

NFL Admits Mistake in Penalizing Muslim Player for Praying After Touchdown

The National Football League admitted on Tuesday that Kansas City Chiefs safety Husain Abdullah should not have been penalized for sliding on his knees and bowing in prayer after scoring a touchdown.

Abdullah, a devout Muslim, was slapped with a 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty after his touchdown during the Chiefs' 41-14 rout of the New England Patriots on Monday night.

NFL spokesman Michael Signora said players are not allowed to celebrate while on the ground but this was different.

"Husain Abdullah should not have been penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct following his fourth quarter touchdown," Signora said in an email to Reuters on Tuesday.

"The officiating mechanic in this situation is not to flag a player who goes to the ground as part of religious expression, and as a result, there should have been no penalty on the play," he added.

Abdullah, who scored during a 39-yard interception return in the fourth quarter, had said he believed he was penalized for the slide prior to his prayer.

"I just got a little too excited," Abdullah told reporters after the game. "I think it was for the slide."

Abduallah slid on his knees for several yards before touching his head to the ground at the back of the end zone.

Reporting by Steve Ginsburg; editing by Susan Heavey

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