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NFLPA COVID-19 Media Call Transcript

George Atallah: [00:00](#) And we can get rolling with this week's NFL PA COVID briefing. We are going to start off like we always do with some facts and figures about testing, where we are with rates and how things are going to proceed over the course of the next couple of weeks.

George Atallah: [00:20](#) I think to NFL fans everywhere, the two most important numbers are eight teams left, 26 days to go until the Super Bowl. Keep in mind that when I'm reading off these notes, we have moved down from last week's number of 6,702 total players and personnel tested, to this week, that number is 2,933 total players and team personnel tested. Three new confirmed positive cases amongst players, and 22 confirmed positives amongst other personnel. This is all for January 3rd through January 9th.

George Atallah: [01:04](#) The overall positivity rate for this week is 0.14%, that is down slightly from 0.17% last week. The incidents rate is 0.85%, whereas last week was 1.04%. For players, that number is 0.4%. And the incidents rate for players this week is 0.29%. We are approaching 950,000 total tests in the NFL from the period of August 1st through January 2nd. And we are now, again, moving into a period of the playoffs where the number of tests will be reduced just by sheer fact that the number of players and staff will be reduced. That is the COVID update. We post those numbers on the site every week. And I know that this week we're going to deviate a little bit from directly talking about COVID. I know D and JC want to quickly address what's been happening in our country and with that, D the floor is yours.

DeMaurice Smith: [02:11](#) Sure. Thanks, George. We just felt that it was important to talk about the events of last week and what it means for our country. We're certainly thrilled, I'm thrilled always to be a part of this great game and to work with a union that cares about our membership. And I've certainly enjoyed football this year, probably in some ways more than I ever have, but every now and then things happen that transcends sport.





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- DeMaurice Smith: [02:43](#) What we saw last week and what portends for us over the next few weeks is something that's bigger than football. Anytime that we know that we are actually in a battle for the very soul of our country to find out whether or not America's experiment and democracy is going to continue and trend towards the better, I think that's where we have indeed found ourselves. We had a great opportunity to chat with the staff this morning, to talk about all of those things and what it means.
- DeMaurice Smith: [03:25](#) I know there might be questions about coach Belichick, but I just felt that we're at a point now where we can certainly cheer about football and certainly cheer about what our members and the league has been able to accomplish this season. But when we find ourselves having to question the loyalty of certain people towards our country, the oath that they've taken to support our country, I think those are important questions for us to ask and certainly answer.
- DeMaurice Smith: [04:04](#) America has always been at its best, not so much because we always talk about healing or talking about becoming better. But I do think that the necessary precondition for healing and for being better is labeling exactly what the wounds are. We have not achieved in any way, shape, or form, a post race America. And we now know that there are people out there who will continue to challenge what it means for this democracy to actually function.
- DeMaurice Smith: [04:43](#) And I think before we can move forward to a world of healing, before we can move forward, we have to take that necessary step of recognizing what the wound is, who caused it, and really dedicating all of ourselves to certainly gig and sports, and enjoying it. But every now and then focusing on what's truly wonderful about this country, and what I have to believe are the majority of people who believe in a representational democracy. And we can certainly have questions about that, but that's kind of the way I wanted to start this off.
- DeMaurice Smith: [05:26](#) JC, you want to add anything to that?



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JC Tretter:

[05:28](#)

Yeah. I mean, we saw a sad day, a frightening day, and an embarrassing one. It's something we need to be better. We need better from our elected leaders at this point. We are experiencing an extreme lack of leadership, and leaders are tasked with telling their constituents the hard truths, not what they want to hear. And right now we have a lot of those elected leaders who are very much caught up in what is best for their political career, what's best for furthering themselves, and not what's best for this country. And we need better. And if they can't give us better then we need to find better people to fill those roles.

DeMaurice Smith:

[06:18](#)

Here, here.

George Atallah:

[06:19](#)

Well said JC, thank you. We'll open it up to questions. Smaller group this week so still use the raise hand feature. I'll try to get in as many as we can. Okay, Mark, go ahead. And then David and others.

Mark:

[06:41](#)

JC, I just want to ask about the events with the Browns. We've talked about some of the [inaudible 00:00:06:47], the health issues this season, and we've rarely seen a team be able to overcome the competitive disadvantages of all of this. Can you just sort of give us your thoughts on how the Brown's prepared for that game and why in that regard?

JC Tretter:

[07:07](#)

Yeah. I think what you see is there are, especially in small doses, there's a lot of ways to prepare to play an NFL football game and still be successful. And there's always that fine line coaches and staffs have to walk, figuring out the best balance between rest and being fresh, and preparation, and how to walk that line. And our hand was kind of forced into a mini bi-week of sorts, an unscheduled mini bi-week.

JC Tretter:

[07:36](#)

And we were still able to meet, still able to do everything we need to mentally to prepare for that game, but I think you found a lot of guys got their bodies back after a long season since the by week. I know when I got back out to the practice field on Friday, that was probably the best I've felt late in the season in a long time. And it just goes to show, when guys are fresh, when guys are healthy, you can kind of feel that energy and feel that when you watch the game.

George Atallah:

[08:07](#)

David, go ahead.



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David:

[08:09](#)

Thanks. JC, I want to talk about the Browns as well. I know that the Browns are hoped to have the coach back Thursday. He told us that yesterday in your news conference, but then there is this news of COVID exposure in Pittsburgh. And I wonder what you can tell me, what you know, what you're able to share about the COVID exposure in Pittsburgh. And if that is a concern at all, to the Browns, who are hoping to recover from their own COVID experience in the [inaudible 00:08:47].

JC Tretter:

[08:48](#)

May have been my audio, you cut out for a second. I think you're asking just about the COVID exposure from Pittsburgh to Cleveland. I don't have any update on that at this point. I know we follow the same protocols, we always will. And that's contact tracing, finding if there's any high risk close contacts, and then isolating them away from the group. I'm not sure if that process is done, it usually takes some time, but I have yet to hear any update on where that stands.

David:

[09:17](#)

Just to follow up real quick, do you know if with your team, with the Browns, if there is any contact tracing that's happening as a result of the concerns in Pittsburgh?

JC Tretter:

[09:28](#)

I do not know that.

George Atallah:

[09:34](#)

Thanks, David. Mark, you had another one, and then we'll go to Al.

Mark:

[09:37](#)

Yeah. D, I know you've said that this is a very much a week-to-week [inaudible 00:09:41]... some advanced planning has to go into some events. At this point, with your conversations with the league, what do you expect in terms of logistics for Super Bowl week and the Super Bowl teams? Do you expect that to be treated for those teams, in travel-wise, as more like our regular season or another post-season game? And then also on the combine, I know those players are not yet NFL PA members, but do you have conversations with the league about the combine and what are your expectations for that?

DeMaurice Smith:

[10:13](#)

Let me do the second one, we've had a few conversations with the league about the combine, as far as I know, haven't made any final decisions. I know that there's been a number of conversations about what



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- DeMaurice Smith: [10:38](#)
- George Atallah: [11:12](#)
- Al: [11:13](#)
- Al: [11:54](#)
- JC Tretter: [12:26](#)
- Al: [12:29](#)
- JC Tretter: [12:31](#)
- they've been thinking about. I don't expect the country to be in a significantly different place at the time of the combine than where we are right now.
- With respect to the Super Bowl teams and the teams traveling to the Super Bowl, at least right now, I haven't heard anything that would suggest there's going to be a major deviation from how teams have prepared all week. And if there are going to be some changes, then we certainly would expect to hear from the league of the teams in the roll up, or the ramp up, to that week.
- Go ahead Al.
- All right. Hey, listen, JC, I have a question for you, and I'm not going to ask you to name any names, but I have medical people on my Wednesday show every week, and we talk about COVID. We talk about high school football and the crowds that are allowed into the stadiums. And down South, it seems like its anything goes, you don't see masks much, except for the Manning debut of their nephew. Every other high school game we saw on TV was pretty reckless. Thousands of people in the stands, ESPN would even show games from the North because they weren't even sure they were going to have them. And you see the same with colleges.
- We asked the medical people, what is the deal with policies and whatever? And they all just say, it's depends on what part of the country you're from. And it seems like the seriousness of COVID is... The seriousness of it is taken by where you grew up or where you are. Do you see that in the locker room amongst your teammates, and maybe staff or whatever, that depending on what part of the country they are from the degree of seriousness they take this pandemic?
- I'm not sure I see it that way. I think our guys understand-
- Maybe not you, but I'm saying in your locker room.
- Right. No, I think our guys understand the importance of what needs to happen with this virus going on. And we've been experiencing our protocols for the entire



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year now, and we know how important it is to wear masks, to socially distance, to work with the contact tracers to make sure we don't have further spread of the virus. And I mean, we have, I think a player, Myles Garrett has been very outspoken about his struggles coming back from having COVID. I think guys understand how real this is, how important it is to stay healthy and do the things that will keep you healthy. And I think we've had pretty good compliance in doing the right thing and understanding why it's the right thing to do.

- Al: [13:12](#) Do you think people are going to have second thoughts, maybe in certain parts of the country on how they handled this when it's hopefully under control at some point?
- JC Tretter: [13:22](#) I mean, I think it's been clear for a long time, wearing masks work, socially distancing works. I think people should, by now, know those things are just truths. And if they don't know it by now, I don't know how else to explain it to them, but we've seen it time and time again that those just other ways to stop the spread of this virus.
- George Atallah: [13:44](#) And Al, I mean, that's one of the reasons why we're doing these calls once a week to be transparent about what the risks are, how to mitigate those risks, how our protocols are supposed to work, explain why decisions have been made, how future protocols can improve, how we've changed with the virus. That's really one of the reasons why we continue to do these once a week is to make sure that we don't slip up either in trying to convey the right information about how we're operating.
- George Atallah: [14:18](#) Jonathan Jones, you're up.
- Jonathan Jones: [14:23](#) Thanks. Yeah. This is for D, no grand question here, but what's the update on the revenue from this season and how that will impact the salary cap in 2021 and beyond? And if there is no update, when would you expect an update here in the next few months?
- DeMaurice Smith: [14:44](#) There really isn't an update right now, we start taking a look at cap projections, in a normal world, probably starting next week. As you know, a few years ago, we started providing cap projections not long after or right



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- DeMaurice Smith: [15:20](#) around the Super Bowl, maybe a few weeks afterwards. It's going to be significantly more difficult to make those projections this year.
- DeMaurice Smith: [15:20](#) Revenue from tickets are obviously going to be down, but that said, you remember that we did do a COVID CBA deal that established a floor for next year. We can't fall below the cap floor next year. As soon as we get better numbers and looking at the implications of COVID this year, we'll have a little bit better handle on, on making those cap projections, but we will do them again this year.
- George Atallah: [15:55](#) One technical point for Jonathan and everybody, the cap carry over numbers should be coming into us soon. Worst case scenario we'll have 175 cap plus whatever the teams have carried over, or chosen to carry over from this year. Other questions from the group?
- George Atallah: [16:20](#) All right. Sounds like we've covered as much as people want to cover. Oh, Ben, got in there under the gun. Go ahead, Ben.
- Ben: [16:30](#) Just in time. Thanks. D and JC, I guess for you both, I just wanted to follow up in your opening statements. D, can you say whose loyalty in particular you believe is open to question? And JC, who are the leaders who are more concerned with their own careers then telling hard truths to their constituents?
- DeMaurice Smith: [16:52](#) Well, I mean, I'll take the broad-brush swipe at that one, look, we have a constitutional representational democracy that is rooted in the rule of law. And you've seen dozens of public officials, both on the federal and state level question that process, try to insert themselves to derail the constitutional process that we've all, as Americans, and in their case, specifically, cases where they've pledged an oath to the constitution that they appear to want to overrun. We've seen state officials bemoan the fact that they've been castigated by other public officials on the federal level for doing their jobs in the state. And we watched a mob be egged on by individuals who broke into the Capitol to disrupt the electoral ballots that were casting by the States.
- DeMaurice Smith: [18:23](#) I've heard a tremendous amount of rhetoric from some of these public officials about law and order, championing state rights, ensuring that the federal



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government doesn't encroach on state rights. And we watched the same group espouse all of those things in a violent way that led to the death of a police officer, and the deaths of other individuals. I don't think anyone has to look far to see the worst examples of people deciding that they were going to fight against our democracy. And frankly, I don't know if we've ever had a more explicit demonstration of people turning on their own words. I think as we go forward, it's right and necessary to question specifically whether some of these people intend to be more loyal to our country or more loyal to their personal goals.

JC Tretter: [19:37](#)

Yeah. To follow up on that, I think this year has been eye opening, not just what's happened in the last month, but what's been on the entire year of 2020. And we have been dealing with a global pandemic that, like we talked about earlier on this call, it has been clear the way to move forward and live with this virus by mask wearing and social distancing, those aren't up for debate at this point. Those are just the facts. Anybody who wants to take a stance differently, isn't doing the right thing by doing that. It's been clear, it's been scientifically proven.

JC Tretter: [20:17](#)

And we see the same thing, we just went through a free and fair election and anybody who wants to state differently, again, isn't doing their job, or their right job, in defending this country as a whole and all the people who live in it. And instead are doing it for, I believe, politically motivated reasons.

George Atallah: [20:41](#)

Thanks, spurred on a bunch of other questions, Mr. Dixon.

Mr. Dixon: [20:46](#)

D, you mentioned ticket revenue earlier, what's your sense of the overall impact of the revenues for clubs in terms of a dip in revenue?

DeMaurice Smith: [20:59](#)

Yeah, well, somewhere 40-ish, 35%-ish percent of revenue is tied to ticket sales. It's going to be a lot, right? I mean, we've seen virtually no fans all year. The impact on revenue, just from ticket sales alone this year, is going to be dramatic. It's not anything that we didn't expect, it's not a surprise to us. If you remember, we finished a CBA in March. JC was elected before that CBA was completed, and he, along with new members of the executive committee immediately rolled into a



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- DeMaurice Smith: [22:02](#) CBA deal to change the off season, and a new CBA deal to deal with the shortfall of revenue. None of this is coming as an expectation.
- I'm glad that we have a long-term collective bargaining agreement that insulates us from this, in a way. It allows us to structure the offsets from revenue and push out those offsets for a while, so that revenue can come back. But look, none of us are going to be surprised that there's going to be a significant drop off from overall revenue. I'm just happy that we have a floor for the cap next year. And because of that floor, teams at least have a solid number in order to figure out how to restructure contracts, if that's what they want to do. And as George mentioned earlier, one effect of the 2011 CBA was to allow teams to carry over money from previous years and put that money into the salary cap this year. And if there was ever a time where I was glad that we negotiated for that carry over effect, it's now.
- George Atallah: [23:16](#) Thanks for that question. Mark, back to you.
- Mark: [23:20](#) Further follow up on that other topic. You also mentioned Bella tech in the beginning, what's your reaction to what he announced last night and how that situation was handled?
- DeMaurice Smith: [23:30](#) You know, Bill and I don't share a lot of words. I know that's going to come as a shock to everybody, but I thought that certainly his position was, I think, extremely important at this moment for a person who has an extremely high profile in the national football league. And frankly, I thought his statement was spot on. He referenced standing with the players, referenced the conversations that were going on in his locker room about social justice. And while he recognized that it was an award that has honored a number of extremely deserving people in the past, he felt that at this time, and in this moment in history, that he should decline and I thought that his statement was spot on.
- George Atallah: [24:31](#) Thank you very much. Another week down. We'll see everybody next Tuesday. And hopefully it will be the aftermath of a successful divisional playoff round. Good luck to everybody who's playing, JC, especially to you.
- DeMaurice Smith: [24:48](#) Good luck brother.



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JC Tretter:

[24:49](#)

Appreciate it.

George Atallah:

[24:51](#)

Any follow up questions, let us know. As always, we'll make the transcript and video available on our site. Thanks for tuning in. See you all next week.