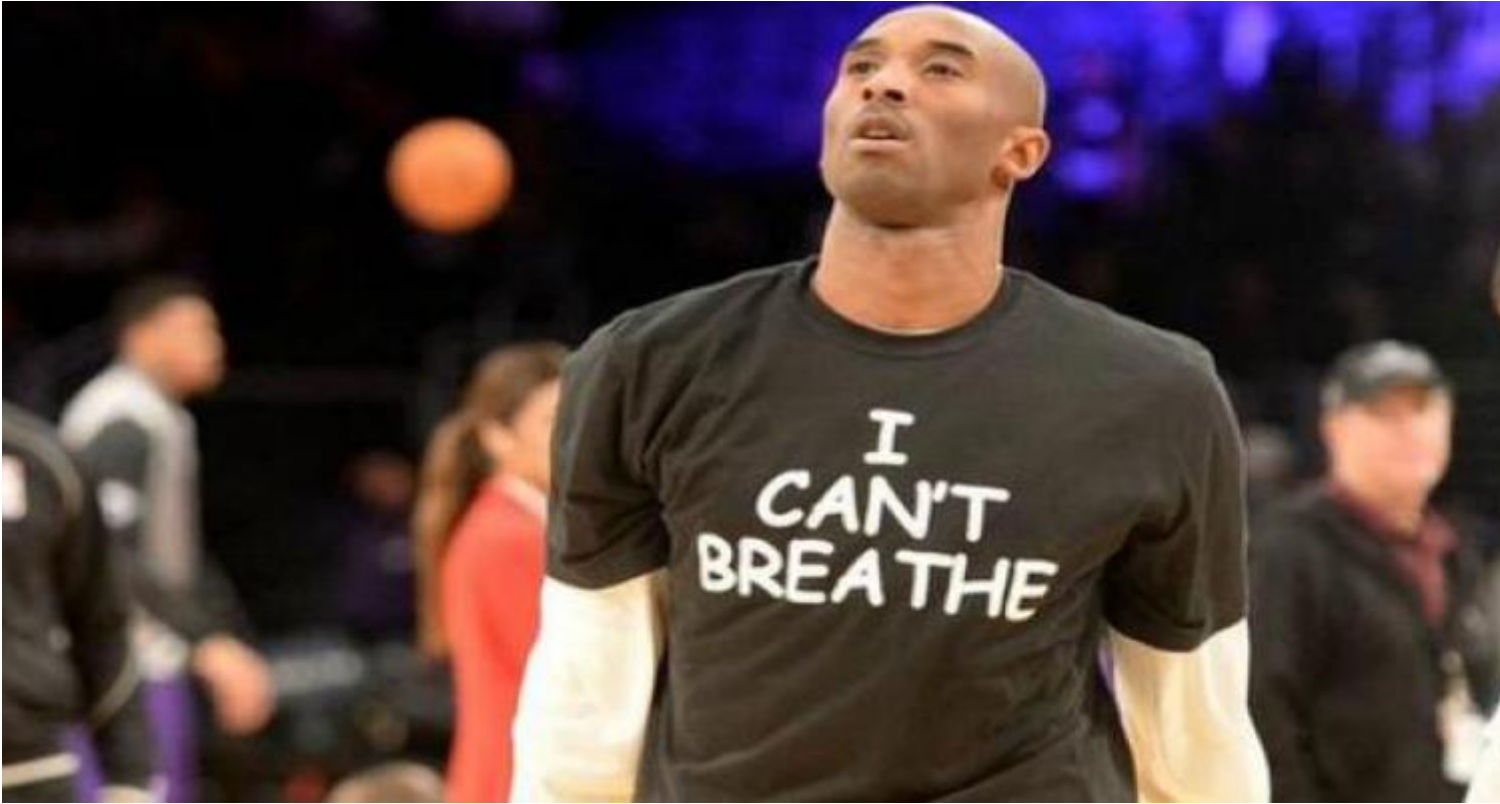


Sports News Roundup Dec. 25



Stars Join Campaign over US Police Killings

The U.S. sports world is showing solidarity with the protests taking place all over the United States, as players make public statements during games. Protest in the U.S. continues over the death of Eric Garner and Michael Brown and the decisions by the respective Grand Juries to not indict the police officers who killed them.

American Football team St. Louis Rams have shown their support for Ferguson victim of police brutality Michael Brown. Sports stars are using slogans made popular by mass protests to display responsibility for Eric Garner's death at the hands of police officers.

The phrase, "I can't breathe," has been taken up by protesters in one major city after another, citing the words gasped 11 times by 41-year-old Garner as policeman Daniel Pantaleo placed him in a chokehold during an arrest, resulting in his death later. The fatal incident was recorded and immediately went viral.

The St. Louis Rams raised awareness of Garner's killing, as offensive lineman Davin Joseph wrote "I can't breathe" on his shoes, before the Rams beat the Washington Redskins 24-0.

Tight end Jared Cook wrote the same phrase on his wrist tape, while receiver Kenny Britt's cleats bore the names of several victims of race-related police brutality, including Michael Brown.

Their dramatic action was part of a series of marches, rallies and other actions protesting the police killing. The St. Louis Police Officers Association was furious, and demanded that the National Football League (NFL) take disciplinary action against the players, but the league refused to do so.

National Basketball Association (NBA) superstars joined in the criticism of the court decision on Tuesday, with NBA star Kobe Bryant of Los Angeles Lakers sporting a black t-shirt with the "I Can't Breathe" slogan on it during the team's warm-ups before playing Sacramento.

Kobe joined other NBA players as Derrick Rose, LeBron James and Kevin Garnett and other athletes denouncing the grand jury decision to not indict Pantaleo in the death of Garner.

NFL football player, Cleveland Browns wide receiver, Andrew Hawkins addressed complaints from the city's police union regarding his wearing a shirt with a message about recent police killings. Hawkins stepped onto the field for the game against the Cincinnati Bengals with a shirt demanding justice for Tamir Rice and John Crawford III, both shot and killed by Ohio police officers.

The NFL player explained his actions, refusing to apologize. "I was taught that justice is a right that every American should have. Also, justice should be the goal of every American. I think that's what makes this country. To me, justice means the innocent should be found innocent. It means that those who do wrong should get their due punishment," Hawkins said. "Ultimately, it means fair treatment. So a call for justice shouldn't offend or disrespect anybody. A call for justice shouldn't warrant an apology."

FIFA Won't Restage Vote for 2018 or 2022 World Cup

FIFA's executive committee has unanimously agreed to release an "appropriate" version of an investigation into the report of alleged corruption in the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding process, insisting that the decision to let Russia and Qatar host the tournaments was made in a transparent manner.

FIFA president Joseph Blatter explained the reasons why FIFA chose not to hold a re-vote on its previous decision to host the 2022 World Cup in Qatar during their hot summer, despite protest from players foreseeing health risks.

"It would really need an earthquake, extremely important new elements to go back on this World Cup in Qatar," said Blatter. "At the current time, there is no reason to go back on our decisions. The two World Cups are in the calendar, the only thing missing is the precise dates for 2022, but these two World Cups will take place."

Key FIFA investigator Michael Garcia had opened an official probe against a number of affiliated individuals, including three members who sit on the current FIFA executive committee, Blatter confirmed Friday.

Blatter added that FIFA has overcome the crisis set off by the publication of former investigator Garcia's 430-page report .

However the controversy is unlikely to go away, with Garcia resigning from his role last week, claiming the global soccer association had misrepresented his original report, using "erroneous representations," to deny its wrongdoing.

At the moment, global governance bodies like FIFA are not required to abide by international law. This circumstance made Garcia's investigation into the corruption charges surrounding the 2010 vote to assign

the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 World Cup to Qatar especially difficult.

In his resignation statement, Garcia referred to a “lack of leadership” at FIFA’s executive level, casting particular doubt on the accountability of his colleague on the ethics committee, German judge Joachim Eckert.

While the investigation will continue, Mark Pieth, a Swiss professor and expert on governance who has consulted FIFA in the past, stressed the need for reform of the international organization.

“FIFA needs a permanent, outside oversight body. One investigator isn’t nearly enough. It never will be,” he told The New York Times in an interview.

FIFA could not say how long it would be until the final report is published, but Blatter urged the ethics committee to speed up the investigation.

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