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COMMUNICATIONS

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**COMMISSIONER GOODELL APPOINTS PAUL TAGLIABUE HEARING OFFICER
FOR APPEALS OF DISCIPLINE IN SAINTS BOUNTY MATTER**

Commissioner Roger Goodell today notified the NFL Players Association and the four players who have appealed their suspensions in the Saints bounty matter that he has appointed former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue as the hearing officer to decide the appeals and bring the matter to a prompt and fair conclusion.

Under the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the NFLPA, Commissioner Goodell has the exclusive authority to hear appeals of discipline for conduct detrimental or appoint a designee to hear and decide an appeal. Commissioner Goodell consulted with NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith in several conversations before deciding to appoint another hearing officer for this case.

“I have held two hearings to date,” Commissioner Goodell said, “and have modified the discipline in several respects based on my recent meetings with the players. To bring this matter to a prompt and fair conclusion, I have appointed former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue to serve as the hearing officer for the upcoming appeals. Paul Tagliabue is a genuine football authority whose tenure as commissioner was marked by his thorough and judicious approach to all matters. He has many years of experience in NFL collective bargaining matters and an impeccable reputation for integrity.

“To be clear, I have not consulted with Paul Tagliabue at any point about the Saints matter nor has he been any part of the process. Furthermore, under our process the hearing officer has full authority and complete independence to decide the appeal and determine any procedural issues regarding the hearings. I will have no role in the upcoming hearings or in Mr. Tagliabue’s decisions.”

Tagliabue, the NFL’s commissioner from 1989-2006, will conduct hearings for the four players (Scott Fujita, Anthony Hargrove, Will Smith, and Jonathan Vilma) on October 30 at a time and location to be determined by him. He will issue a decision as soon as possible after the hearings.

In a letter to DeMaurice Smith, Commissioner Goodell said, “Commissioner Tagliabue’s deep experience in professional football and his reputation for integrity and sound judgment, as well as his understanding of the CBA, the parties’ past practices, issues surrounding player safety rules and the integrity of the game, make him singularly qualified to hear and decide the appeals in an efficient and fair manner for all concerned.”

Tagliabue, an attorney, is chairman of the Georgetown University Board of Directors. Tagliabue was founding chairman of the Graduate Institute of International Commerce of the State University of New York. He has served on the boards of the United Way of America, the National Urban League, and on the boards of other non-profit organizations. Earlier this year, Tagliabue was honored by the Jackie Robinson Foundation with its Humanitarian Award.