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Specialized Agency

NFL Executive Committee

Alex Percey and Kushal Gowda

Co-Chairs



GSMUN XXVI
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NFL Executive Committee

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates and Sponsors,

Welcome to GSMUN XXVI's NFL Executive Committee! Your chairs, Kushal Gowda and Alex Percey, are thrilled to meet all of you! As delegates in this committee, you will work to come up with solutions on pressing issues that the National Football League faces. Covering everything from player salaries and safety, to season length and globalization, we're very excited to see the debate brought up. When debating these issues, it's important to note that changing one piece has an effect on every other topic we'll be discussing, so make sure you're ready to back up your arguments. It's the duty of delegates in this committee to come up with solutions for NFL fans and players, present and future.

Kushal Gowda, a junior, absolutely loves football, and can not wait to co-chair this committee. This is his second year doing Model UN at Maggie Walker, and is excited to continue contributing to GSMUN after serving as a crisis director the previous year. In addition to Model UN, he serves as the State President for Virginia's Technology Student Association. Outside of school Kushal plays concerts in restaurants around Richmond, runs track and plays baseball, and coaches football at Deep Run High School. Kushal loves getting to work with people and is very excited for this committee!

Alex Percey, a senior at Maggie Walker, is excited to chair his first committee for GSMUN. He fell in love with Model UN last year at GSMUN when he was a mock delegate in the Star Wars committee. Outside of Model UN, Alex is a captain and the #1 singles on the Maggie Walker tennis team. He is the president of Maggie Walker's sports club, Dragons on the Field, and the badminton club, while also being the vice president of his school's acapella group, Deadbeats. Alex cannot wait to chair a committee focused on his greatest interest, the NFL!

As delegates of the NFL-EC Committee, you are expected to come ready to discuss the future and expansion of the most successful league in professional sports. You should know the history of NFL season expansion and the previous ground rules set for international games and teams in order to further your point of view on the topics. Information on the mentioned topics can be found in the background guide, but you will want to go much deeper into the vast archives of NFL media and history when completing your position paper. The paper should be formatted in Chicago Manual Style (CMS), in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, and be reflective of your delegate's position on the committee. Keep your papers adherent to the MLWGS Honor Code, and write your own paper, which means no plagiarism or ChatGPT. Please send your papers to our committee email no later than 5pm the day of the conference.

Finally, a large part of GSMUN is our commitment to making a difference through charity. There will be merchandise, baked goods, t-shirts, and many other things on sale during the conference. All proceeds go to charity, and raising a certain amount of money gives you the chance to mess with your chairs in the last committee session. It's a win-win, so don't forget to bring your money! If you have any questions or concerns, or would like feedback on your position papers, feel free to contact your chairs at gsmunxxvi.nfl@gmail.com. We are looking forward to meeting everyone in committee! See you at GSMUN XXVI and good luck!

Your Chairs,

Alex Percey
gsmunxxvi.nfl@gmail.com

Kushal Gowda

NFL Executive Committee

Committee Overview

Background

American football was played professionally for the first time when the Allegheny Athletic Association and the Pittsburgh Athletic Club played each other on November 12, 1892.¹ In 1920, a league based in Canton, OH, called the American Professional Football Association, would be created. The name was changed to the National Football League, often called the NFL, two years later. The top teams in this infant league played 11 games in the regular season, and player safety was minimal. Players wore no pads and were only shielded via a leather helmet. At the time, the game was not very popular and mostly played at the collegiate level. In the 50's, the game grew and was integrated, with star players such as Green Bay Packers receiver Don Hutson, Browns running back Jim Brown, and Colts quarterback Johnny Unitas becoming household names. In 1958, the NFL championship game between the Lions and Colts, dubbed "The Greatest Game Ever Played," brought incredible viewership and popularity to the sport. It was at this moment that the league seemed destined to pass Major League Baseball as the most popular sport in the United States.

The modern NFL originally consisted of two separate leagues: the National Football League and the American Football League. The leagues were solely competitors for a few years until they created a championship game named the Super Bowl in 1966 where the winner of each league would compete for a world championship. Between 1966 and 1970, the two merged and created the league we know today.² With the merger in place, the teams could finally play against each other in their 14-game regular seasons, instead of just in the Super Bowl. The NFL was seen as the

far superior conference previous to the merger, however Joe Namath's famous "guarantee" and victory over the powerhouse Baltimore Colts in Super Bowl III gave a greater degree of legitimacy to the AFL teams.

The NFL is now divided into two conferences, the AFC and the NFC. Each conference is further divided, each having respective North, East, South, and West divisions. Each division has four teams, for a league-wide total of 32. Until 2020, each regular season was seventeen weeks long, with each team playing sixteen times. The preceding preseason included four games each year. Each team had one week of rest, called a "bye week," between weeks four and thirteen of their season. The postseason consisted of four Wild Card games, with the top two seeds in each conference receiving a first round bye, followed by four divisional games to determine who would play in the conference championships and the Super Bowl.³ There was a one week break reserved for the Pro Bowl, a competition for the league's best players from all 32 teams, before the championship.

Unlike Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association with teams in Toronto and the National Hockey League which has the Montreal Canadiens, Toronto Maple Leafs, Vancouver Canucks, Edmonton Oilers, Calgary Flames, Ottawa Senators, and Winnipeg Jets, there are no international NFL teams. The NFL is known for moving teams around to areas based on interest and revenue. Some examples include the recent relocation of the Chargers and Rams to Los Angeles, and the recent move of the Raiders from Oakland to Las Vegas. However, no international cities have truly been in consideration to host a team up to this point. The NFL does, however, play multiple

international games each season to showcase the league worldwide, which have generated massive interest abroad. In addition, the International Player Pathway Program is a newer program created to bring in a wider NFL community from other nations across the globe.⁴ Each roster is given an extra slot for a player from outside of North America, facilitating inclusion of players with rare backgrounds into the game.

Every decade, the 32 team owners and league employees, broadcasting corporations, and the NFL Players Association, a group of former and current players created to campaign for player protection and compensation, draft and vote on a Collective Bargaining Agreement to govern future league activity. Similar to a constitution, this document sets in place ground rules for what the league can and cannot do for the next few years, though in certain circumstances it can be amended. Important league protocols such as the salary cap, the maximum amount of money a team can spend on their players' contracts, were not created until player strikes led to a new CBA or compromises that laid the foundation for them. Sometimes, failures in negotiations can lead to player and personnel lockouts, delaying preseason and sometimes even regular season games. A recent example of development from the previous CBA benefited players with short careers or those that will not immediately receive a contract after the 4th year of their salary. New rules were implemented in 2020 stating that the 5th year contract option, which is a possible offer a team and player can choose if the player wants to stay with their team on their rookie contract, is fully guaranteed. Agreements such as this can be amended when new CBAs are called for, and while the current one is set to last 10 years, a revision can happen at any time. This committee must decide the extent to which the 2020 National Football League CBA must be modified to support necessary changes to the modern game of football. The group of players, executives, representatives, and

coaches must come to a consensus on how league policies and guidelines should or should not be changed for international interest and increased revenue while keeping the players, and fans, satisfied.

Topic I: NFL Season Expansion **History of the Issue**

In the early years of professional football, teams played roughly 11 games each season. As the game became more regulated, NFL seasons developed into 14 game regular seasons with a championship game between the best two teams. The next alteration to the schedule came in the 1960s when the addition of the Super Bowl altered the playoff structure. In 1978, the NFL expanded the regular season from 14 to 16 games. With this, they added an additional Wild Card game to the playoffs, and shrunk the preseason from 6 to 4 games. The league made this change to balance the risk of injury, but whether or not that worked is complicated as injuries seemed to increase still. Each conference now had 5 teams in the playoffs with the new Wild Card slot added. In 1990, the league added another Wild Card slot, bringing the total of postseason teams to 12. Since there were more games in each season, new scheduling considerations had to be made. They placed each team in a division, and played each other team in their division twice. They then played all the teams from one other division in their conference, and all teams in one division from the other conference. If the season was to be expanded in the future, more scheduling considerations would have to be made.

As seasons got longer, in 1978, rule-makers made attempts to make the game safer. To combat the possible increase in injuries, the NFL implemented rules such as the 5 yard chuck rule, which required that defenders could not make contact with receivers further than 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. Also, the Deacon Jones rule prohibited defensive pass rushers from hitting offensive lineman's heads. Certain star players, like Steelers cornerback Mel Blount, had to

completely alter their physical playstyles to abide by the new league rules. These changes led to increased passing efficiency and yardage in the years following. Over time, the game developed to feature more quick passing, exemplified by Bill Walsh's West Coast offense that won the San Francisco 49ers four championships in the 1980s. Injuries seemed to decrease on a per-game basis due to the rule changes, and popularity of the sport grew with more flashy offensive plays and the reign of legendary players such as Jerry Rice and Walter Payton. While the rule changes seemed to favor the entertainment value of the sport and help certain positions, such as quarterbacks, others like running backs became less valuable and suffered from the changes. As the NFL continued to crack down on plays that led to injuries by banning lowering the crown of the helmet to initiate contact, both running backs and defensive players spoke out saying that it was "part of the game." Long-time fans of the game cried out that their favorite sport was becoming too soft, sacrificing good defense and tough football for the sake of safety.

Recent Events

In the 2020 Collective Bargaining Agreement, the NFL owners wanted to take the schedule to the next level: an 18-game regular season. Advertising coordinators, executives, and many league personnel advocated for more weeks to increase revenue, up the value of broadcasting deals, and have higher total viewership. With this change could come the chance for additional playoff games for even more football, along with many other appealing opportunities. To avoid some teams having an imbalance of home and away games, some executives proposed neutral site games in the future, maybe even outside the country.

Longer seasons, however, mean a heavier toll on players' bodies. If a team had eighteen games in a season and a week four bye, they could play eighteen consecutive games from week five until the conference

championship. This would devastate health, morale, and team performance. Eventually, since CBA's must be agreed upon by the NFLPA and ratified by the players, the total was negotiated down to seventeen regular season games. Retired longtime Cleveland Browns center and NFLPA president JC Tretter echoed a cautionary sentiment about how players must now shift their training focuses. Tretter called it a "body-clock" issue, where players' bodies are used to working until 16 games are completed and expect to take a certain toll, but now they must take more impact from the sudden addition of an extra game. In the same year that the extended season was implemented, the Tennessee Titans set a league record with 86 different players used in games throughout the season, likely due to the extra game.

Current Status of the Issue

In regards to the now extended season, some players wish for compensation for the extra time they may play, while others simply don't want that risk on their bodies. Football is known as an extremely physical and dangerous sport, which is why it only has seventeen games per season compared to the NBA's 82 and the MLB's 162. It is also why NFL teams have the largest rosters of any major sport because teams need multiple replacements, and they may need even more with a longer season. Helping the players along, though, is the largest total payroll of any sports league. In 2023, each NFL team is allowed to spend up to 224 million dollars on their players, a "salary cap" number which increases each year. The salary cap increases each year with the revenue of the league. Available "cap space" is the total salary cap minus how much the team is currently spending and dead money.

No position has a designated amount of the salary cap that they are allowed to take up, however if you spend a good percentage on a player like Joe Burrow, who is getting 55 million per year, it may be hard to build a balanced roster around them. This is

complicated as star players are being paid exponentially more as the years go by while each wants to be the highest paid in their position group when their contract is renewed. There are many ways that teams pay for players. Each player signs a rookie contract after being drafted into the league, which pays a set amount each year with a large signing bonus and a certain amount of “guaranteed” money. After 4 years, a team has the option to add a 5th year to the contract fully guaranteed, to sign the player to another contract, let them be a free agent, or give them the franchise tag. The franchise tag is a contract alternative that can only be used on one player per team that pays that player the average amount of the top five salaries at their position.

Usually, this system smoothly transitions players into new contracts or onto new teams, but recently, that has failed with the running back position. For most positions, when their rookie contract runs out at about 27 years old, they are just reaching their prime. However, with the wear and tear of the running back position, most drop off significantly at age 28. This leads to teams seeing signing an RB to another contract as an unnecessary expense, and even stars like Dalvin Cook find it hard to get any interest in their talents. As the NFL has transitioned into a more pass heavy league with rule changes benefitting quarterbacks, running backs are now seen as the most interchangeable position. Teams used to rely on one ball carrier for 68% of yards two decades ago, but now the top back only gets 47% of a team's rushing yards. The committee approach with lower salary running backs is much more appealing for contending teams, especially knowing that the last 9 Super Bowl winning teams had no pro-bowl RB. Experiencing the devaluation of their role, running backs across the league are speaking out against the contract system, hoping to have a chance at a career past their rookie deal.

Questions to Consider

1. Marketability to fans vs. player safety; which one is more important? Can players and business-focused executives come to a consensus?
2. How many games is too many? Is more games better for the brand?
3. What safety measures can be taken to prevent more player injuries if more games are played?
4. Should roster limits be changed to account for more injured players?
5. How would player salaries be changed to match the physical toll they are asked to take on their bodies? Should each team be required to pay certain positions equal money?
6. How can the salary situation be changed to keep Running Backs valuable?

Further Research

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Topic II: NFL Global Expansion

History of the Issue

During the 2007 season, NFL games went overseas for the first time. Truth be told, the NFL had made an attempt at opening a league in Europe before, but with only 6 teams, it didn't see much success. *The NFL Europe League* ran from 1989 to 2007, but shut down due to its unprofitability. Fans didn't

want to see the same 6 teams for an entire season with zero change. It didn't truly feel like "NFL football" to them. In 2007, the NFL sent one of their main-stream, official regular season games to a renovated version of *Wembley Stadium* in London to roaring crowds that surpassed expectations. The league noticed tickets selling out in record time, and certain teams gained a British fanbase, which led the NFL to return with those same teams a few years later.⁵ The NFL also saw success and even greater sales in Mexico City's *Estadio Azteca* and in Munich's *Allianz Arena*. The NFL game in Germany this year sold out in less than an hour.⁶ It is obvious that there is extreme international interest in the sport which previously only experienced popularity in the United States. Fans in England and Mexico have been begging for their own team for years, wanting a piece of the extremely profitable NFL in their countries.

The beginnings of what could be a potential long term solution was the introduction of the NFL Global Markets Program. This program offered NFL teams exclusive marketing rights in different countries. This establishes the idea of foreign countries having an NFL team that has some attachment to them. Recently, the league granted the New Orleans Saints international marketing rights in France, and it will be the first time the NFL has hit the French Sports Market. Other examples include the Buccaneers being granted rights in Germany, as well as Austria and Switzerland – or the Steelers and Jaguars frequently visiting the UK and marketing in Ireland.

Recent Success With International Expansion

With the NFL proving to be a great success in other countries and even other continents, it's worthwhile to also look at the large social and economic impacts an overseas franchise would provide.⁷ If NFL franchises moved to or opened new divisions in international nations, local economies would

greatly benefit. In London, each year the three NFL games in contribute 58 million euros to their economy, though this figure pales in comparison to the amount a resident team generates.⁸ In the United States, with NFL teams serving as permanent residents to the city, these franchises contribute roughly five billion USD to the local economy per season.⁹ It is profitable for cities to host a game, but pales in comparison to having a resident. However, a lot would have to change to accommodate an overseas team. To broadcast all their games, international TV coverage of NFL games would also have to increase and be consistent with other scheduled matchups. Currently, options such as NFL Game Pass are available to viewers in 181 countries, but cable broadcasts are much more rare. Expansion could rapidly increase the number of games shown worldwide, but global television is hard to coordinate with time zone complications. Conversely, there is no question that NFL games and broadcasts provide local citizens with job opportunities and add revenue to the economy. In addition, spreading the game of football is good for the brand, sales, and the future of the sport.

Current Issues Facing Expansion

The CBA limited the NFL to having no more than 10 foreign games each year until 2025, enough to only have one about every other week. In addition, it forbade an NFL team from operating internationally as there are many consequential roadblocks in the process. The concern is with how the team would operate, being an overseas franchise and now having to pay fees to international governments, construction workers, television broadcasters, and legal agencies. Timing of games may have to be changed, and players would experience rough travel adjustments. Many players have voiced how much they love playing in other countries, but it has its drawbacks. Tom Brady was quoted saying that it is a great opportunity and that he is always super excited when playing internationally, but

also that it is a very big challenge jumping time zones.¹⁰

Even if the matter of getting around the 2019 CBA is handled, it's worth noting that the NFL is a privately owned corporation composed of the 32 member teams' owners. It's not one consistent body, but rather a collective of each team that is present. This raises the question: How can an American-based conglomerate then be expected to operate from an international standpoint, in terms of revenue sharing, marketing, viewership, and geographic distribution? This could lead to foreign investors in teams and complications in executive meetings and groups. New phrasing to define what makes the NFL ownership group would be required before any advancement is made internationally, to ensure a fair distribution of income among NFL team owners. Marketing is currently an exclusive right that is granted under the NFL Global Markets Program, so the program would either need to be cut or entirely reworked in order to allow multiple new NFL teams to market themselves to global audiences. Viewership comes as a result of marketing, but it's also worth noting different nations use different channels to stream games. Local restrictions might apply to who can watch what with a multitude of networks such as Sky Sports, CBS, NBC, Anthem Sports & Entertainment, Star Sports, and Eurosport Network controlling media in different regions.

Questions to Consider

1. As the NFL moves to an international franchise, how should ownership change?
2. How should revenue sharing work if an NFL team is international?
3. If NFL teams move across the globe, how should travel and player recovery standards change? How should time zones be accounted for with deadlines and events? When should these games be placed on a schedule?

4. Should the league move headquarters to a nation with a more beneficial set of economic laws and practices?
5. What should the standards be for a city to host an NFL team?
6. How should league scheduling be determined, given that there's a possibility of teams being nearly 20 hours apart in time-zones?

Further Research

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