Position Specification

NFL Players Association (NFLPA)
Executive Director

NFLPA
Our Client
In 1956, a group of unhappy Cleveland Browns approached Creighton Miller about setting up a trade association to address player grievances. The attorney and former Notre Dame standout reluctantly accepted the roles of legal counsel and chief spokesman and thus the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) was formed. Based in Washington, DC, the NFLPA is the union for professional football players in the National Football League that advocates for and protects their health, rights, and fair wages. The NFLPA is dedicated to the success and well-being of all players on and off the field and has six primary responsibilities:

- Representing all NFL players in matters concerning wages, hours and working conditions, and protecting their rights as professional football players;
- Negotiating and ensuring that the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) are met;
- Monitoring and administering retirement and insurance benefits for current and former players;
- Providing other member services and activities related to players’ off-field interests;
- Providing assistance to charitable and community organizations; and
- Marketing, enhancing and defending the image of players and their profession on and off the field.

The NFLPA is the exclusive bargaining agent for active NFL players and is responsible for negotiating the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), the contract that governs every aspect of the relationship between NFL players and owners. Most recently in March 2020, the NFLPA negotiated the current CBA, which runs through March 2031. The current CBA brought new gains to the NFLPA’s members including increased shares of revenue, expanded roster sizes, a sizable bump in minimum salaries, increases to active and former player benefits, and health and safety advances.

Governance
The NFLPA is a democratic institution with a constitution governed by US labor law and led by a Board of Player Representatives (Board). All power and authority for the union’s governance comes from the 32 members of the Board (one from each NFL team) who are elected by the player members. Player members on each NFL team elect both a Player Representative and three Alternate Player Representatives to serve on the Board. The Board meets at least once a year and votes on important decisions for the organization. The Board is responsible for selecting the Executive Director. The union also has an Executive Committee, made up of its President, Treasurer and nine other Vice Presidents who exercise the power of the Board of Directors between meetings and ensure that the Board’s directives are being followed by the Executive Director and union staff.

Way Forward
In October 2021, the NFLPA Board of Player Reps voted to extend DeMaurice Smith for his fifth term as NFLPA’s Executive Director. Smith was transparent with the Board about his interest in moving on after this term. As such, the NFLPA has embarked on a search for their next Executive Director.

Additional details about the NFLPA’s organizational structure and affiliates/partners are in Appendices A & B.
Position Specification

Ref: Executive Director
NFL Players Association (NFLPA)

The Role
The Executive Director, at the direction of the players’ elected Board of Player Reps, provides strategic leadership and makes all significant decisions governing every aspect of the NFLPA’s work, operations, and its approximately 140 staff members. More specifically, the Executive Director is responsible for and supervises the NFLPA’s collective bargaining negotiations with the NFL, its administration of the contract with the NFL on behalf of individual players and the NFLPA, its affiliated business operations, and its internal operations and staff, including its regulation of player agents, its charitable efforts, its communications function, and its programs and services. This is a multifaceted role calling for an accomplished and inclusive leader able to build on the substantial strengths of the organization to ensure the success and well-being of all players on and off the field.

A critical responsibility of the Executive Director is to provide strategic leadership and decision making about collective bargaining and contract administration. The new Executive Director will lead the NFLPA’s efforts for a successor to the current collective bargaining agreement, which is set to expire in March 2031. In addition, the Executive Director will direct the NFLPA’s business initiatives, enhancing, developing, and promoting commercial opportunities under its for-profit marketing and licensing subsidiary, NFL Players Inc. and in conjunction with OneTeam Partners. The Executive Director also directs and supervises the NFLPA’s operations and personnel to ensure that the NFLPA continues to focus on and serve the best interests of players.

On a day-to-day basis, the Executive Director will be a focused, disciplined, and decisive manager capable of establishing clear priorities and steering the NFLPA toward maintaining its strategic focus, mobilizing new resources, and expending them efficiently. They will be an inclusive, generous, and present leader able to foster a culture of inclusion, collaboration, collegiality, and accountability. The Executive Director also serves as the union’s lead spokesperson in the media and will be responsible for carrying the institution’s message to the public. His or her job is to inspire, lead the staff, build solidarity, and serve the membership in their roles as NFL players in the sport and in their communities.

In terms of key responsibilities, we would highlight the following:

- Chief public advocate for NFL players and the NFLPA.
- Leading and directing the negotiation and enforcement of the CBA.
- Being the principal administrative employee of the NFLPA, with responsibilities for leading the day-to-day affairs of the NFLPA and its related entities.
- Hiring, developing, and directing staff to perform the affairs of the NFLPA as they provide services to active and former player members, including the Trust and Professional Athletes Foundation.
- Oversee the regulation of player agents (870 certified agents) and the NFLPA Financial Advisors Program (150 financial advisors registered).
- Sit as Chairman of the Board of Players Inc. and oversee activities relating to protecting and promoting NFL players’ licensing rights and otherwise advance the players’ commercial interests.
- Sit on and Chair the Board of OneTeam Partners, an organization owned by the NFLPA, MLBPA, MLSPA, WNBPA and other player organizations focused on helping maximize the value of player name, image, and likeness rights, and specializing in group licensing, marketing, and media.
- Chair the Board of Trustees for The Trust.
- Oversee the legal and financial security of the NFLPA and related organizations.
- Provide strategic long-term planning for the NFLPA and its related entities.
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Ref: Executive Director
NFL Players Association (NFLPA)

It is important to note that the Executive Director serves on the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO.

Candidate Profile

The NFLPA Board of Player Reps seeks a proven strategic leader with excellent operational, deal-making, and management skills to partner with the Board in developing a long-term vision for protecting players’ health, rights, and families. The ideal candidate will have experience in high stakes negotiations, preferably in collective bargaining. He or she will be a savvy executive with a track-record of leading organizational growth, including through the diversification of revenue streams and the identification of impactful initiatives that advance the activities and/or mission of the union and its players. This Executive Director will be an innovative and inspirational leader, who is not necessarily looking to transform the NFLPA, but to build upon and enhance its existing platform. The successful candidate will bring experience leading and managing through change, and a reputation for fostering a culture of collaboration and accountability across a high-performing, diverse team. This leader will be capable of driving organizational excellence by assessing and adapting the NFLPA’s organizational structure, processes, systems, and technology to ensure a forward-thinking and nimble organization.

The successful candidate will be a poised and energetic leader who is also down-to-earth and approachable with the ability to connect with people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. The individual must have outstanding interpersonal acumen and communication skills. They will be a service-oriented listener who engages all constituencies in a meaningful and respectful manner. The successful candidate should also bring a solid understanding of social media and the importance of digital marketing to ensure the NFLPA is communicating with its members and other external influencers as effectively and efficiently as possible. The Executive Director must be a diplomat who is skilled at building bridges and developing relationships in a variety of settings with diverse constituencies. They must have a track record of successfully leading and building consensus in complex environments. A strong emphasis will be placed upon the proven ability to deal with a broad range of individuals, backgrounds, and perspectives in a collaborative, strategic, and consensus-driven manner. The ideal candidate will bring demonstrated experience in organizational leadership roles.

In addition to the critical, externally focused competencies, the successful candidate must also possess outstanding leadership skills that will enable them to efficiently oversee the management of a talented staff and an appropriate budget. The successful candidate must be able to set the future strategic direction for NFLPA, prioritize and define clear goals for staff, and manage performance toward achievement of those goals. Further, they must have the executive skills to partner with the Board in an efficient manner.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Setting Strategy

- The ability to create and articulate an inspiring forward-thinking vision for the NFLPA.
- The inclination to seek and analyze data from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the organization's overall strategy.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the sports landscape.
- The ability to balance the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of how much change the NFLPA is capable of handling, to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful.
- The ability to integrate all the foregoing to navigate the organization through shifting marketing dynamics while maintaining the organization’s reputation and track record.
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- The desire and willingness to fight for the players against the interests of management.

**Executing for Results**
- The ability to set clear and challenging goals while committing the organization to improved performance; tenacious and accountable in driving results.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the ability to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations.
- An executive who utilizes data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended circumstances from decisions; someone who takes smart risks.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity and forethought in his/her approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always considering what is best for the organization.

**Leading Teams**
- The ability to attract and retain top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, embrace diversity within the team, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to higher standards, which commands respect from followers.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of his/her own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

**Relationships and Influence**
- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- Inspires trust and deference in others through compelling influence, powerful charisma, passion in his/her beliefs, and active drive.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Creates a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates deference beyond his/her own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization as a whole.
- Navigates the competing demands of multiple constituencies and an ability to lead and direct towards the best outcome for the organization while taking into account these competing demands.
- Seamlessly operates and transitions from a locker room setting with NFL players, to Board rooms with NFL owners and Fortune 100 CEOs.
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Appendix A: Organizational Structure

The NFLPA is organized into two entities – NFLPA (Union) and NFL Players, Inc., a for-profit subsidiary of the NFLPA – both led by the Executive Director. Additionally, The Trust is powered by the NFLPA and the NFLPA Executive Director serves as the Chairperson of the Board, pursuant to the Trust foundational documents.

NFLPA (Union):

- **Executive**: The Executive Department leads the NFL Players Association’s operations, directs negotiations with the National Football League and leads implementation of innovative programs geared toward enriching the lives of all members of the NFLPA, including current, former, and future players.

- **Legal**: The Legal Department protects, defends, and enforces the rights of NFL players, the NFLPA and its subsidiaries. In addition to filing grievances to enforce provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and NFL Player Contracts, the Legal Department assists the Executive Department with collective bargaining and oversees all legal matters involving the NFLPA and NFL Players Inc.

- **Salary Cap and Agent Administration**: The Salary Cap and Agent Administration Department administers agent certification and assists certified contract advisors and players with contract research and negotiation. Beyond collecting all salary information and player transactions into a centralized database, the Salary Cap and Agent Administration Department tracks each club’s cash and salary cap spending as well as all representation agreements between players and certified contract advisors.

- **Communications**: The Communications Department promotes and protects the players’ and the union’s integrity and image through fair and accurate coverage in the media. In addition, they promote the player membership on programs and initiatives available through their union while ensuring that internal and external messages are clear and consistent.

- **Player Affairs**: The Player Affairs Department ensures players are educated about their rights and benefits under the CBA, and that they are aware of and utilize union resources and services available to them. The Department also runs a Pipeline to the Pros program which educates college players about life once they enter the NFL. They work closely with the Player Representatives to advance CBA and union initiatives. The Department assists players who have entered Policy and Program for Substances of Abuse and Policy on Performance-Enhancing Substances. They also administer the NFLPA’s Financial Advisors Registration Program which provides NFL players with access to a list of financial advisors who are deemed qualified by the NFLPA. The program is designed to provide an extra layer of protection to athletes against fraud and poor advice. Advisors must meet minimum professional specifications and go through a full background check before being added to the list.

- **Former Player Services**: The Former Player Services Department strives to build a fraternity of former NFL players and facilitate personal growth beyond football, while providing an active voice for former players of all ages. In addition to providing tools, resources, and opportunities to support a successful transition from the game, the department also focuses on cultivating compassion, respect, and dignity within its membership. The Former Players Department seeks to inspire players to feel connected to one another, their community and to the NFLPA when their football careers end and their life after football begins.

- **Finance and Asset Management**: The Finance and Asset Management Department is responsible for the monthly and annual production of accurate and timely financial results for the NFLPA and all subsidiaries and affiliate entities and the management of the organizations’ cash and invested assets, including insurance needs. In addition to assuming the responsibility for all tax and other government agencies compliance, the Finance and Asset Management Department is responsible for collecting dues, licensing royalties and other revenues as well as distributing payments to players.
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▪ **Benefits:** The Benefits Department represents players by jointly administering benefits earned under the Collective Bargaining Agreement in conjunction with the NFL Management Council. In addition to negotiating with the Management Council, insurance companies and others on behalf of NFL players, the Benefits Department provides players with comprehensive knowledge of their benefits, empowering them to make informed life decisions.

▪ **Information Systems:** The Information Systems Department oversees an innovative, technologically advanced system that enables the staff to serve the players. They also manage the systems which track data and reporting to relevant stakeholders.

▪ **Security and Operations:** The Security and Operations Department directs and coordinates programs which protect all company assets, employees, active players, former players and guests. Security and Operations maximizes process efficiencies, provides superior services to players and staff, and covers all security, travel services and business operations for every department within the NFLPA, NFL Players Inc. and The Trust.

▪ **Events and Travel:** The Events and Travel department assists in planning and executing all player, partner and other stakeholder events. The overall experience by the attendees is the most critical factor when determining the success of the event or series of events. Additionally, this department helps to negotiate all travel partnerships and benefits, shape the NFLPA travel policy and track NFLPA-related player travel as well as staff travel and accommodations.

▪ **Department of Operational and Professional Excellence:** Affectionately known as DOPE, this department oversees the daily personnel functions of the NFL Players Association, NFL Players, Inc., and The Trust. The department serves as a strategic partner working closely with all divisions to attract, develop, retain, and engage a highly skilled and diverse workforce. The central focus of DOPE is to develop long-term initiatives geared toward the professional development, management, and wellbeing of all our employees.

**NFL Players, Inc.:**

NFL Players Inc., the NFLPA’s for-profit group licensing business, is one of the largest and most influential licensors in the world, representing the exclusive group licensing rights of more than 2,000 active NFL players for licensing, marketing, and promotional opportunities.

Through the Group Licensing Assignment (GLA), NFL Players Inc. is tasked with maximizing the commercial rights of all current NFL players. To do so, NFL Players Inc. operates as a B2B company that connects brands to the power and influence of players through group player rights and demonstrates the unifying power of sports and athletes.

▪ **Consumer Products & Strategy:** Consumer Products & Strategy oversees the NFLPA’s licensing partnerships and strategic relationships with Fanatics and OneTeam Partners. The department is responsible for driving the global growth of the apparel, hardlines, trading cards, games, and digital business. Vertical account teams provide day-to-day management, ensuring a clear understanding of group rights and a focus on maximizing annual revenue and increasing player marketing opportunities. The department also offers marketing and promotional consultation to assist brands with creating effective activation campaigns featuring NFL players, designed to deliver results-driven outcomes.

▪ **Partner Services:** The Partner Services Department is dedicated to servicing companies with official sponsorships, working closely with all the NFLPA’s partners to help them maximize their usage of group player rights. Partner Services works collaboratively on the overall planning and integration of NFL players leveraged within its sponsors’ annual NFL player-integrated promotional campaigns to maximize and exceed the player fund. Account teams provide NFL sponsors and clubs with strategic direction and resources to help implement their overall campaigns using NFL players and related properties. In addition to delivering group player rights,
Partner Services oversees creative executions using the identities of NFL players and develops programs with partners that deliver value to players.

- **Player Services**: The Player Services Department serves as a primary resource for former and active players by helping to identify and maximize off-the-field marketing, endorsement and revenue opportunities which leverage their personalities, interests and business pursuits. Player Services provides high-impact customer service operations across all stakeholder groups, including player membership, NFLPA partners, the agent/marketing rep community and internal business units.

- **Marketing and Business Development**: Marketing & Business Development teams align to drive opportunities for business growth leveraging NFLPA group player rights.
  - The Marketing Department amplifies the NFLPA brand and promotes NFL players to NFLPA partners and prospects with a focus on enhancing engagement and bringing awareness to the services of NFLPA by leveraging multiple platforms including content, media, programs and events.
  - The Business Development team identifies, evaluates and executes high-quality and innovative new business opportunities to grow revenue with a focus on core licensed product categories, human performance and innovative growth verticals. The Business Development team also explores venture opportunities, where investment of the NFLPA’s rights enhances and accelerates relevant early-stage businesses in exchange for equity.
Appendix B: Affiliates and Partners

The NFLPA has a number of affiliates and partners:

- **The Trust**: The Trust was formed by the NFLPA in 2013 after the NFLPA negotiated a provision in the 2011 Collective Bargaining Agreement (Article 12, Section 5) that guaranteed certain funding per year to support benefits for former players. This provision was renegotiated in the 2020 CBA, and it is from such monies that The Trust’s programs and services are funded. Through nationwide partnerships, the Trust provides access to career, medical, financial education, nutrition, entrepreneurial, and continuing education services. It is committed to a player’s well-being and creates customized game plans to meet each former player where he is in his transition from football.

- **Professional Athletes Foundation**: The Professional Athletes Foundation was founded to support, strengthen, and inspire players as they transitioned from their active NFL careers. Established in 1990 as the charitable arm of the NFL Players Association, the PAF offers a range of wellness resources as well as financial assistance through the Gene Upshaw PAT Grant. With more than $10 million in financial, medical and educational assistance granted, the PAF is the leading foundation in assisting former NFL players.

- **OneTeam Partners**: The NFLPA is a founding partner of OneTeam Partners (OTP), formed in 2019. OTP helps athletes maximize the value of their name, image, and likeness rights. OTP specializes in group licensing, marketing, media, and investing. Through partnerships with Players Associations, OTP’s mission is to transform the way all athletes participate in business by putting them squarely at the center of the commercial ecosystem.