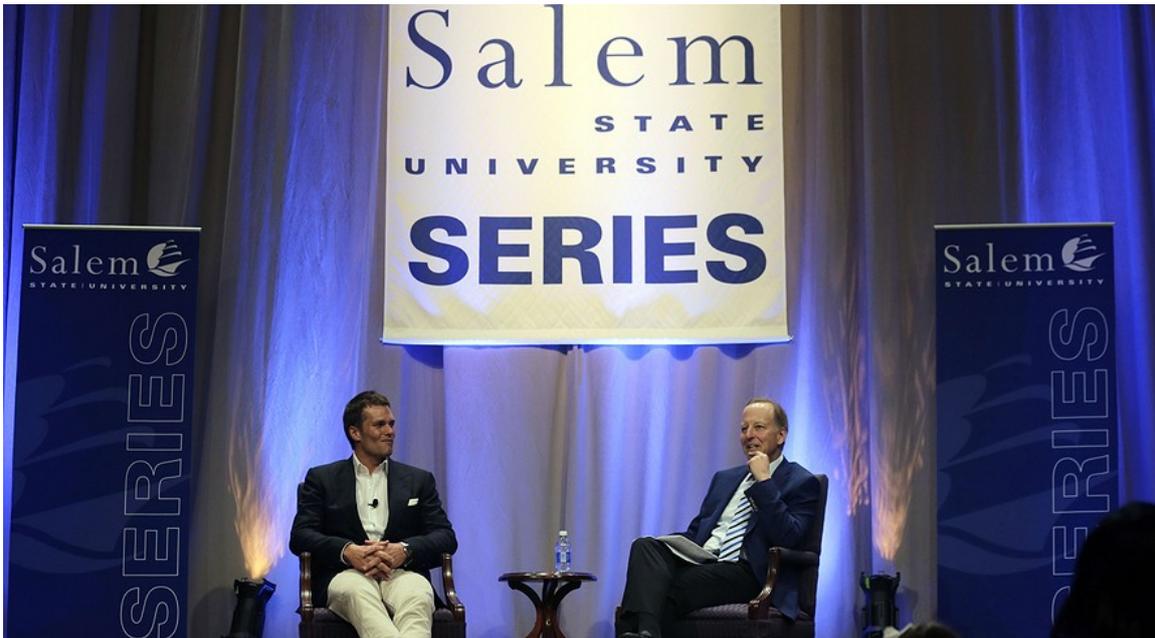


Patriots star Tom Brady suspended in football scandal; team, fans object

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.13.15

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New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (left) is interviewed by sportscaster Jim Gray during an event at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts, May 7, 2015. Photo: AP Photo/Charles Krupa

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady has been an NFL golden boy.

But even a golden boy has to play by the rules.

The NFL delivered that message loud and clear Monday. It suspended the star football uarterback without pay and will not let him play the first four games of next season.

Deflated Footballs

On January 18, the Patriots played against the Indianapolis Colts. The winner of the game would go to the Super Bowl. The Colts told the NFL that something was not right about the footballs. The footballs were tested at halftime and were discovered to be low on air.

Letting the air out -- or deflating -- the balls made them easier to throw and catch. Deflating the balls too much is cheating. Air in the balls must be at least 12.5 pounds per square inch, and the Patriots' balls had less than that.

The Patriots won the game against the Colts, 45-7. Two weeks later, the Patriots defeated the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl.

Last week, the football league found that Brady probably knew that workers had let the air out.

Punishing The Team

The Patriots were fined \$1 million. The NFL said the Patriots also will not get their first-round draft pick next year and a fourth-round selection in 2017. During the draft, NFL teams take turns choosing college players to be on their teams. The two workers who intentionally let the air out of the balls -- John Jastremski and Jim McNally -- were suspended indefinitely. McNally had referred to himself as "the deflator" in text messages, according to investigators.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said it was important to protect the honesty of the game.

Brady's agent, Don Yee, said the NFL report was weak. He said Brady would try to get the suspension lifted so he could play.

Was It The Weather?

Patriots' owner Robert Kraft said the decision was not based on facts. He also said the punishment was too severe.

Kraft complained that he had scientific evidence that cold weather caused the problem, but it had been ignored. He said a drop in temperature could have caused the change in air pressure in the footballs. If you take a football from a warm place to a cool place, it loses air pressure. The game was played on a cold December day. He also said Brady has the team's complete support. "Our belief in him has not wavered," Kraft added.

There have been mixed feelings about the punishments in the world of football.

"Good Thing"? Or "A Joke!"

Shawne Merriman is a former player. He was in favor of the suspension. "It's a good thing the @nfl suspended Tom Brady now everyone knows that NOBODY is above the system," he wrote on Twitter.

Former NFL tight end Jake Ballard thought differently. "4 games?? What a joke!" he wrote. He said that the crime did not match the punishment and a four game punishment is too severe.

Brady refused to let investigators see his email and text messages. This — along with the Patriots' history of cheating — likely led to the heavy punishment.

Troy Vincent is the NFL Executive Vice President. He said every player must follow the rules.

A Price To Pay

Brady is still as popular as ever among Patriots' fans. He was cheered enthusiastically last week, one day after the report came out. During an interview at Salem State University last Thursday, Brady was asked if the football scandal made the Super Bowl win less important.

Brady smiled. Then he answered, "Absolutely not," to more cheers.

Rich Gannon is a former NFL quarterback and Most Valued Player.

"If you hate the Patriots you're going to say those guys always cheat," Gannon said. "But if Tom Brady had 12.5 pounds of pressure in those footballs or 11, what difference does it make? He's still one of the greatest quarterbacks ever. But the bottom line is, the rules were violated and there's a price to pay."