



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

NFLPA COVID-19 Media Call Transcript

- JC Tretter: [00:00](#) Well, as the executive committee have made really difficult decisions in order to keep everybody safe. And we know it's not an easy time and all decisions are difficult and we're doing the best we can in such an unprecedented year.
- DeMaurice Smith: [00:15](#) Yeah. I will simply echo a lot of what JC said. I mean, this has been a difficult year for everyone. The good news is that we are blessed by having tremendous leadership, both from our president, our executive committee and the board of reps. As JC said, there was a lot of tough decisions at the beginning of the season, even during the off season, about how we were going to structure this with the hope of getting through the season. A couple of things just to hit those points. I mean, at the beginning of this we had a call with many of you, I think back in probably April, May. And I told you one of the most critical decisions that we had was whether or not we felt that from an ethical, moral position, whether we should be playing football.
- DeMaurice Smith: [01:08](#) And then the questions that flow out of that is if we can, can we keep our members safe? We've gotten to this point because we have great leadership. Now we find ourselves in literally the teeth of the virus, positivity rates are up. Incidents rates are up in all of our communities. We've held fast to our protocols and working through those protocols. And we have had spikes certainly with teams. And in certain cases, we've had to reschedule games, but someone the other day asked me whether this was about playing football at all costs. And nothing can be further from the truth. We don't do anything at all cost. It has been a challenging year. We are 60 or 58 or so days away from the Super Bowl and while everybody's focused on the end of the season, our men and our leadership know that we have a long ways to go.
- DeMaurice Smith: [02:14](#) Some of the data that I think is important that I just want to get out there and we can certainly turn it over to questions after that, but just data points. And I'll





NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

make sure that George sends these things to you once we get off the line. Our positivity rate this week, so that's the number of positive test against all of the tests that have been administered. Our positivity rate this week is 0.11%. That's down from 0.20 last week. Our incidents rate, our incidents rate for this week is 0.74%. That's down from an incidence of 1.35 from last week. Again, incidents is the number of people testing positive against our overall population.

DeMaurice Smith: [03:12](#)

Since August, until December 5th, 173 players have tested positive. 297 other personnel have tested positive. And up to this point, we've administered approximately 750,000 tests. So to put everything in a frame, as we talk about football, as we talk about our business, we look at not only the rate of testing, but we look at the number of people and our adherence protocols that really focus on being able to identify high risk close contacts after we have a positive test. Certainly we're always looking at decisions about when an outbreak happens. Whether we are in one of two scenarios, scenario A, are we in an outbreak scenario where it is not controlled? Or are we in scenario B, where there has been an outbreak. We've identified the high risk, close contacts and we believe that we have the outbreak under control. Last thing that we look at, and frankly, this is what's going to be a challenge for the rest of the year. It's simply going to be the rate of COVID in our communities. You're looking at places right now, where the incidents rate is above 10%. And we're looking at many of our communities where the positivity rate is significantly higher, exponentially higher than our positivity rates. Look, we are confident that we are approaching this the right way. We know we're going to have to continue to make adjustments to our protocols. We'll probably have to make adjustments to scenarios that we find ourselves in. But what I would say is, hats off to our men, our leadership, our teams. We're certainly in the final stretch, but it is certainly no time to relax.

DeMaurice Smith: [05:33](#)

We have to maintain our vigilance, maintain our adherence. And we're blessed to have people like Dr. Tom Mayer, our medical director, [Sean Sansiveri 00:05:50], who champions a lot of our health and safety efforts, but also a tremendous working relationship with the league. And you all know that I rarely miss an opportunity to mix it up with the league when we have



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

George Atallah:

[06:11](#)

to on behalf of our membership, but we have worked well together over the last few months. And my hope is that we continue to do so. George, do you want-

Yeah, I have a bunch of questions in the queue, but I also wanted to prompt you and JC to talk a little bit about the contact tracing. And I think one feature of the briefings that we want to try to provide everybody, is to help everybody understand how the protocols work together. Because we hear your questions from week to week about, why is this week different than the last week. And how are intensive protocols working versus how they were a couple of weeks ago and why certain decisions are made. And there's been a lot of discussion about daily testing and how we move to daily testing early in season [inaudible 00:06:50] game data. There has not been a lot of tailored conversation about our contact tracing protocol, which I think is one important element for how we ensure that we contain the virus. So [inaudible 00:07:06] do you want to talk to you about policy and JC, you want to talk from a what's it like in the actual locker room?

DeMaurice Smith:

[07:12](#)

Sure. Well, one giant step back, we pushed hard for daily tests at a time when the league didn't want to engage in daily testing. And I know that everybody focuses a lot on testing. We have a matrix system of how we are working to keep our players safe. And as George pointed out, a critical component of that is contact tracing. It has two tracks, the technology-based of contact tracing is the requirement of every player and every staff member who was in tier one to be outfitted with a contact tracing device. All of our players are wearing them, should be wearing them as all of our staff. That contact tracer measures people with whom there has been contact. And we have the ability of tracking how long or the duration of that contact.

DeMaurice Smith:

[08:17](#)

And that becomes an important factor in determining who is a high risk close contact after someone has tested positive. So if you think about it again, from the matrix standpoint, when we have a positive test, the first thing that we're going to be looking at is the data that comes back from that contact tracer about the persons with whom that that individual, who has been identified as positive, has spent a significant amount of time with. And then the next step is to make sure that we identify those individuals, isolate those individuals



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

so that they don't further spread the virus in an exponential way.

DeMaurice Smith: [08:59](#)

The second part of contact tracing is just the grind of interviewing players and staff and asking them with whom they've had a significant amount of contact. So I don't want to leave the impression that it's all technology-based. I don't want to leave the impression that it is all simply relying on what information we learned from an individual. But both of those things have to work together. And it requires people to wear their contact tracers at all times, but equally important, it requires people to be candid about the information they're providing to the people trying to limit the spread, so that we don't have a mass outbreak.

DeMaurice Smith: [09:45](#)

And I know that's been hard on our players and I'll turn over to JC, what it's been like to live under a set of protocols for the last few months, it can't be easy.

JC Tretter: [09:58](#)

Sorry. Yeah. I mean, it's a different year. And this year it's about understanding the rules, understanding the protocols and understanding how to play this season while staying healthy, while avoiding the transmission of this virus. So as a player, you understand how you become a high risk close contact. And the quickest way to get off the field, both being put into the protocol, as well as unfortunately, contracting the virus, is by becoming that high risk close contact. And that's why it's so important as an education factor of making sure players understand how exactly to keep themselves safe and keep themselves protected from possible transmission of this virus. So we talk, we wear our connects on at all times. That way if someone turns positive, there's data there to show you how long you have been in contact with that sick individual.

JC Tretter: [10:55](#)

And that causes changes in how we act around the facility. I talked earlier about that isolation factor. Less time in the locker room, not being at the cafeteria together. Making sure you're in a mask and you're staying six feet apart at all times. When you're within that six feet, that's when that connects on data starts recording how close you are. Understanding all of that in order to keep yourself safe. And you see it out at practice too and in games. Practice, you usually see



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

after the period, the offensive line all comes together and goes on a knee and waits for the next period.

JC Tretter: [11:31](#) And all a foot away from each other, talking about what they just did in that last period. And now you see this spreading out of all players, where if you go out and practice, just looks completely different than how it's always been run. Players are six feet apart from each other. Everybody spread out across the field. So it's a totally different world we're living in. Again, in order to make sure we don't become close contacts, first of all, to avoid potential transmission of the virus, as well as making sure we're out there and able to play the game that we love.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:12:04]

DeMaurice Smith: [12:00](#) We're out there and able to play the game that we love.

George Atallah: [12:01](#) We got some questions in the queue. Last thing on contact tracing that I think is really critical to share with everybody, from the data that we've collected jointly more than 90% of NFL players test positive five days from exposure. So that's really important to understanding why we as a league and a union, make certain decisions about either moving games or identifying players as high risk close contacts or isolating them.

George Atallah: [12:37](#) In the case that we did, for example, in Denver, where the quarterbacks couldn't play. The data that we have collected from the testing and the tracing is the reason that certain decisions are made. So that 90% figure has held strong throughout the season. So our first question is from Ben from the Boston globe. Ben, let me unmute you here real quick.

Ben: [13:07](#) Hey guys, thanks so much for doing this today. A few weeks ago, you had the Ravens outbreak where the trainer reportedly wasn't wearing a mask and wasn't reporting his symptoms. And then this year you've had several teams and coaches been punished by the NFL. How satisfied are you guys with the compliance of the protocols from coaches and staffers and people on that side?



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

DeMaurice Smith:

[13:29](#)

I mean, I'll let JC jump in. You know, you're only as satisfied as close as we get to 100%. Certainly we've had those instances where people haven't complied with the protocols, and that literally leads to problems. I think the league has been aggressive in holding people accountable, but anything less than 100% is a failure model for us because we know how quickly the virus spreads and to JC's point, and George's point if you're identified as a high-risk close contact to someone who has tested positive, you have to be removed so that we can ensure that you don't spread the virus anywhere else.

Lindsey:

[14:24](#)

Yeah. I think you said it right there. This is all about 100% compliance. The virus is, as we know, extremely contagious and it can run through a building if those protocols aren't followed. And what we've seen is our protocols work when followed. And the need for everybody in the building, players, staff, coaches, front office must follow the protocols at all times in order for us to continue on this season. And that's where we found [inaudible 00:14:55] Following of the protocols.

George Atallah:

[15:03](#)

Okay josh, you're up.

Josh:

[15:05](#)

Thanks to both of you guys. There has been talk, and is there a willingness from players about the possibility of teams moving into maybe local bubbles, like going to hotels away from families for the playoff's to keep this contained and make sure that there are no [inaudible 00:15:23] of the things like we've had in the regular season?

DeMaurice Smith:

[15:28](#)

We talked to our players about it on the board call. We've certainly had conversations about it at the executive committee level. There's been no decision about what to do. The thing I would add there is where we started off the briefing. Everything that we're going to do was going to be data-driven. So we're still looking at an incidence rate that's extremely low. We're looking at a positivity rate that's extremely low. That last factor of the amount of virus that's in a local jurisdiction is that other piece that we're just really going to have to pay close attention to, and we'll make the best decision at the time based on all the data.

George Atallah:

[16:16](#)

Lindsey.



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

Lindsey:

[16:19](#)

Hi, thanks guys. I guess so many of these conversations have been about health and safety and about the COVID protocols, where do you guys fall down on the health and safety decisions that come along with playing games without potentially a week of practice, maybe only one practice or one walkthrough? JC what, I mean you guys haven't necessarily had to be in that situation specifically in Cleveland, but I know it was a concern coming out of Baltimore last week. So where do you guys as a union come down on those decisions that are health and safety related when it comes to actual football on the field issues and not necessarily pertaining to COVID?

DeMaurice Smith:

[17:01](#)

JC, you want to jump in and then I can talk about the conversations we have with the league.

JC Tretter:

[17:06](#)

Yeah. I mean, our priority is health and safety, and this is a year where health and safety takes on two different definitions. You have the classic football health and safety of on the field making good decisions to keep people healthy physically, their bodies. And then you have the virus that you have to prioritize and making sure we're not putting people out there possibly spreading to others. This year that has become such a high priority to us of not allowing somebody onto the field that could potentially expose both teams to the virus and get more people sick. So it's never an easy decision or a clear decision on what's best. But I think the priority always lands with making sure that we don't allow this virus to continue to transmit over and over again. And I think that's the first step to shutting down the season is if we err on the side of getting games played exactly on time or prioritizing that and the preparation. That's going to cause the biggest downfall of the season of getting a bunch of people sick. And that's not what we want first and foremost.

DeMaurice Smith:

[18:14](#)

The only thing I would add is we have conversations with the league constantly between Thom, Dr. Thom Mayer, Sean Sansiveri, Dr. Sills over at the league, Don Davis from here, Troy Vincent at the league. So there's always a conversation on that other side of ensuring that the players have had enough rest and have had enough acclimation period to play. But simply as JC said, we're in a world where things just aren't going to be perfect. And we have to make a lot of decisions based on the data and the information that we have at the



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

George Atallah: [19:16](#)

time. And we've taken advantage of a lot of the flexibility, frankly, that we can have in the National Football League that a lot of other sports don't. So we're constantly trying to make that balance and constantly trying to get it right.

Sam Farmer: [19:26](#)

Sam Farmer. To team Sam. You're up.

All right, there you go. Thank you for doing this guys. In terms of the connected devices, there's two parts. At any point, were there privacy concerns about the connection devices and what they would be recording? And in the post COVID, God-willing, time will there be a use for these devices? A lot of money has been spent obviously on infrastructure and the facilities, and did those just go away or are players going to be tracked from this point forward?

DeMaurice Smith: [20:02](#)

I mean, I'm happy to get JC's thoughts. Just taking the second question first, all of it is going to depend on what the need would be to continue to track someone. Me personally, I always want to know where JC is. So other than that need, I can't imagine why we would have to have them, but I think your second question is really laden with a big assumption. What does a post-COVID, if there is a such thing as a post-COVID world, right? We can all imagine at some point, but the question is just when do we get there? On the issue of privacy, we spend a lot of time on the moral and ethical issues that really don't bubble up let's just say every day on our sports pages.

DeMaurice Smith: [21:02](#)

And that thought was, what happens to the data? How long are we keeping it? What's the use? We've sued the league in the past over technology that we felt was inappropriately tracking our players during sleep and their activities outside of the facility. So we remain really vigilant on our players' privacy and also the use of the data. And we've had a lot of conversations about that and set up protocols within protocols or firewalls within protocols to protect ourselves. And I want to say a great thanks to Sean Sansiveri for that, but those are all great questions.

DeMaurice Smith: [21:49](#)

Just all of the ethical questions that go along with operating a non-essential business in the middle of a pandemic are questions that we asked at the beginning of the season, everything from, should we be taking



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

resources away from communities? How do we ensure that we're not removing testing from the pool of people who could be tested? And frankly, I just want to say that our players were interested in the answer to all those questions even before the first snap. So our job is to keep asking the questions. I'm happy to have literally a full-time ethicist on board, and Dr. Ross from Duke. We retained him for exactly those kinds of questions you're asking.

Sam Farmer: [22:40](#)

Thank you. Do you work in X and device?

DeMaurice Smith: [22:42](#)

Me?

Sam Farmer: [22:43](#)

Yes.

DeMaurice Smith: [22:44](#)

My wife always knows where I am, so no. No I don't.

George Atallah: [22:50](#)

Next three questions up. We'll go to Jess. Just the way they're set up in the queue. Jessica Golden, Jonathan Alexander, Calvin Watkins, and then Graziano. So those are the next four in the queue. Jessica, go ahead.

Jessica Golden: [23:02](#)

Hi, Jessica from CNBC. We're starting to see the vaccine rolled out very shortly to the priority groups. I'm curious, your thoughts on what order do you think NFL players will rank in terms of receiving the vaccine? How are you guys looking at it from a timeline perspective? Will it be encouraged, will it be mandatory? Anything there that you can tell me?

DeMaurice Smith: [23:29](#)

Yeah. Look, it seems to me that right now, and I try to stay up as much as possible on the projected amount of vaccines that are going to be in the community. It seems to me from what I've read and I rely on, Thom Mayer and the folks from DARPA to advise us, no one should be thinking about the vaccine going anywhere other than our first responders and the most vulnerable people right now. I think I may have mentioned it before.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:24:04]

DeMaurice Smith: [24:00](#)

... well, right now. I think I may have mentioned it before. I mean, football is not an essential business and while I certainly, both JC and I, have a fiduciary duty to our players, I don't think either of us for a nanosecond



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

- DeMaurice Smith: [24:31](#) forget that we're fortunate enough to be playing a game while millions of people are out there trying to keep us safe. And that's where the focus should be.
- As far as what happens after the vaccine becomes available to the general public I'm sure that's going to be a conversation that we're going to have going forward, and how the vaccine gets rolled out to individual people in our country. All I can tell you is I'm far more focused on how the vaccine gets to the people who need it in our country right now. As long as we continue to wear masks, socially distance, aggressively engage in contact tracing, and handle our business as players and as staff, and we keep ourselves around this .11 positivity rate, then I think that should be our focus for right now.
- JC Tretter: [25:22](#) Yeah. We as players understand, we don't expect to jump the line. We know, as a community, there are people we need to take care of first. The elderly, the most vulnerable, and our first responders. So I don't think we have any expectation to cut the line in any way.
- Speaker 1: [25:38](#) Thanks, [inaudible 00:01:43]. Next, Jonathan Alexander, where you at?
- Jonathan Alexan...: [25:47](#) Hey, Jonathan Alexander, Charlotte Observer. Thanks for doing this. I'm wondering, do you all have any updates on the situation in Carolina and what may have happened to cause eight players to go on the COVID list in one day?
- DeMaurice Smith: [26:06](#) I'll just answer that for how we handle all of these. The world is full of a lot of speculation, and we try not to speculate. We've got a team of people who dive into the data after positive tests, and also dive into our ability to genetically go back and try to find out where certain strains came from. So, we always rely on that process to happen. And after that process happens, we're going to be back here next week. And we'll certainly share with you what we found.
- Jonathan Alexan...: [26:52](#) Thank you.
- Speaker 1: [26:53](#) I think I had Calvin and then Dan, right? Calvin you out there?



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

Calvin:

[27:01](#)

Yeah, I'm here. My question is, in Texas, the numbers obviously are rising. Is there any concern from D or even JC about the number of fans that are still allowed to come to games, especially here in Dallas?

DeMaurice Smith:

[27:22](#)

JC, you want me to do it or do you want to do it?

JC Tretter:

[27:24](#)

Go ahead.

DeMaurice Smith:

[27:27](#)

Thank you. We have a limited amount of influence on fans at games, and that's primarily linked to their proximity to players and to make sure that they don't pose a risk to the players and the players don't pose a risk to the fans. I think that it's going to be up to the owners and the information that they're relying on in their local jurisdictions to make prudent decisions about ensuring that our game doesn't negatively contribute to outbreaks or increased instances of COVID in our communities. And I think that's a moral obligation.

DeMaurice Smith:

[28:23](#)

I think that's a duty that the League and the teams should have [inaudible 00:28:28], and certainly a duty that local health officials and public officials should have. And we've seen that in certain States where public officials have limited gatherings, and I think they've made prudent decisions when they have, but I do think that it has to be a thoughtful conversation between the teams, the owners, the League, and the local jurisdiction about what is in the best interest of the communities.

Speaker 1:

[29:07](#)

Graziano?

Graziano:

[29:10](#)

Yeah. I'm wondering if you guys are seeing anything in terms of common threads that you've spotted. Jonathan asked about Carolina, eight cases, they're coming off their bye week. And my first instinct without having access to the information is I wonder if the bye week has been a problem for a lot of teams.

Graziano:

[29:25](#)

Are you seeing any kind of trends along those lines that lead you to continued alterations of protocols? You identified certain particular common reasons for the virus getting into team facilities?

DeMaurice Smith:

[29:41](#)

You know, again, I mean, it's sort of a macro question. I don't think that we've seen anything particular about



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

bye weeks. The two things that I would say that we found that seemed to be reoccurring is where we have lapses in compliance, we have outbreaks. And worse, if we have lapses in compliance, it makes it very difficult to identify all of the high-risk close contacts. And if you can't identify all of the high-risk close contacts or accurately identify all of the high-risk close contacts, it hampers your ability to tie off or tourniquet the outbreak. So the two things that I've seen that have been most impactful as far as spotting trends is failure to wear a mask failure to wear connection devices.

JC Tretter:

[30:40](#)

Yeah, I think also just understanding where we are in our communities and understanding what's going on around us. And as cases have continued to skyrocket and rise across the country, you're more and more surrounded by the virus, and more and more surrounded by individuals who could transmit that virus to you. So, that also plays a factor in the virus getting into the facilities in the first place. And everybody in that building who comes in contact with each other understanding that what you do away from the facility, you need to treat it like it still is the facility. All those protocols you follow about distancing, wearing masks, being smart around others, even though you're no longer with work, those are the things that help keep you healthy and safe [inaudible 00:31:23] the facility as well.

DeMaurice Smith:

[31:27](#)

And Dan, I guess the last thing I would say about that is, we'll continue to look at the data. We insisted on continuing testing during bye weeks for that reason. But we'll continue to take a look and try to draw lessons to keep our players safe.

Speaker 1:

[31:50](#)

Carita Parks. If you're out there, you're up next.

Carita Parks:

[31:57](#)

I am. Thanks. Good afternoon. When the commissioner spoke last week, he mentioned that there's no plans for a postseason bubble, but with the numbers rising, and to your point earlier about the differences in COVID in the communities, is there a plan or some flexibility in place if this starts to disproportionately affect the players during the postseason?

DeMaurice Smith:

[32:19](#)

Yeah. Great question. We always look at contingency plans. So, I think the only reason that we have been so successful this year is we put a lot of work in at the



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

beginning of the season, but also realize that we're going to have to be flexible about changing the protocols and changing our behaviors. And you've seen that during the season.

DeMaurice Smith: [32:45](#)

So, as we get closer to the playoffs, we'll keep an eye on the, unfortunately, what is the rising rates in many of our communities. But again, going back to kind of the matrix of the way that we look at things, it's not just the amount of COVID in the communities. It's also how well we're adhering to compliance, our incidence rate, our positivity rate, how well we've been able to contact trace, and at the end of the day, to try to come up with a way to keep our players safe and to continue engaging in our business. But we have looked at contingencies and we'll continue to do so.

Speaker 1: [33:31](#)

Okay. Let's keep flying through these. We want to make sure we get everybody's question in. We have four more to go.

Arnie Stapleton: [33:41](#)

This is Arnie Stapleton from AP. I know this has been a weird year for everybody, but I'm wondering if there's anything that you guys are doing this year that you'd like to see stay as part of the NFL? Like maybe the expanded practice squad with the veterans, the guys being able to come off of IR after three weeks kind of thing, remote learning, any of that, that is going to kind of have a staying factor that you guys would like to see?

JC Tretter: [34:16](#)

Yeah, I think that's one of the positives you can take from this year is we've been able to try out and see a bunch of different things that wouldn't have went into effect for a long time. So, I think you can look at how the off-season went and what we've been able to accomplish virtually in the off-season. But you can look at the changes to training camp and getting a longer acclimation period and getting guys back into shape. All that stuff plays into it.

JC Tretter: [34:45](#)

And you talk about able roster flexibility. These are all things because of COVID we'll have the ability to look at and see what we want to move forward with. And it's given us the ability to do that because of this unique year and us having to find unique solutions to the problems that COVID has brought. But I think there are a lot of important things that we can continue to build



NFL PLAYERS

ASSOCIATION

DeMaurice Smith:

[35:14](#)

on and continue to change in our game that only helps the players and the teams.

Yeah. The only thing I would add is, that's a great question. I mean, anybody who's followed our sport for a long time knows one thing about NFL football, change is hard. And there's always been suggestions about different ways of doing things. And I think you've seen this year, I've enjoyed the games this year, probably more than any other single year that I've had the job. They've been exciting. They've been thrilling, but coming out of a world where we modified off-season, we've cut down on in-person meetings. I think giving guys more flexibility on and off the rosters and looking toward a world where maybe we start looking at the dead period and what's gone on there, maybe ways of changing things to make it more accommodating to players and their individual schedules.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [00:36:04]

DeMaurice Smith:

[36:00](#)

... Certain things to make it more accommodating to players and their individual schedules? I think those things have been good this year, and sometimes necessity is the mother of invention, even in the National Football League.

Ben Fischer:

[36:12](#)

Great, thank you guys.

George Atallah:

[36:16](#)

Thanks, [inaudible 00:36:16]. We're going to go Ben Fischer, Barry Bloom, and then Liz.

Ben Fischer:

[36:24](#)

Thanks George. Am I on?

George Atallah:

[36:28](#)

Yeah, you're on.

Ben Fischer:

[36:28](#)

Okay, great. You know, these [De 00:36:31] and JC, these changes in protocol, have been coming in with increasing frequency over the last week, or last couple of weeks and months, as the cases get worse. If you could, maybe characterize a little bit how that process has gone. Do you find that your side, and the league, are mostly on the same page when we talk about new things that might have to happen to further clamp down on risk?



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

Ben Fischer:

[36:56](#)

And is there an example you can give or something? Was a tough discussion and didn't ultimately happen, because of not being able to get to the same page on what needed to change?

DeMaurice Smith:

[37:07](#)

Yeah, again, let me ... With the last one, I really can't come up with a scenario where something didn't happen because we couldn't get on the same page. I think this season, you found both sides to be very data-driven and flexible, given the scenarios that we find ourselves in.

JC Tretter:

[37:29](#)

Yes, as we learn more about the virus, we let that dictate what we need to do, and we educate the players as well as everybody at the building on what these protocols and the changes needed to be done for, what they will help us with, and that's what we've been kind of focusing on from the get go, when we started talking about COVID this off season. Was allowing the data and the science to drive us forward and make all the right decisions, in order to keep everybody safe, and the season moving forward.

George Atallah:

[37:56](#)

Barry Bloom.

Sam Farmer:

[38:01](#)

I've got my audio working, or-

George Atallah:

[38:03](#)

You got it.

Sam Farmer:

[38:04](#)

Okay, great. So, back to the bubbles, I've probably, you know, I mean the NHL and NBA went into hard bubbles. They had no COVID tests reported, positive tests reported during their stay in the bubbles. MLB, they played regular season, just like you guys, traveling, they had 57 positive tests that they claimed. Then they went into soft bubbles for the last three rounds of the playoffs, and they reported none until Justin Turner was tested positive in game six of the World Series.

Sam Farmer:

[38:39](#)

So, my question to all this is what's the downside, from your point of view, of going into a soft bubble. I know football is played differently, it's one game a week, there's a lot more practice time. What's the downsides of doing it, when it seems to be so protective and it's worked for the other sports?



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

DeMaurice Smith:

[38:58](#)

I mean, I'll this. And I think the one thing we have to be careful of is having a myopic focus and assuming that all things are the same across sports. When you talk to our experts, our epidemiologists, our infectious disease doctors, some of the questions they raise about the bubble is first you start off with body mass of people that is much different than the other sports. A larger group of people who are confined in a bubble versus the other sports. And for the epidemiologists, the concern that they have raised are everything is fine, except when an outbreak happens in a confined place under the characteristics, or given the circumstances, that I mentioned before.

DeMaurice Smith:

[39:50](#)

So, I don't think that, unfortunately, the analysis just isn't as simple and as binary as it sounds. Our job, and I think one of the things we've done extremely well is we've got a COVID task force, close to 10 of the best researchers in the world, advising us on what we should do. The league has exactly the equal number of reputable people advising them. We've worked well together handling those issues, and if we make a joint decision at the end that one way to go is perhaps positive, more positive than the other, we'll do it. But it certainly includes analyzing a wide range of factors and in a far more nuanced way than just simply looking at what worked in the NBA and what worked in MLB.

JC Tretter:

[40:53](#)

Yeah, on top of that, I think we always have to include the human aspect of it. Our players have wives and kids at home that they want to see. It's been, like I said earlier, a tough year from a mental health perspective, for our players. The feeling of isolation, of not being able to see people, to see their friends, to see their family. Further asking guys to stay away from their young children and their families for potentially six weeks, that's a big ask, and that has ramifications outside of the game of football.

Sam Farmer:

[41:30](#)

Thank you.

George Atallah:

[41:33](#)

All right. We are getting close to time here. We're hitting 2:45. I know De and JC, we've got to get to somewhere else. Three, Liz, why don't we have you give us the Swan Song, here, at the last question.

Liz:

[41:49](#)

I'm honored. Can you guys hear me? All right. Thank you, very much, gentlemen. I have two questions. One



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

is, what is your prediction for being able to play the entire season, and the Super Bowl, at this point, based on the data you have? Or, in other words, how many more games can the season stand that are postponed now, with you, by weeks used up and so on, before you run into a problem with completing the season? That's the first question.

- Liz: [42:25](#) The second question is, I think I heard you say, both De and JC, that the main concern is the rapid spread, or the widespread, of the virus in the community, but the incidents among NFL players, or the positivity rate among NFL players, is actually better. And so I wondered if you could please kindly repeat those numbers. Thank you.
- DeMaurice Smith: [42:51](#) I'm going to leave the prediction for JC, I'll do the numbers. I'll do the numbers, JC. I've got that. No worries, I've got that.
- DeMaurice Smith: [42:58](#) So, just real quick, this week, our positivity rate was 0.11%. That's that's down from 0.20%. And again, positivity is the number of positive tests against all of the tests that have been administered.
- DeMaurice Smith: [43:18](#) Our incidents rate, Liz, is 0.74%. That's down from 1.35% last week. And I'm sure you can track down the positivity rates and the incidents rates in the States. Our numbers are considerably lower than in most jurisdictions, and frankly, our numbers are probably something that most public officials would dream for in this pandemic. As for predictions, our esteemed president.
- JC Tretter: [43:58](#) Yeah, I think when it comes to predictions, I think you have to look at what we've seen so far this year, and that when we follow the protocols, everybody inside that building, not just players, coaches, staffs, front office members. When we all follow the protocols, they work, and they work well. The contact tracing, getting people who have potentially become exposed out of the building, works to stop the spread of the virus.
- JC Tretter: [44:24](#) So, it is all going to come down to how well we all follow those protocols, and we will continue to evolve those protocols as we've seen, as needed, but we know they work, and it's all about making sure we have a



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

hundred percent compliance in order to finish the season.

[44:40](#)

Well, how much space do you guys have, to have another outbreak and games postponed, before you run into a problem of ending the season, finishing the season and having everyone be able to finish the season? Are you okay on that job? Wiggle room, to postpone or reschedule games?

DeMaurice Smith:

[44:58](#)

Liz, yeah, those questions are almost impossible to answer. None of us deal with a world of wiggle room, or how much is too many. Every week we get test results of the number of people that test positive. The process then moves to the high risk close contacts, and whether we can, again, tourniquet or cut off the outbreak, and whether we're confident that that outbreak is under control, so that we can play the game. If we're able to do those things, the games go forward. If we're not able to do those things, the games don't go forward. So, it just isn't as soft a guesswork as how much room do we have, or whether we have wiggle room, or how much is too much.

DeMaurice Smith:

[45:59](#)

I'm confidently optimistic about how well we have done, so far, and what that outlook is for the future. But as JC said, anything less than 100% compliance creates a problem. And so, our job is to try to make sure that that folks comply, and that when we do have people who test positive, that we can move quickly to isolate and control the outbreak.

Liz:

[46:29](#)

All right. Thank you, very much.

George Atallah:

[46:31](#)

So, we expect to do these every Tuesday, same time, same place. We did record this, we'll be dropping a transcript to everybody. I dropped my email and Carl Francis's email in the chat, if you have any additional questions, or you didn't get to ask what you needed to. Appreciate everybody's time today, and one foot forward, stay safe.

DeMaurice Smith:

[46:56](#)

Be safe. Thank you.