



XFL Suspends Operations, Will Not Return For 2021 Season, Future Of BattleHawks And Other Teams In Jeopardy

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ST. LOUIS - The XFL professional football league, in its second incarnation, announced on Friday that the league would suspend operations, and laid off all employees of its eight teams, including the St. Louis BattleHawks. The league, which cancelled its season halfway through its 10-week schedule because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, also announced it would not return for next spring for its 2021 season, according to reports first made by ESPN.

The league is owned by Vince McMahon, the president of World Wrestling Entertainment, and originated in 2001 with 10 teams, but was sharply criticized for its wrestling-style gimmicks and sideshows that overshadowed the games. In its revival for the 2020 season, the emphasis on football first and its innovative rules changes, such as on kickoffs, a three-tiered conversion system after touchdowns, and a shootout-style

overtime session, won praise from players, coaches and fans alike. None of the 20 games played before the season was cancelled, though, went into overtime.

The BattleHawks were the only team based in a non-NFL city --- the other teams being the New York Guardians, DC Defenders, Tampa Bay Vipers, Dallas Renegades, Houston Roughnecks, Los Angeles Wildcats and Seattle Dragons --- and were quickly embraced by fans who were still hurting after the abrupt return of the NFL's St. Louis Rams to Los Angeles by team owner Stan Kroenke. The BattleHawks attracted two of the top three attendance marks in the the XFL, as crowds of nearly 30,000 came to the team's two home games --- both wins --- at The Dome At America's Center.

Plans were being made to open the upper decks of the Dome for the BattleHawks' third home game against the Wildcats before the league cancelled the remainder of the season in March due to concerns about COVID-19. At the time of the cancellation, the BattleHawks were 3-2 and in a three-way tie for first place with the Defenders and Vipers in the Eastern Division. Houston, leading the Western Division with a 5-0 record, was the league's only undefeated team.

The two most notable players on the BattleHawks, quarterback Jordan Ta'amu and defensive end Dwayne Hendrix, who played at O'Fallon High in the Southwestern Conference, shortly after signed with NFL clubs, Ta'amu going to the Super Bowl LIV champions Kansas City Chiefs, and Hendrix signing with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The XFL's folding marked the second consecutive year a new football league was forced to suspend operations in the middle of its first season. The Alliance of American Football folded after eight weeks of its opening season in 2019 due to financial difficulties.