

At our best, the NFL sets an example that makes a positive difference. Unfortunately, over the past several weeks, we have seen all too much of the NFL doing wrong. That starts with me. I said this before back on Aug. 28 and I say this now: I got it wrong in the handling of the Ray Rice matter, and I'm sorry for that. I got it wrong on a number of levels, from the process that I led to the decision that I reached. But now I will get it right and do whatever is necessary to accomplish that.

First, I don't expect anyone just to take my word. Last week, I asked former FBI director Robert Mueller to conduct an independent investigation to answer the questions raised about our process in reviewing Ray Rice's conduct. I pledged that Director Mueller will have full cooperation and access. We all look forward to his report and findings. I promise you that any shortcomings he finds in how we dealt with the situation will lead to swift action. The same mistakes can never be repeated. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that we are thorough in our review process and that our conclusions are reliable. We will get our house in order first.

Second, and most importantly, these incidents demonstrate that we can use the NFL to help create change, not only in our league, but in society, with respect to domestic violence and sexual assault. We are taking a number of steps. On Aug. 28, I said that the entire NFL would receive comprehensive information and resources and support systems for victims on domestic violence and sexual assault. We will reexamine, enhance and improve all of our current programs, and then we'll do more.

Earlier today, each NFL club and all our league office locations received information about advocacy and support organizations in their communities. In addition, our teams and league staff, everyone, will participate in education sessions starting in the next month, followed by training programs. These programs are being developed by a top group of experts. Some of them were announced earlier in the week. We will continue to identify and add expertise to our team and we will ask the NFL Players Association to help us develop and deliver these programs in the most effective way.

Third, we recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault exist everywhere in every community, economic class, racial and ethnic group; it affects all of us. These are problems we are committed to addressing. But we cannot solve them by ourselves. Law enforcement, the criminal justice system, social service organizations and families are the cornerstones to addressing this problem. For our part, we can add and we will do more.

To begin, we have entered into long-term partnership with two leading national organizations. The National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. The hotline received an 84 percent increase in the call volume just last week. They did not have the resources to reach even half of those calls. They need our help, and we are providing it.

Fourth, we strongly, strongly condemn and will punish behavior that is totally unacceptable. Domestic violence, including child abuse, sexual assault, irresponsible ownership or handling of firearms, the illegal use of alcohol or drugs -- these activities must be condemned and stopped through education and discipline. Our standards and the consequences of falling short must be clear, consistent and current. They must be implemented through procedures that are fair and transparent. This is the central issue today. I'm here now because our rules, policies and procedures on personal conduct failed to ensure that this high standard is met.

But I want to make it clear: These are very complex issues. Our country has a legal system that everyone needs to respect. When there is evidence of misconduct by anyone in the NFL, we need to carefully

consider when to act and on what evidence. Everyone deserves a fair process. You know, I feel passionately that working in the NFL in any capacity is a privilege, something we must earn every day and must never take for granted. The vast majority of players, coaches, owners and employees in the NFL stand tall -- not only for their role in the game but for what they do in their communities. To get all this right, we will bring together our players and their union representatives, coaches, owners and outside experts who can help us set the right standards and identify the right procedures.

I have discussed these challenges with the Players Association executive director DeMaurice Smith. He shares my view that domestic violence and sexual assault have no place in the NFL. He and I will meet next week to bring together experts to help us establish and live up to the standards that our fans deserve and that we set for ourselves. I will be asking these experts to examine all current NFL policies related to employee and player conduct and discipline. They will address how to balance due process rights for those accused with the need to hold our personnel to the highest standards. They should also consider the current system for determining violations, including my role in the process.

There will be changes to our personal conduct policy. I know this because we will make it happen. Nothing is off the table. Let me say it again: We will implement new conduct policies. They will have a set of clear and transparent rules for league and club personnel, owners and players. My goal is to complete this by the Super Bowl.

Football and the NFL have always changed and improved. We drive changes in the game through our competition committee. It reviews and updates the rules to govern the game on the field. Through this process of evaluation and reform, we keep the game competitive, entertaining, fair and, most importantly, do everything we can do protect our players on the field from injury.

We go to enormous lengths to make sure players, coaches, officials, fans, our broadcast partners fully understand our playing rules and how they are enforced. That must now be our model when it comes to personal conduct. So, like the competition committee and other league committees, I'm establishing a conduct committee to review these new rules in the months and years to come and ensure that we are always living with the best practices. There is no reason we cannot be as transparent and effective on these issues as we are with the game on the field.

I believe in accountability. I understand the challenges before me, and I will be held accountable for meeting them. Every day, so many of our players, coaches and staffs are doing tremendous things in their communities. I couldn't be more proud of how they're using the opportunity to help make a positive difference. Today I ask everyone who's part of the NFL to join me in making positive and significant changes going forward.