

I wonder if professional boxers or MMA fighters realize that when they enter the ring, they might get hit.

Recent lawsuits in the NFL surrounding concussions make it seem as if these athletes had no idea when they put a hard-shelled helmet around their heads, accepted an offer to play a game that involves contact, made millions of dollars, and then claimed that they were unaware that they might have physical effects from playing.

4<sup>th</sup>  
& GOAL



EARL WATT

Recent rule changes have taken much of the aggression out of the game, and I believe the NFL is teetering on going too far. If they leave it as it is, the game may survive, but further restrictions on contact should open the door for another league that would allow and support the original version of the game.

If the league made a mistake, it was not having players sign waivers from future lawsuits before they handed them millions of dollars.

Could you imagine George Foreman suing Muhammad Ali for punching him in the face? Multiple times? Or suing the Boxing Commission?

There is clearly a physical risk to playing the game, or any game for that matter.

There's not a football fan that isn't aware that the protection of the quarterback is simply a financial decision. These players are the highest paid on the field, and they help fill the stands.

Fans do not like to watch back-ups, so the NFL had to modify the rules to maximize profits.

I get it.

Protecting undefended receivers is another area where high-paid players get a rule to protect their safety, and perhaps some of it is warranted.

But what used to be a great defensive play of a well-timed hit just as the ball arrives is now illegal.

This leads to more scoring, which again, is something that helps fill the stands. Fans don't like to watch a 7-3 game.

If the NFL wants to make a rule change that matters, here's a good one: Use the replay to determine who started a fight that results in personal foul penalties.

The NBA does it, college basketball does it. Why can't the NFL stop this offsetting penalties business and stick it to the guy who caused the original problem?

Too often, it is the retaliator who gets the 15 yards, or at worst it's both players.

But it is the first guy who should be the one to receive the penalty.

A simple review of the video will clearly tell who should receive the 15 yards, and possible ejection. But no more offsetting penalties. The first guy pays.

Here's another change — any excessive celebration or unsportsmanlike conduct penalties following a touchdown should negate the touchdown.

If you really want to stop it, don't enforce it on the kick-off. Take the points off the scoreboard and move the ball back to the 15 yard line and make it first and goal.

I bet the first guy who decides to show off after a touchdown gets taken off the board, coaches and teammates will make sure it never happens again.

Let's make the game better with rules like these, not by putting players in bubble wrap.