



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on September 30, 2017

NBA Warns Against Anthem Protests

“The League office will determine how to deal with any possible instance in which a player, coach, or trainer does not stand for the Anthem,” the National Basketball Association (NBA) has warned in a memo distributed late Friday by Mark Tatum, the league’s deputy commissioner. The NBA has a rule (as does the National Football League) that players, coaches, and trainers must stand for the National Anthem, and the memo states that individual teams, players, and coaches “do not have the discretion to waive” the rule.



Commissioner Adam Silver (shown) spoke out publicly on the issue on Thursday, insisting that players are expected to follow league policy and stand for the National Anthem.

Any punishment for violating the NBA policy will evidently be meted out by the league itself, rather than the teams themselves.

It appears that the NBA is attempting to be proactive in order to prevent the public relations nightmare presently being encountered by the NFL. TV viewership of NFL games is down from last year, as are ticket sales. Instead of the unpopular action of kneeling during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner, as has occurred in the NFL, the NBA suggests other ways for players and teams to address social and political issues.

Among the suggestions offered by the NBA is the idea that teams could address the current political climate by players and coaches holding a joint pregame address at their first home game. “This could include a message of unity and how the team is committed to bringing the community together this season.”

Another idea is for teams to make a video tribute featuring “team leadership speaking about the issues they care about.” (One must wonder if, say, pro-life or pro-Trump statements would be allowed by the NBA.)

Several players have already condemned comments made by President Trump about the situation in the NFL. Trump, speaking a few days ago at a political rally for U.S. Senate candidate Luther Strange in Alabama, asserted, “Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, ‘Get that son of a b**** off the field right now. Out. He’s fired.’” Players have also expressed disagreement with some of Trump’s stances on particular political issues.

The reaction of the NBA is a refutation of the widely-held but mistaken view that NFL owners cannot do anything about what the players say or do, because their protests are protected by the First Amendment. Actually, the First Amendment restricts the government from infringing upon free speech. While most business owners do not care what their employees say about political issues on their own time, very few want their employees to use the workplace to advance a political agenda — especially if such demonstrations cost them business, as is the case with the NFL protests.



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Michelle Roberts, executive director of the NBA players' union, said on Friday that the union will respond to any discipline the league metes out to an individual player "when it happens."

Almost lost in all of the talk about whether to kneel, link arms, or not even emerge from the locker room until after the playing of the National Anthem, is what former San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick's actual message was when he started the Anthem protests last year.

Kaepernick explained last year why he was kneeling: "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people," he declared, adding that his special beef was with the police: "Cops are getting paid for killing people," he asserted. Combined with his praise for the late Fidel Castro, the communist Cuban dictator who killed thousands of dissidents during his long reign, it is apparent that Kaepernick's protest had little to do with "unity."

This leaves us with an obvious conclusion: either the NFL players are just ignorant of the radical ideology being promoted by Kaepernick, or they agree with it. Either way, it is not difficult to understand why many NFL fans are reacting by not coming to the games, and not watching them on television.

It also explains why the NBA is making an effort to avoid the fan backlash being experience in the NFL. Whether the NBA will actually follow through and discipline players who choose to break NBA rules remains to be seen.

Photo of NBA commissioner Adam Silver: AP Images



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