



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



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Deflategate

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In a recent press release, the Associated Press states:

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) -- Tom Brady appealed his four-game suspension for his role in using deflated footballs during the AFC championship game, and the players union urged Commissioner Roger Goodell to appoint a neutral arbitrator to hear the case.

The expected appeal was filed by the NFL Players Association on Thursday about an hour before a 5 p.m. Eastern deadline. The league's collective bargaining agreement stipulates that it will be decided by Goodell or a person he designates.

One of the most gifted quarterbacks in history was not aware he was playing with deflated footballs? Nor was the New England Patriots staff? Nor was the coach? Even a child could see through these falsehoods:

During my 7th through 9th grades and my brother Tom's 9th through 11th grades, we played pass and catch almost every day in the summer---before fall training for the football season began. Hour after hour, with nothing better to do, we took turns running out for passes and playing catch.

Usually, we executed pass receiver plays with one of us snapping the ball to the other, with the snapper then taking on the role of the receiver. I was usually the ball snapper and the receiver, because Tom was a better passer and eventually, the first-team quarterback on the high school team.

Tom and I had an air needle and air pump. We played around each day with using different inflations. We both preferred a slightly deflated ball...as does Mr. Brady. We played-around with different pressures, and even as children, we developed a natural feel for the effects of how much we deflated or inflated the football.

I was injured in my 9th grade year and could no longer play contact football. To stay in contact with the team my last three years in high school, I became the manager. One of my principal duties was the care of the precious football inventory, including the air pressure in the balls. My frequent experience and experimentations with Tom and later, my responsibility for keeping the team's balls in proper condition led to my being adept at gauging football air pressure. I could hold a ball, squeeze it a few times, and be able to determine if it met Coach Knapp's instructions and the quarterbacks' preferences about ball pressure.

As a youth, I had developed a rather unusual talent, but one that older people also possess, such as quarterbacks in the NFL. I include this sidebar to give you an idea of the inanity of the present stance of the Patriots' camp. (And this from the experience of former child.)

At this stage in my life, by feeling the football, I doubt I would know if the balls used by the New England Patriots were near the 12.5 air pressure requirement. This assertion is especially true in these later years when I have trouble gauging the air pressure in my ears. But this I do know, those men knew the balls did not meet the mandated specifications. For them to

plead ignorance is beyond belief. Even worse, regardless of the situation, Brady, the team, and the union automatically went on the offensive, stating that the charges are wrong.

They have issued stories to the public that are insulting to one's intelligence. As one example, their equating one of the Patriots' staff attempt to lose weight with a reference to deflating.

I wish these people would try a different path: Taking on the responsibility of simply admitting the making of a mistake. But this does not happen today. There is too much at stake, rolled into the phrase: "fame and fortune." In today's sports world the situation has come down to another one of those unwritten rules in segments of *all* societies: An illegality is such an accepted, maybe even trivial part of life that it is morally "OK to ignore." It is done every day in all walks of life.

It is difficult to think that deflategate revolves around only one team. It is akin to professional cycling or professional baseball: "I am destined for greatness but only if I copy the doping that is being used by my competitors. Otherwise, I am competing for fame and fortune with a handicap. I will not be remembered in the Hall of Fame if I must compete within the rules. After all, my competitors for wealth and eminence are playing outside the rules. So must I."

What has happened to our society? It is as if a *mea culpa*---"OK, I got caught. I did wrong, and I am regretful"---is no longer an option. Nowadays, no one is wrong, even when they are.

Post Script

I sent some emails to several friends who used to play football and/or follow football in their older ages (about the same age as I). One of my friends responded that the deflategate issue was no big deal. I countered that it was. He countered with:

How about the defensive tackle who puts Vaseline on his jersey so that the offensive tackle can't get a good grip. I could name numerous other things that go on, but in my opinion Brady is a target because he is a pretty boy who is also rich. Jealousy plays into this. Different quarterbacks like a different feel to the balls that they use, and I would be willing to bet that the majority have their game balls adjusted accordingly.

Thus, I decided to respond with this postscript, which is written as a personal note to my friend:

Yes, we look for ways to skirt the rules. I do it. I expect you do, too. As well, skirting the rules by which we humans supposedly live our lives varies: at one extreme: murder, on down to those that seem trivial, such as Vaseline and deflated footballs. All entail making moral and ethical decisions practically every moment of our lives. I am convinced you are incapable of murder (except knocking off people of certain political persuasions... :). Yet you have no problem with Vaseline grips or deflated-football grips, because it is another example of others doing it. Your approach is likely the most practical way to live in the subtle, ethical cultures in which we humans have come to create and perpetuate.

I think most people live based on making these moral and ethical decisions depending on their effects on other people. The breaking of customs and laws is, wisely, a practical matter: *What do I gain in relation to the expense of those around me?* For example, I have no qualms about driving 90 miles per hour at 4 am in the morning on the local Interstate to get to the

Spokane airport that is 50 miles away. There are no other cars on the freeway at that time. On the other hand, at 4 pm, I stay within the speed limits.¹

You may be correct in that Brady is a scapegoat to the public. That is not pertinent to me. I have been an admirer of the man, of his skills, of his class. Thus, I have no axe to grind, other than admiration. My concern is my belief he knew he was cheating on an issue that is a huge factor in his line of work: the effect air pressure has in the ability to pass footballs.

As written above, I know these facts and their associated implications from considerable experience with experimenting with air pressure of footballs during my childhood, and my three years of taking care of footballs in high school.

I suspect I am going to receive a response from you that my early experiences are irrelevant to the modern, complex NFL world. Quite the opposite: It is often the early experiences that make us natural experts in something with which we have tinkered during our youths.

We have different perspectives. My take on the matter is that if we write-off a violation of this magnitude that can potentially affect so many people, we place ourselves on a slippery slope. What's next that we ignore?

By the way, if I get a speeding ticket for my rule infraction, I pay the fine. If the Brady Bunch gets a ticket for a rule infraction, they protest.

¹ Yes, I know. My speed might kill me and affect my family. That is not the point I am trying to make.