



DEMAURICE SMITH

DeMaurice Fitzgerald Smith was the Executive Director of the National Football League Players' Association (NFLPA) from 2009 to 2023.

Upon his initial election, ESPN opined that he had assumed “the toughest job in all of sports,” having succeeded the late Gene Upshaw and facing the most contentious and public labor/management battles in history. As Executive Director of the Player’s Union, he has negotiated two comprehensive collective bargaining agreements and is the longest serving Executive Director of a major sport union. As the Chief Executive Officer of the NFLPA’s for profit company, Player’s Incorporated, he has guided annual revenues to over \$200M and witnessed the largest growth in player’s marketing and licensing. He has been named one of the top ten most influential executives in sports.

In March 2020, he successfully negotiated his second long-term Collective Bargaining Agreement with the National Football League. The eleven-year deal introduced an additional game into the regular season and provided players with their guaranteed highest share of NFL revenue in history. The agreement improved health care, pensions, and benefits for all players; achieved a twenty percent increase in the salaries of the core players; and gave retroactive benefits to players who had previously retired without full benefits. The agreement also renewed the comprehensive transition program for NFL Players called “The Trust” and secured funding for the next ten years of research that is currently affiliated with the Harvard Football Players Health Study. Both programs provide transition and health services to former NFL Players for life. He also led the negotiations to create comprehensive Covid-19 protections and protocols for his membership, obtained comprehensive testing and opt out provisions for players, and designed the return to play agreements that secured NFL players being paid their full salary for the season despite a projected \$3billion shortfall for 2020.

In July 2011, Smith successfully negotiated an historic ten-year Collective Bargaining Agreement with Roger Goodell and the National Football League. As Executive Director, Smith led the players through the 132-day NFL lockout, instate by the league in effort to achieve an 18-game schedule, a twenty percent reduction in salaries, and the elimination of the long-term pension program for retired players. The Players Association voted unanimously to decertify as a Union and file an antitrust lawsuit against the owners of the thirty-two teams. Smith is credited with leading the Players through this turbulent time and turning the tables to achieve a ten-year agreement. To do this, he employed a novel, multi-faceted strategy that combined a successful legal attack on the NFL’s \$4B Lockout Fund, a federal and local legislative agenda, creative use of social media, and the unprecedented securing of the first employee anti-lockout insurance policy that would have compensated NFL Players during the loss of any games. The eventual agreement secured unprecedented financial gains for the players and successfully blocked an 18-game schedule, locked the players in to a firm share of revenue in the highest earning years in NFL history, and expanded pensions and benefits for former players. It also reduced the amount of time of player practices, implemented strict guidelines and schedules for players, and limited what was nearly year around access by coaches to NFL Players.

During his tenure, the NFLPA also called for Congressional hearings on concussions, developed new concussion protocols that are now standard in amateur and professional sports, codified regulations to hold team physicians accountable to players, and created the first comprehensive transition programs for NFL Players.

Prior to his election as the Executive Director, Mr. Smith was recognized as one of the best trial lawyers in the country. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. He was an Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Columbia for nearly a decade and was formerly Counsel to then Deputy Attorney General Eric H. Holder



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Jr. in the United States Department of Justice. Smith was awarded the U.S. Attorney's Office highest honor for courtroom advocacy with the John H. Evans Award. In 2000, he was awarded the Department of Justice's highest honor with the Attorney General's Award by U.S. Attorney General Janet W. Reno. He was inducted into the prestigious American Trial Lawyers Association and was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award by the Bar Association of the District of Columbia. He served as a partner in the worldwide firms of Latham & Watkins, LLP and Patton Boggs, LLP in Washington D.C. While in private practice, he represented corporations, boards of directors, and senior executives in civil and criminal matters. He also served two terms on the Board of Governors of the District of Columbia Bar Association.

In addition to his legal accolades, Mr. Smith has been awarded the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award, the Keeper of the Dream Award by the Action Network Alliance, the City of Justice Award by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, and in 2010 he was inducted into the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges' Hall of Excellence.

Smith serves as co-chairman of the Board of OneTeam Partners, a venture capital company that joined the group licensing of players from the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team, and the Women's National Basketball Association. He also serves on the Executive Council of the AFLCIO and he is on the Board of Directors for ULLICO (The Union Life Insurance Agency).

Smith also chairs the Annual Georgetown University Comprehensive Cancer Lombardi Gala; is on the Board of Harlem Lacrosse; the Board of Living Classrooms, the Board of Trustees of St Andrews Episcopal School; the Board of Directors for the U.S. Congressional Award; the Board of Advisors for the Office for Access and Advancement for Public Black Universities; and is an Advisory Board Member of The Power of Diversity Mentorship Exchange Program.

He has been featured in *Fortune*, *Bloomberg Business*, *Ebony*, *Wall Street Journal*, *BusinessWeek*, and *The Atlantic*. Smith's first book, [Turf Wars](#), was published in August 2025.

He is a 1989 graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law and a 1985 graduate of Cedarville University. Mr. Smith has been an Executive in Residence and the Darden Business School at the University of Virginia, and is a guest lecturer at Georgetown University, Columbia University, Duke University, Harvard University, George Washington University, and the University of Virginia School of Law. He is on the Advisory Board at University of Miami School of Law. He has also been a guest speaker at the New York Stock Exchange and a commencement speaker for the University of Virginia School of Law, University of Maryland, and Howard University School of Law.