

Friday Lite



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Principles

...are what we are losing in America and the loss of them is destroying us. The enemy is not the terrorist in the hood; the invaders of territories; the cyber thieves of our vulnerabilities. No, the enemy is us – our subtle compromise of principles owned by every individual in this country.

Case in point - the real loser of the most recent super bowl game was actually the Indianapolis Colts team. They paid the price for compromised principle.

Eleven of twelve footballs owned by the New England Patriots used in the AFC Conference game were underinflated and tampered with, the result of which created unfair advantage for the Patriots in their eventual win.

Argue it fifty ways to Sunday, it's this simple – the tampered footballs created inequitable play and given that, the winning team won by cheating.

That's the message the Patriots gave our children.

It really doesn't matter who is to blame, who is at fault, who did what – the Patriots owned the compromising footballs. Eleven of *their* footballs had been tampered with and proved to be below PSI standards. They belonged to the team who won the AFC game. They cheated. They won. They spent consecutive weeks covering it up. Nothing was done about it.

The commissioner of the league is supposed to be the leader. A good leader is decisive, articulate, unwavering when it comes to principle because principles are absolute and when adhered to, the leader's job to enforce them is an easy one. Decisions made to uphold the principles of the game should be swift, harsh, but right.

The role of the commissioner is to preserve the equity of the game – to defend this principle upon which sportsmanlike conduct is based; upon which rule books are written; upon which referees balance fair play; upon which coaches and players neutralize imbalances of skill, talent, size.

When the game is compromised it is the role of the commissioner to take

decisive action to restore the equity of the game and the principles that govern it.

The right decision regarding the compromised footballs used in the AFC conference game should have been fines, suspension and forfeiture. The underinflated footballs were pointed out during the game and after it.

The PSI readings validated the fact that 11 of 12 footballs on only one team in the same climate and play conditions, had been tampered.

The commissioner had time to take decisive action. He didn't. Instead, he spent the weeks in political posturing.

It can be argued whether or not the Colts would have won the conference championship had there been no tampering of the footballs by the Patriots, but at the end of the day it didn't matter. The Patriots had manipulated the game and made it inequitable.

The principle of playing the game fairly was compromised, proved by the PSI tests done later. The Patriots won by cheating and unsportsmanlike conduct.

The Indianapolis Colts should have been sent to the Super Bowl by the commissioner -

- because New England cheated.

It had nothing to do with who won or lost that conference championship game.

Cheating should have been grounds for forfeiture.

The Patriots should have been removed. Period.

Instead, compromise took precedent.

It got me thinking...

Sports teach us a lot of things about character and teamwork and faith in each other to deliver our best. Any game becomes personal when it symbolizes principle because it represents all of us.

Although the game has to have a winner and a loser those players who stand on principle handle winning and losing with grace.

In any sport no one wants to lose and no one chooses to be a loser. Many would argue that a game is only about winning. But have we lost sight of "how" we play the game? Isn't it really about character?:

- How we handle success and failure?

-How we deal with pressure?

- How we support each other when we're down?

Many commentators called the coach of the losing team of Super Bowl 49 a fool because he failed to execute a sure thing by using one of the best running backs in the game in the critical seconds that remained. All he had to do was hand that running back the ball for a sure super bowl victory at the one yard line. He had 4 plays, 30 seconds and 2 timeouts to execute.

Instead, the coach made a bold and daring decision against predictable outcomes. Had the play executed successfully, it would have silenced the critics. It would have said that the price we all pay for greatness requires extraordinary risk. Instead, the decision created fatal consequences.

Leadership requires pushing conformity into the unexpected to drive an outcome that becomes extraordinary.

The losing coach took a bold step but never compromised this principle and at the onset he shouldered the responsibility of his failure and stood up for his players.

It is what leaders do. It is what built this country.

Cowards and cheaters run from it.

We have become so tolerant of compromise that we no longer have the courage to do the right thing.

There is still right and wrong. If one doesn't think right and wrong matter as principles, ask God what He thinks.

Principle is the root of our currency, our governing laws, our founding documents, our monuments. Principles define our heroes, our core, our purpose.

Lose principle and the root is severed. Sever the root and there is no longer a cornerstone, a binding element, a separator of right from wrong, evil from good.

Compromise principle and there is no longer a leader to execute.

This recent super bowl game will long be forgotten.

But the deflated footballs and all its controversy have left a scar: The scar is that a wrong makes a right if one can get away with it, blame everyone else, point fingers, lie without so much as a flinch and win at all costs.

The scar is that the game was manipulated by the cheating of one of the two top teams in the league and it altered the outcome.

The scar is that leaders can be blinded by their own arrogance and political ambitions and cover up the truth.

The scar is that what is done cannot be undone long after the game is played, because history records the events as they played out and history is unforgiving - when a principle is compromised, it lingers.

These are the messages we gave our children:

When we cheat and get away with it and lie about it, we teach our children that honor and integrity and truth don't matter.

This is the real message behind underinflated footballs, and cheating, and compromise and cowardice instead of courage.

We say to our children that it is okay to cheat and lie – just don't get caught.

Shame on us.

Children look to us for hope. They watch. They listen. They look to players of the game – any game – as models of the principles of fair play and gamesmanship and doing it right. They look up to the players and the coaches as role models and mentors and

future leaders whom they want to emulate.

Win or lose on merit.

Have the character to admit a mistake.

Play your hardest, but play fair –

This is what our children should know about us,

This is what our children should hear in our conversations,

This is what principles should mean to them because they see the consequences that result when principles are compromised.

There are always consequences.

Where were the leaders to hold people accountable? To have the courage to defend principle, intolerant of the violation of absolutes?

At the end of the day in Super Bowl 49, the Commissioner proved to be the coward because he compromised principle by failing to shoulder his responsibility and take action when he was made aware of the cheating.

Because he failed to act, that team went on to play in a game they didn't belong in and win a

trophy they bought instead of earned.

The losing coach of Super Bowl 49 proved to be the leader because he stood on principle without compromise and shouldered the responsibility for his decision, no matter what the outcome.

One-hundred-and-fourteen-million people would watch Super Bowl 49 – the largest crowd in the history of the game.

That meant money – lots of money; and sponsorship; and advertising dollars;

- and money took precedent over cheating.

New England won the game, but cheated to get there.

Seattle lost the game on merit.

But the real losers of this Super Bowl game

...were not the Indianapolis Colts,

...nor the Seattle Seahawks,

...nor the New England Patriots.

No, the *real* losers of Super Bowl 49

...were our children.