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**Deflated**

New England Deals with Controversy Before Big Game  
By Paul Asay

**What Happened**

After beating the Indianapolis Colts 45-7 in the AFC Championship Game, the New England Patriots were excited about going to the Super Bowl for the eighth time in the team's history—the sixth since Tom Brady has been the team's quarterback.

However, before the team could begin preparing for its Super Bowl in earnest, the Patriots found themselves embroiled in a cheating scandal. National Football League officials found the footballs the team used in the first half against the Colts were under-inflated. The kerfuffle has become known as Deflategate.

It doesn't seem as if under-inflated footballs would make a big difference in the game, but experts say (in the perfectionist world of the NFL) it actually does. If a ball is under-inflated, it's easier to grip and throw. NFL rules state that all footballs have to be inflated to at least 12.5 pounds of air per square inch. Anything less is, by rule, illegal.

Coach Bill Belichick and Brady say they have no idea how the footballs came to be under-inflated. "At no time was there any intent whatsoever to try to compromise the integrity of the game," Belichick said at a news conference. "Quite the opposite." Many believe the whole controversy has been overblown.

Still, New England has been embroiled in cheating controversies before, and many football experts doubt the full truth is being told.

"It's cheating," said former wide receiver Hines Ward. "Regardless of how you may want to spin it. It helps Tom Brady, provides a better grip on the football, especially in bad weather conditions like rain."

**Talk About It**

The NFL is continuing to investigate Deflategate, and we won't know for some time—if ever—exactly what happened, but it does throw a light onto the issue of cheating as a whole. Keep in mind, winning is incredibly important in professional football. Careers and reputations hinge on the ability to win games, and most teams will give themselves an edge wherever they can—hopefully within the rules. The temptation to go outside the rules must be strong.

Cheating can be tempting for us, too. Good grades and educational success can have a huge impact on one's future. Most of us have at least thought about cheating on a test or paper at one time or another. Our friends and families are important to us, too, making it tempting to lie to make ourselves look better.

Have you ever cheated? When? Did you get caught? Did you come to regret having cheated? Have you ever lied to improve your standing with someone?

Some people say the whole controversy is overblown, even if New England cheated. Is it ever OK to cheat a little? If the Patriots are guilty, do you think they should be punished? What should happen to them?

One reason people may be suspicious about whether the Patriots are telling the truth is their previous history. How important is reputation when trying to decide if someone is guilty of something? Is it more likely, for instance, that someone who has a history of lying will lie in the future? Does that history sometimes make us accuse people unfairly for something they didn't do?

### **What the Bible Says**

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (James 4:17).

“Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool” (Prov. 19:1).

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Gal. 6:7-8).

“A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth” (Eccl. 7:1).

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold” (Prov. 22:1).

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