

Full text of Patriots owner Kraft's statement about Brady

In light of yesterday's league ruling, I felt it was important to make a statement today, prior to the start of training camp. After this, I will not be talking about this matter until after the legal process plays itself out and I would advise everyone in the organization to do the same and just concentrate on preparation for the 2015 season.

The decision handed down by the league yesterday is unfathomable to me. It is routine for discipline in the NFL to be reduced upon appeal. In the vast majority of these cases there is tangible and hard evidence of the infraction for which the discipline is being imposed and still the initial penalty gets reduced. Six months removed from the AFC championship game, the league still has no hard evidence of anybody doing anything to tamper with the psi level of footballs.

I continue to believe and unequivocally support Tom Brady. I first and foremost need to apologize to our fans because I truly believe that what I did in May, given the actual evidence of this situation and the league's history on discipline matters, would make it much easier for the league to exonerate Tom Brady. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

The league's handling of this entire process has been extremely frustrating and disconcerting. I will never understand why an initial erroneous report regarding the psi level of footballs leaked by a source from the NFL a few days after the AFC championship game was never corrected by those who had the correct information. For four months, that report cast aspersions and shaped public opinion.

Yesterday's decision by Commissioner Goodell was released in a similar manner under an erroneous headline that read, "Tom Brady Destroyed His Cellphone." This headline was designed to capture headlines across the country and obscure the fact the NFL still has no hard evidence regarding the tampering of air pressure in footballs. It intentionally implied nefarious behavior and minimized the acknowledgement that Tom provided the history of every number he texted during the relevant time frame. And we had already provided the league with every cellphone of every non-NFLPA employee that they requested, including head coach Bill Belichick.

Tom Brady is a person of great integrity and is a great ambassador of the game, both on and off the field.

Yet, for reasons that I cannot comprehend, there are those in the league office who are more determined to prove that they were right rather than admit any culpability of their own or take any responsibility for the initiation of a process and ensuing investigation that was flawed.

I have come to the conclusion that this was never about doing what was fair and just. Back in May, I had to make a difficult decision that I now regret. I tried to do what I thought was right. I chose not to take legal action. I wanted to return the focus to football. I have been negotiating agreements on a global basis my entire life. I know that there are times when you have to give up

important points of principle to achieve a greater good.

I acted in good faith and was optimistic that by taking the actions I took, the league would have what they wanted. I was willing to accept the harshest penalty in the history of the NFL for an alleged ball violation because I believed it would help exonerate Tom.

I have often said, "If you want to get a deal done, sometimes you have to get the lawyers out of the room." I had hopes that Tom Brady's appeal to the league would provide Roger Goodell the necessary explanation to overturn his suspension. Now, the league has taken the matter to court, which is a tactic that only a lawyer would recommend.

Once again, I want to apologize to the fans of the New England Patriots and Tom Brady. I was wrong to put my faith in the league.

Given the facts, evidence and laws of science that underscore this entire situation, it is completely incomprehensible to me that the league continues to take steps to disparage one of its all-time great players and a man for whom I have the utmost respect.

Personally, this is very sad and disappointing to me.