The recent months in the NFL have been like nothing the league has ever seen. The amount of negative attention is new to the NFL, not that the league never attracts negative publicity, but it rarely sees its image and credibility under such scrutiny for such a period of time. The type of negative publicity the NFL is seeing right now is in the case of domestic violence. Domestic violence is nothing new for the NFL because it has been dealing with such issues dating back close to twenty years ago. The most obvious case of domestic violence related to the NFL, one that was headline news across all outlets, has to be OJ Simpson’s situation. OJ was accused of stabbing his ex-wife and her friend, and even though he was acquitted, he was still an NFL player, put on trial for such a heinous crime.[[1]](#footnote-1) This was just the beginning of a long, straining issue that the NFL had to deal with, while none may have been as news worthy as OJ’s case, there were without question several that forced the NFL to quiver. Among the other cases includes Rae Curruth in 1999, where he shot and killed his girlfriend, Shawne Merriman for choking his wife in 2009 and most recently, Dez Bryant in 2012 for striking his mother across the face.[[2]](#footnote-2) Even though the past twenty years have been full of domestic violence cases, the NFL has not seen such activity like it has the past several months. Since February, there have been four different domestic violence cases that involve NFL players. Those cases were made clear in the news outside and inside the sports world. However, nothing came to fruition until several months later once the media caught wind of the details and decided it was evident that these issues were too large to overlook. In February, a video was released of Ray Rice pulling his wife, whom was unconscious, out of a hotel elevator. For the next several months, apologizes would take place along with hearings, but no punishment being issued by the NFL.[[3]](#footnote-3) It wasn’t until July when the NFL finally made a move in enforcing a punishment for Rice. Greg Hardy was accused of domestic assault of his girlfriend back in July, but it wasn’t until the middle of September, three weeks into the football season, that his team, not even the NFL, took action. Also in September, Adrian Peterson’s domestic violence situation came to light, and due to the previous cases, once again his team, decided to take action. The Arizona Cardinals immediately penalized Jonathan Dwyer, also accused in September, once the accusations came about. Over a span of seven months, the NFL endured a very rocky time, but the biggest issue was why it took so long for actions to be taken by the league.

The NFL always wants to make sure that their image is in top notch, because if the slightest crack forms in their shield, the credibility and popularity are going to be at risk. And when their popularity starts to be in question, than the profits are going to be on a downward spiral. So for a business that succeeds of its profits, mainly by fan bases, it is essential that the image never be tainted, no matter how far the NFL has to go. Apparently, domestic violence falls under the category of not going to far to protect the image. The moment the NFL and its officials caught wind of domestic violence issues regarding some of their players, they knew that they had to cover it up. The only problem with covering up these types of situations is that when another case comes along, it doubles the burden, and soon enough, there is going to be too much to cover up. However, according to a former executive of the league, that is not the case, in fact, the NFL could cover up more than anybody would expect. Jerry Angelo was an NFL executive for 30 years; ten of them were spent as the general manager of the Chicago Bears. During his time, he was one of the best at his job along with one of the most well respected executives in the league. So when he comes out and says teams did not discipline players in “hundreds and hundreds” of domestic violence incidents during his 30 years, it is hard to turn away.[[4]](#footnote-4) The worst part about this was how exactly the NFL would go about covering up these cases. Their type of “investigation” into it would be to ask if everyone involved was ok and if things between the parties were good. If so, the league and team would move on and swipe it right under the rug. It will never be revealed on who was involved in these hundreds of hidden cases, but one has to wonder if a big name player, a superstar and face of a franchise, was involved.

The NFL and its franchises may have been able to hide ‘hundreds’ of domestic violence cases over the past 30 years, but we are in a different age right now. We are currently in the age where media is such a pivotal point of society and sports, that even if a league like the NFL wanted to cover up situations, it would be difficult because of media coverage. Every team has numerous beat writers that have the sources to break news that players in the locker room aren’t even aware of. There are times when so much media coverage positively affects the NFL, but times like these are when teams wish the league wasn’t so popular. It doesn’t help than when two of the bigger stars in the league are at the center of domestic violence cases in today’s age. Adrian Peterson and Ray Rice are both running backs in the NFL and are both considered to be in the top tier of players at the position. They also are viewed as the face and their respective franchise. In the span of one week, a second video of Ray Rice and his wife in the elevator was released followed by the arrest of Adrian Peterson for his assault on his four-year-old son.[[5]](#footnote-5) It may be one thing if a third string player or an undrafted rookie is at the heart of a domestic violence investigation, but when two of the games brightest stars stand center stage, is a completely different story. Aside from these two men being superstars on the field, their popularity off the field encourages even more media coverage, furthering the impossibility for the NFL to hide. It doesn’t help the league when females, the main demographic of these domestic violence cases, are wearing an Adrian Peterson jersey while holding a switch in her hand, the object used by Peterson on his son.[[6]](#footnote-6) Hiding domestic violence from society is not easy, yet somehow the NFL succeeded in doing so for many years, but that time has passed and they finally have to pay the price and give answers to their issues. Gary Myers puts the past several months in perspective and what the NFL is facing going forward. “Goodell’s beloved shield and the league’s image have been taking a terrible beating.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

The NFL has had a rough, to put it lightly, couple of months and they did not do themselves any favors in trying to cover up incidents that most people take seriously in society. For the NFL to have allegedly covered up ‘hundreds’ of domestic violence cases in recent years is a black eye in itself. It is not as much about domestic abuse as it is more about the NFL and its decisions on how to protect their image. By doing idiotic things like this portrays them as caring more about their image and making billions of dollars than abiding by society norms and bringing to a light an issue that tarnishes society day in and day out. One can see why they would hide so much, being how much negative publicity the league is receiving right now. The NFL is in the midst of maybe its darkest days since its inception over close to 100 years ago due to a combination of four players: two of the games brightest stars, one rising star a third year player trying to make a name for himself. They were not alone because without the media pressure and continuous coverage, these four could have fallen under the same rug those hundreds of cases got swept under.

1. NFL Domestic Violence Timeline, *Daily News EN*, <http://www.dailynewsen.com/sports/nfl-domestic-violence-timeline-a-look-at-major-incidents-and-arrests-since-1994-h2650375.html> (accessed October 20, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NFL Domestic Violence Timeline, *Daily News EN* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Louis Bien, “A Complete Timeline of the Ray Rice Assault Case” *sbnation.com*, <http://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2014/5/23/5744964/ray-rice-arrest-assault-statement-apology-ravens> (accessed October 24, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Josh Peter, “Former NFL Exec: Teams hid ‘hundreds’ of abuse incidents” *USA Today*, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2014/10/09/jerry-angelo-chicago-bears-national-football-league/16981865/> (accessed October 25, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gary Myers, “NFL Can’t hide shame of Adrian Peterson and Ray Rice scandals” *Daily News*, <file://localhost/Users/jakelebowitz/Library/Application%20Support/Zotero/Profiles/26626vvt.default/zotero/storage/INCZWNVV/myers-nfl-hide-shame-adrian-peterson-ray-rice-article-1.html> (accessed October 26, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gary Myers, *Daily News* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gary Myers, *Daily News* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)