

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

23 October 2017

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All About Respect

I guess I might as well enter the fray. After all, there seems to be an obsession over the NFL (and more recently the NBA) finding it necessary to “take a knee” during the playing of the National Anthem at stadiums and arenas around the nation.

So, let me set the stage so you won't be wondering where I'm going with this article.

To the NFL, NBA and any other alphabet soup teams that make up our national, professional games provided for Americans to enjoy throughout the year: No, you do not have the right to carry on with such a disrespectful protest. There are several reasons for this. First, you are an employee. You work for the NFL. You want to protest? Fine. Do it on your own time! And how dare you humiliate us by taking a knee during the presentation of our National Anthem while playing a game in London's Wembley Stadium, and yet you stood respectfully during the playing of “God Save the Queen”? It shows how little you know of our history. It was this very same England that we fought two wars against for our freedom (Revolutionary War and the War of 1812)!

The policy is clear. “The NFL rulebook makes no mention of the National Anthem. But the game operations manual does. Here's what the game operations manual says regarding the National Anthem, according to an NFL spokesperson:

“The National Anthem must be played prior to every NFL game, and all players must be on the sideline for the National Anthem. During the National Anthem, players on the field and bench area should stand at attention, face the flag, hold helmets in their left hand, and refrain from talking. The home team should ensure that the American flag is in good condition. It should be pointed out to players and coaches that we continue to be judged by the public in this area of respect for the flag and our country. Failure to be on the field by the start of the National Anthem may result in discipline, such as fines, suspensions, and/or the forfeiture of draft choice(s) for violations of the above, including first offenses.”

There are those who will equivocate about the wording throughout this instruction, but the important part is embedded in the body of the above text. *“It should be pointed out to players and coaches that we continue to be judged by the public in this area of respect for the flag and our country.”* How true, how true!

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Secondly, it is true that some team owner signs your check. But never forget that "we the people" subsidize a portion of stadium costs through our taxes. Plus, we buy over-priced tickets, and pay exorbitant amounts for hot dogs, beer and soda from concession stands. We purchase all manner of memorabilia in support of our favorite team and players. We watch you, dare I say, religiously, on television every week, recording the games as well. We love our teams and those players who make us proud. But, guess what happens to your paycheck if "we the people" decide we've had enough of your foolishness? We stop paying for those tickets to the game. Therefore, concession stands lose business. Merchandise sits on shelves and racks. Beer halls, pubs and other drinking establishments in the vicinity of ball parks lose patrons and the rowdy business they bring, especially when the home team wins. But the bottom line is this: When advertisers begin to lose revenue after paying a gazillion dollars to have access to we the people each week, guess what? Your paychecks really take a hit.

But, thirdly, when you show disrespect and disdain for the American flag and the playing of our National Anthem, you have crossed the line. And I really don't care what your beef is. When you kneel, or link arms, or raise your fists in the air, or whatever other foolishness you display, you are spitting on the graves of those who have fought and died for the freedoms you enjoy every single day.

"Oh, but we're not disrespecting our military!" you say. Yes, you are. Do you think for one minute that we would still be the "land of the free, and the home of the brave" if it were not for our vigilant volunteer military that is willing and able to shoulder the responsibility of keeping our nation free? Are you so mindless as to assume our nation would continue on as is if national defense was not important? It's bad enough that we have a stupidly implemented open borders policy, jeopardizing our national safety and well-being.

I served as an enlisted Marine in Vietnam. I saw the body bags of our fallen lined up in rows awaiting transport back to the United States where the military was routinely criticized and denigrated. Later when I served as a Navy chaplain during Operation Iraqi Freedom, it was my solemn duty to receive the remains, and often to conduct the funerals for way too many of my fallen comrades.

That coaches, managers and owners don't have the backbone to demand respect from their players is a mark of poor leadership, and a sad day for the sports world.

This much is certain: I don't need professional athletes entertaining me. Friday night high school games are far more fun and entertaining anyway. What I do need is a strong and well-trained military fearlessly keeping the wolf from the door so I can sleep peacefully at night!

Since the NFL and NBA have decided to disrespect our nation, I have judged you and found you wanting. Thus, I have decided to take my remote and turn you off.