

The NFL and the National Anthem

by Gary Fouse



Yesterday's events on NFL Sunday have pushed me to the point of walking away from it all. First, players from the Ravens and Jaguars, playing in front of a British crowd in London, stood for God Save the Queen (as they should), but knelt for their own National Anthem. They embarrassed their own country.

Then the Pittsburgh Steelers, a team I have rooted for for 62 years-since I was 10 years old- chose to remain in the locker room in Chicago during the National Anthem. Imagine the Chicago Bears out there on the field and the Steelers in the locker room. To add insult to injury, the Steelers went out and stunk up the field losing to a clearly inferior Bears team.

This has put me in a position I never thought I would experience-walking away from the Steelers as a fan. Something that was unimaginable is happening. Today I am thinking that I will not watch another game this season until this crap stops.

It is now up to us the fans whether we go to the stadium or watch on TV, to say, "that's enough." It will be hard to break with the Steelers, but I can try.

And you know what? If this stuff spreads to baseball, as it might -one Oakland player is now doing it- I can stay away from baseball too. I have been a die hard Cub fan since 1963 and experienced the joy of last year's championship. But if the Cubs start doing this, I will consider walking away from them too.

Of course, the demographic makeup of the players in football and baseball differs. The NFL has over 50% African-American players. In baseball, a large percentage of players are foreign-born. Many are from Latin America. They know that it is expected to stand for anybody's national anthem. It is also true that in this point in time, there are not that many African-American baseball players, a sad state of affairs due to many social and economic factors which we don't need to go into here.

To be fair, I should note that most black football players are standing during the National Anthem. I applaud them. I do not respect those that are disrespecting our country, our anthem, and our flag. This is not 1968, and Colin Kaepernick is no John Carlos or Tommie Smith. He has started something very ugly and divisive and it is spreading.

I am not sure how I feel about President Trump's comments. I agree with him, but I wonder if a president should be jumping into it. Now the NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, is reacting as well as the sportscasters and sports pundits. They are now basically supporting the players who kneel as a way of

opposing Trump.

Of course everybody has their right of free expression. The players have a right to kneel or stay in the locker room. Trump has a right to say his piece. We have a right to agree or disagree. We also have a right to stay away from the stadium turn off the TV.

After all, I love my country more than I do the Steelers.