



More CFL

CFL taking part in campaign to end violence against women



Grey Cup game will feature broadcast-visible LED sideline signage

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CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie addresses the media during the state of the League news conference at Grey Cup week in Edmonton on Friday. (Jonathan Hayward/Canadian Press)

The Canadian Football League is joining a new campaign aimed at ending violence against women.

The "Call It Out" campaign urges people to be more than a bystander when they see gender-based violence taking place.

- [Q&A **CFL Commissioner continues to dream big — eyes expansion in near future**](#)
- [PROFILE **Redblacks' Lewis Ward goes from security guard to kicking in Grey Cup**](#)

Other participants include the Ending Violence Association Canada, Status of Women Canada and the United Steelworkers.

The Ending Violence Association has been working with CFL players, coaches and staff as part of a league-wide initiative begun in 2015 to respond proactively to any allegation of gender-based violence.

This year's Grey Cup game will feature broadcast-visible LED sideline signage, an in-stadium video and an accompanying social media campaign with the message that everyone has a role to play.

Watch Randy Ambrosie's annual league address:

Watch CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie deliver the annual State of the League Address from Edmonton.
46:41

During his annual state of the league address, CFL commissioner Randy Ambrosie said nearly 70 per cent of Canadians report that they know a woman who has experienced sexual or physical violence.

"At this time of year, when we Canadians join together to celebrate the Grey Cup, we want to remind everyone that we need to work together to end violence against women and the attitudes that can contribute to it," Ambrosie said at a news conference in Edmonton on Friday.

"The CFL remains committed to ending violence and to calling out disrespect and violence where we see it. As individuals and as organizations, we all have the ability to be leaders on this issue and put a stop to violence against women."

The Calgary Stampeders and the Ottawa Redblacks will play for the national championship Sunday at Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium.

CFL signs deal with Mexican league

CFL SIGNS DEAL WITH MEXICAN LEAGUE

Ambrosie also announced a partnership between the CFL and the Liga du Futbol Americano Professional ("LFA").

Ambrosie signed a letter of intent with LFA officials which paves the way for the two leagues to jointly plan events, share resources, and increase co-operation.

"We're really going to use this to kick off what we hope is a long-term, fantastic relationship that helps us grow the game of football," Ambrosie said. "I think it's the beginning of a new beginning for us."

There had been talk of a CFL regular-season game being played in Mexico City as early as next year. But a league official said due to logistics, a more likely scenario is for that to happen in 2020.

The LFA is an eight-team Mexican semi-pro American spring football circuit. The letter of intent is not a binding contract between the two leagues but it does pave the way for a CFL scouting combine in Mexico this winter.

Ambrosie and the LFA officials signed the letter following Ambrosie's annual state of the union address.

'Challenges have to be addressed'

Teams in Toronto and Montreal both have attendance issues and there's uncertainty in Vancouver whether owner David Braley will sell the B.C. Lions.

And there's also the matter of the league's impending talks with the CFL Players' Association this off-season with the current collective bargaining agreement slated to expire in May 2019.

But Ambrosie remains bullish on the CFL's ability to handle all situations.

"I feel the future for football in Canada is bright, but I also recognize there are challenges that have to be addressed," he said. "I think we can do both and we should do both."

"We should have our eyes on the horizon, we should be looking forward and looking out into

"We should have our eyes on the horizon, we should be looking forward and looking out into the future and planning for the bigger, stronger CFL that we've been talking about for the past 16 months."

Next season, the Alouettes will reduce seating at Molson Stadium from just over 23,000 to 20,000, but Ambrosie said that's a standard business practice.

"The issue of contracting the size of the stadium is just a tactical decision," he said. "It's like an inventory management issue that businesses will do to reduce the amount of supply they have available to make the supply they have more valuable too."

"But there's no doubt there are challenges there. Somehow we've lost that connection with Alouettes football and we have to find a way to get it back."

- **Montreal Alouettes go from model franchise to the CFL basement**

Ambrosie called the upcoming CBA talks, "the great unknown." But he remains very confident the two sides can reach a deal and eliminate the threat of a work stoppage.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again that I think the future is better together," Ambrosie said. "I'm optimistic."

"I think we can sit down with the players shortly after the season and lay out a path to put in place a deal that's fair for both sides."

Ambrosie said ongoing dialogue must also take place regarding developing Canadian quarterbacks, the league's ratio, long-term care for players and adopting a one-division format. But Ambrosie feels the letter of intent with the LFA could provide opportunities for Canadian-born quarterbacks to further hone their skills in Mexico then head to the CFL.

Ambrosie also said a "move is afoot," for the CFL to hold Grey Cup a week earlier by 2020.

"In our requests for 2020 Grey Cup bids we've asked the teams to bid one week earlier," Ambrosie said. "It's a step in the right direction."

\$200-million lawsuit

Earlier this month, the NHL and a group of retired players reached a settlement in a lawsuit brought against the league over head injuries. In 2017, the NFL and a group of former players agreed to a US\$1 billion settlement.

- [NHL, retired players reach tentative settlement in concussion lawsuit](#)
- [NHL concussion settlement won't stop Bernie Nicholls' worries over his memory loss](#)

The CFL is currently facing a \$200-million class-action suit filed by a group of retired players but Ambrosie said the two sides are talking.

"In the case of the NFL and NHL, that process took time to reach the outcome that they've achieved," Ambrosie said. "We'd like similarly to reach a successful conclusion with the plaintiffs on this matter.

"This has got to be an item that gets talked about as soon as we hit the ground Monday morning."

Ambrosie said the decisions last year to eliminate padded practices and extend the regular season to 21 weeks have had the desired affect. He added in-practice injuries and game-days lost to injury have declined 35 and 10 per cent, respectively.

No change on concussion issue

On Thursday, CBC Sports reporter Devin Heroux sat down with Ambrosie and asked about a number of issues — from concussions to player safety and possible expansion into Halifax.

As he did last season, Ambrose refused to link football and CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy). Instead, he called concussions an issue beyond the sports world.

"This isn't just a football issue," he told CBC Sports. "This is a sports issue, and there are almost four million concussions in North America every year. And the vast majority of some of those come from just people having falls. We're not alone with this. This isn't a football problem, this is a problem that we have to tackle as a society."

Watch Ambrosie discuss concussions in the CFL:

CBC Sports' Devin Heroux asks the CFL commissioner about player safety issues. 3:40

Ambrosie also said player safety is at the top of his priority list, saying there has been "a 30 per cent reduction in the number of injuries during practices."

He also wants to see an expansion team in Halifax, which has been a league hope for decades.

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