
"Detrimental to the League": Gambling and the Governance of Professional Football, 1946-1963

MICHAEL E. LOMAX

*Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies
University of Georgia*

IN 1963, NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE (NFL) COMMISSIONER PETE ROZELLE suspended Green Bay Packers running back Paul Hornung and Detroit Lions defensive tackle Alex Karras for betting on professional football games. Although he found no evidence that either player attempted to influence the outcome of a game, Rozelle suspended both players indefinitely, reinstating them after eleven months. Several players on the Detroit Lions were also fined for betting on the 1962 NFL Championship game. At the same time, Baltimore Colts owner Carroll Rosenbloom was also under investigation for allegedly betting on football games. After a full investigation no evidence was found to incriminate Rosenbloom.

Scholarly research regarding the link between professional football and gambling has been minimal. Scholars have virtually ignored the NFL's first gambling scandal, the 1946 championship game. A few popular sources highlight events leading up to Hornung's and Karras' suspensions. In addition, scholars have yet to examine how the NFL's response to gambling influenced the development of its governance structure. This paper analyzes the forces that led to the proposed fix of the 1946 NFL Championship game, examines Carroll Rosenbloom's association with gamblers, and investigates the events that led to Hornung's and Karras' suspensions. Three questions will serve to guide the narrative: how did the

proposed fix of the 1946 championship game shape the NFL's policy on gambling; what were the forces that resulted in Hornung's and Karras' suspensions and Rosenbloom's pardon; and how did the NFL's response to these gambling occurrences influence the development of the sport's governance structure in terms of conduct detrimental to the league.¹

The National Football League's response to gambling was instrumental in shaping the sport's governance structure to deal with league misconduct. The gambling scandals of 1946 and 1963 occurred at a time when the NFL's popularity rose dramatically. The effort to fix the 1946 championship game marked the beginning of the NFL owners granting Commissioner Bert Bell control of the decision-making process. The gambling scandal was one of many ways Bell centralized power within the commissioner's office. This centralized power allowed him to develop an investigative staff, create what can best be described as an information bureau, and devise a more structured set of penalties and fines to prevent players, owners, and officials from associating with gamblers. Furthermore, Bell sought to quell rumors that could cast doubt upon whether a game was played on the level. Bell recognized that he could not stop people from betting on league games. Therefore, his major concern was to maintain the sport's integrity in times of increased popularity.

Unlike the 1946 scandal, the Hornung and Karras incident involved two high profile players and a NFL owner. Like Bell, Rozelle utilized the gambling scandal to further centralize power within the commissioner's office. The owners increased his authority to impose sanctions that included a raised ceiling on fines, and he increased the investigative staff to gather evidence of wrongdoing. Rozelle's suspension of Hornung and Karras served to sustain the league's integrity before the public and sent a strong message to the other players regarding the consequences of betting on games. His exoneration of Rosenbloom, however, established a double standard regarding the administration of fines or suspensions.

Neither Bert Bell nor Pete Rozelle deluded themselves into thinking their efforts would eliminate gambling from their growing sport. Both of their responses to the scandals led to formalizing the NFL's governance regarding league misconduct. However, both commissioners focused primarily on constructing a public relations campaign designed to sustain the NFL's image and integrity. The NFL benefited from an informal alliance with the bookmakers themselves. Bookmakers also had a vested interest in professional football remaining honest or face possible ruin. More important, public relations served as the fundamental underpinning of the NFL's governance structure. Bell and Rozelle sought to create the perception that the commissioner safeguarded the game's image and integrity. In other words, a change in image more than the rules against gambling proved every bit as powerful and effective.

Professional football's early history can best be described as a quest for respectability and stability. During the 1920s, NFL franchises were cheap and almost always unprofitable as the professional game was neither very popular nor respected. All teams had a hard time surviving, especially clubs in minor towns that had a smaller potential audience.² Although the majority of their clubs were located in large urban centers, professional football remained a minor sport in the 1930s. The early owners had survived through their business acumen, political associations, underworld connections, and even by gam-

bling. Tim Mara, a bookmaker and member of Tammany Hall, formed the New York Giants in 1925 and conducted business under the striped umbrella at New York State racetracks when bookmaking was still legal. Arthur Rooney, a gambler involved in local politics, won \$256,000 at the Saratoga Race Track in 1927 and bought the Pittsburgh Steelers franchise for \$2,500. The Steelers were established in 1933 in anticipation of the passage of laws permitting Sunday sports. Rooney also allegedly hired Joe Bach as his head coach in order for the Steelers coach to pay back a gambling debt. Charles Bidwell, owner of the Chicago Cardinals and Sportsman Park racetrack, was the third NFL patriarch with questionable associations, while Eddie O'Hare, a Bidwell partner and director of the Cardinals, had fronted for Al Capone at the Hawthorne Dog Track.³

In 1941, the NFL established the commissioner's office. Elmer Layden, head football coach and athletic director at Notre Dame, was named the league's first commissioner. The move was in part a response to League President Joe Carr's death in 1939 and the magnates' dislike of his successor, Carl L. Storck, the league's secretary-treasurer. In addition, the owners had the lofty aspiration of forming an umbrella organization patterned after Organized Baseball with a commissioner at the helm. The sport's growth facilitated the need for an executive with the authority to settle disputes, impose sanctions, and negotiate contracts with radio. According to *Chicago Tribune* sports editor Arch Ward, the NFL owners were prepared to grant Layden the authority to handle these duties. Whatever ambitions they may have had about developing this organizational structure was thwarted by U.S. entry into World War II.⁴

In 1943, Layden investigated rumors regarding professional football players associating with gamblers. The *Washington Evening Star* reported that rumors circulated linking several Washington Redskins players with a "gambling coup or a series of them." Several games toward the end of the season ended with questionable outcomes, but when Layden released the results of his investigation he did not find "the slightest bit of factual evidence of collusion between anyone in the league and gamblers."⁵

Rumors linking the Washington Redskins to local gamblers marked the first time allegations of possible game fixing appeared in print. According to *Washington Evening Star* journalist Walter McCallum, rumors regarding professional football's association with gamblers had been heard for years but seldom appeared in print. Given that several NFL owners had connections with the gambling underworld, a gambling subculture undoubtedly existed among the players. McCallum concluded that the potential gambling coup regarding the Washington Redskins had "gone too far beyond the rumor stage to brush off in a city where on six Sundays more than 35,500 people . . . watched the pros play football."⁶

Despite these rumors, by the end of World War II, the NFL appeared to be on the brink of stability. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, in 1945 the NFL's attendance reached 1,918,000 spectators for fifty league and seventeen exhibition games. The following year the NFL's attendance leaped to 2,600,000. This increased spectatorship was an unparalleled achievement in professional sports.⁷ It was within this context that the NFL experienced its first gambling scandal. On the morning of the 1946 NFL Championship game between the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants, Commissioner Bert Bell learned that Giants players Frank Filchock and Merle Hapes had been offered bribes to throw the

game. Filchock was the Giants starting quarterback and enjoyed his best year as a pro, finishing seventh in the league in passing and tenth in rushing. Hapes was a reserve fullback who signed with the Giants after spending three years in the U. S. Army. He was expected to see plenty of action due to the injury to the Giants leading ball carrier, Bill Paschal. Alvin Paris, a novelty storeowner, offered Hapes and Filchock \$2,500 and a \$1,000 bet each on the Bears provided they "lay down" in the championship game. The players refused the offer. New York police had Paris under close surveillance as part of a citywide crackdown on gambling. Detectives learned of the attempted fix as a result of tapping Paris' phone.⁸

In addition to the police investigation, rumors of the prospective fix occurred the day before the game. The Bears were favored by ten points the entire week. Suddenly the spread dropped to 7½ points after some heavy betting took place at the ten-point price. *Washington Post* sportswriter Shirley Povich reported that "word of the attempted 'fix' spread rapidly across the nation via the bookies' underground, and hit them during the business peak in the two hours before the game." Prior to kickoff, the point spread rose to thirteen points when the bookmakers learned that Hapes and Paschal would be missing from the Giants' lineup. According to the *Chicago Times*, the "bookies took a sound beating" when the Bears won 24-14.⁹

The police investigation led New York Mayor William O'Dwyer and Police Commissioner Arthur Wallender to summon Bell, Giants owner Tim Mara, head coach Steve Owen, and Filchock and Hapes to the mayor's home. After an intense interrogation that lasted the entire night, Hapes admitted that he had received a bribe offer but refused Paris' bid. On the other hand, Filchock denied any knowledge of the affair. Evidently, O'Dwyer was convinced that Filchock was telling the truth and recommended that he play in the championship game. Based upon the mayor's recommendation, Bell allowed Filchock to play but suspended Hapes pending further investigation.¹⁰

The police's preliminary investigation revealed that Hapes and Filchock had met Paris on several occasions throughout the season. On November 23, Paris met Hapes at a cocktail party, and Filchock's name came up during the course of their conversation. On December 8, Paris took Hapes and his wife to dinner after the Giants clinched the Eastern Division title. After dinner Paris supposedly told Hapes it would be a good idea to "fix" the championship game. When Hapes indicated how problematic that would be, the issue was dropped. Two days later, Paris telephoned Filchock and invited him to his novelty store. At this time Paris offered both players a bribe to throw the championship game, but they declined.¹¹

On January 7, 1947, the trial reinforced the police's preliminary investigation. The *Chicago Times* reported that the district attorney's office had evidence eight hours before the game that Filchock had received a bribe offer prior to the contest. Assistant District Attorney George Monaghan read into the record Paris' sworn statement, revealing his bribe offer to Hapes and Filchock five days before the game. On the witness stand, Filchock admitted lying to Mayor O'Dwyer about receiving a bribe offer because he had rejected it. Filchock admitted he was aware that the NFL rules required a player to report such offers. Hapes's rationale for not reporting the bribe was due to Paris' promise of a job in his novelty store during the off-season. The trial revealed both players' associations with Paris throughout the regular season.¹²

During the course of the trial, Bell took initial steps to prevent the possible reoccurrence of fixing a NFL game. Responding to Paris' swift conviction, Bell suspended both players and then granted them hearings. After the hearings, Bell stated that he would not render a final decision until he gathered more evidence from the district attorney's office. Next, he contacted officials of all NFL clubs urging them to push for anti-bribe legislation in their respective states, to make it a crime to engage in such action. Bell asked his brother, Pennsylvania Governor John Bell, to secure appropriate legislation. Since the 1919 Chicago Black Sox scandal, New York State had anti-bribe legislation, which led to Paris' conviction.¹³

Bell proposed three resolutions at the NFL owners' winter meeting to amend the leagues bylaws. On January 22, 1947, the ten club owners gave Bell the power to suspend for life anyone connected with the league involved in crooked operations. Failure to report a bribe could result in one of three penalties: definite suspension, indefinite suspension, or a lifetime ban. This decision rested solely in the commissioner's hands. Players were directed to make reports of bribe attempts to their coach, owner, or immediate supervisor. All others involved in the game must bring that information to the commissioner's attention.¹⁴

On April 3, 1947, Bert Bell suspended Filchock and Hapes indefinitely from the NFL. According to Bell, both players were "guilty of actions detrimental to the welfare of the National League and of professional football." The penalty was the severest Bell could administer, since the bylaws were amended only after the attempted fix occurred. The suspension ended Hapes's NFL career, and he accepted a coaching position at the Bryan Consolidated School near Jackson, Mississippi. Hapes felt that Bell's action "was a little bit stiff." "It's a bunch of baloney about hurting the league," he added. Hapes continued, "All they got against us is just not reporting the attempt." What the Giants fullback failed to recognize was that his association with Paris throughout the season also influenced Bell's decision. On the other hand, Filchock held aspirations that he would play again in the NFL. During his banishment from 1947 to 1949, Filchock played with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of the Canadian Football League. In 1950, Filchock was reinstated, finishing his professional career with the Baltimore Colts.¹⁵

Press reaction reinforced Bell's suspension of the two Giants players. From the beginning, several sportswriters stressed the need for NFL officials to take stern measures to protect the sport's image. *Chicago Times* sportswriter Gene Kessler argued that it was in pro football's best interests "to discipline any player who even associates with known professional gamblers." Paul Zimmerman of the *Los Angeles Times* suggested the best way to handle this problem was to "cease disclaiming knowledge of gambling; admit the presence of this octopus and take necessary steps to cut off its tentacles." After Bell suspended Hapes and Filchock, Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* declared that pro football "must" be like Caesar's wife—"above suspicion." He added if Hapes and Filchock's actions were not detrimental to football then there was no true definition of the term. *Washington Evening Star* journalist Francis Stann asserted Bell protected professional football's good name "without further damage to the reputations of the young men whom the gamblers hoped to use."¹⁶

Bell continued to bolster the NFL's defenses against the reoccurrence of another gambling scandal. He compiled a list of all the big gamblers in the country and hired an ex-

Federal Bureau of Investigation man, Austin Gungel, to work out the league office in Philadelphia. Bell also employed at least one former FBI investigator in each league city on a retainer-fee basis. The commissioner hired the ex-FBI men to watch the gamblers and check the backgrounds of new owners, officials, or broadcasters. Bell established what could best be described as "a system of listening posts," informing him of substantial bets placed on any one team or any particular game. Each week during the season he received the betting prices and point spreads on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights, Saturday morning and Saturday night. Bell also wrote an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* to educate the public about "rumor mongers" who cast doubt about the game's integrity. Finally, before the start of the season Bell talked to every squad in the league, stressing the need for players to exhibit the "proper conduct" on and off the field.¹⁷

The foundation of the NFL's policy on gambling was to minimize the contacts between gamblers and players or league officials and simultaneously marginalize rumors that cast doubt on the game's image. The amendments to the bylaws served as a strong deterrent against the association of players and officials with known gamblers and standardized the league's policy on conduct detrimental to the league. In addition, by amending the bylaws, compiling a list of known gamblers, hiring former FBI investigators, and devising a system of "listening posts," Bert Bell shaped the NFL's governance structure dealing with league misconduct. The NFL's gambling policy was also a public relations campaign designed to insure the public that the league was taking initial steps to ensure their sport was honest.

Bert Bell, however, did not delude himself into thinking that his efforts would eliminate gambling occurrences from his growing sport. "I don't care if people bet, because people are [going to] bet," Bell told *Saturday Evening Post* writer W. C. Heinz. "I just want to be sure they stay away from our ballplayers and don't spread rumors." The attempt to fix the 1946 championship game occurred after a very successful year. Attendance reached new heights, the sport's popularity increased significantly, and the NFL met the challenge of a rival league, the All-America Football Conference (AAFC), even though costs rose dramatically. The fix attempt highlighted professional football's increased popularity, but it also attracted the gambling element to the sport. *Los Angeles Times* sportswriter Paul Zimmerman argued that an increase in gambling and a greater effort on the part of "sharpsters to put over 'deals' come with any boom, whether it be in sports or any other field." In essence, the fix attempt reflected the kinds of growing pains professional football endured to achieve a sense of stability.¹⁸

As football's popularity increased, NFL officials had to be concerned with the sport's image and maintaining a sense of integrity. Thus it was imperative to structure their governance in a way to achieve these ideals. Certainly Bell was responding to the Landis precedence in the 1919 Black Sox scandal. No doubt the personalities of the two commissioners contrasted in the way each man handled their gambling scandals. Unlike the moralistic Landis, Bell was comfortable in the gambler's world despite his upper-class upbringing. More important, the effort to fix the 1946 championship game marked the start of the owners granting Bert Bell control of the decision-making process. The scandal was one of many ways Bell centralized power within the commissioner's office. This centralized power allowed him to develop an investigative staff, create what can best be

described as an information bureau, and devised a more structured set of penalties and fines to deter players, owners, and officials from associating with gamblers. Public relations, however, served as the cornerstone of Bell's governance structure. Bell sought to create the perception that the commissioner safeguarded the game's image and integrity. In other words, a change in image more than the rules against gambling was every bit as powerful and effective.¹⁹

Bert Bell had formalized the NFL's governance structure regarding league misconduct. But how effective would the NFL's policy on gambling be? Were the penalties severe enough to deter players and officials from betting on NFL games? Moreover, if one of the owners were implicated, would a standing commissioner be willing to impose sanctions?

Questionable Associations

In the 1950s, the National Football League achieved economic stability. This achievement, in conjunction with the development of the NFL's symbiotic business relationship with television, resulted in a dramatic increase in betting on NFL games. The culmination of the point spread and television established the pattern for modern sports betting and bookmaking. An NFL owner, Carroll Rosenbloom, was implicated in gambling activities because of his business interests outside the NFL. These charges were brought to the owners' attention at their 1963 league meeting because Commissioner Pete Rozelle failed to investigate them. Rosenbloom's indiscretions, however, were overshadowed by allegations of players betting on NFL games and associating with known gamblers.²⁰

Several factors contributed to placing the league on sound economic ground. First, in 1949 the AAFC collapsed with three franchises—Baltimore, Cleveland, and San Francisco—absorbed into the NFL. With the move of the Rams to Los Angeles in 1946 and the San Francisco 49ers incorporated into the league, the NFL expanded its structure to the West Coast, thus making it a national league. Since none of the AAFC franchises absorbed in the NFL competed in an existing league market, the "merger" restored the NFL's monopoly.

Bert Bell's efforts to establish a symbiotic business relationship with television represented the second factor that placed the sport on sound economic ground. At first the television industry approached pro football cautiously, particularly NBC and CBS who virtually ignored the NFL. In 1954, the DuMont network increased its regular season coverage to twelve games. When DuMont's average audience rating rose to nearly 37 percent of all households that had sets turned on, major advertisers and big networks began taking notice of the NFL. Sport historian Ben Rader points out that television was carrying the sport far beyond the franchise cities, to such remote outposts as Bippus, Indiana, and Bangor, Maine. In 1956, NBC seized the rights to televise the NFL title game from DuMont, while CBS began to air regular season games. For their rights, CBS paid slightly over a million dollars annually.²¹

The NFL's business relationship with television coincided with what gambling scholar Richard Sasuly referred to as a new style of bookmaking. Television set the pattern for modern sports betting and bookmaking. Sports betting was simply the unrecorded part of the flood of money set loose by TV broadcasts. On Saturdays, Sundays, and Monday evenings during the football season numerous bars and taverns nationwide had its own

wire service hanging on the wall. It was free too, courtesy of advertisers, and it would later come complete with instant replay and in color. The increase in gambling on professional football paralleled its increase in popularity, spurred by the sport's business relationship with television. From the outset, gamblers would simply get odds on a game. For example, if a team were an eight-to-five favorite, a gambler would wager eight dollars to win five betting the favorite, or five to win eight betting the underdog. Obviously few gamblers were willing to risk money on a game between two mismatched teams.²²

To minimize their losses and facilitate betting on professional and collegiate sports, bookmakers invented a point spread covering a three-point range. A team might be quoted as a six-eight favorite; in other words, the bettor collected if the favorite won by eight or more, while a bet on the underdog paid off if the game was lost by six or fewer. Bettors soon recognized the pitfalls to this system as an unusually large number of games seemed to hit the middle and nobody won except the bookie. An adjustment was made where only one point line was given, usually a half-point added to avert a tie. Therefore, if a team were a seven-and-a-half favorite, it would have to win by eight for its backers to win. If the team won by seven or fewer points, the underdog won. Theoretically, the point spread made every game even. The new medium, in conjunction with the point spread, resulted in a dramatic increase in betting on NFL games. Yet the symbiotic business relationship between the NFL and television was instrumental in the sport challenging major league baseball's preeminent position in U.S. society. Undoubtedly, the sport's meteoric rise in the 1950s marginalized any concerns regarding the increase in betting on NFL games.²³

It is somewhat problematic to place a dollar amount on the increase wagering on NFL games. However, there is evidence to show a substantial increase in sports betting in the late 1940s and 1950s. The *Washington Post* reported that roughly 30 million Americans bet on horse racing, wagering approximately \$3.5 billion a year legally at the racetrack and another \$50 billion with bookies. The Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver, reported that the gambling syndicate of Frank Costello and Joe Adonis dominated every form of gambling in Bergen County, New Jersey. Adonis' gambling casinos alone grossed a reported \$1 million a month. Subsequent investigations revealed bookmaking earned more than \$4 million a year, with profits to the underworld so enormous they were difficult to estimate. Undoubtedly the NFL was caught in this web of increased gambling.²⁴

A final factor that led to the NFL being placed on a sound economic footing dealt with the disposition of the league's weak franchises. In 1952, New York Yanks owner Ted Collins exhibited a willingness to sell his club to Baltimore interests after the latter lost their NFL franchise the previous year. Instead, Collins sold the Yanks to businessmen in Dallas, Texas. The sale proved ill advised, and the Dallas franchise collapsed before the end of the season. The league took over the club, and the Texans operated as a road club in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Facing a lawsuit by the Baltimore stockholders for reinstatement of their franchise, Bert Bell turned the Dallas club over to Baltimore in 1953, but the move was contingent upon the stockholders selling 15,000 season tickets. This was a monumental task since, according to the *Washington Post*, only two of twelve clubs sold 15,000 or more tickets for the upcoming season. The undertaking was further complicated by the fact that Baltimore would inherit a franchise that won only one game the previous season.

In any event, Baltimore accomplished this during the 1952 Christmas season. By the time the campaign ended, \$300,000 was in the bank awaiting an owner.²⁵

It was within this context that Carroll Rosenbloom became the owner of the Baltimore Colts. Born on March 7, 1907, Rosenbloom inherited a clothing manufacturing business from his father and later expanded into the other business ventures. His firm manufactured work clothes, including most of the battle fatigues the U. S. armed forces wore in World War II. While attending college at the University of Pennsylvania, Rosenbloom played under Coach Bert Bell. At first, Rosenbloom was reluctant to become the Colts new owner. According to the *Washington Evening Star*, Rosenbloom was not happy about the personal publicity the job might entail and contemplated withdrawing from consideration. However, Bell proposed that the prospective owner take over the Colts on a promise that the league would underwrite his losses. Rosenbloom accepted, and in later years he would be fond of saying, "the investment never cost me a dollar."²⁶

From the beginning, Rosenbloom attempted to remain aloof from the club's day-to-day operations. He delegated that responsibility to Don Kellett, the Colts general manager and former television executive. When the Colts defeated the Chicago Bears in the 1953 league opener, sportswriter Tex Maule reported that Rosenbloom retained an active role in the club's affairs. In 1954, he hired Weeb Ewbank as the team's head coach. Ewbank replaced Ted Molesworth who became the Colts chief talent scout. The management team of Rosenbloom, Kellett, Ewbank, and Molesworth transformed the Colts into one of the NFL's most successful franchises by the end of the decade.²⁷

Carroll Rosenbloom's alleged gambling activities surfaced when the NFL underwent a transition in leadership. On October 11, 1959, Bell died and Alvin "Pete" Rozelle replaced him the following year. Born on March 1, 1926, in South Gate, California, Rozelle began his career as an assistant athletic director at the University of San Francisco in 1950. In 1952, he left that job and became publicity director for the Los Angeles Rams. Four years later Rozelle left the Rams to work for a public relations firm. In 1957, Rozelle returned to the Rams as general manager at Bell's behest. The commissioner felt that Rozelle could bring harmony to a club divided by warring factions. When Bell died, a deadlock developed in the choice of a new commissioner, and Rozelle was chosen as a compromise candidate. Wellington Mara and Paul Brown put Rozelle's name forward, and Rosenbloom recommended him for the job.²⁸

To understand the controversy surrounding Carroll Rosenbloom, it is necessary to describe his relationship with Louis A. Chesler. Chesler was one of Rosenbloom's close friends, and they were involved in several business deals. In 1962, Chesler controlled three large companies—Universal Controls, General Development, and Seven Arts, Ltd. Other corporate officers involved in this sophisticated acquisition of these three companies included Morris M. Schweble, a New York attorney; Max Orovitz, an associate of gangster Meyer Lansky; and Carroll Rosenbloom. According to author Robert Pack, Chesler was instrumental in bringing gambling to Freeport in the Bahamas in 1963. When Chesler needed advice on staffing the Monte Carlo Casino at Freeport, he turned to Meyer Lansky, a renowned mob boss and reputed controller of gambling in the Caribbean. Acting on Lansky's advice, Chesler chose Frank Ritter, Max Courtney, and Charles Brudner—all New York bookmakers with large clienteles—to run the casino.²⁹

In addition to being business associates, Rosenbloom and Chesler were betting partners. Chesler was known as a "compulsive gambler," and he reportedly wagered as much as \$500,000 on a horse race. Reportedly, Rosenbloom and Chesler wagered a "bundle" on the 1958 championship game between the Baltimore Colts and the New York Giants. This contest that went into sudden death overtime has been touted as the game that established the NFL as a television attraction with enormous audience potential. Both men supposedly bet on the Colts to win by four or more points. On their way down the field to ultimate victory, the Colts surprised everyone by passing up an opportunity to kick a field goal and win by three points. Instead, the Colts risked losing it all, scored a touchdown, and won by six points. The decision to go for the touchdown instead of a field goal was a source of controversy. Rosenbloom allegedly got on the press phone and ordered his team to go for a touchdown, but no evidence exists to determine whether this call was made. In any event, the Colts won by six points, and Rosenbloom and Chesler were ecstatic.³⁰

In 1958, Rosenbloom and Chesler advanced the initial start-up capital to Mike McLaney, a professional gambler, to purchase the Hotel Nacional with its casino in Havana, Cuba. Rosenbloom loaned McLaney a reported \$200,000 to buy the hotel. This venture, however, coincided with Fidel Castro's takeover of Cuba, forcing McLaney to flee the country, leaving Rosenbloom and Chesler's money behind. McLaney then filed a \$4.2 million lawsuit against Rosenbloom, claiming he had been cut out of a share in the American Totalizer Company takeover, engineered by the Baltimore owner and Chesler. McLaney argued that he had introduced the two men and was entitled to a finder's fee. On September 2, 1960, McLaney filed his suit in federal court in Miami, Florida, to recover the fee in either money or stock. The trial's bizarre testimony resulted in revealing Rosenbloom's prior gambling activities.³¹

Four principals who claimed Rosenbloom bet on or against the Baltimore Colts produced two sets of affidavits. Robert J. McGarvey, a former Philadelphia detective and one-time Rosenbloom employee, stated that he placed bets for the Baltimore owner on professional football games. The former detective pointed to the last game of the 1953 season, between the San Francisco 49ers and the Colts, when Rosenbloom bet against his club and won a substantial amount of money. Larry E. Murphy, McLaney's chauffeur and Rosenbloom's golf caddy, asserted, "I particularly remember that in 1953 when his team, the Colts, was playing against the 49ers out on the coast, Rosenbloom bet a large amount of money against his own team, and because of the point spread, won the bet." Richard Melvin, an investor married to Tommy Dorsey's widow, claimed: "I distinctly remember that during one professional football season he made nine straight winning bets on professional football games." McLaney also pointed to the final game of the 1953 season. Although he erroneously stated the Colts played the Pittsburgh Steelers instead of the 49ers, McLaney declared that Rosenbloom wagered \$55,000 against his own team. McLaney also alleged that the Baltimore owner left several of his best players at home for that game. Despite this damaging testimony, Federal Judge Joseph P. Lieb dismissed the suit and ordered the records sealed, on the grounds that revealing the contents of the depositions would humiliate and embarrass Rosenbloom.³²

In 1961, ten months after the depositions were sealed, Sam Benton, a Miami Beach private investigator, delivered new affidavits from McLaney, McGarvey, Melvin, and Murphy to Commissioner Pete Rozelle. Evidently these men used the same information in the construction of four new affidavits. Benton became involved in the Rosenbloom affair because of his investigation of an insurance fraud case against the Baltimore owner. According to the Miami *Herald*, four insurance companies sued Rosenbloom over a 1950 fire, alleging that he had made false claims to collect \$130,000. In any event, Benton admitted that his interest in taking the affidavits to Rozelle was to "remove the halo from Rosenbloom and reveal his true character." According to the private detective, Rozelle received him "coldly." When Rozelle failed to investigate these charges, Benton delivered forty copies of the affidavits to the NFL owners at their 1963 league meeting.³³

While Benton delivered the affidavits to the NFL owners, McLaney continued his court battle with Rosenbloom. For the first time, the press reported Rosenbloom's alleged gambling activities. According to *Baltimore Sun* sportswriter Bob Maisel, these affidavits were essentially given to the Miami *Herald* for publication. Rosenbloom's attorney Jerome Doyle argued that the new affidavits were in violation of the court order when the four men used the same information in the sealed depositions. However, Judge George C. Young threw out the motion, carefully emphasizing that he was not ruling on the truth or falsity of the accusations. Judge Young added that he was "of the opinion that the facts of the evidence do not constitute cause for contempt." Moreover, the sealing order applied only to the first McLaney-Rosenbloom lawsuit three years earlier.³⁴

Rosenbloom's alleged gambling activities placed Pete Rozelle in an awkward situation. Rozelle's selection as a compromise candidate to succeed Bell was due, in part, because he had no enemies among the owners. From the outset, Rozelle began his tenure by focusing primarily on maximizing the magnates' profits. He devised "League Think," an organizational concept designed to sell the league's collective television rights as a single package, centralize its video marketing, and share its broadcast revenues equally among all franchises. League Think would never have gotten off the ground without the passage of the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961. Rozelle's initial effort to get legal sanction for League Think was struck down in a court decision, leading the commissioner along with major league baseball to turn to Congress to push through the federal legislation. Simultaneously, Rozelle had to convince the owners in the three largest markets—the Maras in New York, George Halas in Chicago, and Dan Reeves in Los Angeles—to agree to share equally the revenues generated by television. Rozelle successfully lobbied Congress for passage of the Sport Broadcasting Act and convinced the aforementioned owners to go along with the plan. In 1962, he negotiated the first of several contracts with CBS that marked the start of the NFL's unprecedented prosperity.³⁵

Rozelle was now placed in the unenviable position of investigating one of his employers. The situation was further complicated by Rozelle's need to probe an owner who had endorsed him for the job. Therefore, it was somewhat predictable when he stonewalled any inquiry into these alleged gambling activities. Since the affidavits were delivered to the owners, Rozelle had to take some action. However, allegations of players betting on NFL games and associating with gamblers overshadowed Rosenbloom's questionable activities.

Guilty by Association

On January 5, 1963, the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that Pete Rozelle had been investigating rumors of a possible pro football scandal. The probe was in response to Chicago Bears owner George Halas' request to determine whether any members of his club were involved. Chicago Bears fullback Rick Casares voluntarily took a lie detector test and was asked if he had thrown games or tried to reduce the margin of victory. Although Casares passed both tests, the episode served to cast doubt upon his integrity. According to the *Milwaukee Journal*, the test revealed that Casares associated with known gambler and businessman Abe Samuels, and he also frequented "hoodlum hangouts."³⁶

Rozelle admitted that he had been investigating rumors of "unusual activity" for the past two years and, in addition to the Bears, had probed "three or four other clubs." Two other teams under investigation were the Detroit Lions and the Green Bay Packers. Reports of unusual betting activity involved two games with the Packers during the 1962 season. According to the *New York Times*, in both cases the reports said money from the same source had wagered correctly. As a result, bookmakers in Boston and New York refused to accept subsequent Packers games. On January 31, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that Rozelle had extended his probe to include the Baltimore Colts and the Pittsburgh Steelers. Although he found nothing criminal in nature, Rozelle added that a number of players from these various clubs were found to be "associating with undesirable types."³⁷

Green Bay Packers halfback Paul Hornung and Detroit Lions defensive tackle Alex Karras were two of those players under suspicion. Nicknamed the "Golden Boy" at Notre Dame where he won the Heisman Trophy, Hornung was the Packers' first round draft pick in 1957. In 1959, he had developed into an all-purpose halfback and led the NFL in scoring with 94 points. The following year Hornung set a single season record, scoring 176 points and, by 1961, was named the NFL's most valuable player. Early indications of Hornung's betting habits had surfaced during his senior year at Notre Dame. At the end of the season, Hornung played in the East-West Shrine game in San Francisco. At dinner one night on the coast he met Barnard "Barney" Shapiro, a big, suave man in his early thirties. Shapiro, a Nevada businessman, owned the United Coin Machine, a pinball and slot company, and also had a stake in the Royal Nevada Hotel, which included a gambling casino. Hornung and Shapiro became friends, and the latter called the Packers halfback once or twice a week during the football season. One of his questions was always the same: "How do you think the Packers will do this week?" According to Lombardi biographer David Maraniss, by 1959 the nature of the telephone conversations changed. Along with making recommendations to Shapiro, Hornung began asking the gambler to place bets for him. Hornung reportedly made bets of \$100 to \$200 with some as high as \$500. Hornung ceased placing bets by the 1962 preseason, except for one occasion where he won \$1,500.³⁸

After the 1962 championship game, Rozelle summoned Hornung to New York. From the outset, it appeared obvious to him that Rozelle was aware of his betting activities. According to Maraniss, Hornung suspected they had tapped his phone in the apartment he shared with teammates Max McGee and Ron Kramer. Rozelle wanted Hornung to

take a lie detector test, but he refused. Instead, Hornung threaten to appear before Arkansas Senator John L. McClellan's Investigation Committee on gambling and expose the NFL's gambling subculture. Rozelle admitted he did not want that to happen and urged Hornung to keep their meeting confidential.³⁹

Alex Karras was an All-American from the University of Iowa. In 1957, Karras won the Outland Trophy, an award given to the best offensive or defensive lineman in college football. The following year he joined the Detroit Lions and was one of the premier defensive linemen in the NFL for twelve years. Karras' involvement in gambling surfaced as the result of a joint investigation by the FBI, the NFL, and Senator McClellan's Investigation Committee. Karras reportedly made six bets on NFL games in 1958, his first year in the league. In 1962 Karras wagered \$100 on his own team against Green Bay. That same year, he bet \$100 on the Packers in the championship game against the New York Giants.⁴⁰

Karras was the co-owner of the Lindell A. C. Cocktail Lounge with Jim and John Butsicar. The FBI had the Butsicar brothers under surveillance because of their connections with gamblers and bookmakers. Because of their association with gamblers, Detroit Lions officials exerted pressure on him to sell his interests in the Lindell Bar. Edwin J. Anderson, the Lions general manager, reportedly said, "I don't like the idea of a player owning a part of a bar where he might run into undesirable people." In response, Karras stated he would not give up his \$45,000 investment without a fight.⁴¹

On January 9, 1963, the Detroit Police Department had reportedly observed Detroit Lions players in the company of "known hoodlums" and notified the NFL authorities. Police Commissioner George Edwards reported that he notified the Lions ten days earlier regarding the players' associations with notorious gamblers. According to Edwards, two gamblers, Vito and Anthony Gicalone, continually associated with the same Lions players. While no evidence of anything involving criminal activity was found on any of the Lions players, the extensive media coverage had the makings of a public relations nightmare.⁴²

On January 17, Rozelle summoned Detroit Lions head coach George Wilson and Karras to New York for questioning. The summons was sparked by Karras' confession on the television show the "Brinkley Journal" that he bet on NFL games. Karras' admission placed him in violation of the NFL rules forbidding gambling, further casting doubt upon his integrity. The following day Karras and Lions linebacker Wayne Walker had a private conference with Rozelle in New York regarding betting on league games. After the meeting, Rozelle refused to comment and the players were "unavailable." Not until mid-April did news of the breaking scandal hit the sport pages and capture the nations attention.⁴³

Clearly Pete Rozelle was aware of the players and owners gambling activities and associations. He had inherited Bert Bell's infrastructure that kept tabs on known gamblers, the point spread on NFL games, and the cadre of ex-FBI men in league cities to investigate league misconduct. Rozelle expanded Bell's infrastructure to include the constant counseling of players and club officials regarding the importance of maintaining high standards of conduct. Yet the majority of the information on Rosenbloom and the players came from sources outside the NFL's governance structure, casting doubt upon its effectiveness. By the 1960s, the NFL was on the verge of becoming a booming industry, and the issues of image and integrity were critical elements in sustaining the league's popu-

larity and prosperity. Furthermore, the sport's unpredicted outcome had always been its most appealing characteristic. Any indication that this outcome was pre-determined, or the insinuation that the outcome was pre-arranged, could prove catastrophic.⁴⁴

Rozelle responded slowly to the gambling allegations. Several factors contributed to his pace and somewhat indecisive actions. External pressure from various civil rights groups and low-level members of the Kennedy Administration against George Preston Marshall's refusal to sign black players constituted the first factor. As early as 1957, several civil rights groups and labor organizations picketed Washington Redskins home games in order to pressure Marshall to sign black players. In 1961, the Redskins owner signed a thirty-year lease to play all home games in D.C. Stadium. As the "residential landlord" of the parks area, the Interior Department could deny the use of the stadium to any party practicing discriminatory hiring policies. Signing the lease led Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to pressure Marshall into signing black players.⁴⁵

Simultaneously, several local NAACP chapters threaten to boycott NFL exhibition games because of the segregated seating policies of several Southern cities. For example, on August 10, 1961, the NAACP's local chapter in Roanoke, Virginia, sent telegrams to six black players on both the Pittsburgh Steelers and Baltimore Colts, urging them to boycott the game on August 17. The Association charged the local chamber of commerce with selling tickets on a segregated basis. A suit was filed in federal district court charging the promoters with using a municipal property for the promotion of discrimination. The NAACP also stated that picket lines would have to be crossed by fans and players. The Roanoke situation required Rozelle to mediate the conflict. The Association withdrew its picket lines after the commissioner promised there would be no segregated seating.⁴⁶

The judge's ruling in the American Football League's antitrust suit against the NFL represented the second factor contributing to Rozelle's slow response to the gambling allegations. The suit was in response to the NFL placing franchises in Dallas and Minneapolis to drive the rival league out of business. Concurrently, AFL owners sought to loosen the NFL's hegemony over its player force. *Sports Illustrated* journalist Kenneth Rudeen reported that Rozelle spent a great deal of time exploring whether the government might prosecute the NFL for barging into the AFL's territory. He researched antitrust litigation and hired a Washington lawyer to defend the NFL. Rozelle's efforts paid dividends when Judge Rozel Thomson of the United States District of Maryland ruled that the AFL had no monopoly case against the NFL.⁴⁷

Rozelle's choice as a compromise candidate formed the final factor influencing his slow response to the gambling allegations. According to David Harris, several NFL observers gave odds that Rozelle would not last more than three or four years before the owners devoured him and found someone more seasoned. It was problematic to suggest that the amiable Rozelle would be able to handle the notoriously carnivorous egos of his employers. For a little over two years Rozelle had information from outside sources pointing to Rosenbloom and the players' gambling activities and associations. But the commissioner preoccupied himself with maximizing his employers' profits and simultaneously dealt with a potential NAACP boycott of exhibition games and the AFL's antitrust suit. However, the media storm in early January placed Rozelle in a position where he had to act. His response to these gambling allegations could make or break his commissionership.⁴⁸

On April 17, 1963, Rozelle made public the results of his investigation. He began his official report by stating there was "no evidence that any player has given less than his best in playing any game." No evidence was uncovered that any player wagered against his own team, but there was "clear evidence" some NFL players knowingly carried on undesirable associations, which, in some instances, led to their betting on their team. Based on this premise Rozelle suspended Hornung and Karras indefinitely for betting on league games and associating with gamblers or "known hoodlums." Five Detroit Lions players—John Gordy, Gary Lowe, Joe Schmidt, Wayne Walker, and Sam Williams—were fined \$2,000 each for betting on the 1962 NFL Championship game. Rozelle pointed out that neither Hornung nor Karras bet against their own team, sold information for betting purposes, or performed less than their best in any game. Their pattern of betting and transmission of specific information regarding NFL games for betting purposes, however, constituted serious breaches of their player contracts and the league's constitution and bylaws. In regards to the five Lions players, Rozelle concluded that their actions were "abnormal." He added: "this single violation of the constitution and bylaws should be placed in its proper perspective as an act that cannot be condoned because of the strict rules of the NFL, but one that should in no way adversely affect the reputation of those involved."⁴⁹

Several sports writers across the country praised Rozelle's actions. Morris Siegel of the *Washington Evening Star* stated Rozelle's actions was the only course and the "guilty parties had to be punished to satisfy the public's rightful demand to know what the sports world [was] doing about cleaning up its house." Miami *Herald* sportswriter Jimmy Burns argued that Rozelle pursued his probe diligently and "right-thinking" people would applaud his judgments. Oliver Kuechle of the *Milwaukee Journal* declared that Rozelle should be commended for his actions. Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* acknowledged that Hornung's and Karras' suspensions were harsh penalties, but the sanctions were justified because it involved the "honor" of the NFL. *Detroit Free Press* journalist Lyall Smith stated that the commissioner "not only stifled the snickers but jammed them down the throats of those who claimed he was too young, too mild, too meek, and too inexperienced."⁵⁰

Rozelle received high marks from several NFL owners, officials, and Senator John L. McClellan. George Marshall claimed the penalties were "just and gentle" and praised Rozelle for a job well done. Cleveland Browns owner Art Modell declared that the NFL would be stronger than ever, and the suspensions and fines served as a "strong deterrent in the future." Dallas Cowboys General Manager Tex Schramm pointed out that Rozelle's handling of the scandal "made everybody accept him as commissioner and no longer as a boy playing the part. He gained once and for all everybody's complete respect." Schramm added that Rozelle's handling of the scandal was a skillful display of crisis management requiring "fortitude under extraordinary pressure." Senator McClellan commended the NFL for taking "affirmative action to clean up conditions in professional football."⁵¹

Detroit Lions owner William Clay Ford was the lone dissenter among the NFL elite. The Lions' owner recognized that the punishment Rozelle administered would be rough, "but not as rough as this." Ford added that he did not feel the Lions' organization was derelict in the supervision of its affairs or its personnel. He was quick to assert that the Lions did not condone actions in violation of league rules. Since Rozelle levied a \$4,000 fine against the Lions' organization, fined five of their players, and suspended their All-Pro defensive tackle indefinitely, Ford's grudging remarks were predictable.⁵²

Virtually overlooked, and underreported, was the ongoing investigation of Carroll Rosenbloom. From the outset, the press focused primarily on the players' indiscretions and marginalized the Rosenbloom investigation. *Baltimore Sun* journalist Cameron Snyder reported that Rozelle said Rosenbloom's accusers withdrew their charges. Tex Maule and Shirley Povich raised some doubts about the way Rozelle handled the investigation. Maule pointed to the commissioner withholding the name of Hornung's associate, Barney Shapiro, until the day he announced the suspensions. Povich focused on Rosenbloom's on-going investigation citing Rozelle's critics and admirers would anticipate his judgment against the Baltimore owner. But when Rozelle declared that Rosenbloom's accusers withdrew their affidavits, Povich wondered what the commissioner meant by that. Both Maule and Povich speculated whether Rozelle was withholding information. However, Maule quickly dismissed his suspicion, concluding that his doubts were unfounded.⁵³

On July 16, 1963, Rozelle made public his investigation of Rosenbloom. The commissioner claimed: "No proof whatever has been uncovered that Rosenbloom ever bet on a NFL game since becoming an owner . . . the charges were unfounded." In an ironic turn of events, Rosenbloom's accusers had withdrawn their affidavits. According to Rozelle, McGarvey issued a new affidavit stating that he wagered on the football games and that to the best of his knowledge Rosenbloom "never bet on a pro game." As part of Rozelle's final report, the Baltimore owner "freely admitted that he has bet substantial sums on activities other than professional football" but indicated "that he has ceased such practices." At the time of announcement, the media storm had long since subsided.⁵⁴

It was unclear why Rosenbloom's accusers suddenly withdrew their affidavits. According to Harris, by the summer of 1963 Mike McLaney scheduled a meeting with Rozelle and supposedly handed the commissioner an envelope containing retractions of the previous charges. McLaney reportedly told Rozelle the "Irish Mafia" was after him, the nickname given to the Kennedy political machine. Rosenbloom was a good friend of Joseph Kennedy and President John F. Kennedy. The validity of such charges is subject to debate, but Rosenbloom's connection with Louis Chesler, who had ties with organized crime, could have also pressured McLaney to withdraw his charges.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Rosenbloom was unhappy with the way Rozelle handled the investigation. According to Harris, Rozelle recalled that the Baltimore owner was "upset about the delay and thought he was being left on the hook." The *Baltimore Sun* reported Rozelle awaited the outcome of the private litigation against Rosenbloom. On June 28, the Baltimore owner was acquitted of all charges. Rosenbloom's son, Steve, explained: "My father had helped Rozelle get his job but Rozelle had considered him guilty until proven innocent." Rosenbloom's anger towards Rozelle was unfounded. The revelations of his gambling habits were the result of his business deals unrelated to the NFL. In many ways, Rozelle saved the Baltimore owner's reputation and imposed no fines or a suspension. In any event, Rozelle's verdict in the Rosenbloom investigation marked the start of a strained relationship between the two men that lasted for the next fifteen years.⁵⁶

Conclusion

On March 16, 1964, after serving eleven months of their indefinite suspensions, Rozelle reinstated Hornung and Karras. Both players' conduct during this period influ-

enced the commissioner to lift their suspension. Rozelle met privately with both players prior to the announcement and found that they had a "clear understanding of the seriousness" of what they did. For Hornung, the suspension marked the beginning of the end of his fabulous career in professional football. He did have one more productive season in 1964, finishing fourth in the league in scoring. By 1966, Hornung lost his starting half-back position to Elijah Pitts and was out of the football the following year. Karras, on the other hand, had seven productive seasons with the Lions before he was released in 1971.⁵⁷

In 1964, *Sports Illustrated* named Pete Rozelle "Sportsman of the Year." The sporting periodical broke from its tradition of naming an athlete, and Rozelle became the first executive to win the award. Rudeen argued, "[Rozelle] bucked the almost universal trend in professional sport by emerging as a strong commissioner—making vigorous decisions, not all of them popular, and proving that he could act independently of the owners who hired him." The commissioner asked the public to believe, with him, in professional football's integrity. Rudeen added, "The public so believed; editorial voices, including most of those that had previously censured Rozelle, now spoke relieved praise."⁵⁸

The NFL's response to the gambling scandals served to standardize the league's policy on conduct detrimental to the league. The NFL's gambling policy can be summed up in three broad objectives: constant counseling of players and club officials to the importance of high standards of conduct; maintaining a strong intelligence system to discover and eliminate potential problems; and taking disciplinary action when rules or policy violations occur. But how effective was this policy? Was the NFL's gambling policy an integral part of the league's governance or a public relations campaign?

Part of this answer lies in the way Rozelle handled the Rosenbloom investigation. To be sure, Carroll Rosenbloom was one of the NFL's most influential owners. His relationship with Bell lent him influence from the beginning, and his team's success enhanced it. Rosenbloom was at the forefront in getting the league to recognize the players' union, and he made an unsuccessful attempt to arrange a possible merger with the AFL. Although the Baltimore owner denied the charges regarding his betting habits, Rozelle contended he had no choice but to investigate. To do otherwise would have established a double standard.

In fact, Rozelle established a double standard. According to his report, Rozelle found no evidence of players giving less than their best or trying to influence the outcome of a game. The players' association with "known hoodlums," leading to some betting, provided Rozelle the rationale to impose sanctions. On the other hand, Rozelle justified his actions to exonerate Rosenbloom when his accusers withdrew their affidavits and a court of law acquitted him of all charges. Yet no evidence was uncovered to suggest that Rosenbloom relinquished his relationship with Louis Chesler. Since Rozelle's status as commissioner was still in question, absolving Rosenbloom was understandable. Like the players, Rozelle was well aware of the power of the owners.

Rozelle benefited from a cooperative press that led to the construction of a public relations campaign designed to protect the league's image. Several articles appeared in various periodicals highlighting the NFL's governance structure that dealt with gambling occurrences. The owners increased Rozelle's authority to impose sanctions that included a raised ceiling on fines and hiring James Hamilton, a former head of the Los Angeles Police

Department's Intelligence Division, to counsel players and gather evidence of wrongdoing. More important, the overwhelming focus was investigating players, as opposed to owners. In this way, Rozelle and his press allies influenced public opinion into believing that the NFL was "above suspicion" regarding gambling incidents.⁵⁹

Much like his predecessor Bert Bell, Rozelle did not delude himself into thinking his public relations campaign would cleanse the sport of gambling activities. According to *Esquire* magazine, in 1965 college and professional football was projected to reap the richest gambling harvest of that time—over \$13 billion. Gambling experts estimated that the total money bet on football was equal to all other sports combined and exceeded horse racing by nearly \$2 billion. Like Bell, Rozelle sought to minimize the contacts of gamblers with players and owners as well as marginalize any rumors. Undoubtedly, his previous experience in public relations influenced the way he mediated the conflict.⁶⁰

The NFL benefited from an informal ally to insure the sport remained above suspicion—the bookmakers themselves. As Sasuly argued convincingly, the league's security officers used the bookmakers as an early warning system. To profit from their bribes, fixers would have to bet heavily on what they hoped was a sure thing. The bigger bookmakers were constantly on the alert for very large bets from strangers. For example, a bettor who normally wagered \$500 would cause the bookies to take notice if they suddenly bet \$20,000. Bookies profit from random results, and if a game was fixed they face the threat of ruin from betting coups. Bettors buy information and pay for inside information, about injuries or the chance that an athlete has been reached. Bookies keep an eye on such information, too. What they really want to know is who is betting and how much.⁶¹

Although he handled the conflict somewhat indecisively, the gambling scandal was one of several ways Pete Rozelle further centralized power within the commissioner's office. It should be noted that the scandal occurred almost simultaneously with his efforts to obtain legal sanction for League Think and his negotiation of a lucrative television contract with CBS. Combined with the external pressure from civil rights groups and the AFL's antitrust suit, Rozelle exhibited an ability to act independently of the owners who hired him. More important, Rozelle, like his predecessor Bert Bell, created the perception that the commissioner was the guardian of the game's integrity and image. A change in image more than the rules against gambling has been every bit as powerful and successful. Thus the way Rozelle handled the gambling scandal proved effective, and it secured his leadership role in the NFL.

Professional football has not dealt with gambling scandals on the same magnitude as the 1946 championship game, or the Hornung, Karras, and Rosenbloom affairs in the 1960s. The league's public relations campaign has been very effective in keeping the sport above suspicion. Rumors still persist, however, over the years regarding the players' and owners' associations with gamblers. Because the commissioners have safeguarded the league's image and integrity, the NFL has remained above suspicion.



¹Scholars have focused primarily on the gambling scandals that occurred in major league baseball and college basketball. See Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); idem, *Baseball: The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963);

David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball: From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); idem, *American Baseball: From the Commissioners to Continental Expansion* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970); Charles C. Alexander, *Our Game: An American Baseball History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1991); Benjamin G. Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Robert F. Burk, *Never Just A Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); idem, *Much More Than A Game: Players, Owners, & American Baseball Since 1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). For accounts on gambling in college sports, see Stanley Cohen, *The Game They Played* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); Humbert S. Nelli, "Adolph Rupp, the Kentucky Wildcats, and the Basketball Scandal of 1951," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 84 (1986): 56-70; Albert J. Figone, "Gambling and College Basketball: The Scandal of 1951," *Journal of Sport History* 16 (1989): 44-61; William H. Beezley, "The 1961 Scandal at North Carolina and the End of the Dixie Classic," in *Sport and Higher Education*, eds. Donald Chu et al. (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1985), 81-100; John R. Thelin, *Games Colleges Play: Scandal And Reform In Intercollegiate Athletics* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Murray Sperber, *Onward to Victory: The Crises That Shaped College Sports* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998). David Maraniss addresses Hornung's suspension in *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999). Popular sources on the 1946 and Hornung and Karras scandals include Herbert L. Marx, Jr., ed., *Gambling In America* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1952); Harry Wismer, *The Public Calls It Sport* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965); Tex Maule, *The Game* (New York: Random House, 1967); Bernie Parrish, *They Call It A Game* (New York: New American Library, 1971); Gerald Eskenzai, *There Were Giants In Those Days* (New York: SportsPages, 1976); Alex Karras and Herb Gluck, *Even Big Guys Cry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977); David Harris, *The League: The Rise and Decline of the NFL* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1986); Michael O'Brien, *Vince: A Personal Biography of Vince Lombardi* (New York: Morrow and Co., 1987); Robert W. Peterson, *Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Although he does not discuss the Hornung and Karras scandal, Larry Merchant chronicles gambling and the 1972 NFL season in *The National Football Lottery* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973).

²Marc S. Maltby, *The Origins and Early Development of Professional Football* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997); Keith McClellan, *The Sunday Game: At the Dawn of Professional Football* (Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 1998); Peterson, *Pigskin*, 76-77; Tom Bennett et al., *The NFL's Official Encyclopedic History of Professional Football* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 18-19; Maule, *The Game*, 113.

³Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 233; Stephen Mahoney, "Pro Football's Profit Explosion," *Fortune* 70 (1964): 154.

⁴*Chicago Tribune*, 16, 17, 18 January 1941, 4 February 1941, 5, 7 April 1941; *New York Times*, 18 January 1941, 7 April 1941.

⁵*Chicago Tribune*, 8 December 1943. A series of gambling coups were published in *Washington Evening Star*, 8 December 1943; *Washington Post*, 8 December 1943. Although newspaper accounts did not identify any player by name, Harry Wismer asserts that Washington Redskins star quarterback Sammy Baugh was implicated because he associated with a friend who was a local gambler. See Wismer, *Public*, 32. Three different investigations were supposedly conducted to substantiate the rumors. In addition to Layden, Redskins head coach Arthur J. "Dutch" Bergman investigated the allegations but found no evidence linking the club to local gamblers. Redskins owner George Preston Marshall asked Washington Police Chief Edward J. Kelly to investigate the rumors. Like Bergman, Kelly found no evidence of wrongdoing. See *New York Times*, 9 December 1943; *Washington Evening Star*, 9 December 1943; *Washington Post*, 9 December 1943. See also Dan E. Moldea, *Interference: How Organized Crime Influences Professional Football* (New York: William Morrow, 1989), 51-56.

⁶*Washington Evening Star*, 9 December 1943.

⁷*Chicago Tribune*, 29 December 1946. In 1946, the All America Football Conference's first year of operation, attendance reached 1,578,537 for fifty-six championship and eight exhibition games. The

AAFC champion Cleveland Browns drew 689,393 fans, eclipsing the old attendance of 521,000 set by the Green Bay Packers the previous year. In contrast, the NFL's attendance leapt to 2,600,000. Combined, both leagues drew 4,178,537 fans, an increase in patronage in excess of 100 percent. This increased spectatorship was an achievement unparalleled in professional sports at that time.

⁸*New York Daily News*, 16 December 1946; *New York Times*, 16 December 1946; *Chicago Times*, 16 December 1946; *Chicago Tribune*, 16 December 1946; *Washington Post*, 16 December 1946; *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1946.

⁹*Washington Post*, 16 December 1946; *Chicago Times*, 16 December 1946.

¹⁰*Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1946; *Milwaukee Journal*, 16 December 1946; *New York Daily News*, 16 December 1946; *Chicago Times*, 16 December 1946.

¹¹*New York Daily News*, 16 December 1946; *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1946; *Washington Evening Star*, 16 December 1946.

¹²*Chicago Times*, 8 January 1947; *Chicago Tribune*, 8 January 1947; *New York Daily News*, 8 January 1947; *New York Times*, 8 January 1947.

¹³*Chicago Tribune*, 9, 10 January 1947; New York's anti-bribe legislation in *Chicago Times*, 10 January 1947; *New York Daily News*, 10 January 1947; *New York Times*, 10 January 1947. Prior to the scandal, the NFL's policy on gambling read as follows: "Any person connected with the National Football League or any League member, in any capacity, whether stockholder, officer, director, coach, player, employee or official, who bets money or any other valuable thing on the outcome of any game or games played in the National Football League or by any member of the National Football League, shall be expelled from the League by the Commissioner and there shall be no appeal from his decision and every party involved or affected by the Commissioner's decision releases the Commissioner and waives every claim or any or all may have against the Commissioner individually and in his official capacity and/or against the National Football League and against any director, officer and stockholder or every club in the National Football League for damages and for all claims and demands whatsoever arising out of or in connection with the decision of the Commissioner." See *National Football League Constitution and By-Laws: Article X: Gambling* in Pro Football Hall of Fame, *National Football League*, Gridiron Library, Pro Football Hall of Fame, Canton, Ohio.

¹⁴*Chicago Times*, 23 January 1947; *New York Daily News*, 24 January 1947; *New York Times*, 24 January 1947; *Chicago Tribune*, 24 January 1947; *Washington Post*, 24 January 1947; *Los Angeles Times*, 24 January 1947.

¹⁵*New York Times*, 4 April 1947 (1ST QUOTATION); *Chicago Tribune*, 4 April 1947; *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April 1947; *Milwaukee Journal*, 4 April 1947; *Washington Post*, 4 April 1947 (2ND QUOTATION).

¹⁶*Chicago Times*, 17 December 1946; *Los Angeles Times*, 17 December 1946; *New York Times*, 4 April 1947; *Washington Evening Star*, 4 April 1947.

¹⁷W. C. Heinz, "Boss Of The Behemoths," *Saturday Evening Post*, 3 December 1955, p. 72; Bert Bell and Pete Martin, "Do the Gamblers Make a Sucker Out of You?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 6 November 1948, pp. 152-162, 179.

¹⁸Heinz, "Boss," 72; *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1946.

¹⁹Bell would also centralize power within the commissioner's office in labor relations. See Michael E. Lomax, "Conflict and Compromise: Professional Football's Labor Relations, 1957-1966," *Football Studies* 4 (2001): 5-39. Centralized power also allowed Bell to become a virtual dictator over the NFL's television policy in the 1950s. See Benjamin G. Rader, *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

²⁰According to Moldea, Bert Bell pressured Cleveland Browns co-owner Saul Silberman to sell his interest in the club due to his betting activities. Silberman, in conjunction with Ohio businessman David R. Jones purchased the Browns from Mickey McBride. Silberman was the president of the Tropical Park, Randall Raceway, and Painesville's Commodore Downs and in 1953 was forced to sell his interest in the Browns. However, as Moldea points out, the Silberman incident received minimal press coverage. See *Interference*, 82-83.

²¹For an account on the impact of television upon professional sports, see Jeff Neil-Lunsford, "Sport in the Land of Television: The Use of Sport in Network Prime-Time Schedules 1946-50," *Journal of Sport History* 19 (1992): 56-76; Robert W. McChesney, "Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States," in *Media Sports & Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publishers, 1989), 49-69; Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 83-99; Ron Powers, *Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1984), 45-51; Ira Horowitz, "Sports Broadcasting," in *Government and the Sports Business*, ed. Roger G. Noll (Washington, D.C.:The Brookings Institute, 1974), 281-283; Joseph Durso, *The All-American Dollar: The Big Business Of Sports* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 47-66.

²²Richard Sasuly, *Bookies and Bettors: Two Hundred Years Of Gambling* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 185-186. Richard Davies and Richard Abram argue that television dramatically changed sports betting by "democratizing the process and opening up sports for all to see" (p. 87). It provided prospective bettors the opportunity to scout teams and to contemplate future wagers. Combined with the expansion of sports reporting in daily newspapers, television provided the information that gave a new generation of gamblers confidence, albeit in false, in their own abilities as handicappers. More important, according to Davies and Abram, wherever there was a television set, there was a new type of sports wire service. By 1960, Western Union had shut down its horse telegraph operations. See *Betting The Line: Sports Wagering in American Life* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2001), 81-96.

²³Sasuly, *Bookies and Bettors*, 186-189. See also Figone, "Gambling," 45-46; Cohen, *The Game They Played*, 58-59; Timothy L. O'Brien, *Bad Bet: The Inside Story of the Glamour, Glitz, and Danger of America's Gambling Industry* (New York: Time Business, 1998), 236-241.

²⁴*Washington Post*, 23 August 1961; Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime report in Fred J. Cook, "The \$50 Billion Dollar Window," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 November 1961, p. 57.

²⁵Maule, *The Game*, 47-50; David S. Neft et al., *The Sports Encyclopedia: Pro Football* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974), 156, 162; Jon Morgan, *Glory for Sale: Fans, Dollars, and the New NFL* (Baltimore, Md.: Bancroft Press, 1997), 28-32; *New York Times*, 7, 12, 13 January 1953, 1 February 1953; *Washington Post*, 4 December 1952, 7, 12, 13 January 1953, 1 February 1953.

²⁶*Washington Evening Star*, 7 January 1953; Harris, *The League*, 43-44; Philip Taubman, "Carroll Rosenbloom's Obsession," *Esquire*, 21 November 1978, pp. 111-112, 114-115, 117; *Los Angeles Times*, 3 April 1979; *New York Times*, 3 April 1979. It should be noted that Bruce Livie, owner of the Bobanet racing stable and head of the NFL ticket sales drive, was also considered for club ownership.

²⁷Maule, *The Game*, 50-51.

²⁸Harris, *The League*, 7-13, 22-27; idem, "Pete Rozelle," *New York Times Magazine*, 15 January 1984, p. 16; Leonard Shecter, "Does Pete Rozelle Run Pro Football? Ask Joe Namath," *New York Times Magazine*, 17 August 1969, p. 82.

²⁹Robert Pack, *Edward Bennett Williams for the Defense* (New York: Harper & Row., 1983), 340-344. For accounts on Chesler's association with Lansky, see Robert Lacy, *Little Man: Meyer Lansky and the Gangster Life* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1991), 316-317; Hank Messick, *Lansky* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 221-235; Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 190.

³⁰There have been several accounts regarding Rosenbloom's alleged betting coup of the 1958 championship game. See, for example, Wismer, *Public*, 52-53; Shecter, "Does Pete Rozelle," 84; Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 190; Pack, *Edward Bennett Williams*, 339-340; Harris, *The League*, 45-46; Moldea, *Interference*, 89-95.

³¹Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 190; Pack, *Edward Bennett Williams*, 342; *Baltimore Sun*, 13 March 1963; *Miami Herald*, 13 March 1963.

³²Ibid. McGarvey and Melvin quotation in Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 193-194.

³³*Miami Herald*, 13 March 1963 (QUOTATION); Parrish, *They Call It a Game*, 191-192; Harris, *The League*, 46-47.

³⁴*Baltimore Sun*, 13 March 1963.

³⁵Kenneth Rudeen, "Sportsman of the Year," *Sports Illustrated*, 6 January 1964, pp. 23, 28; Harris, *The League*, 13-17. For Rozelle lobbying Congress for passage of the Sports Broadcasting Act, see Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 89-91; Horowitz, "Sports Broadcasting," 281-283.

³⁶*New York Herald Tribune*, 6 January 1963; *Chicago Tribune*, 6, 7 January 1963; *Detroit Free Press*, 5, 31 January 1963; *Milwaukee Journal*, 6, 7 January 1963; *New York Times*, 5, 9 January 1963; *Washington Post*, 5, 6, 7, 9 January 1963.

³⁷*New York Times*, 5 January 1963; *Detroit Free Press*, 31 January 1963. While the evidence is limited, it appears that Rozelle did not conduct an investigation until he was asked to do it. The fact that he did not begin an inquiry on Rosenbloom when evidence was brought to his attention suggests that his reported investigation of unusual activity was more public relations than substance.

³⁸For Hornung's extracurricular activities, see O'Brien, *Vince*, 133. Pete Rozelle, *National Football League Commissioner's Report On Investigation*, 17 April 1963, pp. 4-5, Pro Football Hall of Fame; *Milwaukee Journal*, 8 January 1963; *New York Times*, 18 January 1963; *Washington Post*, 18 April 1963; W. C. Heinz, "Golden is Back," *Life*, 28 August 1964, pp. 70-72. For Hornung's association with Barney Shapiro, see Maraniss, *Pride*, 336-337; Tex Maule, "Players Are Not Just People," *Sports Illustrated*, 29 April 1963, pp. 25-26; Underwood, "The True Crisis," 18.

³⁹Maraniss, *Pride*, 338-340. Senator McClellan's subcommittee was investigating certain aspects of gambling. Their primary focus was on casinos and the gambling paraphernalia used in them. See *New York Times*, 23 August 1961.

⁴⁰Karras and Gluck, *Even Big Guys Cry*, 152-169; *Chicago Tribune*, 5, 6, 7 January 1963; *Detroit Free Press*, 8 January 1963; *Milwaukee Journal*, 5, 6, 7 January 1963; *New York Times*, 8, 9 January 1963; *Washington Post*, 8, 9 January 1963; Tim Cohane, "Why Pro Football Must Live with Sin," *Look*, 2 July 1963, pp. 67-68.

⁴¹*Detroit Free Press*, 8, 9 January 1963 (QUOTATION); *Milwaukee Journal*, 9 January 1963; *New York Times*, 9 January 1963; *Washington Post*, 9 January 1963.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Karras and Gluck, *Even Big Guys Cry*, 161-162; *Detroit Free Press*, 17, 18 January 1963; *Milwaukee Journal*, 17, 18 January 1963; *New York Times*, 17, 18 January 1963; *Washington Post*, 17, 18 January 1963.

⁴⁴For Rozelle expanding on Bell's infrastructure, see Rudeen, "Sportsman," 29.

⁴⁵For accounts on the efforts to desegregate the Washington Redskins, see Thomas G. Smith, "Civil Rights on the Gridiron: The Kennedy Administration and the Desegregation of the Washington Redskins," *Journal of Sport History* 14 (1987): 189-208; Charles K. Ross, *Outside the Lines: African Americans and the Integration of the National Football League* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 143-158.

⁴⁶Ross, *Outside*, 151-152. See also Michael E. Lomax and Melvin Adelman, "Goal Line Stand: The Impact of Both Expansion and The Civil Rights Movement on Professional Football's Race Relations," unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

⁴⁷Rudeen, "Sportsman," 28-29; Tex Maule, "Judgment at Baltimore," *Sports Illustrated*, 4 June 1962, p. 47. In 1963, the AFL lost another antitrust suit against the NFL. See *Washington Post*, 24 September 1963.

⁴⁸Harris, "The League," 16.

⁴⁹Rozelle, *National Football League*, 5 (QUOTATIONS); *Detroit Free Press*, 18 April 1963; *Milwaukee Journal*, 18 April 1963; *New York Times*, 18 April 1963; *Washington Post*, 18 April 1963; "Bush-league Scandal," *Time*, 26 April 1963, p. 45; "Hornung and Karras Fired," *Life*, 26 April 1963, p. 38; "Judgment Day," *Newsweek*, 29 April 1963, pp. 84-85; Bill Paddock, "Hornung Humble, Karras Angry over Ban for Betting on Games," *Sporting News*, 27 April 1963, p. 38. On May 20, 1963, Paul Hornung appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

⁵⁰*Washington Evening Star*, 18 April 1963; *Miami Herald*, 18 April 1963; *Milwaukee Journal*, 18 April 1963; *New York Times*, 18 April 1963; *Detroit Free Press*, 18 April 1963.

⁵¹*Miami Herald*, 18 April 1963 (1ST AND 5TH QUOTATIONS); *Milwaukee Journal*, 17 July 1963 (2ND

QUOTATION); Shecter, "Pete Rozelle," 84 (3RD AND 4TH QUOTATIONS).

⁵²*Detroit Free Press*, 18 April 1963 (QUOTATION); Rudeen, "Sportsman," 24.

⁵³*Baltimore Sun*, 18 April 1963; Maule, "Players," 25. Povich's speculation in *Washington Post*, 19 April 1963.

⁵⁴Rozelle's report in Harris, *The League*, 47. *Baltimore Sun*, 17 July 1963; *Miami Herald*, 17 July 1963; *New York Times*, 17 July 1963; *Washington Post*, 17 July 1963. No editorials were uncovered regarding the Rosenbloom verdict.

⁵⁵Harris, *The League*, 47.

⁵⁶*Ibid*; *Baltimore Sun*, 17 July 1963.

⁵⁷*Milwaukee Journal*, 17 March 1964; *New York Times*, 17 March 1964; *Washington Post*, 17 March 1964.

⁵⁸Rudeen, "Sportsman," 22-29.

⁵⁹Rozelle's increased authority and hiring James Hamilton in Cohane, "Why Pro Football," 71. See also Underwood, "The True Crisis," 17-19, 83; Rudeen, "Sportsman," 22-27; Shecter, "Does Pete Rozelle," 83-84; "The Pro Football Stands for Profits," *Business Week*, 10 January 1970, pp. 56-58.

⁶⁰Ovid Demaris, "The Toughest Customers," *Esquire*, October 1965, p. 77.

⁶¹Sasuly, *Bookies And Bettors*, 199-203.