



Michael Vick And The Presidential Seal Of Approval

As ISAR's supporters know, our animal rights organization was in the vanguard of those who attempted to ban dog-torturer/killer Michael Vick from returning to professional football after he was released from prison. ISAR published blogs (see [What Made Michael Vick](#), [Heart Bleeding For Vick, But Not His Victims](#), [ISAR vs. Michael Vick](#), [Vick Scores Again](#), [Vick Scores Yet Again](#), [Profit Trumped Principle](#)), wrote articles (see [Don't Let Michael Vick Benefit By Abusing Dogs](#), [Vick Petition Update 1](#), [Vick Petition Update 2](#), [Vick Petition Update 3](#), [Vick Petition Update 4](#), [ISAR's Anti-Vick Campaign Is Being Heard](#)), circulated [petitions](#), erected [billboards](#), designed [posters](#) for our supporters to have printed and distributed at events such as NFL games where Michael Vick and the Eagles were present, and provided an [online button](#) featuring our *Profit Trumped Principle* design for our supporters to facilitate ISAR's anti-Vick campaign online.

It was bad enough when HSUS was complicit in Vick's resurrection (see ISAR's letters to HSUS President Wayne Pacelle [1](#), [2](#)), when the commissioner of football restored the felon's eligibility (see ISAR's [letter](#) to Commissioner Roger Goodell), when the Philadelphia Eagles hired him, and when countless football fans welcomed Vick back to the gridiron despite his soul and hands being covered with the blood of tortured and murdered dogs.

Frankly, ISAR didn't believe that anything worse could happen in the Vick story.

But it has.

Thanks to the President of the United States, as recounted below by one of America's most astute commentators, Jonah Goldberg.

Shortcut to Redemption

By Jonah Goldberg

Jewish World Review Dec. 31, 2010)

One of the best things I read all year came in a magazine I don't read, about a subject I don't follow, by an author I don't agree with on nearly anything. But Matt Taibbi's "The Jock's Guide to Getting Arrested" in the August 2010 Men's Journal was simply a great piece of writing.

I bring it up because Michael Vick is in the news, and Taibbi's rule No. 1 for athletes who get arrested is "Don't Suck."

"Before you go out and start committing crimes," Taibbi writes, "it's important to first make sure you're at least slightly better than the 30 or 40 guys the team's assistant GM could instantly pull off some practice squad to replace you. Otherwise you will become fodder for the team's zero-tolerance discipline policy. Conversely, if you're awesome, the line will be, 'There've been some bumps in the road, but hopefully he's learned from that.'"

Enter Vick, a star quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons until he was caught, tried and convicted for dog fighting and animal cruelty. Vick had been warned to abandon the hobby he loved, but he just couldn't resist brutalizing dogs for sport and drowning the losers.

He went to jail for 21 months, lost a vast amount of money, and was publicly shamed for his misdeeds.

As a dog lover of the first order, I can sympathize with the sentiment behind pundit Tucker Carlson's hyperbole about wanting Vick executed for his crimes. But at the end of the day, nearly two years in jail, personal bankruptcy and the loss of some prime playing years is a reasonable punishment. Though I think lifetime banishments should be more common in professional sports. (Why is betting on, say, basketball more of a reason to ban someone than betting on dogfights? No one drowns the Celtics when they lose.)

Anyway, because Vick is a close student of Taibbi's First Rule, he doesn't suck. Which is why he was picked up by the Philadelphia Eagles. Fine, one more reason not to root for the Eagles.

But the story leapt from the sports pages to the editorial pages because the president called the team's owner, Jeffrey Lurie, to congratulate him for giving Vick another shot in the NFL.

"So many people who serve time never get a fair second chance." He reportedly told Lurie. "It's never a level playing field for prisoners when they get out of jail."

Obama is surely right that ex-cons face a lot of hurdles in life. But is Vick really a good example?

Michael Vick had it all. He received a \$37 million signing bonus when he joined the Falcons. Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen, another liberal writer I rarely agree with, is exactly right when he says: "You would think from the commentary that Vick was some poor kid who got caught swiping something so he could get something to eat. You would think he had on the spur of the moment stolen a car, gone for a joy ride -- and collided with a police car at an intersection."

No, this guy was such a self-involved creep that he couldn't stop himself from running a gladiatorial canine torture mill, even though he knew he was risking everything.

And why did Obama wait until Vick's second year with the Eagles to

congratulate Lurie for his "brave" decision? It was only after an entire year as a backup quarterback had passed and Vick emerged as a superstar again, taking his team to the playoffs and coming in second in Pro Bowl voting, that Obama congratulated Lurie. If Lurie's decision was so virtuous, why wait until the decision panned out?

The answer, again: Vick doesn't suck. At football.

But what of the millions of men released from prison who have little education, few skills and a criminal record that would make any reasonable employer think twice, and then twice again, about hiring them?

If our prisons were releasing top-flight software engineers, physicists and biologists, they'd all get second chances too. Ironically, it's the folks who need government licenses -- doctors, stockbrokers, et al. -- who often can't get second chances in their vocations. Obama could actually do something about that.

How to deal with the ex-con population is very hard knot. But neither Michael Vick's example nor the self-flattering preening that has come with it helps cut through it.