

MESSAGE TO THE FANS FROM THE BALTIMORE RAVENS

We at the Ravens have promised to be open, candid and transparent with our fans, sponsors, ticket holders, and the general public.

This past Friday, ESPN.com's "Outside the Lines" feature ran a story entitled, ***Rice case: purposeful misdirection by the team, scant investigation by NFL.***

Later that day, we released this statement: "The ESPN.com 'Outside the Lines' article contains numerous errors, inaccuracies, false assumptions and, perhaps, misunderstandings. The Ravens will address all of these next week in Baltimore after our trip to Cleveland for Sunday's game against the Browns."

What follows is our response. Many statements and allegations from the article are attributed to unnamed "sources" and people "close to" the Ravens. In our determination to maintain transparency, our responses are provided by those directly involved, and each is named.

1. From the article: (the reporters) found a pattern of misinformation and misdirection employed by the Ravens and the NFL since that February night.

Steve Bisciotti (Ravens Owner): "As I stated in our letter to you on September 9, we did not do all we should have done, and no amount of explanation can remedy that. But there has been no misdirection or misinformation by the Ravens. We have stated what we knew and what we thought throughout – from the original report of the incident, to the release of the first videotape, to the release of the second videotape, which revealed a much harsher reality. As we said in our response to ESPN's questions on Friday, it was our understanding based on Ray's account that in the course of a physical altercation between the two of them he slapped Janay with an open hand, and that she hit her head against the elevator rail or wall as she fell to the ground."

2. From the article: But sources both affiliated and unaffiliated with the team tell "Outside the Lines" a different story: The Ravens' head of security, (Darren) Sanders, heard a detailed description of the inside-elevator scene within hours and shared it with Ravens officials in Baltimore.

Darren Sanders (Director of Security): "I did not receive an account of what happened in the elevator "within hours" of the incident. Within a couple of days, I asked the casino and the Atlantic City Police Department for a copy of any

videotape of the incident. They said they could not release a copy of the videotape to me. Some days later—I believe it was on February 25—I spoke to an Atlantic City police official again, asking again whether I could get a copy of the tape or, if not, whether I could come to his New Jersey office and view it. He said I could not, but he did offer to view the tape and describe what he saw. (As I understand it, he was describing a raw video, not the “cleaned up,” “smoothed . . . out” version that appeared on TMZ.) He said that Ray and Janay both appeared to be intoxicated, and that they were involved in a heated argument that began outside the elevator and continued inside. As he described it, Janay appeared to initiate the altercation, but they both spit at and struck each other, resulting in Janay falling and hitting her head against the wall railing. The officer could not tell from the video whether Ray slapped or punched her, but Ray told me very clearly that he did not punch her. It was not clear from the officer’s account whether it was being intoxicated, being hit, or hitting her head against the railing that caused Janay’s apparent unconsciousness.”

3. From the article: ...asked by the Sun whether the video matched what Rice had told them months earlier, Newsome conceded that it had. "You know, Ray had given a story to John [Harbaugh] and I," Newsome said. "And what we saw on the video was what Ray said. Ray didn't lie to me. He didn't lie to me."

Ozzie Newsome, (Ravens GM): “When I met with Ray to discuss the incident, I asked him one question: “Did you hit her?” He responded: “Yes”. Ray and I didn’t discuss details beyond that, because in my mind if he hit her, no matter the circumstances or explanation, he needed to own the situation. I immediately focused on Ray taking responsibility and making amends. I later said Ray didn’t lie to me because he told me he hit her, and that is what the video later showed—although the video was much more violent than what I had pictured.”

4. From the article: ...the images (on the first videotape) horrified Ravens coach John Harbaugh, according to four sources inside and outside the organization. The Super Bowl-winning coach urged his bosses to release Rice immediately, especially if the team had evidence Rice had thrown a punch... But Harbaugh's recommendation to cut the six-year veteran running back was quickly rejected by Ravens management: owner Bisciotti, team president Cass and GM Newsome.

John Harbaugh (Ravens coach): “I did not recommend cutting Ray Rice from the team after seeing the first videotape. I was very disturbed by that tape, and I told

people that the facts should determine the consequences. When I saw the second videotape, I immediately felt that we needed to release Ray.”

Ozzie Newsome: “Neither John nor anyone else ever recommended cutting Ray Rice before we saw the second videotape on September 8.”

5. *From the article: "He motioned it to me," (Kyle) Jakobe (trainer and friend of Ray Rice) said, making a closed fist and bringing it across his body. "He was like 'Hey, this is what happened.'"*

John Harbaugh: “Ray Rice never told me that he punched her. In June, when I spoke to ESPN The Magazine, it was still my understanding that Ray had not punched her and was acting defensively.”

Darren Sanders: “Ray told me he slapped her. He denied punching her.”

6. *From the article: “Ravens executives -- in particular owner Steve Bisciotti, president Dick Cass and general manager Ozzie Newsome -- began extensive public and private campaigns pushing for leniency for Rice on several fronts: from the judicial system in Atlantic County, where Rice faced assault charges, to commissioner Goodell, who ultimately would decide the number of games Rice would be suspended...”*

Dick Cass: “That statement is not true. In February, Darren Sanders made contact with the police and the prosecutor in an effort to obtain a copy of the video. Apart from Darren's efforts, no one from the Ravens ever spoke or communicated with a prosecutor, a judge or anyone else employed by the judicial system in New Jersey regarding Ray Rice, with one exception. At the request of Ray's defense lawyer, Ozzie, John and I sent a letter addressed to the Clerk's office in support of Ray's application for pretrial intervention. The letter was largely devoted to describing Ray's extensive efforts in the community. According to the article, our letter was one of 30 such letters.”

7. *From the article: Michael J. Diamondstein, (Rice's attorney), who in early April had obtained a copy of the inside-elevator video and told Cass: "It's f---ing horrible." Cass did not request a copy of the video from Diamondstein but instead began urging Rice's legal team to get Rice accepted into a pretrial intervention program after being told some of the program's benefits. Among them: It would keep the inside-elevator video from becoming public.*

Later in the article: Diamondstein began a series of conversations with Cass, a lawyer as well as the Ravens team president, about strategy on how to resolve Rice's criminal case as quickly, and as quietly, as possible, team sources and other sources say.

Dick Cass: “I believe Ray’s criminal defense attorney mentioned the video to me in late May around the time that the court granted Ray’s application for pretrial intervention. I don’t recall his precise words, but he did say the video looked terrible. I did not ask Ray’s attorney for a copy of the video. I assumed the video would be terrible, because it would show a man striking a woman. But I also thought the video would show a physical altercation where Ray was defending himself with an open hand. My view about the video was also influenced by the fact that the prosecutor and the judge agreed to the ultimate dismissal of all charges against Ray after seeing the video. We had decided several months before to leave fact finding to the court system and the League. As we have said, that was a mistake, and I regret it.”

“I did not urge Ray’s defense attorney to follow any particular course of action. I told his attorney that he should do what he felt was in the best interest of his client. I had never even heard of ‘pretrial intervention’ until Ray’s attorney explained it to me. So yes, I agreed with him that pretrial intervention was in Ray’s best interest. Who wouldn’t? It meant the ultimate dismissal of all criminal claims without a trial and the risk of a guilty verdict. Of course, I did not want a criminal trial because of all the adverse publicity associated with a celebrity trial. But I did not think that pretrial intervention would prevent the video from becoming public. I assumed that would eventually occur in any event.”

8. From the article: Goodell gave Rice -- the corporate face of the Baltimore franchise -- a light punishment as a favor to his good friend Bisciotti. Four sources said Ravens executives, including Bisciotti, Cass and Newsome, urged Goodell and other league executives to give Rice no more than a two-game suspension, and that's what Goodell did on July 24.

Steve Bisciotti: “I did not ask Roger Goodell to give Ray Rice no more than a two-game suspension. I did not make any request for a ‘favor’ or any particular outcome. I know and like Roger Goodell, but it is inaccurate to call us ‘good friends.’ The two of us have spent very little time together – as I recall, one round of golf and one dinner several years ago.”

Dick Cass: “I did not urge Roger Goodell or any other League official to take any particular action.”

Ozzie Newsome: “I never asked Mr. Goodell or anyone else at the NFL to do anything for Ray or for the Ravens.”

9. From the article: An avid golfer with a 10 handicap, Bisciotti played 27 holes on March 18 and another 27 holes on March 19 at Augusta National Golf Club, where he is not a member. Goodell, who is also an avid golfer, became an Augusta member in 2013. Goodell and Bisciotti have become good friends, and talk of golf is a lubricant of their friendship, several sources say.”

Steve Bisciotti: “I did not see or talk to Roger Goodell the entire time I was in Augusta.”

10. From the article: The Ray Rice case had become more serious. He now faced a potential prison sentence of three to five years. And yet, according to public statements made by Bisciotti and other team officials, the team decided at that point to stop seeking to obtain or even view a copy of the inside-elevator video.

Dick Cass: “We decided that we would await the outcome of the criminal case and the NFL disciplinary hearing and to leave the fact-finding to others. We should not have done that.”

11. From the article: Goodell presided over Rice's disciplinary meeting. Ray and Janay Rice were accompanied by Newsome and Cass as well as by two NFLPA representatives. Goodell was joined by Adolpho Birch, the NFL's senior vice president of labor policy, and NFL general counsel Jeff Pash. Several former executives and lawyers who represent players and coaches before the league said a player or coach facing discipline is rarely accompanied by the team GM and the team president in a hearing before Goodell and league officials. A league source insists it has happened numerous times before, but he did not provide examples.

Dick Cass: “We did accompany Ray and have accompanied other players in the past. We believe that our actions are not uncommon around the league. The article notes, for example, that one of the owners of the Steelers accompanied Ben Roethlisberger when he met with the Commissioner.”

12. *From the article: "One source who spoke to Cass said he heard at least two weeks before Goodell announced the penalty that Rice would receive only a two-game penalty."*

Dick Cass: "That is not true. Neither I nor anyone at the Ravens knew what the penalty would be until the Commissioner sent his letter to Ray on July 23. I did believe that a two-game suspension was one of the likely outcomes, because as far as I knew that was the maximum penalty that had been imposed in a case similar to Ray's."

13. *From the article: When the second TMZ video was released early the next morning...That afternoon, the Ravens terminated Rice's contract....An hour after the Ravens released Rice, the NFL announced that Rice was suspended indefinitely.*

Steve Bisciotti: "Yes, after seeing the second videotape, we took the pre-emptive step, ahead of the league, to do what we thought we had to do."

Ozzie Newsome: "I had to tell Ray, and it was one of the hardest phone calls I have ever made."

14. *From the article: (After the Ravens released a letter to their season ticket-holders and sponsors explaining the steps they had taken...) Minutes later, Rice's phone buzzed. He could scarcely believe what he was looking at-- back-to-back text messages from Bisciotti. Rice read them aloud so everyone in the room could hear them:*

Hey Ray, just want to let you know, we loved you as a player, it was great having you here. Hopefully all these things are going to die down. I wish the best for you and Janay.

When you're done with football, I'd like you to know you have a job waiting for you with the Ravens helping young guys getting acclimated to the league.

Steve Bisciotti: "I did have an exchange of text messages with Ray, which he initiated. I felt awful about what had happened. I believed he was, at heart, a good person, that he was capable of redemption, and I wanted to tell him I would be supportive of him. Here are the texts, not as told to someone and then misquoted in the article, but verbatim":

Monday September 8, 7:44 pm

Ray: I understand the decision but I am thankful for what you have done for me and my family. Me and my wife will continue to work on us and being better but I just wanted to say thank you for giving me a chance

Steve: I'm sorry we had to do this. I still love you and believe that you will be a great husband and father If you ever need to talk just call

Tuesday September 9, 10:27 pm

Steve: I just spent two hours talking to Ozzie. It was all about you. We love you and we will always figure out a way to keep you in our lives. When you are done with football I will hire you to help me raise Great young men. I still love you!!!

Ray: I know it's a rough time for all of us I love all of you and that will never change for life!

Steve: I will help you make it a great life indeed. I give you my WORD

Ray: That means the world to me and my family we greatly appreciate you and thank you.

15. From the article: A few days later, after thinking about it more, Rice told friends he believed Bisciotti was suggesting that, as long as he kept quiet and stuck to the story that he had misled team officials and Goodell about what had happened in the elevator, the Ravens would take care of him down the road. He felt incredibly insulted.

Steve Bisciotti: "I cannot believe that Ray ever thought I was suggesting he keep quiet, when he got the texts or later on. They were not an insult. To the contrary, I think he knew these were messages from the heart, as were his responses to me. I wear my heart on my sleeve. Everyone knows that, including Ray."

As always, we endeavor to keep you, the public and the fans, fully informed, and we promise to continue to do so. We may all wish this incident to be put behind us, to concentrate on how we can learn from it and apply the lessons to a more aware and sensitive society, but as it continues to warrant attention, we will address it with the utmost candor and openness. We hope to live up to the support you have given us.

Stephen J. Bisciotti,

on behalf of the Baltimore Ravens organization

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