

EVEN MILLIONAIRE WORKERS LIKE TOM BRADY NEED SOLIDARITY

President Obama's at a labor breakfast in Boston today. He offered this message.



Alison King 
@alisonkingNECN

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Obama: Even Tom Brady is glad he belongs to a union. They had his back. And if Brady needs a union - we definitely need unions.

Clearly, the President is pandering to his audience. Bostoners like Brady, unlike much of the country.

But it's an important point, one which has been missing from a lot of the coverage of DeflateGate. Brady will play on Thursday not just because he had better lawyers than the NFL, nor because Roger Goodell is a douchebag who's not even competent at being a tyrant, but also because he's a member of a union that had negotiated certain rules with the bosses, one of which was that certain kinds of violations get treated a certain way (in this case, that equipment violations involve a team fine, but no suspensions).

Mind you, I keep wondering why the NFL, after having been embarrassed with the BountyGate, Ray Rice, and Adrian Peterson disciplinary procedures, would adopt an even more abusive approach with Brady, when they were dealing with an alleged crime that wasn't even as serious or as politically unpopular as the others (setting aside how much most people hate the Pats, of course). It's possible they did so because they got so far ahead of themselves when they launched an investigation – and leaked highly

derogatory and false information – in response to rumors about overinflated balls that they were left with no choice but to double down. But partly, the serial leaks feel like part of the plan here. In which case, I think it at least possible the NFL went after Brady so hard because he has always been active in the Players Association, and was the named plaintiff in 2011 when the players sued the NFL on anti-trust grounds.

Tom Brady may look like a hero, a badass quarterback, or a cheat to fans (depending on whom you're asking), but maybe to every owner not named Kraft, he looks like a union rabble rouser?

I don't know the answer to that, but as the league appeals Judge Berman's ruling, I hope some people ask whether the NFL is just acting so stupid because they are that stupid, or whether there's something more going on.

In any case, the President may have been pandering. But his point is sound. If even millionaire workers like Tom Brady need a union – need solidarity with other workers to achieve some measure of justice – then we all probably could use more of it.

Happy Labor Day! Go Patriots!

Update: As a number of people are noting, the NFL released a graphic asking which QB will be in next year's Super Bowl that left the reigning champ off.