

The XFL is Coming Back. Can We Destroy America Now?

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“Who does vote for these dishonest shitheads? Who among us can be happy and proud of having all this innocent blood on our hands? Who are these swine? These flag-sucking half-wits who get fleeced and fooled by stupid little rich kids like George Bush?” – Hunter S. Thompson

“The kings of the mines, of the coalfields, and of gold would be wrong to worry. Their serfs’ resignation consecrates their authority. They no longer need to claim that their power is based on divine right, that decorative joke: their sovereignty is legitimated by popular consent....

Teach the people! What else is needed? His poverty has taught him nothing...The worker’s neck is used to the harness.” – Zo d’Axa

“Less than one year has passed since I first stood at this podium, in this majestic chamber, to speak on behalf of the American People—and to address their concerns, their hopes, and their dreams. That night, our new Administration had already taken swift action. A new tide of optimism was already sweeping across our land.”- President Donald Trump, First State of the Union Address

I knew this place would end up being in an article the minute I walked in.

It was a sports bar masquerading as a barbecue joint, a sterilized and clean franchise playing country music and pretending to be “old timey.” Around me were trucker hats, gruff laughs, and a FPL crew that didn’t know what to make of my Hawaiian shirt and combat boots. Above the almost exclusively white patrons twelve different television screens were buzzing, black athlete after black athlete running, jumping, and scoring. The commentators analyze them like champion horses, comparing stats and debating abilities. The patrons nod in approval, as if they too have a stake in this collective property.

When these same football players began to protest the state-sanctioned slaughter of black folks, some thought perhaps America had reached a precipice, that perhaps the “salt-of-the earth” might be moved towards a greater consciousness. After all, these athletes were the ones Americans cheered for every week, the same soldiers of sport whose uniforms they wore for good luck during every game. Here, surely here, in a silent protest that screamed for the murder of innocents to end, the American people could be reached, forced to stare at something they denied every chance they could.

Instead the American people, the revolutionary subject held so holy by leftist theorists, simply changed the channel and created a new league where black players were denied the freedom to speak.

Grabbing a seat, my wife and grandfather in tow, I went over the details in my head. The WWE CEO and chairman Vince McMahon had announced that the XFL (short for “Xtreme Football League”) would be returning in 2020, nearly two decades after the NFL alternative went out of business after just one miserable season. This rebooted version of the league will feature eight teams, each with 40-man rosters, and some very interesting rules.

For one McMahon has promised a “faster” and “easier to understand” game, assuring his slack-jawed and troglodyte audience it will be a game adapted for their mental fortitude. Of peculiar interest was one league rule that was in place before any teams had been announced or players even hired:

All athletes, in a sport where 68% of the players were black, will be forced to stand for the national anthem, taking from them one of the most effective ways they’ve been able to have their voices heard.

McMahon’s reasoning is that the XFL revival “*will have nothing to do with politics or social issues,*” that he doesn’t think fans want to deal with things of a political nature while watching football. “*They just want good football.*” Of course forcing someone to do something, to silence their ability to draw attention to the literal murder of human beings by state-sanctioned killers, is absolutely political in nature. It’s the ruling politics, the capitalist and racist ethos we revere as distinctly American.

When you have all the power and all the money it’s very easy to forget all these things exist due to a very real political order, one you alone benefit from. To the average football fan a cop brutally beating a teenager isn’t “political” because the kid is probably guilty and shouldn’t have resisted. Ghettos are just “magically” poor for no apparent reason, and crack certainly wasn’t sold to inner city youths to fund illegal wars. Layer upon layer of racism, of capitalist exploitation, has been transferred to the idea of how the world works; each finely tuned piece appears as natural as hurricanes in fall or gators fucking in the summer.

But while McMahon can pretend his league is “free” from politics, his fans aren’t even bothering with the camouflage:

Mark Dice @MarkDice

By the NFL allowing the anti-cop, anti-American players to disrespect our National Anthem, they have invited their own demise. Vince McMahon is bringing back the XFL #XFL2020 #RIPNFL

3:55 PM - Jan 25, 2018

- 8,506
- 3,502 people are talking about this

Matt Couch @RealMattCouch

You know Liberals hate American when they are trolling Conservative accounts talking about the rebirth of the XFL Football League. The Liberals hate EVERYTHING about America.

- They Hate our Anthem
- They Hate White People
- They Hate Capitalism
- They Hate our Military & Police

4:16 PM - Jan 25, 2018

- 175
- 119 people are talking about this

Jason Bailey @iamjasonbailey

: Vince McMahon looks to EMBARRASS the NFL (as if they haven't already done so themselves) by bringing the XFL back in 2020.

That would mean Trump GREW the ECONOMY, cut TAXES, drained the SWAMP (in progress), & crippled the unpatriotic NFL ALL during his 1st term!#MAGA

4:08 PM - Jan 25, 2018

- 723
- 389 people are talking about this

Whole lotta politics, no? Weird. Go ahead and wade through the filth that passes for conservative conversation yourself, the only people talking about the XFL certainly aren't excited about a shorter game or access to "new ways" to watch a ball fly through the air. They don't give a shit about any "innovations." This is ALL about silencing black voices and not being bothered with their struggles or pain. Could it be since black players DARED to draw attention to a slow motion genocide the NFL has become the most hated brand for Republicans?

Conservatives abandoning football en masse! Sweet tap dancing Christ! Am I the only one who sees what this *means*?

Football is practically the living archetype of the American identity. Born from the ultra-penis days of post-WW2 the sport caught on quickly with a population whose entire lives had been lived in uniforms. The game was one big metaphor for our own military success, the all important Good War Myth: soldiers from some far off corner aggressively fighting their way to the "end zone" of some foreign power, all the while keeping our own "safety" through rigorous attack.

It is so goddamn American, so fucking important, that the Department of Defense paid \$5.4 million to the National Football League from 2011 to 2014 to turn the games into a recruiting tool. These payments funded segments "*designed to promote military service and honor soldiers,*" which is a funny way of saying "*convince poor people to kill other people for a rag and a few badges.*"

But that says something, doesn't it? About how important football is?

This bar, this corporate hell-hole offering doo-doo ribs at insane prices, is part of an entire industry built around this game. Restaurants, clothing lines, school curriculum, all revolving around a pigskin.

The demand is incredible, lovecraftian in scope and size: during football season in the fall fans have the opportunity to watch high school games on Fridays and Saturdays, college football on

Saturdays, and NFL games on Sundays. Some colleges even play games on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, while the NFL also offers weekly games on Monday and Thursday. As recently as 2013, one could find a nationally televised professional or college game on television any night between Labor Day and Thanksgiving weekend.

It's all some people talk about, you know. Football. Endlessly discussing strategies and plays as if they were right there on the field. Players turned into gods. Royalty. Anywhere you go you'll hear the same thing, even when the season is over. The game lives on; the fans are always planning, reviewing, scheming, trying to figure out how "their guys" can win.

And make no mistake there, that is "their team." They rarely say "the Patriots won," they say "we won" or "we did it." The identification of the self with the team is total and complete. If your team does bad YOU are bad, and will be ruthlessly mocked for it.

It always amazed me, always confused me. How could one life a life devoted to a game, a game you didn't even partake in?

"Popi?" My grandfather looks away from his black-eyed peas, his mind somewhere else.

"Mhm?"

"Why... why do you think people are so obsessed with football, particularly down here?"

"Well," he leans back, "that's a complicated answer." I can see his mind turning through his eyes, drawing through memories. Rapt attention. He has no degree but a sharpened, practical intelligence, the byproduct of youth spent in law school and an adulthood in Miami car lots.

"Football is extremely American. It's a very macho thing, violence and winning and all that. For some it's the only way they feel they can get ahead, like they matter, often because every other opportunity is denied to them. If they can't make it you'll often see them try to do it with their kids. It provides them with a status, you know? 'I'm the father of so-and-so.' Gives them something to live for.

"The rivalries it produces are tied up in that," he says between bites of turnip greens. "Look at Florida State and the University of Florida. Or Georgia and Florida. I can remember dealing with one woman up in Georgia, she was from University of Florida. We were on a tour and of course there were more people from Georgia around and she leaned over to me, and I swear I'll never forget this, leans over to me and says 'you know all these Georgia people are scum.'"

He laughs and shakes his head. "Now when I asked her why she said that she told me the only thing she knew about Georgia was from football games, but that was enough. I about fell out my seat."

The Aztecs, in times of peace, would fight what they called "Flower Wars." Arranged to be fought with certain weapons, at certain times, by much smaller "teams," it was seen as a great way to capture sacrifices, keep up martial traditions, and display the empire's military prowess to neighboring states. It made the gods happy.

Take that and combine it with a sport-soaked cult of Saints, one of heroes and losers and chances, a circus to stave off the existential dread of another shift at WalMart, and you'll have the spiritual footprint of American football.

And these motherfuckers are ready to walk away from every piece of that, every memory, every tradition and season pass, so long as the reality of white supremacy remains unquestioned.

There is no doubt as to what the reality is. Black males are 21 times more likely to be killed by cops than a white male. If they survive the encounter Black folks are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites and serve virtually as much time in prison for a drug offense (58.7

months) as whites do for a violent offense (61.7 months). In 2016, more people were arrested for simple marijuana possession in the United States than all violent crimes combined; African-Americans were 375 percent more likely to be among them than their white counter-parts. In fact, if as few people of color were arrested on marijuana-related charges as white people, America's prison population would plummet by 40 percent.

This is a brutally, nakedly racist system everywhere you look. American sports fans know this and simply do not give a SHIT.

Really think about that, really dial it in about how little you have to care about piles of black bodies dropping under police bullets to create an entirely different sporting event just so you don't have to be bothered with their whimpers of pain. To demand silence, to erase personhood from a being whose body is a source of pride and money.

Most Americans harbor anti-black feelings. From football games to school functions, white supremacy stains everything: it's not just the guy burning a cross but the woman who holds her purse tighter when a black man walks by, the shopkeeper that monitors his black customers assuming they're thieves, and the HR manager that quietly removes black sounding names from the hiring pool because they "*wouldn't be a good fit.*"

This isn't an accident, this isn't some progressive country momentarily confused on its way to a gender-neutral paradise where Alabama elects its first mixed-race trans mayor. This is a brutal, savage, bloodthirsty killing field where the same God they put on the money has demanded whites rule and blacks serve. That is America, what it's always been.

And the people do not plan on losing that, whatever the cost.

There has been talk about the "rights" and value of community, and it always seems to stem from the idea that the "community" can be changed, molded into one fitting our own desired paradigm; that every person is just two steps away from being a card-carrying Marxist.

But this is religious thinking, the same cockamammy notion that convinces Baptists that if they flood the world with enough bibles the entire planet would show up for church on Sunday.

What do you do when the community is wrong? How does a leftist act when "the people" want nothing to do with your ideas, your way of life, or even the simple notion that you have rights at all?

Where does the revolution go when the people merrily choose fascism?

I can't speak for the strange and frozen territories beyond the oaks and Spanish moss. Perhaps the world is different where you're from. There is a level of honesty in the South between radicals and the voting majority clearly absent elsewhere. We know, like komodo dragons sniffing the air, just how much we won't get along. One of us has got to win and one of us has got to go. Simple as that. Life reduced to a contest of sharper claws and longer teeth; maybe the ideology is just a convenient cover to make it more civilized.

The "working class" is a difficult notion to peg when electricians view gas station cashiers with utter contempt. Here in the South you can watch the same folks Marx and Lenin saw as the primary force for human liberation vote Republican breathlessly, just as shamelessly as they pop open a laptop and jack off on their lunch break. They don't care about the rich getting richer, they think it's perfectly fine, natural even. Necessary. So long as black people know their place, gays remain hidden in hair-dressing studios, and Christ is first in everything you can bend them right over the economic sofa and fuck them till their assholes run red.

The working class has risen before. Countless times. Behind the souls of the assembled, chewing processed meat in a simulacrum pretending to be barbecue, lies a twisting nebula of ancestral spirits. I see their struggles, the plantations growing cotton in the middle of the Civil War while children died of starvation. Confederate soldiers used as mere pawns, just as Jefferson and Washington sent settlers into certain death all for political aim. The pain lingers. I feel them often signing up with Federals and decimating Confederate supplies, like one might still feel a neighbor long dead. Organized armies hungry for beef and revenge, threatening the wealthy, seizing property. And yet...

Uneducated. In need of teaching. By the gods man, have you told them The Good News? The gospel of the working class? Maybe. But I can't deny many of these good, honest, simply misguided folk burned hearts alive and hung throats from oak trees.

Maybe I'm just not a good missionary. Still... the question lingers, a stick in my craw.

How is it fair to tell every person of color, every awakened soul desiring to be free, that they must wait for any revolution until "class consciousness" reaches these people? How many bodies must continue to fall, how many tired mothers must weep as we discuss new strategies to convince on-the-fence racists that black people deserve to live?

How much longer are we going to hope?

The one fact Leftists have never really settled for me is that, statistically and purely on a probability basis, you can't convince everybody. It's impossible, defies the very laws of the momentary illusion we call material existence.

Odds can be shifted, any conjurer could tell you that. But there is a damn big difference between "radicalizing" somebody, pushing an open question, and converting them to a totally different worldview that goes against everything they hold sacred.

One of the greatest strengths the South ever had was its inability to listen. There is no argument between ideas. There is blood and bullets and teeth and fists. The Klan didn't exist as a debate society. They came to your house and made what they believed true, even if it cost you your life.

The liberal notion that good ideas win their own converts, that sworn enemies are a debate away from becoming friends is a foul-smelling jar of pure horsepiss. Slavery didn't end because the South was "convinced." Sherman marched to Atlanta burning every building along the way. Confederate soldiers, drawn from the feudal peasant class of farmers, had to be met on the battlefield and killed. People thought the South was beaten but, as soon as the troops went away, the old order reared its ugly head. The Federals failed to deliver the killing blow and Jim Crow grew mightier with every day.

And they happily murdered people to preserve this status quo.

The Civil Rights movement wasn't about pleasant conversation. There wasn't a "change of heart." It wasn't about beautiful arguments or realizing we're all in this together. It was about federal troops invading Southern States at the threat of martial law, the government themselves absolutely terrified at the idea that Black folks were going to begin killing cops en masse if something didn't change. It is something that, so many years later, is still far from settled.

Because it never came to blows.

There are towns down here people are warned about, stretches of countryside filled with stories many would refuse to believe. Every one of those stories involves good, honest, working class people acting like unadulterated nightmare fuel. Football fans and proud Americans, rabid beasts just barely capable of holding back their bloodlust.

Maybe you still see people in need of The Gospel. The great Truth of The Proletariat. Surely, surely they'll eventually come around. Hell, Jesus might come back too.

But this backlash against the NFL makes me very hesitant to drink the communion wine. We are witnessing a hardening of opinions, a shoring up of defenses. Politics was once an argument over who had the answer for a shared experience. No more.

The flight of the white working class from the NFL, the hate they pour upon outspoken black voices, is not an accident. It is what America and many Americans are all about. They do not want to be convinced of any other worldview. They don't care what you have to say. **Rationality is a myth.** Emotions rule our decision-making so strongly that cloudy days can affect stock market performance. **We share nothing now.** We watch different news, believe different things to be true, exist in alternate universes. Some believe the earth is flat and only 7,000 years old. How in the ever-living fuck do you have a conversation with them about climate change? 67% of Americans believe most people are liars. They can stare at a video of a cop beating a child and think it's a set-up, hear police admit they carry toy guns to frame people and call it "fake news."

Dear gods, look around you! You think there's a plan here? A dialectic? Billions of apes pissing and shitting on a rock hurtling through space, armed to the teeth and pissed off, THAT is your grand engine of progress! Add regularly reported anomalies on the moon, astronauts seeing craft they can't explain, children born with memories of previous lives that line up with historical data, mediums reporting accurate and specific information about deceased people, and the fact that the governments of the world have been weaponizing weird forces they know nothing about for years, and you'll have a better grasp of the eldritch carnival ride we call "the human experience."

We are left with what politics actually is, what it always was, when we strip it off all the religious fictions of "truth," "rights," or "destiny:"

Somebody's going to win and somebody's going to lose.

My question is simply what YOU plan on doing?

We paid our bill, and headed to the exit. I stopped, signaled, and went back to empty the countless gallons of beer built up in my bladder. On my return, passing by the FPL table, I heard what I thought was a snicker.

I turned around and pointed a finger at them, my hand molded into the shape of a gun. An imaginary bullet fired from the chamber seemed to take them by surprise. Our eyes flashed with mutual recognition, our auras waved and snapped in shades of fiery red. Suddenly they were aware I knew the game we played and they smiled like crocodiles smelling human flesh.

And I smiled too, hungry for the same.

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