



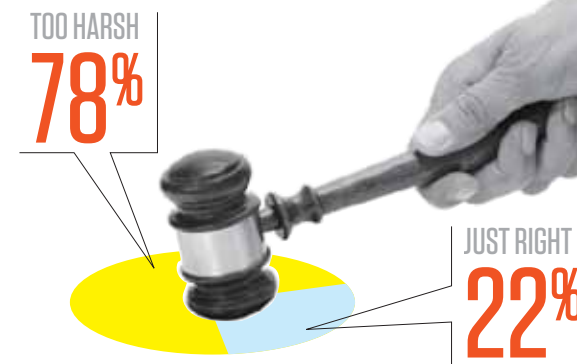
# NFL CONFIDENTIAL

WHY SHOULD ROGER GOODELL HAVE THE LAST WORD? AFTER THE WILD OFFSEASON, WE ASKED 48 PLAYERS ABOUT THE STATE OF THEIR GAME. OUR CONFIDENTIAL RESPONDENTS RANGED FROM ALL-PROS TO JOURNEYMEN. "WE STRADDLE THE LINE BETWEEN MADNESS AND NORMALNESS," SAID ONE SPECIAL-TEAMS STANDOUT. "THAT'S THE LIFE WE LIVE." FOR TOUGH TRUTHS ABOUT THAT LIFE, READ ON.

BY SAM ALIPOUR, HUNTER ATKINS, MATT BEARDMORE, RICH CIMINI, ANNA KATHERINE CLEMMONS, DENNIS DILLON, MATT EHALT, RYAN HAYNER, DAN KUKLA, THERESA MANAHAN, ANDY McDONNELL, JANE McMANUS, MATTHEW MUENCH, KIMBERLY O'HARA, STACEY PRESSMAN, MITCH SHERMAN, SETH WICKERSHAM AND JAKE ZUCKER

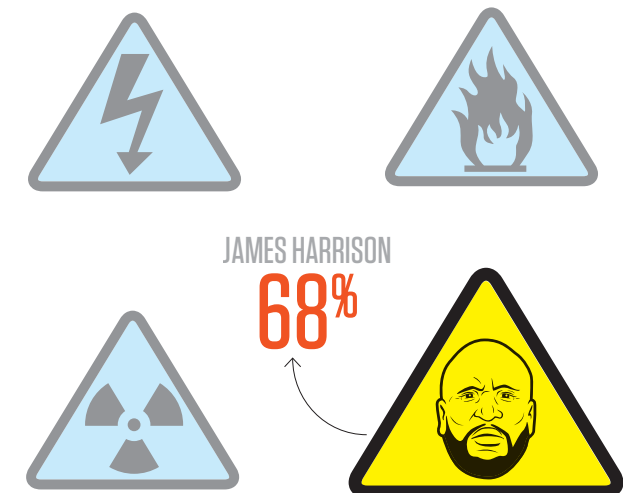
## WERE THE BOUNTYGATE PENALTIES TOO HARSH, NOT HARSH ENOUGH OR JUST RIGHT?

Not a single player thinks Goodell should have levied tougher sanctions on the Saints, and only about 1 in 5 say the commish's call was just right. **The vast majority—78.3%, to be exact—feels that Goodell overstepped his bounds.** "He gave out those penalties like we're in the military—what he says goes," says one veteran wideout. "It seemed like he was trying to make an example of them, and he did it the wrong way."



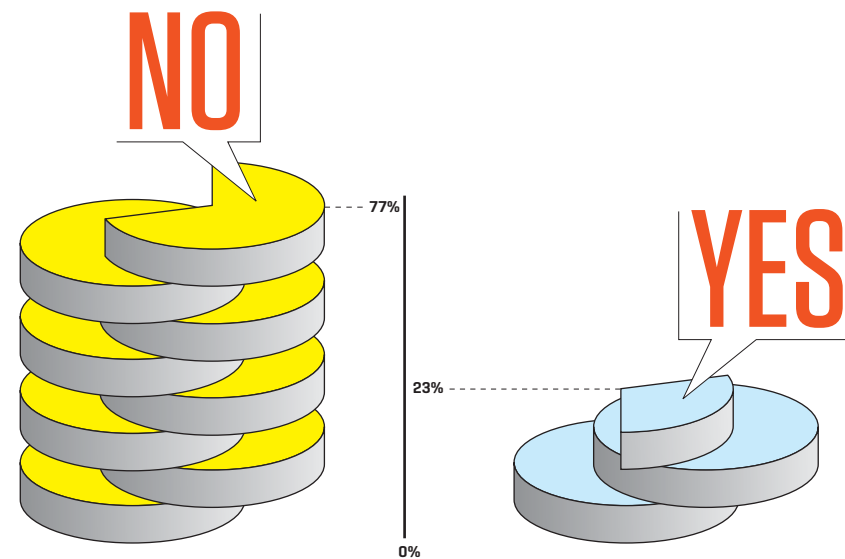
## WHO IS THE MOST VIOLENT, DANGEROUS PLAYER IN THE NFL?

Many players preface their answer by saying Steelers LB James Harrison is a nice guy whom they would want on their sideline. But then **most of the 67.5% who pick Harrison also drop the hammer on him,** much as he has on opponents for the past 10 years. "He's everything a linebacker is supposed to be: mean and vicious, and he doesn't care about nothing on the field," says one AFC wideout.



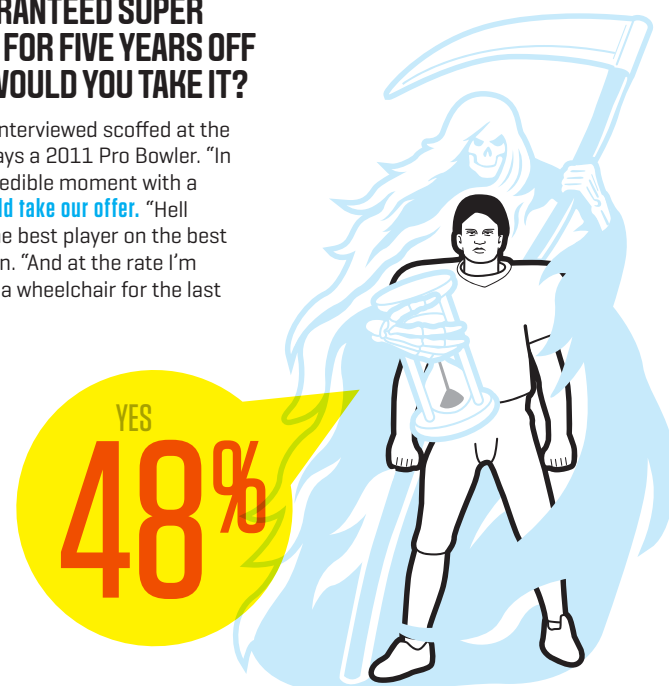
## HAS ANYONE CLOSE TO YOU ASKED YOU TO WALK AWAY FROM THE GAME?

The short answer is no, with 77.1% of the vote. The longer answer is that quite a few of those no voters admit they've received gentle urgings to quit [but no outright requests]. That leaves **22.9% who have been implored to stop.** "My older brother got me into football," says a perennial Pro Bowler. "And now he wants me to quit because he's afraid I won't be able to walk or enjoy life after football." The player paused before delivering a final thought, echoed by many others who answered yes to this question. "He's worried about me, but I love it too much," he says. "I love getting and giving hits. I even love the pain. I love everything that it stands for."



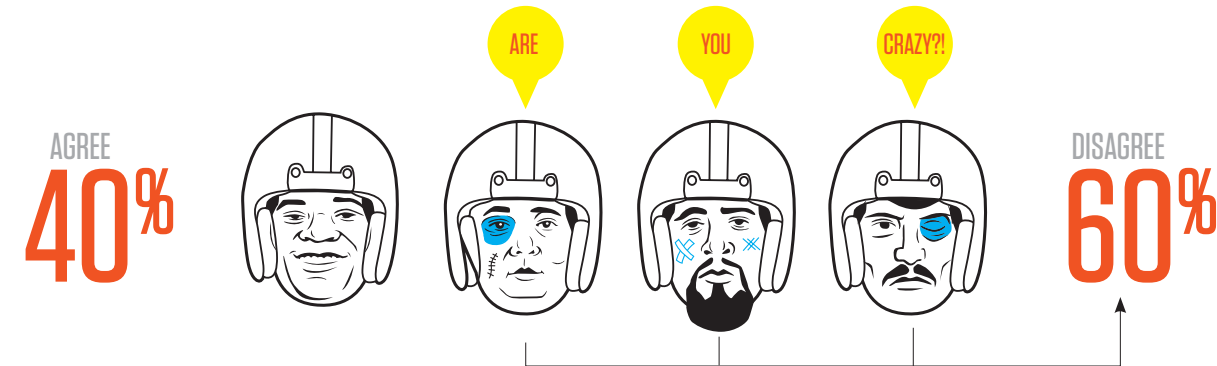
## IF YOU COULD GET A GUARANTEED SUPER BOWL MVP IN EXCHANGE FOR FIVE YEARS OFF THE END OF YOUR LIFE, WOULD YOU TAKE IT?

The slight majority of players we interviewed scoffed at the question. "It's football, not life," says a 2011 Pro Bowler. "In that trade, you could miss an incredible moment with a grandkid." But **the other 47.9% would take our offer.** "Hell yeah—you play this game to be the best player on the best team," says a veteran NFC lineman. "And at the rate I'm going, I'm probably going to be in a wheelchair for the last 10 years of my life anyway."



## SEVERAL FORMER COACHES—including Mike Ditka and Joe Paterno—have said that getting rid of face masks would eliminate helmet-to-helmet hits. Agree or disagree?

The most common response [59.6%] sounded something like this one from a two-time Super Bowl champ: "Are you crazy? We'd all need new faces after one year." Then again, **40.4% disagreed with their colleagues and are ready for the throwback headgear.** "The football helmet has become a weapon," says a former first-round draft pick. "I played some rugby as a kid, and those guys learn real quick the proper tackling technique and how to hit hard without losing all of your teeth."

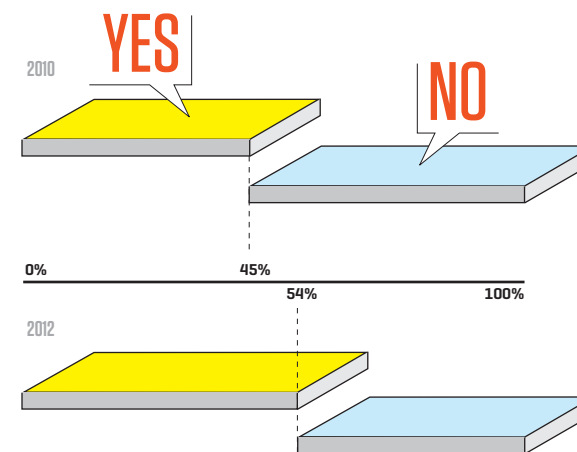


## CONCUSSION CONFIDENTIAL

WE POLLED 300 PREP PLAYERS ABOUT CONCUSSIONS IN 2010 AND FOUND THAT THEY WERE WILLING TO PLAY FIRST, ASK SAFETY QUESTIONS LATER. WHEN WE GAVE THE SAME SURVEY TO 320 STANDOUT SENIORS-TO-BE IN 2012, THERE HAD BEEN A MAJOR SHIFT IN ATTITUDES, JUST NOT IN THE DIRECTION YOU MIGHT EXPECT.

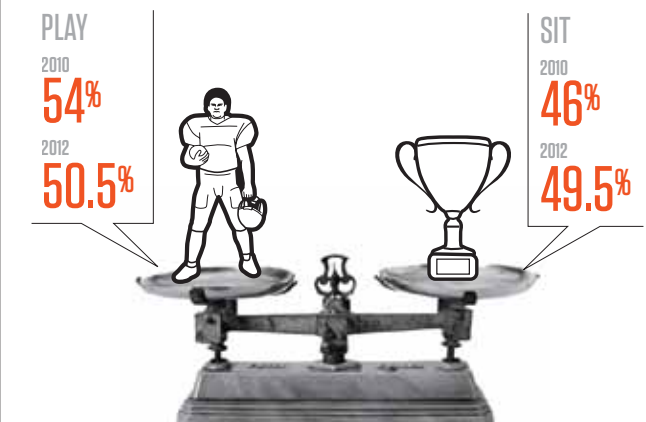
## IS A GOOD CHANCE OF PLAYING IN THE NFL WORTH A DECENT CHANCE OF PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE?

It was surprising that in 2010 nearly half of players said they'd risk brain damage for a shot at the pros. But it was downright startling to find that two years, countless headlines about safety and a flurry of lawsuits later, **that number increased to 53.6%.** "Everything you do in life has risks," says an elite running back. "When you get in a car, there's a chance of an accident. In football, you take that risk."



## YOUR STAR PLAYER IS CONCUSSED IN THE STATE TITLE GAME. WOULD YOU RATHER LOSE AS HE SITS OUT OR WIN BECAUSE HE KEEPS PLAYING?

**The percentage of players who'd want their teammate to sit out increased from 45.9% to 49.5%.** That still left a majority who'd want their colleague to go for it. Says an ESPN 150 defender: "When the adrenaline is pumping and it's Friday night, the selfishness comes out. I'd want him to come back."



## EXTRA POINTS

### NFL CONFIDENTIAL

#### GRADE ROGER GOODELL ON HOW HE HAS HANDLED BOUNTYGATE, THE PRO BOWL AND THE CONCUSSION CRISIS.

Average grades:  
Bountygate: C  
Pro Bowl: C-  
Concussion crisis: B-

#### HOW MANY CONCUSSIONS HAVE YOU HAD? HOW MANY DID YOU REPORT?

Avg. number of concussions: 2.1  
Avg. number reported: 0.7

#### IF THE MONEY WERE RIGHT, WOULD YOU CONSIDER PLAYING AN 18-GAME SCHEDULE?

Yes: 56.3%; No: 43.7%

#### THE FORMER PLAYERS WHO ARE SUING THE NFL KNEW THE RISKS AND SHOULD DROP THEIR LAWSUITS.

True: 37.5%; False: 62.5%

#### WOULD YOU RATHER TAKE A BIG HIT TO THE KNEE OR THE HEAD?

Knee: 18.6%; Head: 81.4%

#### FOOTBALL IS AS SAFE AS IT WILL EVER GET.

True: 57.4%; False: 42.6%

#### WHAT PERCENTAGE OF NFL PLAYERS ARE TAKING PEDS?

Average answer: 16.9%

#### SHOULD GREGG WILLIAMS GET ANOTHER CHANCE IN THE NFL?

Yes: 89.6%; No: 10.4%

#### WOULD YOU WANT TIM TEBOW ON YOUR TEAM?

Yes: 76.6%; No: 23.4%

### CONCUSSION CONFIDENTIAL

#### AFTER A CONCUSSION, DO YOU THINK PLAYERS GENERALLY SIT OUT:

A) TOO LONG; B) NOT LONG ENOUGH; C) THE RIGHT AMOUNT.  
2010:  
A) 10.5%; B) 26.3%; C) 63.2%  
2012:  
A) 21.5%; B) 26.3%; C) 52.2%

#### IF A PLAYER COMPLAINS OF A HEADACHE DURING A GAME, SHOULD HE BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO IT?

2010: Yes: 55.4%; No: 44.6%  
2012: Yes: 66.0%; No: 34.0%