**McNabb accusation falls on deaf ears**

Eagles quarterback blames fan hatred on his race

Of all of the issues that are commonly discussed in North America, perhaps nothing is as inflammatory as race. With its history of institutional slavery, state-sponsored assimilation and widespread segregation, North American culture has been marred by troubling and often polarizing debates about race relations.

And, to a large extent, these race debates have made their way into the world of professional sports. So it should come as no surprise to hear that, only three weeks into the latest NFL season, discussions about race have moved to centre stage.

Last week, an interview with Philadelphia Eagles’ quarterback Donovan McNabb was aired by Real Sports with Bryant Gumble in which the perennial pro-bowl player says that Black quarterbacks in the NFL face much more scrutiny than their White counterparts. With his team languishing at the bottom of their division, it seems appropriate that McNabb would try and deflect attention away from the team’s play on the field; however, using the topic of race to do so seems a tad excessive.

For the most part, I agree with McNabb that race is an issue in professional football – it’s hard to argue otherwise. To be a Black person in America inevitably means that you will face greater pressure to perform than a White person, and by extension it only makes sense that this would translate to the world of sports as well. However, in the case of McNabb, the issue is not really about race so much as it is about the place where he plays.

As the quarterback of the Philadelphia Eagles, McNabb plays in one of the most ruthless sports towns in America, and does so at the most prominent position in sports. We must remember, after all, that Philadelphia is the home of fans that have booed Santa Claus and nearly paralyzed Michael Irvin while helping to run Charles Barkley, Allen Iverson and Eric Lindros out of town.

So, considering that he has yet to deliver a Super Bowl championship, McNabb must expect that he’s going to face a lot of criticism. Philly is a results-oriented town, and to not bring home a win in the biggest game of them all is just unacceptable to the majority of its sports fans.

But the pressure that results from playing in Philadelphia should not, and cannot, be reduced simply to race. Of course, I would never argue that race plays no factor in what McNabb is currently dealing with, but to Eagles fans it wouldn’t matter what colour McNabb’s skin is if he were delivering championships.

If the quarterback could help his team get over the hump and finally win the big game, all would be forgotten by Philly fans and McNabb would be immortalized as a Philadelphia hero in the same way that Sylvester Stallone’s Rocky is. But until the day comes when McNabb is hoisting the Vince Lombardi trophy over his head, he has to expect that his team’s fans will harshly scrutinize every pass that he makes. And until then, the comments that will follow the quarterback’s every move will have less to do with his skin colour than his team’s performance on the field and in the playoffs.

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**RACIAL PROFILING** - McNabb attempts to explain restless fanbase.

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