

Rebekah (Jeff Fisher), Casey (Les Snead), Jesus (Ray Finkle), and Brendan (Andy Kabana)

Sports Communication

Final Project

Due 7 December, 2016

Los Angeles Rams, Ray Finkle, and Andy Kabana Crisis

Michael Sam was drafted in 2014 by the Los Angeles Rams, making them the first team with an openly gay player. During the 2016-17 season the team was scheduled to honor members of the LGBT movement when the team's kicker, Ray Finkle, tweeted that he was proud that his team supported the rights of everyone. His teammate, Andy Kabana, tweeted the following "First Sam, now Finkle- it's cool, but keep it to yourself. Locker rooms are for real men. Why do they always come to the Rams?" In doing this, Kabana publicly outed Finkle and caused a huge divide in the locker room. The LGBT community is planning events around the game and protesting Kabana's employment by the Rams.

The Los Angeles Rams will be holding a news conference to address the concerns of the NFL, Rams fans and the LGBT community. It will be held in Los Angeles, California at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 5:00 pm. Both Ray Finkle and Andy Kabana will be speaking to the media, along with Rams head coach Jeff Fisher and Rams General Manager Les Snead.

Rams management believes that Kabana misunderstood the situation and did not comprehend the severity of his comments. Based on comments in the locker room, Kabana believed that it was known that Finkle was homosexual. He made a poor judgment decision and takes full responsibility for his actions.

The Rams met with Kabana before the press conference to discuss his comments and explain how they were offensive to Finkle, the rest of the team, and the general public. He now understands the impact of his comments and will do whatever it takes to remedy the situation. He also understands that it will take a long time to regain the respect of his teammates and the public.

After further conversation with Kabana, the Rams decided to ban him from team activities until he undergoes sensitivity training for his comments. Kabana has agreed to these terms, and will complete the training. Kabana will issue a public apology and will also apologize to Finkle personally.

In addition to the previously planned events to honor the LGBT community the Rams will be working towards making a bigger impact in the community. The Rams will be releasing a special LGBT Rams shirt to benefit Equality California, a statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization working to achieve equality and acceptance for the LGBT community. As stated above, the Rams will honor members of the LGBT community at a home game this season, and will put these members in a suite for the game, as well as members of Equality California.

At the press conference Kabana will issue the following statement “I want to apologize to Ray Finkle for the inappropriate comment I made on Twitter. I take full responsibility for what I said, and my comments after the fact. I recognize now that what I said was wrong and extremely offensive. I have the most upmost respect for Ray, and am glad to have him as a teammate. He’s an incredible guy on and off the field. To my teammates, I apologize for creating an unnecessary divide. You are all

my brothers, and I'm sorry I distracted us from what matters – the game. To the LGBT community, please accept my sincerest apologies. We are nothing without our fans, and I never intended to isolate those fans in the LGBT community.”

Kabana will most likely be asked how he feels about playing with a gay teammate, and also how he feels about homosexuals in general. Kabana will respond by saying that Finkle's sexuality does not matter; he treats Finkle just as he would any other player and that every person deserves to be treated equally, regardless of their sexuality.

In Finkle's statement, he will officially come out as gay. His statement is as follows; “ I understand how big of a deal this is. I do not believe my sexuality is a reflection whatsoever of whom I am as an athlete. With that being said, yes I am gay. It's kind of a nervous process, but I know what I want to be.... and that's the best football player I can possibly be. Telling the world I'm gay is nothing compared to other problems that exist in the world. I used to be afraid of who I was, and I never want other members of the LGBT community to feel that same fear. I want to rewrite the script for young athletes especially – those that are maybe still in the closet and afraid of who they are. I want them to know it's okay to be proud of who you are. To Andy – I am choosing not to harbor any resentment over the comments. I hope from this he can learn more about our community and who we are. In the end we are teammates working towards the same goal, which is winning games. From here on out that's what I hope we can continue to focus on.”

Finkle may be asked why he isn't mad at Kabana for outing him. In response Finkle will explain that although the comments were hurtful, he understands that

Kabana, along with many other people, do not understand the sensitivity of the topic and the effect their comments have on other people.

Head Coach Jeff Fisher's statement will focus on the actions the Rams are taking and the current status of the team. He will say "Andy will be barred from team activities until he finishes sensitivity training for his comments made on social media regarding his teammate. He will also have to pay an undisclosed fine. The Los Angeles Rams are all working towards one goal, and that goal unifies us, We're really happy for Finkle and he's made the right decision to announce this, and we're proud of him and how he represents the Rams. He's taught a lot of people first-hand that it doesn't matter what your background is, or your personal orientation. And it's just as he said. No matter what, we are a team working to win games, and we will not let personal conflicts deter us from that goal of winning. We're all on the same team and here to support each other."

Fisher will be asked if there is a divide in the locker in the room, to which he will restate the team will not let personal conflicts effect the success of the team, and that Finkle does not hold any resentment towards Kabana. He may also be asked how much the fine was, to which he will say "We are not disclosing the amount of the fine at this time."

Lastly, Rams General Manager Les Snead will speak on the actions the organization is taking to remedy this situation. His statement is "We met with Andy about respect, discrimination, and judgment. These comments are not consistent with the values and standards of our program. The Los Angeles Rams are supportive of all communities and sexualities. In addition to honoring members of the LGBT

community this season, the Rams are also working to make a bigger impact in the community as well. We will be releasing a special LGBT Rams shirt, and profits will be donated to Equality California, an organization working to achieve equality and acceptance for the LGBT community.”

Snead could be asked why Kabana wasn’t cut from the team entirely to which Snead would reply that in this case “We can see Kabana does feel genuine remorse for what he said. He is willing to cooperate with his punishments and sensitivity training. He is a great athlete, and given this sense of remorse we didn’t see the need to cut him from the Rams roster entirely.” Another question Snead could potentially be asked is why they selected the charity Equality California to donate to. To that Snead will say something like “We selected Equality California because of all they do for the LGBT community not only in the city of Los Angeles, but all across California. Their dedication to taking care of the LGBT community and fighting their rights and health is admirable.”

In conclusion, after Andy Kabana publicly outed his teammate Ray Finkle on Twitter, he will publicly apologize to Finkle, his teammates, and the public. He will be suspended until he completes sensitivity training regarding his comments and he will pay an undisclosed fine. The Los Angeles Rams will be releasing a special Rams shirt with the proceeds going to Equality California, and they will be continuing with the plans to honor members of the Los Angeles LGBT movement at a home game in the 2016-17 season.

Works Cited

Alsup, H. Y. (2014, May 13). *NFL draft: Reactions heat up after Michael Sam kisses boyfriend on TV*. Retrieved December 1, 2016, from CNN.com.

Black, J. (2014, February 10). *College Football Star, Michael Sam: "I'm an Openly, Proud Gay Man"*. Retrieved December 1, 2016, from Wwww.NBCnews.com.