

## Life Without Football

Fall has always been my favorite time of year. The weather plays a part, but football is the main reason I can't wait for the turning of the leaves. I guess I better qualify, college football. I've lost my taste for the pros. Being a Falcons fan will do that to you. The current ownership of the Falcons has left me following the Patriots, which I know is weird. I do follow my Georgia Bulldogs, and I'm happy that there's one on the Patriots, so I can justify that interest. I'd hate to be thought of as one of those guys who just picks the best team as his favorite.

It is funny that what was once an obsession for me from the 60's through 2000's has become a "passing interest". Certainly the obsession for new stadiums by the team owners has left me cold. The idea that you could take a twenty year old building and blow it up to salve the ego of a rich guy, seems so wrong to me. It just seems to me that you could have a cage match with Jerry Jones and Arthur Blank to determine the "greatest owner", or whatever the title would be, and leave the public out of it. Taking tax funds that should go to rebuilding our cities infrastructures and padding the NFL owner's coffers with them is so wrong. Of course, if the cities don't do what the rich kids want them to do, the rich kids will just take their bat and ball and move to another city. The rich kids know how the game is played. Only one franchise, Green Bay, has managed to keep their team out of the hands of a self interested individual. Go Pack!

The NFL is a massive industry, spending billions of dollars to capture the interest of what they hope will someday be a world wide market. Games are now being played in Europe to try to get a foothold for a worldwide viewership. Is there a chance that the NFL could be cannibalized like back in the old days of the AFL, or the USFL, to establish a European Football League? Not bloody likely, as the Brits say. Soccer, or "football" as they call it in the rest of the world, is the dominant sport for billions worldwide. Soccer fans are passionate beyond belief, and they are everywhere. Drop a soccer ball in Timbuktu or Shangri La and the kids will know what to do with it, and all of them will participate, not just the biggest and fastest.

Bigger and faster is what will bring about the end of football as we know it. The greed heads are killing Pro football, now. Profits over player safety has always been the rule. Anyone who has ever been told to "shake it off" knows what I mean. The long term effects of two bodies colliding at thirty miles an hour will bring about the end of

college football. Once the college farm system has been curtailed, the NFL will become arena football with a World Wide Wrestling vibe. Why am I predicting such a dour outcome for America's favorite sport?

The average lifespan of an NFL player is 58. Think about that. The average lifespan of your everyday couch potato is 76, but he will outlive the finely tuned NFL athlete by 18 years. Seems atypical, doesn't it? Hundreds of miles run, millions of pounds lifted, and dead before you can collect Social Security. Obviously changing the rules is in order, and in fact, is ongoing. What's not clear is when we will go from football to rugby, or eventually soccer? Football without the violent impacts is rugby, so I'm not crawling out on a limb here.

I don't look forward to life without college football, but I do see the day coming. I won't miss the Falcons one bit.