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Outline

Part 1: Chain of events takes place in the NFL once the first domestic violence case is brought to light. When these events take place, it is interesting how the league handles all the coverage and how they attempt to contain their image.

1. Claim: The NFL has had a long history with domestic violence, but as of late, it has really been at the forefront of news.
2. Reason: Dating back to February, things have been rocky to say the least in the NFL, but nothing came to fruition until several months later.
   1. Evidence: Associated Press: Complete timeline of events from the past several months including Ray Rice, Adrian Peterson, Jonathan Dwyer and Greg Hardy.
3. Claim: The NFL attempted to cover up the initial domestic violence. Once other situations started to come to light, it was hard for the league to continue to lay low and keep everything under rap.
4. Reason: The NFL wanted to protect its image
   1. Evidence: USA Today Sports: Former Executive for the Chicago Bears reveal cases of hidden abuse charges for quite some time now.
   2. Evidence: NY Daily News: With two of the game’s top starts getting heat, it is hard for the NFL to hide.

C. Conclusion: The NFL has had a rough couple of months and they did not help themselves by attempting to cover up incidents that are taken very seriously in today’s society outside of football. From February through September, there are numerous occasions that bring to light the dark times of the NFL at the hands of these four players.

Part II: The players at the heart of the NFL image problem. There were four players that hold responsibility for their actions affecting themselves, their team and the league.

1. Claim: Ray Rice was the first individual to perpetuate this downward spiral for the NFL when he decided to go ahead and knock out his wife in a hotel elevator
2. Reason: The media got hold of this video and it was so damaging that it was hard to keep it under wraps.
   1. Evidence: TMZ Video: Clear video of Ray Rice knocking out his fiancé in an elevator.
   2. Evidence: ESPN: An in-depth description of this situation unfolding before the public’s eyes.
3. Claim: Adrian Peterson is a top 5 RB in the NFL today, so when something negative hits the mainstream media, it is going to have a massive effect on he and the NFL. If Ray Rice gave the NFL a black eye, than Adrian Peterson made it so the NFL could not see at all.
4. Reason: Since the Ray Rice situation was already a top story in the NFL, another domestic violence case involving a player of this magnitude, was not going to slide under the table.
   1. Evidence: Tribune Star: As perfect as Peterson seemed to be, he was far from it and that all came to light recently.
   2. Evidence: CBS: Doctor notices lacerations on Adrian’s son and wonders if something is going on at the home.
5. Claim: Greg Hardy and Jonathan Dwyer are not as well known as the first two, but are equally accountable for the negative publicity surrounding the NFL as they decided to take their aggression from the football field to their personal life.

1. Reason: Greg Hardy was unique because when he was first accused, neither his team nor the league penalized him, but once the Rice and Peterson dominos fell, Hardy was finally going to face the wrath.
   1. Evidence: Charlotte Observer: The first accusations of Hardy using violence towards his girlfriend
2. Reason: Jonathan Dwyer has received the least amount of publicity due to a combination of his popularity, or lack there of, and it occurred in the heart of the Adrian Peterson story.
   1. Evidence: CBS Sports: the latest NFL player to fall victim to violence to a family member or significant other.
3. Conclusion: These four players can be held responsibility for the negative attention surrounding the game at this moment, but at the same time, without the pressure from the media and the constant media attention, maybe the NFL’s image would not be as damaged. In any event, these players still conducting themselves in a manner that people with their kind of spotlight should never do.

Part III: The man behind the NFL, commissioner Roger Goodell and how he handled all these situations as well as how it SHOULD have been handled. Along with Mr. Goodell’s actions, it is also important to understand the consequences for everybody involved, on the field as well as off the field.

1. Claim: Roger Goodell was criticized more during these past few months than he has been during his entire eight-year tenure as NFL commissioner. Mr. Goodell should have acted quicker and with much more authority than he did, and he only acted fiercer due to the pressure from the media.
2. Reason: The media was almost as outraged with Goodell as they were with the players who actually committed these acts of violence.
   1. Evidence: SI: Goodell promises that the domestic violence in the NFL will stop, but his words are not yet followed by actions
   2. Evidence: SI: The NFL’s image needs to be fixed and only one man can lead that charge, and that is Mr. Goodell.
3. Claim: These players faced consequences from numerous outlets, including their respective teams, the NFL and even the court system.
4. Reason: Each and every one of them committed a sin that is unacceptable in society and as a member of the National Football League.
   1. Evidence: ABC: Each player suffered there own consequences being that the NFL’s discipline for domestic violence was practically non-existent.
   2. Evidence: Bleacher Report: NFL finally moves forward in attempting to avoid domestic violence from negatively affecting the game and image.

C. Conclusion: The NFL’s darkest months may have been due to the players and their negligent actions, but it would be inconsolable to give commissioner Goodell a free pass. The discipline in place for this kind of situation was embarrassing and his lack of availability to the media, the ones who were pressuring him constantly, was disappointing. The league and the teams handed down consequences, but mainly because the constant pressure from the media, who seem to have more of an impact than people tend to realize.