

Opinion: How anthem became central to U.S. sports

By Bryan Armen Graham, Guardian

The playing of the “Star-Spangled Banner” is so familiar and perfunctory a trapping of sporting events in the United States that few Americans even bothered to consider what it means and why it’s a tradition until last year when Colin Kaepernick chose to take a knee in protest of police violence and racial inequality.

The stakes were redoubled this September when President Trump called on NFL owners to fire any players who kneel, recasting Kaepernick’s movement as not a protest of social injustice but an affront on patriotism and an insult to the military soldiers who paid the ultimate price for freedom.

But how did a song about the War of 1812 that wasn’t even adopted as the national anthem until the 1930s become so indelibly bound to the American sporting experience? It didn’t happen overnight.

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