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Goodell releases new statement about NFL protests

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Former NFL football star Colin Kaepernick started an epidemic during the 2016 preseason games when he began protesting the national anthem. On Aug. 14 and Aug. 20, Kaepernick went unnoticed while sitting during the national anthems in his first two games as a San Francisco 49er. He was not in uniform and did not play during these games. The third game, however on Aug. 26, he gained national attention. The 49ers released a statement later that night confirming he sat during the anthem.

Kaepernick told the media that he sat during the anthem because of the oppression of people of color and ongoing issues with police brutality throughout the nation. Kaepernick, despite currently being a free agent, has continued to fight for his beliefs, gaining supporters throughout the NFL and the country.

Starting in September 2017, other players from several NFL teams began following suit in protest by kneeling, locking arms, raising fists or just waiting in locker rooms during the anthem. President Donald Trump retaliated by tweeting that the NFL players were being disrespectful and that they should be "fired" for not honoring our country. He said the protests were disrespectful to the American flag and the country's military. In early 2016, former Seattle Seahawks player and Green Beret Nate Boyer sent Kaepernick a letter and the two met up. He explained to Kaepernick that taking a knee was a much more respectful way of protesting, as in the military, soldiers take a knee for a fallen member.

On Sunday, Oct. 8, 2017, Vice President Mike Pence made headlines after leaving the Indianapolis Colts and San Francisco 49ers game after several players from both teams knelt during the anthem. He told CNN that he did not want to "dignify their demonstration." He tweeted several times, explaining his frustrations.

"I stand with @POTUS Trump, I stand with our soldiers, and I will always stand for our Flag and our National Anthem." Pence tweeted. In a reply tweet, he also said, "While everyone is entitled to their own opinions, I don't think it's too much to ask NFL players to respect the Flag and our National Anthem."

More recently, it has been noticed across the country that the NFL has gained more followers. The original "take a knee" protests have moved past the NFL to college and high school sports after Trump's ongoing attacks on the demonstrations.

On Friday, Oct. 20, football players in Midland High School in Michigan held a silent protest during the game's national anthem. Also on Oct. 20, several Kennesaw State University cheerleaders in Georgia took a knee out of sight of the football stadium's audience during the national anthem for their game. Last month, 16-year-old Cedric Ingram-Lewis and 18-year-old Larry McCullough were kicked off their football team in Crosby, Texas after participating in their own demonstration. Ingram-Lewis raised his fist and McCullough took a knee, protesting racial inequity.

On Wednesday, Oct. 18, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell told USA Today that the league wants players to stand for the anthem, but it will not be forcing them with any rule changes. Goodell told USA Today, "We just had two days of conversations with our owners of which this was a fair amount of the conversation and I think our clubs all see this the same way."

"We want our players to stand. We're going to continue to encourage them to stand. And we're going to continue to work on these issues within the community. I can't deal with hypotheticals right now. We'll deal with these issues as they come up, but for right now, that's our focus."

Goodell's statement came one week following Dallas Cowboys Owner Jerry Jones stating that he would bench any of his players that were seen being disrespectful to the flag.

The NFL hosted a meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 17 with league executives, franchise owners, players and NFL Players Association representatives that were able to express their viewpoints on the issues affecting communities. Goodell later said that he wants the league to stay out of politics and that their goal was "to put that at zero" in terms of the number of protestors.

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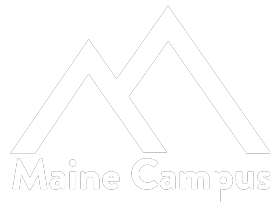
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