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PRESS RELEASE
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**Brand Keys 2014 Sports Fan Loyalty Index Names Fan Favorites:
Patriots, 49ers, Packers,
– Raiders, Jaguars, and Browns Trail –**

**Ray Rice Domestic Violence Erodes League Loyalty, But Leaves Team Loyalty
Intact**

NEW YORK, NY September 15, 2014 – The start of the National Football League’s season was overshadowed by the release of a video of Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his fiancée in the face in a hotel elevator in Atlantic City last February.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, disciplined Rice with a two game suspension, a penalty criticized as being far from ideal and not representing standards expected by the fans; a renewed scrutiny of the video led to the termination of Rice’s contract and his suspension from the NFL.

“While the Brand Keys *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* doesn’t normally conduct diagnostic measures of individual players,” noted Passikoff, “We do measure overall League loyalty.” In January 2014, self-classified football fans representing the NFL’s 32 teams rated the National Football League first in terms of league loyalty. “Based on current Rice related circumstances, their own fans rate the NFL #3, just behind Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association,” said Passikoff. Loyalty for the Baltimore Ravens team (ranked #7 this year) has so far been unaffected by the publicity surrounding the Rice video.

The fans’ “ideal” is the foundation upon which Brand Keys 2014 *Sports Fan Loyalty Index*, the 22nd annual fan survey (brandkeys.com) by the New York-based brand and customer loyalty research consultancy, is based.

Brand Keys *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* was designed to help professional team management identify precise fan loyalty rankings in their home and national markets “with insights that enable league and team management to identify areas – particularly emotional attachments – that need strategic brand reinforcement,” said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys’ founder and president. “Those insights are based upon fans’ ideal team but in the case of fan loyalty, a team is much more than a group of players and the actions of individual players can have dramatic effects on fan loyalty.”

Follows are the 2014 NFL teams that scored well when it comes to fan loyalty, and those that didn’t. For comparative purposes, #'s in parentheses give the team’s rankings for last season:

Top-5

1. New England Patriots (#1)
2. San Francisco 49ers (#4)
3. Green Bay Packers (#2)
4. Denver Broncos (#7)
5. Indianapolis Colts (#5)

Bottom-5

32. Oakland Raiders (#32)
31. Jacksonville Jaguars (#31)
30. Cleveland Browns (#30)
29. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (#24)
28. Dallas Cowboys (#26)

The Brand Keys Sports Fan Loyalty Index (brandkeys.com/portfolio/sports-loyalty-index) provides an apples-to-apples comparison of the intensity with which fans within the team's home market area support their team versus corresponding values for fans of other teams or leagues in that market.

"Everybody loves a winner, but it's important to note that win/loss ratios do not entirely govern fan loyalty ratings. Neither does simply counting attendance. "There are other powerful and emotionally-based factors that must be taken into account," observed Passikoff.

The percentages next to each component of brand loyalty indicates the contribution they make to fan loyalty and engagement:

History and Tradition (33%)

Is the game and the team part of fans' and community rituals, institutions and beliefs? These include both moral and legal codes of behavior and principals.

Fan Bonding (29%)

Are players particularly respected and admired? An issue like domestic violence will not only have its effects primarily on this driver, but on an overall basis as well.

Pure Entertainment (21%)

How well a team does, wins, losses sure. But even more importantly than a win-loss ratio, how or entertaining is their play? And yes, on-the-field aggressive play *is* part of the acceptable DNA of this loyalty driver.

Authenticity (17%)

How well they play as a team. What's the offense and defense like? New managers, as they're seen to be responsible for the genuineness and credibility of the team, can also help lift this driver. How the team – and in this particular instance the league – behaves in a situation like Rice's.

"As overall league and team rankings correlate very highly with game viewership and purchase of licensed merchandise, and since rankings can be influenced by how loyalty drivers are managed, it's critical that team marketers manage them strategically to better meet fan

expectations,” said Passikoff. “But you have to know what the fans really expect – beyond a winning season. The Brand Keys *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* measures all teams in the four Major Leagues.

“Loyalty is a leading-indicator of behavior and profitability,” said Passikoff, “It tells us what people are going to do. And, because loyalty ratings correlate highly with sales of licensed merchandise, we weren’t surprised when retailers like Dick’s Sporting Goods and Modell’s pulled Ray Rice jersey’s from the shelves, and when the Ravens themselves tweeted that they “will offer an exchange for Ray Rice jerseys at stadium stores. Details to come.”

“While aggression and ferocity are certainly a thread that runs through the “Pure Entertainment” loyalty driver for Major League Sports, and are undeniably characteristics that help teams win,” noted Passikoff, “This kind of widespread negative publicity, fan outcry and the appearance of a player letting his fans down and of league indecision or whitewash, unfortunately raises issues regarding not only player behavior but league standards as well. When that happens, bonds of loyalty are weakened for all teams. And when that happens, nobody wins.”