

## **2019 Media Access Policy**

Reasonable cooperation with the news media is essential to the continuing popularity of our game and its players and coaches. The following league policy is reviewed and updated annually and remains standard operating procedure:

- 1. POST-GAME ACCESS** – After a reasonable waiting period, defined as 10-12 minutes maximum after the completion of the game and the players have entered the locker room, the home and visiting team locker room areas will be opened to all accredited media with immediate access to all players and the head coach.

With the exception of league and club broadcast partners, there will be no access for media to the field prior to the conclusion of the game for the purpose of post-game on-field player interviews before the opening of the locker room to accredited media.

To relieve congestion in the locker room, each club must bring the head coach and at least one star player of the game to an interview area as soon as possible. This interview area should be within close proximity of the locker room or inside the locker room itself. Each club is responsible for setting up interview areas in its home stadium for both the home and visiting team. The interview area must include a riser for the coach/player, microphones for the speakers and a camera platform in the back of the room. The home team must ensure that the visiting team interview area is of adequate size to conduct a professional press conference. Access to the area should be restricted to working media only.

In the locker rooms, the home club must make arrangements for both teams to screen the shower areas from view without blocking access to player lockers. Each team must supply its players with wrap-around towels or robes in addition to the normal supply of bath towels for post-game showers. Clubs are urged to take other measures for player privacy, such as placing shorts in each locker or building individual locker curtains. Clubs must ensure that name plates with players' names and numbers are left in position until after the locker room has cleared of media.

Each club will exert its best effort to limit access to the post-game locker room and interview areas to club officials and working media. A club PR representative should be stationed at the locker room door to ensure orderly postgame access for accredited media. When only a few players remain in the locker room and the majority of media have concluded their interviews, a club PR representative should announce that the locker room is officially closed and that media access has concluded. A PR representative must be in the locker room until all media have departed.

- 2. WEEKLY LOCKER ROOM ACCESS** – Beginning no later than the week prior to the opening of the regular season through the playoffs, each club will open its locker room during the normal practice week (based on a Sunday game) on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to all accredited media for player interviews for a minimum of 45 minutes. While the actual interviews may be conducted outside the locker room at the club's or player's request, the media must be allowed to make the interview request in person to the player in the locker room. For the purposes of this policy, Tuesday is treated as the players' day off.

The minimum 45-minute daily interview time on four days of the practice week will be set at the club's discretion, but it should occur when players are available and free of other club commitments. It is the club's responsibility to deliver access to all players during this time period and each player's responsibility to cooperate.

It should be noted that several clubs afford media access both before and after practice on a daily basis. Clubs should consider if possible, based on the team's daily schedule, dividing the open locker room period into two – i.e. a pre-practice session for 30 minutes and a post-practice window of 15 minutes. From a club perspective, it would offer options on fulfilling multiple requests for the same player. For the media, they would have two windows in which to speak to players.

If a club has its only daily interview session prior to practice, the head coach should be available to answer post-practice questions, and the club should make its best effort to have players available for post-practice questions if requested. If the locker room is open to the media following practice, the club must screen the shower area from view and distribute appropriate clothing, e.g. wrap-around towels or robes, for player privacy.

A club PR staff member must be present in the locker room at all times during the open locker room period. When the open locker room period has ended, this PR staff member should announce that the locker room is officially closed and that media access has concluded.

If a team gives its players two days off after a game, meaning no team meetings or practice on Monday (in addition to the typical Tuesday off day), the team must arrange for key players to be available to local media on Monday. The purpose is to ensure player availability between Sunday and Wednesday for media that are reporting on your team every day. This ensures compliance with the requirement that the locker room be open four days during the practice week for player interviews.

The following is a summary of access requirements for Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches (coordinators/assistant head coaches, primary position coaches) and Players:

**Head Coaches** – In addition to holding a news conference after every game, head coaches must be available on a regular basis to the media that regularly cover the team. At a minimum, the head coach must be available to the local media at least four days during each practice week from training camp through the end of the season. The head coach must be available to local media the day after all games – including Thursday, Saturday and Monday night games – either in person or via conference call. The head coach must also be available to the opposing team's media each week via conference call.

**Assistant Coaches** – Through their public relations department, clubs must provide regular and reasonable access to assistant coaches – coordinators/assistant head coaches and all primary position coaches – for media interviews that serve the best interests of the club and league. Clubs may not put assistant coaches off limits to the media and may not unreasonably withhold permission for coordinators or primary position coaches to speak to the media.

**Coordinators** – Offensive and defensive coordinators must be available to media that regularly cover the club at least once between Monday and Friday during every practice week of the regular and postseason for a minimum of 10-15 minutes, beginning with the week leading to Week 1 of the regular season. The scheduled availability of the offensive and defensive coordinator must be communicated to media in advance each week. Media do not need to request weekly access to the coordinators. Availability must occur weekly between Monday and Friday.

For clubs who do not have a named offensive or defensive coordinator, or whose head coach serves in that capacity, another position coach from the offensive or defensive staff (as applicable to the individual team situation) must fulfill this weekly obligation.

**Assistant Head Coaches & Primary Position Coaches** – Permission to interview assistant coaches about reasonable football issues throughout the year should not be denied.

Regular and reasonable access to assistant coaches – coordinators/assistant head coaches and all primary position coaches – will include at least one mandatory media availability during the club’s offseason program and at least one media availability per month beginning in August through the conclusion of the regular season for media that regularly cover the team (offensive and defensive coordinators will continue with their weekly in-season media availabilities as described above). The structure of these sessions is a club decision (i.e. availability on a single day or multiple days, press conference format or on the field following practice, etc.) but all assistant coaches must be available during each of these time periods. For clubs that conduct one mandatory media availability per month, it must be scheduled at least 14 days apart from its previous monthly availability.

Please note that while all assistant coaches must be available at least once during the offseason program and once per month beginning in August, it is not permissible to deny all other requests because of these mandatory availabilities.

Media access to assistant coaches on game day is a club decision, and any game day access to assistant coaches would be in addition to the mandatory access rules described above.

**Players** – Players must be available to the media following every game and regularly during the practice week as required under league rules and their contracts and as noted above. It is not permissible for any player or any group of players to boycott the media. Players with unusually heavy media demands must be available to the media that regularly cover their teams at least once during the practice week in addition to their required post-game media availability. This applies to a maximum of one or two players per team only. The minimum for such players does not include other required media obligations such as network production meetings and national media interviews arranged by the team.

- 3. PRACTICE ACCESS AND INFORMATION** – Following the completion of Week 2 of the NFL preseason schedule and through the regular season and playoffs, daily practice (Monday through Friday) must be open to local media (those who regularly cover the team) for at least the first 30 minutes or until the start of “team” work. It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of practice. Starting the week prior to the opening of the regular season, clubs are required to designate on the NFL Intranet site and issue to local media the names of those players who missed any portion of 11-on-11 team or individual work on the specified days noted in the NFL Injury Report policy.

Setting reasonable ground rules for coverage of practice – subject to the general access rules specified above – is the responsibility of the clubs. For practice sessions during training camp and minicamp that are open to the public, there should be a balance that addresses publicity for our teams, the role of media in serving our fans, and the goals and procedures set by individual teams. As such, we require that at least for practice sessions that are open to the public – and subject to guidelines set by clubs on the reporting of strategy – clubs must allow reporting (tweeting, blogging, etc.) of newsworthy events, such as VIP visitors to practice, exceptional catches, standout rookie performers, etc.

- 4. TRAINING CAMP ACCESS** – Beginning the first day of preseason training camp through at least the completion of Week 2 of the NFL preseason schedule, all daily practices must be open in their entirety to local media (those who regularly cover the team). It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of training camp practices.

All players and the head coach must be available to the media for interviews on a regular basis (not necessarily in the locker room) during the entire preseason period (through Week 4 of the preseason schedule). As in the regular season, one or two players with heavy media demands may be made available to local media once per practice week throughout training camp and the preseason (not including preseason game days). All players must be available to the media following preseason games. Clubs must make several players available to media on the day the team reports to training camp, generally the day before the first practice session.

If a club elects to abide by regular-season access rules following Week 2 of the preseason schedule – practice open to local media for the first 30 minutes or until the start of “team” work, etc. – it must also adhere to all regular-season access policies – open locker room four times per practice week for a minimum of 45 minutes, etc.

If a club elects to conduct joint workouts with another club, those practice sessions must be open in their entirety to local media. This is true regardless of whether the joint workouts occur before or after the completion of Week 2 of the NFL preseason schedule. It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of joint training camp practices.

Assistant coaches – defined as coordinators/assistant head coaches and all primary position coaches – must be available at least once in August (and at least once each

month through the conclusion of the regular season) to media that regularly cover the team. Please note, in addition to at least one media availability in August, offensive and defensive coordinators must be available to media that regularly cover the club at least once between Monday and Friday during every practice week of the regular and postseason. Permission to interview assistant coaches at other times about reasonable football issues should not be denied.

- 5. MANDATORY VETERAN MINICAMP ACCESS** – During a club’s mandatory veteran minicamp, all daily practices must be open in their entirety to local media (those who regularly cover the team). It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of minicamp practices. In addition, players and the head coach must be available to the media for interviews each day during minicamp (not necessarily in the locker room). Media access to a rookie or voluntary minicamp is a club decision.
- 6. OFFSEASON PROGRAM (OTAs)** – To enhance publicity during the offseason, clubs must open to the media at least one of every three Organized Team Activity (OTA) days. In addition, it is recommended that clubs open to the media the first OTA session of the year. The purpose of opening at least one of every three OTA days (not one-third of the total number of OTAs but one of every three) is for media to have at least one mandatory access day in each of the four weeks of Phase Three of a club’s offseason workouts as described in Article 21 of the CBA. This means that on these designated days teams must 1) make the head coach and players available to the media for interviews, either in the locker room or elsewhere at the club’s facility, and 2) open the OTA on-field session to the media in its entirety. It is permissible to limit the videotaping or photographing of certain portions of these sessions. These mandatory offseason media sessions are in addition to the veteran minicamps that must be open to the media in their entirety as described above. Any media access to Phase One or Phase Two of offseason workouts is a club decision.
- 7. PRE-DRAFT NEWS CONFERENCE** – Every team is required to hold a pre-draft news conference with its head coach, and/or general manager, and/or player personnel director within two weeks of the draft. The purpose is to respond to fan interest in the draft and offseason squad development and promote a key league and club event.
- 8. MEDICAL INFORMATION** – Clubs must ensure that all medical information issued to the media is credible, responsible, and specific in terms that are meaningful to teams, media, and fans. This includes the information in the weekly injury reports and information on injuries announced to the media during games.

As endorsed by the NFL Competition Committee, in-game injury announcements to the media must be specific to a body part, accurate, and updated as warranted, including any changes in the player’s status for the rest of the game if it changes from the initial report. In situations where players have been involved in major collisions in which a concussion is possible, there will be an announcement in the press box that the player is being evaluated for an injury and an update will be provided as soon as possible.

A player diagnosed with a concussion in a game will not be made available to the media after the game. The concussion-related medical exemption from mandatory media

obligations extends until the player has been cleared by the Independent Neurological Consultant (INC) under the NFL Concussion Protocol.

Though the injury reporting policy does not begin until the week prior to the start of the regular-season, clubs are expected to update media on significant injuries that occur during the offseason program, training camp and preseason games.

As a reminder, please note that because the injury reporting policy affects the integrity of the game, compliance is governed by the annual certifications required under the Integrity of the Game initiative. These certifications are required from owners, club presidents, general managers and head coaches. Club management, in consultation with its medical staff, is responsible for the accuracy and appropriateness of medical information distributed in response to public interest. Super Bowl teams are required to submit injury report information during the bye week between the Championship Games and Super Bowl.

- 9. ON-FIELD MEDIA COORDINATOR** – Each team is obligated to provide for each game (home and away) an on-field media coordinator whose duties include helping the televising network, sideline photographers and any other on-field media. The media coordinator should be located during games near the bench area with direct communication (radio and telephone) to the team’s Public Relations Director in the press box.
- 10. DEPTH CHARTS** – Every team must produce a credible weekly depth chart for the media beginning no later than the week of its first preseason game and updated weekly through the end of its season. The depth chart must include the 11 offensive positions and the 11 defensive positions a team considers to be in its base units, and it must list expected starters and backups at each of those positions. Listing players at each position on the depth chart in alphabetical order is prohibited.
- 11. EQUAL ACCESS** – Under the equal-access principle of this policy, all accredited media must be given access to the designated player and coach interview times during the practice week, following games, and during training camp and minicamp. When a club allows media to attend daily practice, all members of the media who regularly cover the team must be admitted. Barring individual members of the regularly accredited media from any of the above sessions for what is perceived as “unfair coverage” or any similar reason is not permitted.
- 12. POST-SEASON REQUIREMENTS** – The minimum standards for media access during the regular-season practice week will apply during the playoffs. Due to increased demands, however, it is recommended that clubs supplement their open locker-room times during a playoff practice week with specially arranged press conferences for the head coach and key players.

Normal post-game media access rules apply during the playoffs (i.e. locker rooms must be opened to all accredited media no later than 10-12 minutes after the game ends and the players have entered the locker room). Clubs should supplement post-game interview areas for the head coach and star players to meet the heavier demands of

playoff media coverage. Clubs that schedule off days for players during a playoff bye week are expected to make key players available to the media that week to serve the extensive public interest in the NFL playoffs.

Clubs are required to comply with the league office press conference schedule for playoff games. This obligation includes the responsibility to have available the head coach, starting quarterback and other key players as requested by the league office based on media and fan interest.

For the Conference Championship Games, the four participating teams are required to adhere to media requirements established by the league office for Wednesday through Sunday of championship game week. This will include open locker room periods on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday plus press conference and conference call availabilities on those days at the team facility. The head coach must be available in the press conferences at the team facility on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The starting quarterback must be available in the press conference at the team facility on Wednesday and also available on either Thursday or Friday at a minimum.

For Super Bowl week, overall media arrangements differ in several respects from other playoff games. Those requirements will be communicated to the participating teams in advance of their arrival in the Super Bowl host city.

Full cooperation is required.

- 13. SEASON-ENDING NEWS CONFERENCE/OPEN LOCKER ROOM** – Every team is required to 1) open its locker room for player interviews the day after the season ends and 2) hold a news conference during the week following the end of its season with its head coach, and/or owner, and/or club president, and/or general manager. The purpose is to serve fan interest in the conclusion of the team’s season.
- 14. RESPONSIBILITY OF CLUB OFFICIALS** – Each club will assign the responsibility of administering the post-game and practice week media access policies to two appropriate members of its public relations staff. One – or both – of these designated officials must be present when the club’s locker room is open to the media following each game and during the practice week.
- 15. CONFERENCE CALLS** — Head coaches must be available to the opposing team’s media each week via conference call. A weekly player conference call with opposing team media is at club discretion. While public relations directors may take requests from local media as to players they are interested in interviewing via conference call, the decision on conducting a weekly player conference call is at the discretion of the club. Each club will make arrangements for other appropriate media interviews with its players and coaches upon reasonable request throughout the season.
- 16. TEAM MEETING ON MEDIA & PUBLIC/COMMUNITY RELATIONS** — Each club is required to hold a team meeting during training camp on media and public/community relations. The club president or general manager, coaches and public relations staff should attend. The required playbook section on player public relations responsibilities,

the importance of good media and community relations, plus league and club policies should be discussed. It is mandatory at this meeting that the film, "NFL Players and the Media," be shown and that instructional materials provided by the league and the club be distributed.

- 17. MEDIA TRAINING** – Each club is required to conduct a media training session each year prior to the start of the regular season for all players and coaches. This can be done in one session or in separate sessions at the club's option. In addition, the club PR director must arrange for a separate media training meeting for his club's rookies each year prior to the season. The league office will assist clubs in identifying professional media trainers that can conduct the sessions or advise clubs that prefer to have their own staff handle the sessions. These mandatory training sessions will be held in addition to the annual team training camp meeting at which the club public relations director reviews league and club policies on media and public relations, described above.
- 18. CLUB MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS BROCHURE** — Each club will produce for its coaches and players an annual brochure listing individual local media (with photos) and reviewing club policies on media and public/community relations. A copy of your club's brochure should be sent to your conference communications director.
- 19. MEDIA ACCESS PLAN** — Each club must complete and return by Thursday, June 14, a form provided by the league office on the club's media access plan. The form will ask each club to provide details on post-game interview areas, weekly locker room and practice access for the media, specific details on how a club will fulfill the weekly mandatory coordinator access requirements, and related matters.

Once the form has been received, it will be reviewed by the league office. To ensure clear understanding of these policies at multiple levels of an organization and responsibility for adherence to them, the signatures of the club president or general manager, head coach and PR director on the form will be required. Failure to comply with this directive is subject to discipline.

In addition, your weekly in-season release detailing the club's upcoming media schedule must be forwarded to the NFL Communications staff each week.

- 20. PRESS WILL CALL/PARKING** — Each club will have a separate Press Will Call window or booth, preferably at or near the Press Entrance of your stadium. There will be a phone line or other communication link between Press Will Call and the public relations director in the Press Box. Clubs are encouraged to have credentials available at Press Will Call four hours prior to kickoff for preseason, regular-season and post-season games. Clubs will make their best effort to provide appropriate game-day parking accommodations to working members of the media, as well as including relevant maps and parking-related information on the back of parking passes.
- 21. PRESS BOX SEATING** — Each club will exert its best effort to limit the number of club personnel in the press box during games.



**22. VIOLATIONS** – Violations of the above procedures will be considered conduct detrimental to the league and will be subject to disciplinary action by the commissioner.