When Gilbert Arenas of the Washington Wizards brought guns into the locker room at the Verizon Center he didn't just violate NBA rules, he also committed a crime. When Areneas and his teammates joked about it a few days later in a pregame ritual, NBA commissioner David Stern came unglued and suspended Arenas for the rest of last season and laid down the law to his cohorts.

If NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has a similar sense of outrage, he'll do likewise with Pittsburgh Steelers' linebacker James Harrison and perhaps a few of his cronies as well.

Harrison didn't commit any crimes while playing against the Cleveland Browns on Sunday, but he did commit two rather flagrant penalties, neither of which were called and both of which knocked out players of the game. Both were brutal hits to the head, which are specifically prohibited by the NFL.

Making matters worse is the rather blasé attitude of not just Harrison, but his teammates and even his head coach, Mike Tomlin. Despite all the emphasis on head injuries throughout the league, when it comes right down to it, the NFL's message just isn't getting through to the people that need to understand it best—the players and the coaches.

When T.J. Ward hit a defenseless Jordan Shipley, he was justifiably fined. Afterward, no one in the Browns' organization showed much concern for the hit itself or Shipley's well-being. Ward focused on trying to establish his credentials as a tough defensive back and head coach Eric Mangini spent time defending his player.

Maybe the two spoke behind the scenes and perhaps Ward was given some additional coaching on better technique. If that occurred, no one is talking about it but they should. It's not a sign of weakness or even acknowledgement that a previous hit was wrong. It's just addressing a safety issue. Irrespective, the situation with Ward pales in comparison to the chirping coming out of Pittsburgh regarding the two blows Harrison unapologetically delivered to two opposing players.

Harrison talked about how "geeked up" a hit like the one he put on Cribbs gets everyone on his team, "especially when you find out that the guy is not really hurt—he's just sleeping."

Stop right there for a moment and admire both the ignorance and the arrogance. Harrison is a local kid, Akron born and educated at Kent State. Make all the jokes you want about that scholastic resume but I find it hard to believe that Harrison really is that ignorant, to equate being knocked cold to merely sleeping. I do think he's arrogant enough not to care about the difference.

A person who's sleeping is doing so voluntarily, like taking a nap on a sleepy winter Saturday afternoon. When a person is knocked cold, as Cribbs was, it means that he suffered a blow to his head that was so severe it caused his brain to crash into the inner wall of the skull and some level of internal bleeding occurred. A few minutes later, the brain essentially regained its intended equilibrium and Cribbs regained consciousness. It's not like waking up from a nap. But that's hardly the end of the story.

Cribbs is going to feel the effects of that hit for a few days, perhaps a few weeks. Generally the resulting injuries aren't permanent and the symptoms such as dizziness and nausea disappear within a few weeks. But repeated hits cause repeated damage that increases the risk that permanent brain injury will result.

After being dismissive of the hit on Cribbs Harrison then completely downplayed the hit on a defenseless Mohamed Massaquoi. According to the Plain Dealer, the hit to the helmet left Massaquoi with some neck pain and memory loss. Harrison said, "I could have put a lot more into it than I did." Well, there is that.

If Harrison's self-congratulatory tone and simultaneous downplaying of its actual impact weren't offensive enough, consider the words of James Farrior, who told the media, as reported in the Plain Dealer, "Today was especially good because he took out their top dog, really. He took out the biggest weapon they had. He didn't do it intentionally, but with the intensity he plays with, it's liable to happen sooner or later."

Then there was everyone's favorite cheap shot artist, the ever grinning, ever scheming Hines Ward. According to the Plain Dealer, he said "you see a guy like [Harrison]—knocking guys out like that—he's a man on a mission."

And there was more: "hopefully nothing serious was wrong with those guys. But he set the tempo for everybody else. He's our emotional leader." Yea, hopefully.

Taken collectively, what you have thus far is an attitude that is about 180 degrees from what Goodell and the rest of the league are trying to accomplish when it comes to head injuries.

When the players celebrate Harrison as a warrior, a man on a mission, the inspirational leader, someone trying to set the tone for the defense and if a few head injuries happen, la di da, they're demonstrating a reckless indifference for the welfare of their fellow competitors. They also are demonstrating that whatever educational programs and fines thus far that the league has imposed have had less impact on them then Brett Favre's problems with women.

Every one of these same players, especially Ward, is going to find themselves on the business end of one of these hits. It's liable to happen sooner or later as they like to say And I suspect they might feel differently when they find themselves sitting out a few games, perhaps unable to earn performance bonuses or perhaps finding their careers jeopardized, because some jackass ballplayer thinks he needs to set a tone by playing illegally.

Perspective sure can be a bitch in these circumstances. Right now I'm sure there are plenty of fans in Pittsburgh celebrating Harrison's play and carping at anyone from Cleveland who dares whine about it.

It's the same thing way Cleveland fans played the whole Shipley/Ward encounter. At that time I posited how Cleveland fans might feel if it were Leon Hall and Josh Cribbs instead. But that theoretical turned into reality when it was Harrison and Cribbs instead. Now the Browns' message boards are lit up with comments about Harrison's blasts and, not surprisingly, most of those same people defending Ward are complaining loudly about Harrison.

No one is trying to put a skirt on these players but to act as if knocking players out cold is an acceptable consequence given all the research to the contrary is just more than a tad foolish. But that sort of logic tends to get lost on the fans whose player was the perpetrator and not the victim. It also tends to get lost on the totally clueless, like Harrison.

As for whether he really had any remorse for knocking out Cribbs, Harrison got the last word. "I don't want to injure anybody, but I'm not opposed to hurting anybody. There's a big difference being hurt and being injured. You get hurt, you shake it off and come back the next series or the next game."

It's a fine and self-serving line that Harrison is trying to draw for himself but it's clear that he doesn't see brain trauma as an injury. The medical profession may disagree and I suspect the NFL gods will, too. And the only way they can really send the right message to Harrison, Ward, Farrior and the rest of his posse and the rest of the players for that matter that they are taking this issue deadly seriously, is to look at Harrison's record of cheap shots, the nature of the hits themselves, and sit his ass out for four games, minimum.