



## NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

March 17, 2011

**ROGER GOODELL**  
*Commissioner*

Dear NFL Player:

As you know, negotiations between the NFL Players Association and the clubs have not led to an agreement. Last Friday, the NFLPA walked out of the federal mediator's offices in Washington, told us that it had abandoned its right to represent you as a union, and filed a lawsuit. Some hours later, the clubs instituted a lockout.

The clubs believe that there is only one way to resolve our differences, and that is through good faith collective bargaining in an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication. We have said publicly, told the federal mediator, and say to you that we are prepared to resume those negotiations at any time.

We want you to understand the offer that we made to the NFLPA. The proposal was made to avoid a work stoppage. Each passing day puts our game and our shared economics further at risk. We believe the offer presented a strong and fair basis for continuing negotiations, allowing the new league year and free agency to begin, and growing our game in the years to come.

Here are the key elements of the proposal:

- A salary cap for 2011 that would avoid a negative financial impact on veteran players. We offered to meet the Union at the mid-point between our previous offer and the Union's demand. Under our offer, 2011 salary and benefits would have been set at \$141 million per club, and projected cash spending would have been as high or higher than in either 2009 or 2010. By 2014, salary and benefits would have been set at \$161 million per club. In other words, player compensation would increase by as much as \$20 million per club by 2014.
- Free agency for players with four or more accrued seasons and reduced draft choice compensation for restricted free agents.
- Extensive changes in off-season work requirements that would promote player health and safety, encourage players to continue their education, and promote second career opportunities. The off-season program would be reduced by five weeks, OTAs would be reduced from 14 to 10 days, helmets would be prohibited for the first five weeks of workouts, and rules prohibiting "live" on-field contact would be strictly enforced.

- Changes in preseason and regular season practices and schedules that would reduce the number of padded practices, reduce the amount of contact, and increase the number of days off for you and other players.
- Commit to retain the current 16-game regular season format for at least the next two seasons, and further commit not to change to an 18-game regular season without the Union's agreement.
- Expand injury guarantees for players. The clubs offered to guarantee up to \$1 million of a second year of your contract if you are injured and cannot return to play.
- For the first time, players and families would be able to purchase continuing coverage in the player medical plan after retirement for life, and could use their health savings account benefit to do so.
- Enhanced retirement benefits for pre-1993 players. More than 2,000 former players would have received an immediate increase in their pensions averaging nearly 60 percent, funded entirely by the owners.
- A new entry-level compensation system that would make more than \$300 million per draft class available for veterans' pay and player benefits. The new system would preserve individual negotiations – not a wage scale – and would allow players drafted in rounds 2 through 7 to earn as much or more than they earn today.
- Significant changes in disciplinary procedures, including a jointly-appointed neutral arbitrator to hear all drug and steroid appeals.

Working together, players and clubs have made the game great. Our fans want us to find common ground, settle our differences, and come to a fair agreement. I have met with many of you since becoming Commissioner. You know of my respect and admiration for you as men and as players. We need to come together, and soon.

In that spirit, we are prepared to negotiate a full agreement that would incorporate these features and other progressive changes that would benefit players, clubs, and fans. Only through collective bargaining will we reach that kind of agreement. Our goal is to make our league even better than it is today, with the benefits shared by all of us.

I hope you will encourage your Union to return to the bargaining table and conclude a new collective bargaining agreement.

Sincerely,



**ROGER GOODELL**  
Commissioner