

Local Politics Matter

Is This Really the National Football League (NFL) ?

The Demise of A Wonderful Game



As an avid sports fan and particularly a football fan I am writing this post with a heavy heart. There was a time not long ago when September meant the start of the NFL season as well as the adjustment of my Sunday schedule to accommodate the televised games. In fact during this time of year I went so far as to base the church service that I attended on the time that the games were being telecast. Yes the NFL had a product that was must see for all sports fans.

I am not quite sure when things changed. Maybe the change occurred gradually overtime but the product that we call the NFL is now average at best. Let's examine the things that have played a part in degrading the product.

Parity

The term parity is a familiar one to most sports fans. It basically means that the best teams in a sport are not substantially better than the

worse teams. The NFL has gone to great lengths to ensure that today's league is all about parity. The result is has been to create a league where there are no dominate teams and most of the teams are average at best. In fact during the 2010-2011 season the Seattle Seahawks made the playoffs with a 7 -9 record. The days of NFL dynasties are gone and I am one fan who misses them because our most competitive team rivalries went along with them. Who can forget the Raiders versus the Steelers or the Cowboys versus the Redskins? Not to mention the undefeated Dolphins of 1972. Give me a dynasty over parity anytime.

Obsession with Scoring

I refer to this as video game football. As the game and society have gracefully aged the face of the fan has changed. There was a time when the most avid fans had deep roots in the game having actively

played at some level while coming from a family of former players. These fans were true to the game and understood its basics and fundamental values. They grew up watching games played outside that were often-times influenced by what some called the great equalizer; yes games were played in rain, snow as well as the scorching heat. I can't put my finger on when it changed but the today's fans are quite different. A large percentage of them do not come from football families and have never personally played the game. Their experience in the game can be traced to the latest version of "Madden Football". They don't understand the basics of the game and the video game influence has convinced them that scoring is the only way to win.

Games ruled or ruined by officiating

As you weigh the impact of parity and the changing face of the fan on the NFL there is another phenomenon that has had a devastating impact on the product that we knew as America's Game.

Over the last couple of years a significant number of football games have turned on a controversial call by the officials.

While the press and most fans are quick to point at the officials as the culprits the blame actually lies with the league. Yes, the NFL. The "No Fun League"! The men who are paid to protect the integrity of the league have ruined it possibly beyond repair. There are so many rules and technical nuances tied to this simple game that it has become impossible to officiate. When the players don't know the difference between a legal versus an illegal hit and the coaches no longer understand the rules then the league has a problem that they may not be able to fix. How do you retract rules that have been put in place (supposedly) for the safety of the players? You don't. The Governing Body of this once great game has managed to do the impossible. They have ruined the most beloved game in the world for me.

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