



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on September 22, 2016

## Are Protests the Cause of NFL TV Ratings Collapse?

There are some who argue that you should not mix politics and religion. In fact, some prefer to talk sports so as to avoid controversy over politics or religion. But with the recent protests in the National Football League (NFL) centered on the National Anthem, professional football is being used to promote certain political ideologies, and it appears that the NFL television ratings are down significantly because of it.



The controversy began when back-up San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick decided to protest during the playing of the National Anthem in a preseason game. He has continued into the regular season his protest of sitting on the bench (where he spends most of the game, anyway) during the singing of the “Star-spangled Banner,” and has been joined by players throughout the league.

“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people,” Kaepernick declared in explaining his actions. He later showed up for a press conference wearing a shirt that honored Cuban communist dictator Fidel Castro.

Apparently many Americans do not like the disrespect of the American flag, or they do not want politics shoved in their faces when all they want to do is relax for a few hours or watch a football game. Or perhaps both. And they are finding something else to do during the NFL games.

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For example, in the Monday night game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Chicago Bears, the 8.3 overnight rating was an 11-percent drop-off from last year’s week two Monday night game between the New York Jets and the Indianapolis Colts. It was the lowest week two Monday Night Football rating in at least seven years. *Sports Business Daily* believes it could be even “further back” than that.

Even more startling was the drop-off for the NFL season opening game between the Denver Broncos and the Carolina Panthers, because it was a rematch of last year’s Super Bowl. The game was off eight percent from last year’s premier opening game. It also was the lowest season-opening rating in seven years, according to *Forbes*.

The #boycottNFL hashtag on Twitter has drawn hundreds of participants who are asking for fans to send a message to the owners of the NFL and Commissioner Roger Goodell by not attending the games, refusing to watch on TV, and not buying any NFL merchandise.

Some sports writers, however, have decided that the public wants to hear their opinions on politics — on the sports page. In the Thursday edition of the *Oklahoman* newspaper, for example, sports writer Jenni Carlson criticized Oklahoma State football coach Mike Gundy for refusing to comment on Kaepernick’s protest. Carlson opined, “He could’ve said he understands any potential pain or anger felt by the dozens of black players on his team. He could’ve said he believes things must be better. He could’ve used his platform to say something.”

Note that the “something” that Carlson wanted Gundy to say was a certain viewpoint (her viewpoint, of



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course), not just “something” in general. She stated, “We need to talk about racial inequality and social injustice, and as before, sports is opening the door to the conversation.”

A conversation? Carlson and other liberals like her do not want a “conversation”; they want to hear their liberal opinion validated.

When Lou Holtz — now a retired football coach who won a national championship at Notre Dame in 1988 — made some commercials for North Carolina U.S. Senator Jesse Helms, a well-known conservative lawmaker, he lost his head-coaching position at the University of Arkansas. That is pretty much a conversation stopper.

Maybe Oklahoma State’s Mike Gundy knows that any opinion of his that differed with Carlson’s would put him in her crosshairs. Or perhaps he understands that any expression of his opinion would just be disruptive to team unity. Who knows? Why should a football coach be expected to opine about this more than any other issue in American society? For that matter, if Carlson is truly concerned about injustice, why doesn’t she speak out about the conservative groups being harassed by the IRS? Or perhaps she could write about the injustice of Atlanta’s Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran losing his job over a self-published Christian book.

Maybe the fans are voting with their remote controls, and they no longer want to have Castro-loving multimillionaires using their “platform” as professional athletes to lecture them on what to think while trashing the National Anthem, the flag, and the country.

Perhaps they already know what to think, without watching protests from professional football players or the sports columnists who write about them.



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