

Please end the blackout rule as it pertains to professional sports on television. This is a rule that is past its time. The revenues of professional sports teams, and specifically the NFL, are driven largely by television and other revenue streams. Attendance, while important, does not play the role it once did. Furthermore, this rule is a competitive disadvantage for small-market teams vs. large-market.

Large-market teams typically have no trouble filling stadiums and never have to concern themselves with blackouts. However, small-market teams must struggle to fill the same sized stadiums, and in Buffalo's case much larger, by drawing from a much smaller population pool. Buffalo's stadium is larger than average for the NFL despite the small size of the market. Despite this and the brutal winter weather, Buffalo fans still come to the games in droves.

Even though the NFL and other sports leagues will say otherwise, the blackout rule does not actually help the teams that can't sell out games. If anything, it hurts them in the long run. With more viewership of NFL games on television than ever before it has become the prime way to develop fan bases. The future fans of the NFL, young children, are exposed to what they have access too. Teams that they can see on television on a regular basis will develop a bond with them that will create fans for life. As a child growing up in the late '80s and '90s I was pushed to like many different teams by my family or peers. Ultimately I became a diehard Bills fan because I was able to watch the team week in and week out. How can a small-market team, like the Bills, expect to develop young fans if their games are never broadcast on television. Young fans will instead be drawn to the large-market teams that are shown instead. There is a reason so many teams covet games on national television. Greater viewership of their team means greater exposure and general knowledge of them. This in turn leads to larger fan bases. The same holds true for local blackouts. With access to the internet and the ability to find out information and follow news of any team, what makes a difference with fans is who they can watch. Take the blacked out teams out of that equation and fans are pushed to other choices.

Further complicating this issue is the hundreds of millions of dollars put forth by state taxpayers for new stadiums and stadium upgrades. This amounts to a taxpayer subsidy of this multi-billion dollar industry. While most fans are alright with this subsidy if it helps keep their team in town, taking this money while then hitting the fans with a television blackout amounts to a slap in the face. Given the budget shortfalls that every state, county, town and city government are facing in addition to the economic struggles of average Americans is it really just to deny access to entertainment taxpayers help provide?

This is an antiquated rule that does more harm than good for all parties involved. The NFL and other sports leagues will surely lobby hard to keep it in tact. However, the taxpayers should have the ultimate say. Thank you.