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GREG HARDY SUSPENDED WITHOUT PAY FOR 10 GAMES

Greg Hardy of the Dallas Cowboys was notified today that he is suspended without pay for the team's first 10 games of the 2015 regular season for conduct detrimental to the league in violation of the NFL Constitution and By-Laws, the NFL Player Contract, and the NFL Personal Conduct Policy.

In a letter from Commissioner Roger Goodell, Hardy was informed that an extensive two-month NFL investigation following the dismissal of his case in North Carolina state court determined that there was sufficient credible evidence that Hardy engaged in conduct that violated NFL policies in multiple respects and with aggravating circumstances.

The investigation was led by Lisa Friel and T&M Protection Resources. Prior to joining the NFL staff two weeks ago, Friel was vice president of the sexual misconduct consulting and investigations division of T&M. During a 28-year career as a Manhattan prosecutor, Friel was head of the sex crimes prosecution unit in the New York County district attorney's office for more than a decade. Friel is now NFL senior vice president and special counsel for investigations.

The NFL's investigation involved numerous interviews with witnesses and experts, a review of hundreds of pages of court records, documents and exhibits, photographs, police reports, medical records, and reports and opinions of medical experts retained by Hardy's attorneys and by the NFL office.

In addition, Hardy and his counsel, along with representatives of the NFL Players Association, met with NFL staff and investigators on March 4, at which time Hardy's counsel made a detailed presentation and shared additional information. Hardy and his counsel also met on March 10 with the independent investigators, at which he was afforded the opportunity to discuss and respond to questions about the events of May 13, 2014. And, after having the opportunity to review certain photographs recently made available by the district attorney's office in North Carolina, Hardy and his counsel had a further opportunity to discuss the evidence and provide a supplemental report from Hardy's medical expert.

The NFL's investigation concluded that Hardy violated the Personal Conduct Policy by using physical force against Nicole Holder in at least four instances. First, he used physical force against her which caused her to land in a bathtub. Second, he used physical force against her which caused her to land on a futon that was covered with at least four semi-automatic rifles. Third, he used physical force against her by placing his hands around Ms. Holder's neck and applying enough pressure to leave visible marks. And fourth, he used physical force to shove Ms. Holder against a wall in his apartment's entry hallway.

“The net effect of these acts was that Ms. Holder was severely traumatized and sustained a range of injuries, including bruises and scratches on her neck, shoulders, upper chest, back, arms and feet,” Commissioner Goodell wrote. “The use of physical force under the circumstances present here, against a woman substantially smaller than you and in the presence of powerful, military-style assault weapons, constitutes a significant act of violence in violation of the Personal Conduct Policy.”

Commissioner Goodell noted that Hardy engaged in conduct detrimental to the league and that a suspension of this length would be appropriate under any version of the Personal Conduct Policy or its predecessors.

Despite numerous efforts to interview Ms. Holder, the NFL was unable to do so. It is not known whether that is the result of her entering into a civil settlement with Hardy or other factors. The commissioner’s decision is based on findings that are supported by credible corroborating evidence independent of Ms. Holder’s statements and testimony, such as testimony of other witnesses, medical and police reports, expert analyses, and photographs.

The NFL’s investigation also concluded that Hardy failed to provide complete and accurate information to NFL investigators and members of the NFL staff.

Hardy was initially arrested as a result of the May 13 incident and charged with Assault on a Female and Communicating Threats following an altercation with Ms. Holder at his residence in Charlotte, North Carolina. On July 15, he was found guilty of these charges by a state court judge following a bench trial at which both Hardy and the victim testified under oath, and during which photographic and other evidence was admitted in open court and discussed in the presence of the public and the news media. Following the judgment of conviction, Hardy was sentenced to a period of incarceration (which was suspended) and probation.

Hardy then noticed an immediate appeal and was granted a jury trial in accordance with North Carolina law. Under North Carolina law, his appeal had the effect of setting aside the conviction and sentence, and a jury trial was eventually scheduled for February 9, 2015. On September 17, Hardy agreed to be placed on the *Reserve/Commissioner Exempt* list pending the resolution of the criminal proceeding and subsequently received the entirety of his 2014 salary. After the season, his contract with the Panthers expired and he signed a new contract with the Cowboys.

On the scheduled date of the jury trial, the district attorney for Mecklenburg County moved to dismiss the charges. In his dismissal notice, he said Ms. Holder had “made herself completely unavailable” for purposes of the trial, despite what the district attorney called “extraordinary measures” by law enforcement agencies to find her, and the resulting unfairness of going forward without her live testimony. Both in his filing with the state court and his public statements explaining his decision, the district attorney stated that he had “reliable information” that Ms. Holder had reached a civil settlement with Hardy that was directly related to the events that occurred at his residence on May 13. The district attorney went on to say that Ms. Holder “appears to have intentionally made herself unavailable to the State.” Despite repeated requests, Hardy’s attorneys refused to provide the NFL office with a copy of the settlement agreement or even acknowledge that a settlement agreement exists.

Given the seriousness of the allegations and the guilty judgment after the state court judge’s bench trial, Commissioner Goodell determined that further investigation by the NFL was necessary.

As part of his decision, Commissioner Goodell directed Hardy to obtain a clinical evaluation to be conducted by a qualified professional of his choosing. Should counseling or treatment be recommended, Hardy will be expected to comply with those recommendations and provide appropriate releases to allow the NFL office to monitor his compliance with the evaluation and any follow-up care.

Hardy's suspension will begin on September 5, the day of final roster reductions for NFL teams. He may participate in all preseason activities, including the offseason workout program, organized team activity days, minicamps, training camp, and preseason games. He will be eligible for reinstatement following the Cowboys' 10th game of the regular season.

"You must have no further adverse involvement with law enforcement and must not commit any additional violations of league policies," Commissioner Goodell wrote. "In that respect, you should understand that another violation of this nature may result in your banishment from the NFL."

Hardy may appeal the decision within three days.