

Barbara

First off, let me make it clear that I am not a sportsperson, at all. I don't follow any teams, scream at my television or argue about plays scores, or contribute to betting pools. I never read the sports section of the newspaper. I don't get depressed for days when a team loses and I don't celebrate for weeks when a team wins. In fact, I mix up baseball and foot ball teams, and most of all, do not even care who wins. I have the philosophy that we are all equals on the playing field and it is more important to just do your best in whatever sport you play, so it doesn't matter to me who wins or loses as long as everyone has fun. You can probably guess what my profession is- a teacher, who believes in fairness and equity for all. I have strong beliefs that everyone should be treated equally in the classroom and beyond. I cry when I hear or see anyone who is treated unfairly, especially those who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised, minorities, those who cannot advocate for themselves. I rejoice when the silent speak, and students who were once failing become motivated and successful. These are the moments when I share in their triumphs.

So why have I, a non-sports person, become so vehemently involved in the case of Tom Brady of the New England Patriots? When I first heard about this situation, I became outraged. I read every sports page I could get my hands on, and I applied my close reading skills carefully. and read every single word, trying to decipher each and every meaning. I am outraged at the outcome and what is what I consider to be unfair treatment. Roger Godell holds the esteemed position of the football commissioner. He can decide what penalties to enforce on particular teams and individuals, and he has meted out punishments after much deliberation to Ray Rice, a young man who struck his wife so hard that she fell into the wall of the elevator they were riding in. His punch carried so much force that it knocked her unconscious! This spousal abuser received a mere slap on the wrist. In my opinion, Mr. Godell only gave a punishment to Mr. Rice when he felt pressure from women's groups. He deliberated for a lengthy amount of time before he gave the punishment.

So why did Godell hand down swift and harsh punishment to Tom Brady? His punishment does not seem to fit the crime. Opponents state that Godell had to take the measures he did because he has the integrity of the game of football at stake. I understand this. I believe in integrity also. But how can a man issue a punishment on speculation? What Ray Rice did to his wife was caught on camera in full view. The eyes of the world watched as a hulking football player shoved and knocked a petite woman to the ground and then carelessly dragged her out of the elevator by her hair! Is there any camera showing Tom Brady deflating balls? The answer is no. None what so ever. There is video coverage of a man who handles the balls going into the bathroom with his bag of balls, but there is no video showing himn deflating these said balls. Two men who make a fraction of the salary professional football players make, were fired immediately without any proof or discussion. Brady was asked to hand over his cell phone, a violation of our American privacy, and when he refused, he was punished on the possibility, without evidence, that he deflated the balls that were used on a muddy, rain splattered field. The environment could have been a determining factor in the weight of the balls. This factor does not seem to have been taken into consideration. The Indianapolis Colts complained about the weight of the balls. Would they have been skeptical if they had beaten the Patriots, rather than been trampled 45-7? Probably not. Rather than take responsibility, blame their own inadequacies, and determine to work on their weaknesses, they immediately came to the conclusion: the Patriots must have cheated! The saying goes

that it's lonely at the top, but in this case, those on the top are envied and jealousy abounds in the leagues at the Patriots who are a tight team who come out on top more often than not.

Let's look at the facts. Mr. Godell has handed down a punishment on speculation only and one that is harsh and unfair. This is the United States of America. Whoever heard of punishing a team and player for what they thought they did. Where is the equality here? Why such harsh punishment? Is it because the Colts will play the Patriots in the fall and they want their nemesis off the field? Do they think they will have a better chance of winning now they have eliminated Brady? Roger Godell seems to only hand down punishments when he is pressured either by focus groups or team pressure, such as the Colts. Don't you see the manipulation, Mr. Godell? Shame on you Roger Godell for allowing the Colts to pressure you into making a hasty and unfair decision. Shame on you Colts for trying to get an unfair advantage on your game with the Patriots. Where is the integrity with the both of you? And you dare to call the Patriots' integrity into question.

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