

NEWS



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**USA FOOTBALL TO DONATE 5,000 NFL “TAGLIABUE” GAME  
BALLS TO HIGH SCHOOLS AS PART OF  
“PLAY FOOTBALL MONTH”**

**WILSON TO PRODUCE  
“GOODELL” FOOTBALLS FOR 2006 SEASON**

USA Football, the youth football advocacy organization founded by the NFL and the NFL Players Association, will distribute 5,000 game footballs featuring the signature of retiring Commissioner Paul Tagliabue to high schools, it was announced today. As part of “Play Football Month” (Aug. 15-Sept. 15), the footballs will be given to high school programs around the country for use at their discretion with an emphasis on Gulf Coast schools recovering from Hurricane Katrina. Balls also will be donated to international football programs.

The 5,000 balls were ready for use during the 2006 NFL season, but Commissioner Tagliabue called an audible following the selection of Roger Goodell to succeed him earlier this month.

The NFL’s official football supplier, Wilson Sporting Goods Co., began producing new balls this week for the 2006 season stamped with Goodell’s signature, beginning with the season opener, Thursday, Sept. 7 (Miami Dolphins vs. Pittsburgh Steelers). The “Commissioner Tagliabue” footballs will be used throughout preseason.

“Play Football Month” was created to celebrate the beginning of football season at all levels – from youth leagues to the NFL – and includes clinics, skills competitions, scrimmages, picnics and parades for football fans in communities throughout the country. As part of the campaign, USA Football plans to award \$525,000 in equipment grants to eligible youth football leagues throughout the month. Available equipment grants include a \$25,000 grant and 500 \$1,000 grants.

For more information about *Play Football Month* and to access grant applications and eligibility requirements visit [www.usafootball.com](http://www.usafootball.com). NFL teams also are donating more than 100,000 preseason game tickets to youth organizations and military personnel during the month.

The move to the Goodell-signed balls is the second modification of the NFL game ball this year. Earlier this year, NFL clubs unanimously endorsed a recommendation to return the name of the official game ball to “The Duke” in honor of the late New York Giants owner Wellington Mara, one of the most beloved

and respected figures in professional sports history. Mara died last October. Mara, who spent 81 years with the New York Giants and made numerous contributions to the NFL, was named Wellington by his father after the Duke of Wellington. He was given the nickname "The Duke" as a youngster by Giants players.

Wilson's football factory in Ada, Ohio began making the new game balls earlier this week. To accommodate the change, employees at the world's only dedicated football factory will work for the length of the season to complete the thousands of game balls needed for the NFL season. The short time frame requires that new game balls are constructed weekly and shipped to the various teams in time to be broken in, inspected, and brought to each specific game venue.

Wilson has been the official football supplier of the NFL since 1941. The ball is hand made from genuine leather by Ada factory workers whose average tenure exceeds 20 years. Located approximately 80 miles northwest of Columbus, Ohio, the factory employs 150 workers who produce no less than 700,000 footballs annually. Their traditional method of football construction extends more than six decades, standing as a true testament to American craftsmanship.

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