

Sept. 9, 2014

Dear Ravens Stakeholder:

You deserve an explanation.

What happened with the Ray Rice incident? How could it come to this? Why didn't we act earlier?

As a PSL holder, suite owner, sponsor and supporter, you have a stake in us. You have invested in us – emotionally as well as financially, trusted us, and believed in us. We value that trust and owe you full disclosure.

First, let us say that we did not do all we should have done and no amount of explanation can remedy that. What we can do now is share with you everything that occurred and vow to learn from all that has happened.

Here is how the situation unfolded, and here are our thoughts behind the decisions we made.

On the morning of Feb. 15, we learned that Ray and his then fiancé, Janay, had been arrested at an Atlantic City casino, and both had been charged with “simple assault” resulting from an altercation with each other. After the couple was taken to police headquarters, and after a report was written, they were allowed to leave together.

A number of Ravens' representatives talked with Ray during the course of that day. His explanation was that after he and Janay had consumed a great deal of alcohol, they had had an argument and that they struck each other.

We at the Ravens organization issued a statement to the media that we were aware of the incident, that we had talked with Ray, and that he deserved the due process of law.

We then began our own process to discover as much as we could about what happened. We talked with representatives of the casino, the police who arrested the couple, the prosecutor and a lawyer who represented both Ray and Janay in the case. Soon after, the video of Janay and Ray coming out of the elevator became public.

We contacted the casino management and asked if there was video of the incident from inside the elevator that we could see. The casino would not share such video. We asked the local New Jersey police and the police refused as well. We asked the prosecutor's office and that office refused. It was our understanding at that time that Ray's attorney had not yet seen the video. NFL officials had been informed, and we know they were also trying to retrieve and/or see the video.

Assessing the situation at of the end of February, this is what we knew: A player who had been a model citizen in the community and terrific teammate for six seasons had been charged with simple assault against his fiancé. At that time, his fiancé Janay had been similarly charged.

Ray and Janay both told us nothing like this had happened before. He was showing great remorse; they were meeting regularly with our team chaplain and were diligently attending couples counseling.

In March, the prosecutor dropped the case against Janay, but elevated the charge against Ray from simple assault to aggravated assault. At this point, we decided to defer action until completion of the court proceedings. We stopped seeking to view or obtain a copy of the video. We halted our fact-finding. That was a mistake on our part.

In May, the prosecutor recommended, and the judge agreed, that Ray should be accepted into a pre-trial intervention program that will eventually have the assault charge dismissed from his record, pending a year of good behavior.

The police had seen video from inside the elevator. The prosecutor and the judge, who had also seen such video, allowed Ray into the program that would eventually clear him of the assault charge.

On June 16, Ray and Janay met with Commissioner Roger Goodell, who then announced on July 27 that Ray Rice would be suspended for the first two games of the season. Ray subsequently met with the media and answered questions.

Yesterday morning Sept 8, all of us saw the video from inside the elevator. It is violent and horrifying. I immediately came to the office and called a meeting with Dick Cass, Ozzie Newsome, John Harbaugh and Kevin Byrne. The meeting was relatively short. The decision to let Ray Rice go was unanimous. Seeing that video changed everything. We should have seen it earlier. We should have pursued our own investigation more vigorously. We didn't and we were wrong.

We are moving forward and believe we can help put more of a spotlight on intimate partner violence, while increasing education and awareness to this issue to all in our organization. Our recently announced partnership with the House of Ruth is a start.

We view ourselves as a family. Like families, we have used tough love in the past (fines, benching and releases) with repeat offenders. Because of his positive contributions on and off the field over the last six years, Ray had earned every benefit of the doubt from our organization. We took everything we knew and decided to support Ray Rice until we could not.

We hope that Ray will continue to work to be the best husband, father and person he can be, and he will turn this awful situation into something positive. We also have learned a great deal and will continue to strive to be an organization and team you and Baltimore will be proud of. I am sorry we let you down.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Bisciotti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "B".

Stephen J. Bisciotti  
Owner, Baltimore Ravens