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COMMUNICATIONS

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NFL, NFLRA REACH EIGHT-YEAR AGREEMENT

The NFL and the NFL Referees Association agreed tonight to the terms of a new eight-year collective bargaining agreement that will return the game officials to the field for this weekend's games, beginning with Thursday night's Cleveland at Baltimore game.

The agreement, the longest with the game officials in NFL history, was reached in New York between the negotiating teams for the NFL and the NFLRA with the assistance of Scot Beckenbaugh and Peter Donatello of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The agreement must be ratified by the NFLRA membership. Under the commissioner's authority, Commissioner Goodell can enter into this agreement without a vote of the NFL clubs.

Commissioner Goodell temporarily lifted the lockout so that the officials can work Thursday night's Cleveland at Baltimore game prior to their ratification vote. The officials will meet Friday and Saturday to vote on the agreement. If it is approved, a clinic for the officials will be held following the vote.

"The long-term future of our game requires that we seek improvement in every area, including officiating," Commissioner Goodell said. "This agreement supports long-term reforms that will make officiating better. The teams, players and fans want and deserve both consistency and quality in officiating."

"We look forward to having the finest officials in sports back on the field, and I want to give a special thanks to NFL fans for their passion. Now it's time to put the focus back on the teams and players where it belongs."

The agreement includes the following key terms:

- Eight-year term covering the 2012-2019 seasons.
- The current defined benefit pension plan will remain in place for current officials through the 2016 season (or until the official earns 20 years of service). The defined benefit plan will then be frozen.
- Retirement benefits will be provided for new hires, and for all officials beginning in 2017, through a defined contribution arrangement, which will have two elements: an annual league contribution made on behalf of each game official that will begin with an average of more than \$18,000 per official and increase to more than \$23,000 per official in 2019, and a partial match on any additional contribution that an official makes to his 401(k) account.
- Apart from their benefit package, the game officials' compensation will increase from an average of \$149,000 a year in 2011 to \$173,000 in 2013, rising to \$205,000 by 2019.
- Beginning with the 2013 season, the NFL will have the option of hiring a number of officials on a full-time basis to work year-round, including on the field.
- The NFL will have the option to retain additional officials for training and development purposes, and may assign those additional officials to work NFL games. The number of additional officials will be determined by the NFL.

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