

The NFL's Latest PR Challenge – #ColinKaepernick

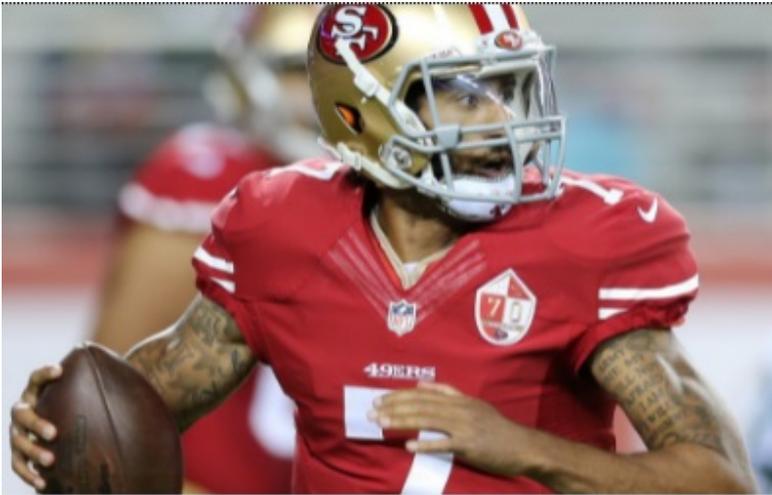
Editor's Note: CommPRO reached out to our community seeking crisis communications management commentary about [Colin Kaepernick's](#) protest and refusal to stand for the playing of the national anthem. The NFL is facing a potential image disaster at a time when the league seemed to be finally putting [Deflategate](#) and other scandals in its rear view mirror. We welcome your comments.

✘ By Thomas J. Madden, Chairman and CEO, [Transmedia Group](#)

The NFL needs to quickly censure Colin Kaepernick, citing that in his uniform and at the stadium in front of 49er's fans and TV cameras, he should not be using such an occasion to express his own point of view, no matter how righteous he feels about lingering systemic racism in our society. Why? Because this is his view, not the team's, nor his fellow players, nor the view of the NFL. Quite the contrary. The NFL needs to clarify that because this individual is representing a team, fellow players, fans, the NFL, and the great America sport of football, he has no right to insult the Flag.

The NFL must emphasize that because this organization and the sport itself and all who play it do so love this country and stand united in their devotion to America. The key word is UNITED we STAND in love of country, for which many are willing to give their lives in defense of this great country and how it gives players like Kaepernick the right of free speech, but not at such a sacred public ceremony—a salute to our Flag and what it STANDS for . . . to our national pride and all the great things we as Americans stand for . . . together. Sure there are occasional flaws, inequities and yes, even traces of systemic racism and the violence it often breeds. Kaepernick

can rail against them, but not at a ceremony where he is part of a team saluting our country.



(Photo Source: Twitter)

So the precepts of effective crisis management require the NFL to come out strongly against what Kaepernick foolishly and selfishly did. The NFL needs to fine him and suspend him for a period of time to show when it comes to respect for America, the NFL has the ball and this one player is out of bounds and has committed a foul.

At the same time, the NFL must consider that there is a large and growing feeling on the part of minorities that they are mistreated and as Kaepernick claims have no voice. So the NFL should also announce a program to bring about better understanding between police departments and the minority communities they serve and protect. They can adopt a program similar to what we're doing in Brooklyn, NY for Fashion Week Brooklyn San Bernardo ice cream for police officers to give out in a poor inner-city neighborhood on a hot day so everyone and their occasional tempers can cool off.

So while Kaepernick needs to be censured, the NFL can at the same time show its concern for minorities, but do it in a form that doesn't trample the Flag of our great country.

About the Author: *Thomas Madden is CEO of TransMedia Group, one of the largest independent PR firms in Florida, where it currently operates. The firm's clients have included AT&T, American Red Cross, City of New York, GL Homes, Jordache Enterprises, McCormick and Schmick's, Rexall Sundown, Stanley Steemer.*