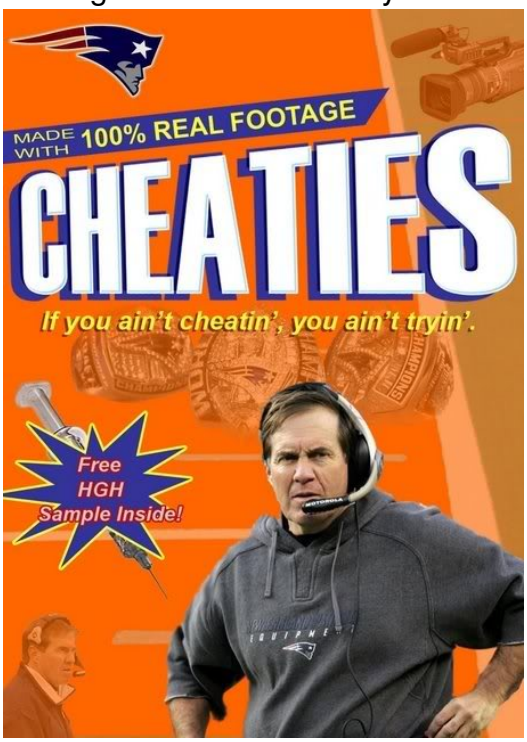
Gary checks in with us again this afternoon, and this time, to readdress the lingering aftermath of the "Spygate" scandal. Several national talking heads have suggested that NFL commissioner Roger Goodell should open up for full public view the league's continuing investigation into the Patriots. And Arlen Specter, with apparently nothing better to do, wants the Pats Super Bowl win over his home state Eagles overturned. Gary has his own thoughts on the matter, and shares them in his latest.



I should know better than to allow myself to be sucked into sports talk radio. The hosts usually have, at most, a casual fan's knowledge of most sports and, besides, most seem to get their information and opinions from the morning newspapers. That's certainly true here in Cleveland and, I suspect, most other towns.

But the national sports talk shows are supposed to be different. In theory, the hosts have achieved some level of accomplishment and credibility that puts them closer to if not quite equal with the print reporters that cover sports on a daily basis than the average bozo fielding still another call from the suburbs about whether or not he thinks the Indians will be able to re-sign C.C. Sabathia.

Listening to ESPN's Mike Greenberg on the *Mike & Mike In the Morning* show this past Monday rant again and some more about the New England Patriots allegedly spying on the opposition has officially started me thinking otherwise. According to

Greenberg, who sounded just a tad unhinged, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell should open up for full public view the league's continuing investigation into the Patriots and what former Patriots video camera holder and part time golf pro Matt Walsh might or might not know.

Greenberg's view essentially is that he's a season ticket holder for the New York Jets, this issue goes to the integrity of the game, and, consequently, he and the rest of the ticket-buying public are entitled to transparency as to the inner workings of the league.

Let's dispense with the easy stuff first. The NFL, the last time I looked anyway, was still a private enterprise. It certainly isn't a government agency nor is it even a publicly-held company. It has no obligation whatsoever under the various laws that govern these things to publicly disclose anything, whether it's Goodell's salary or who the league hires to clean the rest rooms at its headquarters in New York. That doesn't mean it can't publicly disclose such matters and it often does. But undertaking that task on some items doesn't require it to do so on others.

As for Greenberg's bizarre sense of entitlement by virtue of his lousy investment in Jets season tickets every year, it's a great populist justification, but it opens up a slippery slope that I'm not sure even he wants to traverse. Whether he likes it or not, his status, such as it is, doesn't give him an entrée into the executive offices of the Jets, let alone the league, any more than buying a Prius gives him an entrée into the CEO's office at Toyota. More to the point, the fact that my monthly cable bill includes a hefty charge for the various ESPN channels doesn't entitle me to understand, let alone weigh in on, how the various ESPN executives decided to discipline their employee Dana Jacobsen after she acted like a high school sophomore taking her first swig of vodka at the Mike & Mike celebrity roast this past January.

The more difficult issue revolves around the underlying "spygate" allegations. (And, by the way, when exactly does the statute of limitations expire for adding the word "gate" to whatever noun is used to represent an

on-going investigation by anyone into anything?) Apparently, there is a fair number of people, including disgruntled Philadelphia Eagles fan and current Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter, who tend to think that using video equipment to steal another team's signals threatens the integrity of the game. Baloney.

All using video equipment does is help one team better document the other team's signals. If stealing signals was the issue, then the NFL would outlaw that practice, which they don't. All the NFL's arcane rule does is prevent the kind of activity that the Patriots engaged in: using a videographer to tape a sideline coach's signals and note the time so that it can later be synced with the play-by-play log. Nothing prevents a team from having an assistant or an intern train a set of binoculars or a high-powered telescope on an opposing coach if it wants to and write down the various gestures and the time.

This isn't to excuse the Patriots actions. They and the rest of the teams were warned by the league not to tape the sidelines of the opposing team and they did it anyway. They paid a fairly hefty price for their transgressions. But Specter, with absolutely nothing better to do apparently, has been attacking this matter with the kind of fervor one would hope a more conscientious member of Senate would do with the economy, or gas prices, or the war in Iraq, or poverty, or home foreclosures, or global warming, to tick off just a few of the more pressing problems that average constituents are facing.

Specter initially criticized Goodell for supposedly covering up the results of his investigation into the Patriots and destroying the tapes that were gathered, linking it to the CIA's destruction of the tapes of its rather aggressive interrogation techniques. Apparently someone got to Specter rather quickly on that one and he backed down on the dramatic and wrongheaded comparison. But he otherwise hasn't backed down on the underlying issue much to his embarrassment.

What Specter still hasn't explained is why he continues to even care about this issue, except in the way a sore loser whose hometown team lost to the Patriots in

the 2005 Super Bowl might. Try as he and others have, this issue isn't even comparable to the widespread use of illegal steroids and other performance enhancing drugs in baseball or other sports. That clearly is both a legal issue and an integrity issue, not to mention a public health issue. But videotaping another team's assistant coaches, or even surreptitiously filming the opposing team's walk through the day before a game, implicates nothing more than a perceived or potential advantage that can never be proven so why try.

You can forcefully argue the point that knowing what defense an opposing team might be running might be helpful to the offense, or vice versa, but that's always been more theory than reality. By the time an opposing coach's signals are deciphered and relayed to his team, there is precious little time to change the play anyway. In other words, it's about as helpful as batter finding out what pitch is coming just before it's released.

Moreover, the NFL is as open of a book as any sport, maybe more so. Every game is televised, has been for years, and each team has so much film on every other team that by the time the game arrives, little if anything could possibly be a surprise. You could put a member of the Eagles defense into the Patriots offensive huddle and Randy Moss is still going to catch the pass from Tom Brady if he's open. It comes down, as always, to execution.

I have no doubts that little pockets of interest around the country still exist about this issue, just as they do about whether or not Neil Armstrong's moon walk was actually filmed on a Hollywood soundstage. But those same pockets, fueled by blowhards like Greenberg and Specter, still haven't offered a cogent reason for their on-going obsession, likely because there is none. Maybe that's why Goodell keeps stiff-arming Specter, which is a more polite response than the one he'd probably rather give and should, an extended middle finger.