

NFL Kisses Neutrality Goodbye as ESPN Airs Michael Sam Smooching Boyfriend

The NFL's first openly gay draft pick says he doesn't want to be a distraction—and then proceeded to create the biggest one of all by openly kissing his boyfriend on ESPN.

The display, which the network aired without warning—or hesitation—is being called “the kiss seen 'round the world.” Producer Seth Markham says he is stunned by the amount of fallout the footage received.

“When I got home last night and saw the attention [it was receiving], it kind of threw me,” he says.

Markman insists ESPN wasn't trying to make a political statement—but you could have fooled us. Almost 250 picks in, no network devotes this much attention to seventh-round selections.

From current players to former ones, the NFL's athletes voiced their displeasure that ESPN would expose audiences to such a graphic political agenda. Former Super Bowl champ Derrick Ward, like others, took to Twitter to shame the network for its irresponsible coverage.

“For him to do that on national television is disgusting,” Ward said, “Gay or not. Man U got little kids lookin at the draft. I can't believe ESPN even allowed that to happen.”

Since then, Ward's been inundated with responses—some hateful, many supportive.

For the Miami Dolphins' Don Jones, the punishment for supporting natural sexuality was more than social media backlash. The safety responded to the clip with “OMG” and

“Horrible,” only to be hauled into the team’s offices and punished.

Dolphins coach Joe Philbin explains, “We met with Don today about respect, discrimination and judgment. Those comments are not consistent with the values and standards of our program.”

Jones has since apologized, but even that won’t get him out of the fine, suspension and “re-education” training levied by the NFL.

For players, who are losing the right to free speech—at least when it conflicts with the league’s agenda—this is a brave new world. As Family Research Council’s Craig James, a former NFL running back himself, points out, the world of professional sports is only teeing it up for conservatives to be ousted and marginalized.

When the league’s biggest interest is advertising, they’ll follow the dollar anywhere—including the end of free speech as we know it.

Tony Perkins *is president of Family Research Council.*