

NFL players' protests during national anthem spark outrage and support, debate and discussion

Although the specific tradition of NFL players standing for the anthem dates back to only 2009, it has been a longstanding tradition in the United States to play the “Star Spangled Banner” (the national anthem) before sporting events. It is customary for anyone present at the game, including players, coaches, and spectators, to at least stand. In 2016, then-San Francisco 49ers quarterback player Colin Kaepernick sat and later knelt during the playing of the national anthem to protest against police brutality and structural racism. This quiet symbolic action generated a loud discussion discrediting Kaepernick’s behavior, with some calling it “disrespectful.”

Among this animosity, some other players throughout the National Football League chose to follow suit. Although more athletes were doing it, the action was not described as a “movement.” It was more the act of individual players who believed in what Kaepernick’s message. However, these actions caught the attention of President Donald Trump, who took to Twitter to display his disapproval.

On September 23, Donald Trump tweeted “If a player wants the privilege of making millions of dollars in the NFL, or other leagues, he or she should not be allowed to disrespect to our Great American Flag (or Country) and should stand for the National Anthem. If not, YOU’RE FIRED. Find something else to do!”

President Trump’s tweet sparked strong reactions from various players and teams throughout the NFL. Teams used their own

methods to protest the anthem, almost as a form of resistance towards Donald Trump. A day after the tweet, Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin had his team skip the anthem altogether, choosing to remain in the locker room until the game actually started. The Chicago Bears chose to remain standing but locked arms while the anthem played. Players on the Dolphins wore Kaepernick T-shirts during their pregame warm-up. Before Trump's tweet, protesting the anthem was only done by individual players scattered throughout the league. After the tweet, entire teams made it their prerogative to express their resistance.

These different types of protests along with President Trump's reaction have garnered nationwide discussion. Media outlets have blown this story up to its fullest extent, and the controversy has been a topic of discussion across the country, even making its way into the halls of Cathedral Prep.

Mr. Pituch, a social studies teacher at Prep, weighed in on the issue. "This has become a very polarizing issue. Both sides present a clear argument on its relevance today."

Jack Matthews, senior at Cathedral Prep, stated his opinion, "I feel that kneeling in protest of the flag is un-American. Our first amendment right is not only the freedom of speech but the freedom to not say anything at all." Matthews' opinion is against the players' actions; however, there is always another side to the issue.

Mr. Hubert, an English and journalism teacher at Prep, used the issue as a teachable moment in his sports journalism class. "What I was reading on social media and what I was hearing in conversation was a lot of divisive, polarizing rhetoric," he said. "I try to teach my students that it is important to be willing to engage in respectful dialogue and to listen to different perspectives on tough issues."

Mr. Hubert assigned his sports journalism students to read a

variety of articles analyzing and reporting on the protests. The articles, which came from a variety of sources, spanned the political spectrum and included columns with low-to-high levels of bias as well as objective news reports. "I was pleased with how well my students handled the follow-up conversation in a civilized manner. "Too many people resort to name-calling, seeking their mic-drop moment to shut down and 'win' the debate," he said. "I challenged my students to be open-minded and empathetic—to push themselves to try to understand how the other side feels, and as a result we had a very productive, healthy classroom discussion."

Clearly, this is an issue that ignites passion both from those people who support the protesters and those people who oppose them. The debate also leaves room for both sides to make well-reasoned points supporting their arguments. The beautiful part of this nation is that the first amendment allows them to disagree and voice their respective opinions.

[Prep senior retreat recap](#)

Prep provides their students with the unique benefit of class retreats, which serve as a way to connect with the people in one's class on a deeper, spiritual level. For seniors, it is their last time to come together as a class and experience unity. This final retreat ended on a powerful note, led by Justin Fatica and his Hard of Nails Ministry.

Justin Fatica is a Prep alum who specially takes time out of his nationwide tour to motivate his alma mater. Fatica's passion and adrenaline is noted in his speeches, sharing his own personal life and stories with the audience.

Senior class member Dominic Montefiori stated, "Fatica's

really interesting and fun to watch. He really engages the audience.”

Each speech is formed around the message of following God and the responsibilities it requires. Through this, one progresses as a spiritual and moral individual throughout their lifetime.

Justin’s Hard of Nails ministry is a group comprised of young adults who use their personal stories as a form of inspiration. They are examples of people who have devoted their lives to spreading the gospel in order to help others. This is especially impressive, since they have chosen to make this commitment at fairly young age. When commenting on the ministry’s member’s, senior Alec Thomas said, “It’s amazing to be able to connect with people fairly close to our age. I admire their commitment and overall positivity.”

This retreat focused heavily on individual introspection. People in the class were given the opportunity to speak about their lives. These stories told by members of the senior class strengthened many bonds among classmates.

Senior Alex Welz commented on the senior class speakers, “The stories told by members of our class were all extremely meaningful. Everyone who spoke was fantastic because it came from the heart.”

Each speaker was impactful in their own way, serving as compliments to the overall message of following and trusting in God. Overall, retreats serve the primary goal of strengthening bonds between classmates. While they teach important individual lessons, this benefit is a collective gain for everyone. Therefore, Justin and his Hard of Nails ministry increased the unity of an already tight senior class.

Club Profile: Debate

One activity that often goes overlooked in a student's four years at Prep is the Debate Club. This is disappointing, as participation in this club could be enticing to many Prep students. It is developed around persuasion and argumentation, two fundamental skills to being successful in the future. Debate is also highly competitive, leading to self-rewarding results. Through this, the debate team leads to many benefits both inside and outside of school.

Debate is a combination of two fundamental skills: argumentation and persuasion. Argumentation produces critical thinking skills, leading to a greater understanding and appreciation of the world. All arguments are backed by credible sources. Therefore, debaters become excellent researchers and readers. At the same time, debate requires the ability to effectively persuade. This is a practice that occurs in everyday life when interviewing for a job, convincing a parent to do something, or writing essays for college applications.

"Debate can be cross-applied to my role as a student and leader, both inside and outside of the classroom," said Prep junior and debate team member Justin Czerwinski.

A debater receives these benefits without even knowing it. They have too much fun competing.

Debate is an intense and competitive activity. Like any sport, there is a sort of excitement centered around competition that increases its enjoyment. Prep junior and debate team member Owen Jacobsen said, "When i'm debating, I get in the zone."

This game requires an ultra-level of focus that must be tapped

into during a round. There is an incentive to use strategy for the purposes of beating one's opponent.

"At the end of the day, the goal is to win," said Prep debater Timmothy Soucash.

If someone is an inherently competitive person, they should consider doing debate. If someone is looking to gain an intro level to debate, they should take the debate class. Students learn what it means to be an independent thinker and approach the world from a critical point of view. The class is a great way to boost confidence and leadership capabilities, breeding excellent public speakers. Finally, colleges love seeing debate on a prospective student's resume; admissions officers understand the value this activity brings to a student.

Former Prep debater Will Lewis ('17) said, "taking the class was very beneficial and sparked my interest in debate."

Overall, the class is a great way to become acclimated into the team. Being a member of the debate team at Prep reaps unique benefits that no other club or activity has. The first benefit is travel. Debaters get the ability to go to national tournaments all around the country, which allows for a great way to see new places and explore places outside of Erie, Pennsylvania. National tournaments opens up opportunities to make and meet new friends all across the country. The debate community is a diverse network full of like-minded people.

The debate team at Prep has a lot of upside that often goes unnoticed by the students at Cathedral Prep. Students at Prep are always reminded that they are individually vital and unique to the school. Being on the debate team could be a great opportunity to uncover that masked potential.

Prep soccer beats McDowell

Prep soccer had a fantastic 5-0 win over McDowell, adding to their 8-0 undefeated record. This win adds on to an overall impressive yet grueling week, where the Ramblers played six matches in ten days.

Prep's offense came to play, staying dominant throughout the entire game. Goals were scored by Jack Hilbrich, Matt Szparaga, Tyler Vandemerwe, and Jack Peterson. Ten minutes into the game, Hilbrich had a fantastic goal from 25 yards away, going straight through the hands of the McDowell goalie. James Kilgallon remarked of the goal, "[It was a] fantastic way to start, [and it] made our presence known on the field."

Before halftime, Szparaga was able to add in another goal from the right wing. That intensity transitioned even after the break, where just three minutes in Vandemerwe scored. This was a rebound off of Zach Hein's initial shot. Then, Peterson finished the game off with two goals, solidifying a dominant Prep win.

Prep defended its home field very well, not allowing the Trojans to score a single goal. Although the defense often goes unrecognized, they were integral to allowing the offense to flourish. Goalie Nate Ferrick saved all shot attempts that came his way. When asked about his performance, Nate credited the defense, saying, "The Trojans forwards were always met with great resistance by our back line, making my job a lot easier."

This was the last Prep-McDowell game for many of the Prep seniors that are on the team. To capitalize on this infamous rivalry, the game was called "Kicking It For Cancer." Annalise Denning was the honored guest, a young girl diagnosed with medulloblastoma. Proceeds from the game, were given to offset her family's medical costs. Patrick Reim commented on the

game, “[It was a] great win for the boys. It was really great to play for something meaningful. I’m glad I was a part of it.”

North Korea’s nuclear hostility

It starts again. North Korea is sending out another “warning” to the United States that nuclear missiles are headed their way. For what seems like years, North Korea has been threatening that they not only have nuclear capabilities, but will use them for the intent of destruction. In the United States, these feeble warnings have become the source of jokes for many people. Apps like Twitter and ifunny were filled with memes, ridiculing North Korea’s threats. North Korea has once again issued a threat against the United States. In the age of the Trump presidency and his unpredictability, policy analysts seem to be taking this threat much more seriously.

First, North Korea is unique, seen as a global anomaly. They are the only Communist hereditary dynasty, currently run by the dictator Kim Jong Un. The country remains relatively secret, isolating themselves from the rest of the world. This has occurred for decades, becoming a state-centered system with an almost cultish personality. Interestingly, their country went through a great famine then turned into an industrialized-urbanized machine. According to the Foreign Policy’s website, they divert most of their spending and government resources to their military.

Since North Korea remains fairly secret and isolated; Kim Jong Un’s aggression towards the United States is largely unknown.

The New York Times isolated two main reasons: defense and recognition. Kim Jong Un may be looking to build up his military capabilities to defend against the United States in case he is ever overthrown. North Korea has also expressed desire to rejoin with South Korea, which will require forces to be revamped. The second reason is recognition; North Korea will be recognized as a global power if the United States chooses to not recognize the issue.

According to the Huffington Post, North Korea's new weapon of choice is a high energy nuclear bomb that will deliver an electromagnetic pulse at high altitudes in the air. The use of an EMP serves the possibility of destroying the U.S. power grid using overpowering energy to go through the wiring. They essentially "burn out," rendering them useless.

This type of bomb reinforces how truly unconventional North Korea is. Many people had never heard of using EMP as a strategic weapon until this threat was made. It particularly serves detrimental to the United States gridding systems, especially old ones that have not been remade. It has been outlined by CNN that the Eastern seaboard would be the most vulnerable and susceptible to the bombs deployment.

The current political climate only exacerbates the threat of a bomb even more. Multiple sources state that Trump's antics only increase tensions between these two countries. It is apparent that North Korea is increasing their hostility towards the United States and Trump. The timeframe of an impending United States and North Korea war could be sooner than the people of the United States may imagine. 