 1: [00:13:50](#) Yeah. We'll figure that out club by club. And to your point, it's an excellent question, but these are men, they're intelligent men, they're a D and JC always say that a lethally educated player is our strongest weapon and no, that's not true of COVID than it is of concussions. I've had fielded hundreds of calls from players and often with their wives on, at the same time. And they have very intelligent questions. They come to different conclusions, but that's their decision on what to do. And I might just say personally that the concept of vaccine shaming of implying that someone's less than intelligent or less than responsible for making a decision is non-scientific, it's actually anti-scientific. But have we encouraged our players when they've asked me? Sure, I have, but I've given them the facts on central venous sinus thrombosis and other issues as well.
- George: [00:14:53](#) Mary Kay. Good to see you again, you're up.
- Mary: [00:14:56](#) Thanks George. I have two questions. So I'm going to start, first of all, with the one about the NFL mandating that any tier one or tier two employees will be barred from having anything to do with players, unless they are vaccinated. I'm just wondering, did you guys work together with the NFL to come up with that? And are you comfortable with that arrangement? I mean, do you have a say in who can or can't be working with, with players are near and around players?
- Demaurice Smith: [00:15:32](#) Well, last year we had a lot to say about who was going to be near players and came up with the tier one, tier two, tier three designation for people that said we don't have any impact on who the league decides on their staff is going to get vaccinated or not. That's purely their decision.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Mary:

[00:15:57](#)

Okay. And then the second question I have, and we covered some of this in the last briefing that we had. And that was when we're dealing with and writing about these voluntary OTAs, everything so far that we're talking about is voluntary. So if you don't go, it's no big deal, but there is supposed to be, or usually, there is one mandatory minicamp.

So my question is, is that something that still has to be collectively bargained? That you guys have to go back at that to see if you're going to do the mandatory minicamp? Would you prefer there not be a mandatory minicamp? What's your stance on that?

Demaurice Smith:

[00:16:37](#)

Yeah, I think we would... I think we believe that the science and everything we've talked about before would strongly demonstrate that we would be better off not having even the mandatory minicamp, with respect to the conversations we're having with our players right now, it's all about the voluntary OTAs. And I guess the third part of your question is if there was going to be a change to the mandatory minicamps, that would have to be collectively bargained.

Mary:

[00:16:37](#)

Okay. Thank you.

George:

[00:17:13](#)

Okay. Thanks for that, Nate?

Nate:

[00:17:17](#)

Hey, guys. Thanks for doing this call. To kind of follow up on Mary Kay's question, you guys are going to try to eventually ask for a no mandatory minicamps, do you foresee doing the same thing with preseason games? Because when we look at last season, obviously they didn't happen. And then another question I had was, just for JC to kind of personalize some of the things going on, like JC, did you guys have your virtual meetings with the Browns today and kind of what is the reaction you're getting from Kevin Stefanski and the Browns about the players' stance that you guys as a team have taken?

JC Tretter:

[00:18:10](#)

I'll take the second one first. Yeah, we had virtual meetings today. Just a summary of what this offseason is going to look like, what the goals are, but I've spoken with both Kevin and Andrew about the offseason program. They saw our statement that we wouldn't be participating in it. And that our goal, just like the unions



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

is, is that we think it'd be best if we had an all virtual program, we think that's the safest, best way to do it.

With the virus going on and just moving forward, we think we need to have conversations about the best way the offseason works for everybody involved and keeps people healthy and keeps people safe. We saw what happened with the injury data. We saw the 23% reduction in missed time injuries, those are significant for players, that is a big time statistic for guys to look at and see what they're risking by going back in person.

And that the coaches and teams will put pressure on you to say that you may not make the team if you're not here in the middle of April, but the quickest way off a team is to get hurt in the middle of the offseason. And when you see how many injuries we avoided by not being there, it may be actually one of the most dangerous places to be in the offseason as a player, is to be on those practice fields for really unnecessary workouts and practices that get guys hurt. So that's what we talked about as a team. And we've talked to talk to our coaches about that and our leadership about that.

George: [00:19:49](#)

Thanks, Nate. Howl, how are you? You're up.

Howl: [00:19:55](#)

Hello, how's everybody doing? I have two questions for you both related to my market with the Dolphins. For JC and D, what can you share with us on some of the feedback you may have gotten from Dolphin leadership? By leadership, I mean, the players' representatives. What sort of feedback have you gotten from them? What are some of their concerns regarding the offseason program that you can share with us?

JC Tretter: [00:20:28](#)

Yeah. I don't think it really varies market to market. I think we're players and we look at things the same way. So for the calls that have happened for each team's call, when they want to discuss this as a group, really my job and the job of any staff member that's on the call is solely just to inform them of the data, what the negotiations have looked like, what the logistics will look like if you have to go into the building. All those issues guys talk about and realize that this doesn't make sense, this is unnecessary, it's not exactly safe, and if we're in the middle of a pandemic, why are we doing things that aren't necessary? And when guys start





**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

looking at it that way, you've seen now 19 teams come forward and say, "This doesn't make any sense. We're not going." And that's been pretty consistent through the teams that have had calls of looking at the issue that way.

Howl: [00:21:24](#)

Okay. My second question is, last year Miami had 11 draft picks. This year, they've stockpiled a good number and they've also had a huge amount of turnover in their roster, not just incoming draft picks, but just their free agency. So what are both of you think of the idea of players with teams with a lot of young players or new players being at possibly a disadvantage with the reduced offseason program?

Demaurice Smith: [00:21:58](#)

At the beginning of the call, we talked about how we have a myopic focus on what's in the best interest of the player. Right? I think your question might be focused on the game, right? So I would turn the question back on you. If someone told you that there was a 30% reduction in concussions, a 23% reduction in missed time injuries, that the single most determining factor about whether or not a guy makes a roster the next year is whether he suffers a missed time injury during the offseason. And the fact that we're in a pandemic, at what point should we be thinking about competitive balance?

Howl: [00:22:50](#)

Okay, fair enough.

George: [00:22:55](#)

Thanks, Howl.

Mark, how are you doing? You're up.

Mark: [00:23:03](#)

Now that the schedule... the league put out, I think it puts the first on-field work at May 17th, are you still having conversations about the league on these issues? And do you see any chance of a resolution that satisfy both sides before on-field work is scheduled to begin?

Demaurice Smith: [00:23:22](#)

Yeah. I mean, I'm going to be purposefully opaque. We're always talking with the league about something. Right now, the only conversations we've had about the offseason have been the ones with our players about OTAs. If there's a change in that, we'll let you know.

George: [00:23:51](#)

Thanks, Mark.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Lindsey:

[00:23:56](#)

Lindsey, how are you? You're up.

Hi, thanks guys. I wanted to follow up with another vaccine- related question. How do you guys feel about the impending incentives that are coming? The NFL hasn't officially set that threshold, but have indicated it'll be fairly similar to what major league baseball is doing at 85%. How do you guys feel about them implementing that in terms of, for individuals, the incentives for loosening regulations, and then team-wide, if you guys can get to 85%, do you think you... and I guess related, do you think you'll be able to get to 85% vaccination for players?

Demaurice Smith:

[00:24:31](#)

I leave all of the predictions for the NFLPA to JC Tretter. I mean, we look at it this way, the league put out that memo, we've advised our leadership about the memo that they put out about the incentives. I'm sure we'll have a conversation with our leadership about the incentives. As you know, we can only... we don't really get into what the league does with its own employees or anything else.

And I'm sure we're going to have a conversation about the incentives. I think it really comes down to, for us, kind of a clean look, we care about what is most likely to keep the largest number of our players safe and not to getting COVID.

And that's always been our focus since March of last year, and that'll remain our focus where the incentives fall into that health and safety calculus, we'll have to figure out. Whether some players might like the incentives, we'll factor that in. Some might not factor it in, but we do what we always do. We talk about the issues from a perspective of leadership. And then if there's some sort of union position based on the majority of our membership, we'll let you know.

George:

[00:26:07](#)

Thanks, Lindsey. Howard, how are you? You're up.

Howard:

[00:26:11](#)

Doing good. Thanks. Thanks all you guys. Very curious with the continued emphasis on why you feel this way, the pandemic, health and safety of the players. It seems pretty obvious that that's pretty glaring. How does it make you guys feel, especially JC, when you see this notion put out by some, including a head coach in the league that somehow this is related to players wanting



**NFL PLAYERS**

ASSOCIATION

a virtual offseason because they're worried about losing their jobs to younger players?

[00:26:42](#)

Yeah, I think it's just a misinformed perspective. I don't think there's anything backing up, but instead I would say that there's more proof that that's nonsense. We pooled our players all ages and the vast majority of all players came back and said, what they thought was best for this year coming into another year of a pandemic would be to keep it the same exact rules in effect. And that's a virtual offseason. And that was the same, if you were in your 10th year or you were in your first year, the data was consistent across all years. It wasn't the old guy saying it should be virtual. And the young guys saying, please let us go back in person. The same percentages across the board. We're saying the same things. So our job as a union is to represent the player population and our player population is pretty set on that.

And I think you see that based off 19 teams coming forward and saying the same thing as a group. I just don't see how people look at this as one group of the union going after another group. I see it completely different. I see it as everybody standing together, just like we did last year, when guys wanted the right safety measures from the league and the league, wasn't getting them to us. And then you saw a bunch of old guys and a bunch of star players come out on Twitter and say, "I want these protections for me. And I want these protections for guys who can't say it themselves, that we need these."

That's what our union is. It's a union of brothers looking out for each other, keeping each other safe and keeping our families safe. And that's what this entire conversation's about is, what's in the best interest of all of us as players, our health, our safety and our family's health and safety.

Howard:

[00:28:21](#)

Thanks. Yeah, we've seen that there's not too often many jobs are awarded based on offseason work. That seems to be pretty much a stretch.

JC Tretter:

[00:28:29](#)

Yeah, no, I'm not sure how much I carry over there is of what you look like in shorts in April versus what you looked like in pads in September. But somehow that keeps getting repeated as the main factor in getting



**NFL PLAYERS**

ASSOCIATION

Howard: [00:28:48](#)

George: [00:28:49](#)

Pat L.: [00:28:54](#)

your position. But I would also strongly disagree with that perspective.

Thanks.

Thanks, Howard. Pat Leonard, how are you doing? Thanks for jumping on, You're up.

Hey, George. Hey, thanks guys. Yeah.

From an injury perspective, so not including COVID, but from an injury perspective, when there is such a direct correlation between more football and injuries, as you've cited in the data, why agree to the extra regular season game? So like I see the need and the value in protecting players amount of time on the field to keep their bodies fresh. Don't get me wrong, obviously. But so, I'm just trying to understand, removing or avoiding practice time or reducing practice time on the field to protect bodies, but adding the extra game? So why does one decision go towards protecting the on-field time? And the other decision goes towards adding it?

Demaurice Smith: [00:29:36](#)

JC Tretter: [00:29:37](#)

Sorry, go ahead.

I'll start, D and you can cover if I miss anything. I think if you're [inaudible 00:29:43] at one issue, that would be your perspective, but the CBA is a range of a lot of issues. So the 17th game also came with a bunch of health and safety aspects to cut practice time in camp, to cut time on the field, to cut time at the facility.

So, yeah, there's an addition to a game and that had many more things involved in that discussion, but there are also plenty of rollbacks on time on the field, and time at practice, and time at the facility that the majority of our guys felt equaled out that wear and tear. And now we have new data. I don't know if anybody knew for sure what would happen when you don't have an offseason until you don't have one, and you have a virtual offseason.

And now, after that CBA was agreed to, a pandemic breaks out when we have a virtual offseason, and we'd been waiting on that injury data all year, because we were really interested to see what would happen, what would happen with no offseason, what would happen



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

with the acclimation period that we got in place. And what it showed was that guys were much healthier. And we knew that as players, there was plenty of anecdotal evidence that I feel way better, I feel healthier, I feel mentally and physically fresher, but you don't rely on anecdotal evidence. You rely on the actual data and then you do the math and you see, wow, 23% reduction in missed time injuries. That's a lot of injuries avoided, a lot of wear and tear that shortens careers. And so I don't think you can just look at why you added a game. Why did you do that? We also did a lot of things for health and safety in that same CBA to cut on the wear and tear bodies.

D, if I missed anything, feel free to-

Demaurice Smith: [00:31:31](#)

No, you didn't miss anything. I mean, you're talking like a long term football professional who understands the CBA, right? To look at this as a simple binary frame, I think is to charitably say, it misses the picture. JC talked about the changes in health and safety that were achieved in the new CBA. But we... I think it was last... I don't know whether you were on the call the last time...

Demaurice Smith: [00:32:00](#)

We, I think it was last... I don't know whether you were on the call the last time, but the last time we were on, we went through the differences between last... The CBA that was ratified last year and the old CBA. Everything is a package and everything is evaluated in a holistic approach of are our players, for the best part, over better off? Everybody is entitled to their own opinion, but everybody has to stick to the same facts. So we never look at one thing in isolation. We never look at one thing in just measuring it apples-to-apples. When you look at the totality of the package, just on the health and safety side, changes in the way in which that our work occurs. Things that we want to accomplish changing field services. Things that we were able to increase oversight on our health and safety.

I wish that collective bargaining and negotiations was as linear as your question. It just isn't. You're constantly making decisions about what are the things that your membership wants and what is the cost. And if there's an additional cost, how can you ameliorate or limit those costs across the board. That makes sort of perfect sense to me. I mean, if you've got a follow up question, happy to hear it.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

JC Tretter:

[00:33:39](#)

No, I appreciate it. Thank you.

George:

[00:33:45](#)

Thanks guys. Mike. Some guy named Mike Garafolo. Where you at? Hey, how you doing? You're up. You're on mute. There you go.

Mike Garafolo:

[00:33:55](#)

Yeah, my bad. I was just reading the statement from the Minnesota Vikings players. You guys are saying, "Why be there? Why do it?" Last year during the pandemic... By the way, I joined late, so sorry if I'm overlapping on some stuff here. Last year during the pandemic you're telling guys do not gather. And then they were gathering, at a time where we didn't have vaccines, we didn't have as much understanding as we do now about a lot of things. And they were still willing to gather for that. Why discourage them from being at a place where maybe they are safer working out there because a lot more protocols are being followed there versus a facility where they're working out, a gym or whatever? And also if they get injured on their own at a private workout, and the guys are already thrown with each other, they're kind of on their own. Whereas, if they get hurt at the facility, they're covered to a certain extent.

Demaurice Smith:

[00:34:54](#)

But isn't that just utterly false reasoning? Because if we're going to follow that reasoning, everybody should just work out at a facility as soon as the season's over and just stay there forever. Right? Because they wouldn't have to risk NFI, they would all be at the facility and they would be safer. So if we use that argument to its fullest extent, it would be an argument for people to just go to the facilities and work out all the time, right? But we don't have that. We don't have that because we believe that it's important for a player's body to rest and recover. So we bargained for voluntary off season training. Now, yes, did some players get together last year? Yes, some did. But that doesn't mean that everyone did, right? So you can't start off the reasoning by saying, "Players are going to show up."

I think it's important that at its core, that we embrace that every player has the choice. The choice. So if we don't go to our players and emphasize the fundamental fact that they have a choice to begin with at the beginning, if you don't start there, anything you do after there is going to put you in the wrong space at the end. So let's just re-imagine the entire question. Players have the absolute voluntary choice not to go. We know that



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

there was a drastic decrease in injuries last year when they did not go. We also know that we continue to be in a pandemic. So just from those three facts, why wouldn't that be almost an unassailable argument that it is better off for 4,000 players, who don't have money on the line, to not go? Right? And then if you want to say, okay, there's guys who've got de-escalators or guys who've got workout bonuses. They can go."

That's fine. But starting off with the fundamental choice that a man has not to go, why wouldn't we start there? Embrace his choice not to go and then leave it up to him whether he wants to go or not? Everything else, you might get hurt somewhere else and you're not covered by NFI. Some guys got together last year, even though we were in a pandemic. And by the way, all of us, I think, in these conversations, came from the top rope and said, that was crazy, right? So much so that I won't mention the name of the quarterback in Tampa, that wears number 12, who picked up the phone and said that I top-roped him during a press conference.

We said that those weren't good ideas. So I guess, Mike, where I come from is there is a fundamental choice, there's unassailable facts that you're safer not going. Why wouldn't we make the argument based on that instead of, well, some guys might go and workout somewhere else. And if they do, they might get hurt. I would much rather make policy... Strike that. I would much rather advise a guy about what he should do based on the facts that are most likely to keep him safe, as opposed to advising a guy about what to do based on whether people would do something that we wouldn't want them to do, right?

Mike Garafolo: [00:38:42](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). Forgive me if I missed this. Did you tell players, as leadership told them, don't gather this off season. Don't get together and do things. I mean, we're trying to-

Demaurice Smith: [00:38:56](#) ... We always tell players do not work out on your own, as in a group, because you're not covered. And we did the same thing last year.

Mike Garafolo: [00:39:09](#) Okay. One last thing. You're talking about the guys with the workout bonuses. Have you or will you communicate to agents and say, "Maybe we should start going away from that, because if we're in our



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Demaurence Smith: [00:39:33](#)

minds thinking of a potentially all virtual off season and we don't need this off season program, let's not give the teams the ability to lure our guys back with that."

Yeah. I think there's two ways to look at that. I've told the agents for... I mean, we've told the agents for years and try to teach them about the importance of creating good contracts for our guys. And that has to do with everything from contract language to amounts. And I am not going to take the opportunity, I know George is cringing at the moment because he wants to avoid another conversation about guaranteed contracts. But things like guaranteed contracts have always, in all of the sports, have more to do with the way in which agents write contracts and stick to contracts than anything that's in any collective bargaining agreement. Right?

Mike Garafolo: [00:40:23](#)

Yeah.

Demaurence Smith: [00:40:23](#)

So to your question about workout bonuses, it seems to me that there are two approaches. Either A, negotiate contracts with the teams where your client gets paid for showing up. Or instead of not negotiating a contract for your client with a team where he's being pressured to show up for free. If he doesn't have any money on the line, or if he has money on the line, it doesn't really matter. It might make the choice of the young man a little bit different. But we've taken a stand that it is the NFLPA staff position that you are better off, you are safer by not going to OTAs. And if that means that teams or agents or players react to that by either standing on their choice not to go or negotiating a contract where they're not showing up for free, that's something that's well within their power. Right?

Mike Garafolo: [00:41:38](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Demaurence Smith: [00:41:42](#)

I would ask sort of your question. I mean, I know the answer is going to be yes. But for the reporters on the phone, how much stuff do you guys do for free?

Mike Garafolo: [00:41:52](#)

A little bit. This. No, maybe not this.

George: [00:42:01](#)

Mike, do the reading next time.

Mike Garafolo: [00:42:04](#)

What was that?





**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

George: [00:42:06](#) I said do the reading next time. We'll give you the reading on guaranteed contracts.

Mike Garafolo: [00:42:11](#) Oh, boy.

Demaurice Smith: [00:42:13](#) It's good to see you, Mike. We always have fun.

Mike Garafolo: [00:42:17](#) Of course.

George: [00:42:17](#) Oh, man. Next question. Jeremy Fowler. We got a 13 minute hard stop. We'll try to get squeezed [inaudible 00:42:25]. Thanks.

Jeremy Fowler: [00:42:26](#) Yeah. Hey, D. Hey, JC. This is for either of you. Of the 69 opt-outs last year, either voluntary or high risk, I counted unofficially that 20 of those players have already been released by their teams this off season. So I'm curious, what's your feeling on how teams have re-integrated those players, and some of whom might feel they were branded with a Scarlet letter of sorts with the teams they were with and now have to find a new home?

Demaurice Smith: [00:42:58](#) Sorry, I'll take this. I haven't heard that data. I would love to see it. I guess without seeing the data, I mean, like anything else, I run the risk of sounding like a complete moron. But I'd be interested in the data to see what it says. I'd be interested in how many of them would fall in... How to measure it against what the normal amount of turnover would be. Just go into your question, whether or not it's purely attributable to being an opt-out. That said, if the evidence demonstrated that it was the opt-outs that... I'm sorry, the decision to opt-out, and that that was being used or that motivated the team to make an adverse decision against a player. Well, this union has sued the league before and we would sue them again if we believed that's what the evidence showed.

Jeremy Fowler: [00:44:11](#) Gotcha. Yeah. And you're right, it is hard to prove. And some players, maybe with non-guaranteed contracts would have been released anyways. But I have talked to a few that feel like they're sort of put in a difficult spot and stigmatized in a league that can use the toughness thing. And do you love football enough? And then some of those stigmas against them.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
**ASSOCIATION**

Demaurice Smith: [00:44:30](#) Yep.

Jeremy Fowler: [00:44:32](#) Thank you.

George: [00:44:33](#) Thanks, Jeremy. We can follow up on that in the next day or two. Nate, back to you.

Nate: [00:44:45](#) Thanks. Another one for JC. When players approach you and ask you about vaccine questions, what message do you give them, JC? And do you want to share whether you've been vaccinated? I don't know if that's something you've said publicly.

JC Tretter: [00:45:06](#) I'm one shot in. I've got one shot to go. I'm someone who definitely will not try to explain the science behind the vaccine to people. I shouldn't be the one doing that. We have a great medical director, and I know there's guys with questions, I forward them straight to Tom Mayer to get any questions answered. And like D talked about, our job is not telling people what to do, but informing them and answering all their questions and letting them make the decision for themselves. But yeah, I'm one shot in. But I'd send it to a much more experienced, smarter person on vaccines than I am to answer those questions.

Nate: [00:45:55](#) Sure. Have you been getting a lot of those questions?

JC Tretter: [00:45:58](#) Not many. When I do, I just forward them along. But I think guys realize they shouldn't be asking me those questions. I hope they realize that. And that's why they not asking me.

Steve: [00:46:11](#) I wouldn't go with the smarter, but the more frequent calls come directly to me. And I've taken well over 100 calls from players in their families, and had a reasoned and reasonable discussion about particularly in the wake of the J&J adenovirus issues. The calls are all answered and they come to their own decision. To be clear, I recommend that they seriously consider getting vaccinated. But each family comes to their own conclusion.

Nate: [00:46:44](#) Thank you.

George: [00:46:46](#) Thanks, Steve. We've got two more questions left before I do that, just to message to everybody on this



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

call, we've had a lot of questions on this call about what's happening with your local teams that you cover on a daily basis. I know I've already seen some reports, everybody's out there taking attendance. Who's there. Who's not. Obviously that's going to be the case over the next month. I understand that's a story. I also dropped two provisions of the CBA into the chat that are factual starting points for everybody. The one in particular that is pertinent to us, I think is the one that forces, where if a coach or a GM or another management person tries to coerce a player to showing up for these workouts that are purely voluntary. Something that I encourage everybody to track as the off season progresses. So next question, Mr. Ledbetter.

Mr. Ledbetter: [00:48:00](#)

Yeah, greetings JC and Demaurice, the Falcon statement seemed a bit wishy-washy to me as a former labor lawyer. Most of our players and then while some are not unanimous or consent, were opting out. But some of us aren't opting out. How do y'all square their statement? And then also with the first-year coach trying to get going. They want to impress the coach, but I guess they'll just wait til training camp or how's that? You square those two situations that your membership is in during this labor situation.

JC Tretter: [00:48:40](#)

I'll start with the second part of that question. I think the quickest way to impress a coach is by being good at football. And usually, that happens when you play football and put pads on. So I'm not sure anybody's proving how good they are at football right now. They might look great in shorts and a t-shirt, but I'm not sure that's going to be the distinction that's going to get you on the roster. For the statement. We're not telling guys what to say. We're not pushing guys to do a certain thing. All we're doing is informing guys what the data says or what the COVID stats are, what the logistics will look like if you want to go into one of the buildings and then guys make their own decisions.

So each team has that conversation as themselves, as their team and talks about what guys are going to want to go in or have to go in. If they have a ... if they feel they have to go for a workout bonus and they come up with kind of the way they want to frame it. So again, we're not, they're not going against us by going in. It's ... Our job is solely to inform what's going on and letting guys make their decision. That's what this whole thing is



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Mr. Ledbetter: [00:50:03](#) Thank you.

George: [00:50:04](#) Thank you. Adam Beasley. How you doing? You're up.

Adam Beasley: [00:50:11](#) I'm great. Thanks for taking the time. I have a question and it might be a little premature, but with the vaccine, does it kind of change the game with in-season protocol or for any camp protocol, close contacts? And if someone pops positive, but 85% of the team is vaccinated, does that player have to be away for two weeks now? I mean, are those the kinds of conversations you're having? Thinking about how, if there is a degree of herd immunity in these locker rooms that you might not completely shut down a team, if there's a bunch of positives, like it has in 2020?

Speaker 2: [00:50:51](#) I'll take this one. I think it's too early to know any of the answers to those questions. I would defer to Tom, but a lot of it might ... a lot of the answers to the questions might hinge on how many players are vaccinated. And to me, that's just really hard speculation right now about what might happen.

Speaker 1: [00:51:18](#) Yeah. I'd foot stomped that. We've said since day one, when over a year ago when De and JC asked us to stand up our advisory group, our task force of people, that it was novel and emerging. It's still novel and emerging. We now know there's 5,800 people at a minimum who've been vaccinated and have contracted the disease, the active form of the disease. There's at least three highly, very [inaudible 00:51:45] unique variants out there. So all TBD. All good questions, but all TBD. I will say that if you follow the science and math is a science, a very important one. It's hard to imagine stepping back from protocols when we've got twice as many new daily cases in the US then we had a year ago. So, and it wasn't until mid July that we had 70,000 new cases in the US last year.

So we'll look at the data, we'll have a discussion. And just to be clear, I don't make decisions. I help inform De and JC and the executive committee on what science is out there.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

George:

[00:52:26](#)

And let's go back to where we started, right? Where we started was ... Our job is to focus on the best recommendation to protect our membership. That's it. And this has been a novel and emerging virus since last March. Different phases of it have evolved and emerged since then. And we're trying to do the best we can to take this in bite-sized chunks. Our recommendation to have an all virtual off-season came as a result of the data that we're seeing currently. Mary Kay, and then Clarence. You can bring us home.

Mary Kay:

[00:53:08](#)

Okay. The question that I have here would probably be for Dr. Maybe, Meyer, but maybe De would want to take this too. In looking at some statistics from the VAERS, which I know the pros and the cons of VAERS, but it's really all we have. But there have been 795 cases so far of clotting conditions. And 400 of those have been attributed to Pfizer, 337 have been attributed to Moderna and 56 to J and J. So my question is, after what happened with J and J has your message to the players changed at all in terms of what to do and how to do it, and when to do it. And how much of an eye are you keeping on what is going on with the clotting reports for Pfizer and Moderna, and is this, I'm sure it's something that you guys are studying very closely every single day, but just wondering with those reports, how is that impacting your advice?

Speaker 1:

[00:54:22](#)

Well, it's an excellent question. I'll make it short. And that is to say that these are ... the clotting events are what are known as thrombotic event and blood clot is a thrombus, and this is mediated in the cases of the vaccines, through antibodies, against platelets. But people forget that in fact, the disease COVID-19, is a thrombotic disease. So what we know is there've been seven cases with J and J of central, I'm sorry, cavernous venous sinus thrombosis. And so that's one in a million, given the vaccine. But here's the question, we're relentless about getting the right questions. What's the incidence of cavernous sinus thrombosis in people who get COVID-19? And the answer is 40 times that, 40 in a million. The message changes. [inaudible 00:55:21] It's unrelenting in our eyes, not just with me, but our entire advisory group that scours the data on a daily basis. And we keep the players informed as we're informed by the science.



**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Mary Kay:

[00:55:33](#)

I mean, I think that VAERS only captures about 1% from what I understand, from a study done by Harvard, that VAERS really only captures 1% of adverse reactions. So I suppose if that were true, then these numbers that I'm quoting could be, you could add two zeros to those, right?

Speaker 1:

[00:55:56](#)

You could, it's unlikely. And we get a ... I don't think you've the vaccine, it's none of my business, but you get on your cell phone, if you sign up, a text from the CDC saying, have you had problems. But the numerator, the thrombotic incidents tend to be very well known because they seek out medical care. They don't sit back. So all of a sudden you take that this number of thrombotic events and say, did you get the vaccine? So theoretically you might be right, but it's probably not the case only because people particularly with cavernous sinus thrombosis are seeking out medical care. Does that make sense?

Mary Kay:

[00:56:34](#)

Yes. Hm-mm. Thank you.

Speaker 1:

[00:56:34](#)

Sure.

George:

[00:56:37](#)

I think we've now exceeded the use of thrombosis for the year on these calls. Thanks doc. Clarence, last question. If ... I think we had some issue with your audio earlier, let me know if we can resolve that. Go Ahead

Clarence:

[00:56:55](#)

Right there in Hamburg, [inaudible 00:57:01].

Speaker 3:

[00:57:02](#)

I think you're being held hostage in a trunk.

George:

[00:57:04](#)

Yes sir. Calvin, help him out.

Speaker 6:

[00:57:05](#)

Trigger the device on the trunk. Just Trigger it, trigger it. [crosstalk 00:57:10]

Clarence:

[00:57:12](#)

Yeah, I got a question for De and Dr. Meyer.

Speaker 4:

[00:57:17](#)

Oh, he's just going to jump the line. No, I'm just kidding

Clarence:

[00:57:23](#)

That's how we got the vaccine. That's I got the first shot, jumped the line. My question is you got to say, it's not safe for your constituents to participate, but yet you say, "Hey, if you got to get your workout bonus show up." So how do you balance that?



Demaurice Smith:

[00:57:41](#)

**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

Yeah. So we're not saying ... we're saying it's safer not to go and that's ... I guess even when you loop in the answers for the prior question. Because we're dealing with the novel and emerging virus and changes every day and what we know about the virus and what we know about the treatment, I'm very, as you know, hesitant of saying anything that turns into mass generalizations, right? So let's look at your question and what it entails. The reason why we've come to the recommendation that you ... it is better not to go is not just focusing on what happens at the facility, it's a combination of factors.

We made it through 256 games last year, and we did a lot of them with these, with these meetings, right in these press gaggles on a week to week basis. And let's just say both JC and I look a lot more calm now than we did in week four or five, six, seven, all the way to 17, right? Why? Because last year we were literally taking it week to week with issues that were popping up all the time. That was with only ... that was with half the number of players, half the number of players in the facility.

The issue that we are dealing with now is whether we think it's more or less safe to have 4, 400 players into camp during the off-season at a time when we know that a voluntary off-season does not a season make. So to your question about the 230 guys, and that's all it is, 230 out of 4,500 who have workout bonuses, would it be ... does it pose the same level of risk if instead of 4,500 people at the facility, you sprinkled that 230 people around 32 teams?

I think that that is a vastly different environment upon which to measure safety. So if there are only 230 players sprinkled among 32 teams going in to do what they need to do to get their workout bonus. Fine. What we've taken a position on is the length of, I'm sorry, the breadth of the travel of all of these people flying from wherever they are into wherever they are, a group of them coming together, a large group of them coming together at a time when we know that off-season voluntary workouts are not the make or break about whether you either make the team or have a great NFL season.



JC Tretter:

[01:00:59](#)

I'll pay you back one little bit over that, De. I think that's ... it's kind of a shame. Last year, we came to an agreement with the NFL, prioritizing all players' health and safety, and allowed guys to get their workout bonuses and get their per diem virtually in the middle of a pandemic. Now, the pandemic is still going on, and now the league's put into place a situation where guys have to make the decision; if I want to get the money, I have to put myself at risk. I think that's a shame that now a player stuck in that position because the NFL was unwilling to continue on with what we know works in a pandemic. And now players have to make really difficult decisions, weighing money and their health and safety. And that's disappointing.

**NFL PLAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

George:

[01:02:00](#)

Okay. As usual, we'll do our best to get clips and a transcript up as soon as possible for everybody. If you have follow-up questions, most of you know how to reach me. And I appreciate everybody's time and patience in getting through these questions today, we will be back as needed. Have a great day, everybody.