

# SPORTS

## COMMENTARY

### Integrity Lost on Multiple Counts

BY PAT GRUHLER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I thought I had a no-brainer, "just write about Michael Vick," I said to myself. Then Barry Bonds and his steroid-induced body got themselves three home runs away from breaking Hank Aaron's record. Then Tim Donaghy, a 13-year NBA referee got indicted by the FBI for gambling on games, including ones that he officiated.

I will try to sum up all three events the best that I can.

The Michael Vick situation is a bizarre one. For the last two months the FBI has been investigating Vick and three others, and they were charged with competitive dog fighting, procuring and training pit bulls for fighting and conducting the enterprise across state lines.

What they allegedly did was raise and fight dogs on a house and property owned by Vick. They are also accused of killing several dogs by suffocation, drowning, electrocution and may have even slammed one against the ground to kill it. That is a horrendous crime.

If Vick did this then he is just a no-good punk. My problem is Vick has already been labeled and found guilty by the public.

I listen to sports radio a lot and most of the radio jocks have already labeled and convicted Vick. A local sports radio show told people not to wear Nike the day after news broke about the indictment. Show hosts were mad Vick still had a Nike endorsement contract. The Falcons and the NFL were being lambasted for not suspending Vick.

I was shocked when the only person who I agreed with was Steven A. Smith when he told people to calm down on the Vick hating.

Why must we grill Vick in the media? If a Safeway manager was indicted of the same crime people would not boycott the store and picket if he was not suspended from his job.

Innocent until proven guilty. That used to be what Americans

felt should be the way. But when it is a rich athlete (and I am not even going to say black athlete) gets in trouble, we immediately assume guilt. Let's give it a week. Slow it down before we call Vick the scum of the earth.

Now Donaghy, that hurts too. As one of the rare hardcore NBA fans, it stings when the integrity of our game is put on the line.

This man has been connected not only to betting on basketball, but to betting on games he officiated and to the mob. This is a gambling conspiracy almost as big as Pete Rose.

Apparently Donaghy got into the hole with the mob, and then they basically forced him to shave points so they would win their bets.

Hollywood couldn't come up with this. Either Donaghy is going after the mob and has a best case scenario featuring a change of identity and a move to somewhere in God-Knows-Where America, or he brings down the NBA.

What if he brings down cheaters and liars and all sorts of lies that take place in the NBA? If there are more referees, then it is over. Cheating refs and the officiating in the Spurs-Cavaliers series equals the end of the greatest sport of all time.

Which brings me to Barroid, I mean Barry Bonds. Bonds is getting ready to break the all time home run record in one of the bigger sports controversies that we have seen in any sport.

The alleged use of steroids has placed a dark cloud over Bonds that does not make too many people very excited to see him break the record.

I for one am glad to see him break it. I like Bonds. Still, I think he is the best combination of hitting, defense and base-running the league has ever seen and hope he breaks it and then goes to the Hall of Fame.

I think he took steroids, it just does not bother me. I do not think he does anymore. I think too many people did and were told to and it does not really matter. I just hope I get to see him break it.

## Referee Betting Scandal Rocks NBA

### Stern believes case limited to one official

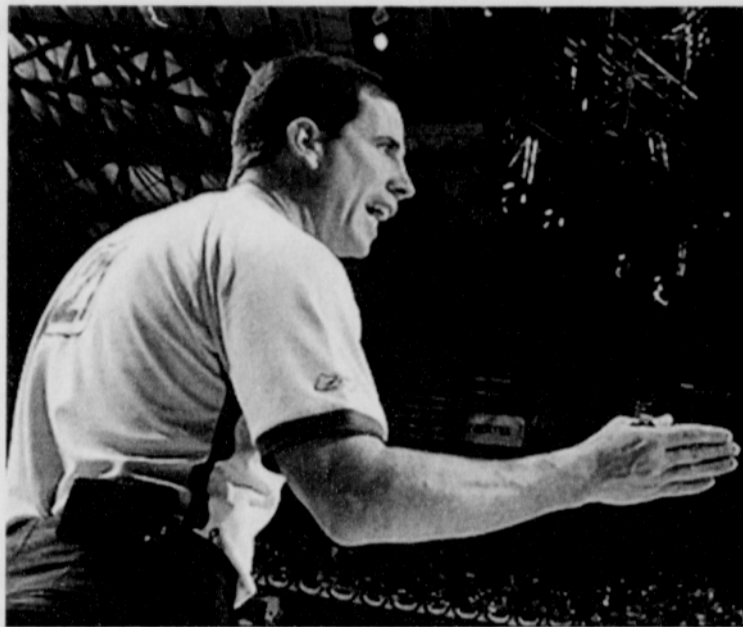
(AP) -- NBA commissioner David Stern said he believed the betting scandal that has rocked the league won't go beyond the allegations against the one referee who resigned. Stern also called it the "worst situation" he's experienced in his 23 years at the helm.

"Mr. Donaghy is the only referee alleged to have bet on NBA games and disclosed confidential information to others," Stern said Tuesday, referring to Tim Donaghy during a packed news conference. "I'll say it again, I understand this is an isolated case."

The FBI is investigating Donaghy for allegedly betting on games he officiated during the last two seasons. He is expected to turn himself in at U.S. District Court in Brooklyn later this week or early next week, according to a person familiar with the investigation.

A subdued Stern said he felt betrayed on behalf of NBA fans in his first public comments since news of the investigation broke.

Stern said his understanding is that Donaghy is being investigated for betting on games, including some he officiated, and for providing insider information to others so they could profit



Tim Donaghy refereeing a NBA game in 2004.



David Stern

by betting on games. "The current state of what we're dealing with is betting and providing information," Stern said. "I don't know of any charges yet or any discussions yet as to fixing of games."

was not the first time Donaghy faced gambling allegations.

In January 2005, Stern said, the NBA investigated a dispute between Donaghy and a West Chester, Pa., neighbor. During the investigation, there were allegations that Donaghy was gambling — not on sports — in Atlantic City. Stern said the league contacted every casino in Atlantic City and Las Vegas and found no evidence of gambling by Donaghy.

Donaghy wasn't allowed to officiate the second round of the 2005 playoffs because of the incident with his neighbor, Stern said.

Authorities are examining whether Donaghy made calls to affect the point spread in games on which he or associates had wagered thousands of dollars during the past two seasons, according to a law enforcement official. The referee had a gambling problem and was approached by low-level mob associates through an acquaintance, the official said.

Stern also outlined the NBA's process of evaluating the officiating of every game, but conceded it had been focused more on the quality of referees' performances than searching for possible wrongdoing. That will probably change, he said.

Donaghy earned \$260,000 as a referee this past season, Stern said.

## Dogfight Blood Sport Sidelines Vick

### NFL star faces animal cruelty charges

(AP) -- Michael Vick was ordered by commissioner Roger Goodell on Monday to stay away from the Atlanta Falcons' training camp until the league reviews the dogfighting charges against him.

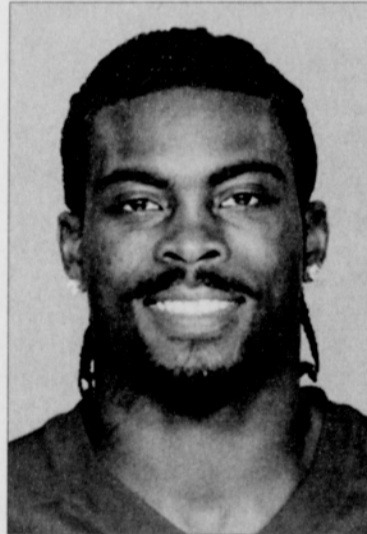
While it is for the criminal justice system to determine your guilt or innocence, it is my responsibility as commissioner of the National Football League to determine whether your conduct, even if not criminal, nonetheless violated

league policies, including the Personal Conduct Policy," Goodell said in a letter to the quarterback.

The NFL said Vick would still get his preseason pay and Goodell told the Falcons to withhold any disciplinary action of their own until the league's review was completed.

Goodell told Vick the league would complete its review as quickly as possible and that he expected full cooperation.

The Falcons open camp on Thursday, the same day Vick is scheduled to be arraigned in Richmond, Va., on charges of sponsoring a dogfighting operation in which dogs were maimed and killed.



Michael Vick

Vick, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2001 draft, last season became the first quarterback ever to rush for more than 1,000

yards. After his indictment last week, the NFL's position was that it would monitor developments and allow the legal process to "determine the facts."

Since then, pressure has been mounting on the league and the Falcons, particularly from animal-rights groups.

PETA — People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals — demonstrated at Falcons' headquarters in Flowery Branch, Ga., on Monday and did the same outside NFL offices in New York last week. At the same time, Goodell was meeting with officials from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

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