

## NFL Offseason busy, but not in a good way!

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine, Sports Editor  
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It seemed like just a year ago when the National Football League was trying to renegotiate a deal that would best benefit both the players and the owners; however a year later the 2012 offseason has been busier than ever, but not in a positive way!

Bounties, bans, replacement referees, unhappy players still dealing with contract issues, player suicides, rules changes, and litigation galore. The NFL has made headlines without even trying too!

The 2011 NFL lockout is in the past, because this year it has been nonstop mayhem away from the playing field.

Even now , as training camps have opened, yes the world is ready for some football, but it's not a day that goes by that you don't hear the names of Commissioner Roger Goodell and DeMaurice Smith, as well as suspended New Orleans Saints player Jonathan Vilma and his defamation lawsuit against the commissioner. The return of Peyton Manning in Denver or the relocation of Tim Tebow to the Big Apple with the New York Jets, hasn't been enough to take people's minds off of all the negativeness that has been going on.

Since early March, the NFL's most dominant story line has been that of the Saints bounty program. After a lengthy investigation, the league said it found evidence of a three-year, pay-for-pain system in which Saints defensive players targeted specific opponents, to purposely take them out of key football match-ups.

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“It is the obligation of everyone, including the players on the field, to ensure that rules designed to promote player safety, fair play, and the integrity of the game are adhered to and effectively and consistently enforced,” Commissioner Goodell stated. “Respect for the men that play the game starts with the way players conduct themselves with each other on the field.”

Another thing that has come out has been the handling of former and current players who have suffered from concussions. More than 2,400 retired players decided to sue the league over brain injuries. The retirees claim that the NFL did not do enough to shield them from the long-term effects of repeated hits to the head, even when medical evidence established a connection between head trauma in football and health problems later in life.

Some of these problems were so bad that they caused several players to commit suicide. Three former NFL players- Junior Seau, Ray Easterling and Dave Duerson – each died of self-inflicted gunshot wounds in the past year and a half. Easterling and Duerson were found to have brain damage at the time of their deaths, and their families are among those suing the league over the long-term effects of concussions.

Just this past Monday, Tennessee Titans reserve wide receiver O.J. Murdock died of an apparent suicide. He had shot himself inside of his car.

Murdock, 25, was found inside his car Monday morning with what appeared to be self-inflicted gunshot wounds. The car was parked in front of Middleton High School, which is the high school that Murdock attended.

Murdock did not report to the Titans training camp over the weekend because of what the team said at the time was a personal issue.

“We are shocked and saddened to hear of O.J. Murdock’s death this morning,” the Titans released in a statement. “In his brief time here, a number of our players, coaches and staff had grown close to O.J., and this is a difficult time for them. He spent the last year battling back from an Achilles injury as he prepared for camp.”

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Murdock was signed by Tennessee last summer. He spent the entire 2011 season on the injured reserve after hurting his right Achilles early in training camp.

Only God knows what was going on with Murdock and what would cause him to take his own life. This is starting to become a trend and there are too many instances of this type of thing happening.

The NFL always have a Rookie Symposium for prominent collegiate NFL Draft picks; however, I don't think that the symposium is enough. There are too many young men, who come from various backgrounds and because of this it is hard for these young men to deal with the image of become an instant millionaire overnight.

There's still a lot that needs to be corrected and be upgraded to help the league and its players overall. It will take some time for everything to get resolved, but it will be a win-win for both parties when its all said and done!