



MAXIMIZE THE POWER OF SPORTS

Fresh voices driving the industry forward.

JUNE 10-11, 2020 | THE RITZ-CARLTON | CHICAGO, IL

www.Brand-Innovation-Summit.com



GOLD SPONSOR



GOLD SPONSOR



SIGNAGE PROVIDER



Street & Smith's

SBJ SPORTS BUSINESS JOURNAL

MARCH 2-8, 2020
VOLUME 22 ISSUE 45 • \$7.95

Viral Impact

An anxious sports world faces a global health scare.
PAGE 6

Larry Tanenbaum to
receive SBJ Lifetime
Achievement Award.
PAGE 4

Hanging out with
Jay Bilas for a classic
college hoops rivalry.
PAGE 16

Champions 2020:
For Marvin Demoff,
results do the talking.
PAGE 22

In-Depth:
The hidden skills
that bring data to life.
PAGE 28

Sports, Media &
Entertainment
Recruiters



C-Suite
Vice Presidents
Directors

The Most Hands-On Industry Experience

(856) 685-1450 | [TurnkeySearch.com](https://www.turnkeysearch.com) | [in](#) [twitter](#) [@](#)

CAA WORLD CONGRESS OF SPORTS 2020

Street & Smith's
S&S SPORTS BUSINESS JOURNAL

**5 INTERVIEWS
YOU DO NOT
WANT TO MISS!**



DON GARBER

Commissioner
MLS



ROB MANFRED

Commissioner
MLB



CYNTHIA MARSHALL

CEO
Dallas Mavericks



JIMMY PITARO

President, ESPN;
Co-Chair
Disney Media Networks



MOLLY SOLOMON

Executive Producer & President
NBC Olympics Production;
Executive Producer
Golf Channel

MARCH 25-26, 2020 | MONARCH BEACH RESORT | DANA POINT, CA

GOLD SPONSORS



YOUNG EXECUTIVE PROGRAM PARTNER

OFFICIAL TICKETING PARTNER

ALL-ACCESS SPONSOR

OFFICIAL SIGNAGE PROVIDER

To view the program AGENDA and to REGISTER, go to www.WorldCongressofSports.com.

STATE OF PLAY



NL EAST

The Braves had a team record \$476 million in revenue last year, while Marlins Park will host the finals of the 2021 World Baseball Classic.

THE METER

NL EAST

The Philadelphia Phillies drew criticism from fans for subtle changes to the team's beloved longtime mascot, the Phillie Phanatic.



Combine Forces

The Women's Careers in Football Forum held its fourth annual gathering at the NFL combine in Indianapolis last week. Buffalo Bills co-owner Kim Pegula served as the featured speaker, and referenced the recent film "Lifetime of Sundays" that spotlighted four famous female owners in NFL history. "When they showed the first hundred years, it was the woman behind the man," Pegula said. "But I'm hoping the next hundred years, we're standing beside the men. We don't have to wait a hundred years for that to happen. It's happening now."

MONEY TALKS

Golf's just held to a different standard. Because it's supposed to be a gentleman's sport. And that's where I think they lose a lot of people.

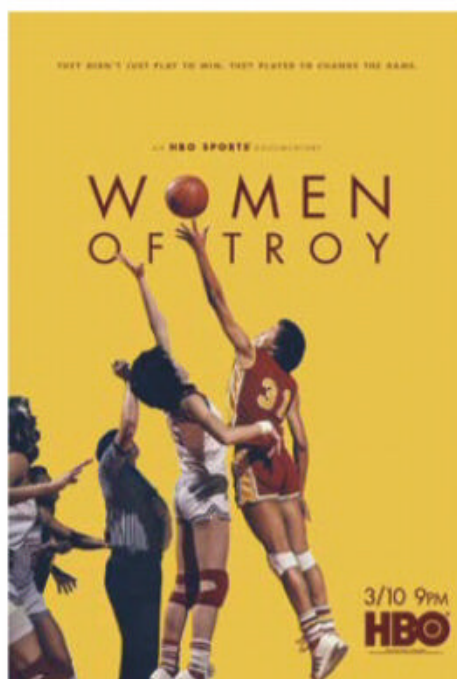
— Four-time major champion **BROOKS KOEPKA**, to GO

FASHION SENSE



Bleacher Report and Mitchell & Ness combined to have hip-hop artists reimagine their hometown NBA teams' logo and designs. Schoolboy Q did the design for the Los Angeles Lakers, while E-40 did so for the Golden State Warriors.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



MARCH 10

"Women of Troy," a documentary about the USC women's basketball team of the mid-1980s, debuts on HBO.

TAKING ATTENDANCE

21,256



Average crowd size at Syracuse men's basketball games this season, meaning the Orange will lead the nation in attendance for the 16th time since the Carrier Dome opened in 1980.



ABRAHAM MADKOUR
PUBLISHER AND
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Honoring the leadership of Larry Tanenbaum

LARRY TANENBAUM is a builder. Throughout his life, the Toronto native has drawn on his background in civil engineering and construction to methodically build successful organizations. He's used those same attributes to develop the sports business in Canada and, as a result, has become one of the most historically important leaders in all of sports.

Today, he sits as chairman of Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, is a governor of the NBA, NHL and MLS, and has led close to \$1 billion worth of investment and sports development around Toronto. On May 20 at the Sports Business Awards in New York City, Tanenbaum, 74, will be honored with Sports Business Journal's Lifetime Achievement Award for his numerous contributions to professional sports, becoming the 11th leader to be recognized with SBJ's highest honor (see box).

There was a lot that went into our decision to honor Tanenbaum, because there's a lot to admire about his style and substance. First, he's been a consistent believer in the power of sports. He had a long-standing interest in sports and entertainment, first working to bring pro basketball to Toronto in the early 1990s. While that bid was unsuccessful when the NBA went with **John Bitove**, Tanenbaum acquired a limited interest in the Maple Leafs.

In 1998, he made his big move by playing a pivotal role in joining Bell Canada and Rogers Communications in acquiring the Raptors and Air Canada Centre, forming Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment and instantly becoming one of the largest sports organizations in the world. The group today consists of the Raptors, Leafs, Toronto FC, AHL Toronto Marlies, G League Raptors 905, CFL Argonauts, Scotiabank Arena, Maple Leaf Square and five other sports facilities, including BMO Field. It's a juggernaut driving all of Toronto's sports marketplace, with the exception of the Blue Jays.

In 2003, Tanenbaum's profile grew when he became chairman of MLSE. Over the years, he became increasingly active in league affairs, serving as chairman of the NBA's board of governors, while also having an influential voice across the NHL and MLS.

"I have seen how he operates at NBA and NHL BOG meetings for the last decade plus,"

said Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment CEO **Scott O'Neil**. "As a man leading one of the largest sports organizations in the world, he leads with dignity and grace, and he is always a huge advocate for what's in the best interests of hockey or basketball as a whole."

Tanenbaum's focus on the greater good was noted by numerous executives, who referred to him as a bridge builder able to bring people together.

"Larry is a gentle giant," said Orlando Magic CEO **Alex Martins**. "Incredibly effective behind the scenes. He doesn't need the podium. He is very much a confidant of Adam [Silver's] and very influential among the owners."

We also admired that Tanenbaum is an adroit, behind-the-scenes operative who shuns the spotlight, focusing attention on others. He told Sports Business Journal in 2013: "I have never been a fan of ownership that tries to manage a team. The day-to-day management should be managed by the professionals. They do it 24/7."

His style was echoed by NBA Deputy Commissioner **Mark Tatum**, who said, "The approach with Larry is always thoughtful and measured. It's about getting the right people in the right positions to get things done, and then taking the reins off them so they can do just that."

Through his leadership, sports in Canada has changed dramatically, and an entire new generation of fans is being exposed to new leagues because of his efforts. He's been a pioneering leader, and he and his wife, **Judy**, have been active and generous contributors to the Toronto community, donating hundreds of millions dollars to various medical, health and social causes. Tanenbaum's vision and hands have been on every major sports initiative in Canada for more than two decades. He's done all of this without seeking any personal or public credit.

That will change in May, as Tanenbaum's respected accomplishments and style will be rightfully recognized before industry leaders. We hope you will join us in honoring Larry Tanenbaum.

Abraham Madkour can be reached at amadkour@sportsbusinessjournal.com.

SBJ/SBD PODCASTS

FIRST LOOK & BUZZCAST

Check out our **First Look podcast** every Monday where we discuss the week's top stories. Also, check out **Buzzcast** in **SportsBusiness Daily's Morning Buzz**, our daily two-minute look at the stories of the day.



The entire contents of this magazine are copyrighted by Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal 2020 with all rights reserved. Street & Smith's is a registered trademark of Leaders Group Holdings LLC. Reproduction or use, without permission, of editorial or graphic content in any manner is prohibited. Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal (ISSN-1098-5972) is published weekly, with the exception of the first week of July and the last two weeks of December, for \$306 a year by Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal, at 120 West Morehead Street, Suite 310, Charlotte, NC 28202. In Canada \$371 per year, includes GST and all other countries \$471, includes a one-year subscription and expedited air delivery (GST#139794580). Periodicals postage paid at Charlotte, NC, and additional mailing offices. Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal is a publication of Leaders Group Holdings LLC. Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal is an equal opportunity employer.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal — Subscriber Services, P.O. Box 36637, Charlotte, NC 28236-6637

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL 1-800-829-9839

For article reprints, please contact newuser@sportsbusinessjournal.com or call customer service at 1-800-829-9839.

LARRY TANENBAUM



PREVIOUS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

2009 Peter Ueberroth	2015 Dick Ebersol
2011 Billie Jean King	2016 Bud Selig
2012 Paul Tagliabue	2017 Jerry Jones
2013 Jerry Reinsdorf	2018 Michael Eisner
2014 Dan Rooney	2019 Tim Finchem

THIS WEEK

OPINION	32
FACES & PLACES . . .	33
CLOSING SHOT . . .	34

Cover image by Getty Images

OLYMPICS

9 L.A. MOTIONS

Delta's sponsorship of the 2028 L.A. Games gives the event's sales arm a strong start toward its \$2.5 billion goal.

By Ben Fischer

GOLF

10 PLACE YOUR BET

Action Network will create "GolfBet" site using PGA Tour official data gathered via ShotLink.

By John Lombardo and Bill King

TENNIS

12 OPEN TO CHANGE

In 10 years, Oracle's Larry Ellison has transformed the fan, player and sponsor experience at Indian Wells.

By Bret McCormick

MEDIA

14 STRATEGY TALK

Monumental's Zach Leonsis weighs in on using direct-to-consumer platforms to reach younger audiences.

By John Ourand

COLLEGE

20 BALLPARK BOOM

Spending on college baseball and softball facilities to be completed this year will hit a record \$256 million.

By Michael Smith



SELFIES. SWAGGER. CELEBRATION.

Street & Smith's
SBJ SPORTS
BUSINESS
JOURNAL

FORTY UNDER 40 AWARDS 2020

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2020 | MONARCH BEACH RESORT | DANA POINT, CA

WWW.FORTYUNDER40AWARDS.COM

FORTY UNDER 40 AWARDS PARTNERS



UPFRONT



The disease has caused more than 2,800 deaths, most in Asia, but the Games are still scheduled to start in Tokyo this July.

Spreading Concern

The escalation of the coronavirus has Olympics stakeholders waiting uneasily for what might come next. **BY BEN FISCHER**



LAST TUESDAY in Japan, a rumor spread quickly throughout the sports marketing business: Someone was sick with the coronavirus at Dentsu, the all-powerful advertising agency with scores of clients across Tokyo 2020's expansive advertising and sponsorship program.

By the close of business that day, media reports had confirmed that more than 5,000 Dentsu headquarters employees were ordered to telecommute until further notice, a bid to stop the spread of the virus responsible for more than 2,800 deaths, most in Asia, by last week. The news sparked a fresh round of fears that the Olympics themselves are in jeopardy, with dozens of sporting events across the continent having already been canceled and signs that the disease was sweeping across the globe.

With less than five months until the Games are scheduled to open in July, sponsors, broadcasters and their advisory firms are waiting uneasily and hoping for medical progress, multiple sources said. But there is also growing anxiety, because nobody is quite sure what a contingency plan would be.

"I think people are a little scared to start thinking through the implications of it," said one Olympics consultant working in Tokyo, asking for anonymity due to the sensitivity. "We're in a bit of a holding pattern. Everyone's trying to figure out if it's going to get worse before it gets better, or if it gets worse before it gets worse."

The sense of emerging crisis grew further on Thursday, when Japanese authorities said public schools would be closed for most of March. And while the opening ceremony isn't until July 24, the torch relay, a hallmark tradition of the Games, is scheduled to start in Fukushima on March 26 and make 47 stops across the country. Sponsors Coca-Cola, Toyota, Nippon Life and NTT Communications have spent millions to activate against it. Tokyo 2020 organizers must decide if it will go on as planned.

International travel to the Games, scheduled to end Aug. 9, has already been affected by the coronavirus scare, said one high-level Olympics sponsor executive. Even if the threat dissipates, leisure travelers are deciding now whether to go, and further international ticket sales scheduled to start in May will probably fall short of expectations.

Despite the rising concerns of the disease, any possibility of moving, delaying or canceling the Games is highly improbable at this point. Official word from Tokyo and IOC headquarters is that it's all systems go right now, and the disease would have to spread much farther than it has for those options to be in play. No other city is in position to step in on such short notice, a

delay would not work because of broadcast schedules and accommodation availability, and canceling would cost the sponsors and numerous stakeholders billions of dollars.

The only time the Games have been canceled since the birth of the modern Olympics was during World War II.

But unlike past “crises” that always emerge in the months before the Olympics, only to be minor problems in hindsight — such as terrorism in Sochi, Zika virus in Rio, or North Korean warmongering in Pyeongchang — Olympics veterans see a potential for a serious problem in Tokyo that was underscored by the Dentsu shutdown.

The stakes are immense. Sixty-six companies have paid more than \$3.1 billion for domestic rights to Tokyo 2020, and another 14 global Olympics sponsors have eyed Tokyo as a uniquely valuable Games since it was awarded to Japan in 2013. The biggest of them, such as Toyota and China-based Alibaba, will spend more than \$100 million on promotional activities and corporate guest hospitality.

Companies have about three months to make big changes to their plans, several sources said. That puts them in line with the time frame for a decision on the Olympics themselves, according to Canadian IOC member Dick Pound last Tuesday.

For now, sponsors are relying on guidance from the IOC, the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee and the World Health Organization. In some cases, sponsors’ internal Olympics working groups have begun receiving briefings from their security and procurement teams that track factors that could disrupt regular business.

Even if the Games themselves can take place as scheduled, travel bans and event cancellations are already causing problems for Olympic qualifying.

Many countries, including the U.S. in a number of sports, determine who makes their Olympic teams through a point system, awarded based on performance in a series of international competitions. China plays an outsized role in hosting many of those events, and athletes could also be prevented from leaving China to attend competitions elsewhere.

Rick Adams, chief of sport performance and national governing body services at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, has asked for information from every U.S. national governing body, hoping to gauge the full scope of the problem. Sports that have singular trials competitions closer to the Games, such as track and field, swimming and gymnastics, are less likely to be affected.

“The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] currently recommends no nonessential travel to China and we at the USOPC are fully supporting that recommendation as it relates to all Team USA athletes, as well as NGB and USOPC staff,” Adams wrote in a Jan. 30 email. “This guidance will remain in place until future notice. ... We anticipate further event cancellations over the coming weeks, so please work with your respective International Federations, event organizers, high performance teams and athletes on necessary contingency plans.”

Last Tuesday, the USOPC issued new guidance that emphasized the still-emerging nature of the risk. “We don’t yet know the full impact of the new developments on Team USA athletes and staff,” read the letter from Adams and Chief Security Officer Nicole Deal. “We have seen a significant increase in precautionary positions taken in both Japan and Korea over the past three days — along with confirmations of additional outbreaks in Italy and Iran,” the letter continues.

For now, U.S. Olympic athletes have been told to follow the CDC guidance against nonessential travel to China and South Korea. In regard to the Summer Olympics, USOPC staff said they continue to prepare “in earnest” for the Games and said, “We will take every precautionary measure necessary to keep Team USA athletes and staff safe during the Games.”

It’s already clear from the work restrictions spreading across China that this won’t be the last time an Olympics faces this global health concern. As Pound told the Associated Press, “This is the new war, and you’re going to have to face it.”

Indeed, the next front in the IOC’s battle against the coronavirus is already open: the 2022 Winter Olympics are set for Beijing. ✖



Sports in U.S. watch, wonder as drastic measures play out

BY KARN DHINGRA

AS THE Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other U.S. agencies last week warned Americans to prepare for the likely arrival and spread of the coronavirus, the sports business community approached an uncomfortable, and perhaps unavoidable, crossroads.

Sporting events bring fans together in close quarters, side by side in seats and on concourses, the very environment those trying to stem the spread of an infectious disease warn people to avoid.

The outbreak that has upended sports schedules across Asia turned

Italian soccer on its ear last week, first with the cancellation of four Serie A games in the affected region and then with the decision to play in empty stadiums.

Faced with the likelihood that the Italian government would shut down its schedule entirely in response to a virus that spreads easily, isn’t immediately detectable and sometimes leads to death, Serie A leaders successfully petitioned to instead have the games go on without fans.

Though it’s too early to predict that direction for events in the U.S., where the first case of unknown origin was reported last week, it’s a possibility that leagues and event operators should be ready to consider, public health experts said.

“The only safe way to actually have a sporting event would be not to have one,” said Regina Phelps, founder of

Emergency Management and Safety Solutions, a San Francisco-based consultancy that works with businesses on pandemic planning and crisis management. “If you stop and think about what the rules of disease transmission are, you’re talking about people that would have to be socially distanced from each other, and that would be 3 feet.

“Every time I’ve gone to an arena or a football stadium or something, you are shoulder-to-shoulder with the person next to you, and you’re pretty darn close to the person behind you and in front of you.”

Contacted last week, U.S.-based leagues all reacted similarly, saying only that they are monitoring the situation, are in contact with the CDC, and are providing guidance to teams based on the agency’s recommendations.

“We’re closely monitoring the situation,” read a statement from the NHL. “The health and safety of our players, staff and fans are our highest priorities, and we will implement all necessary safety measures as required.”

While neither the NBA nor NHL would discuss the possibility of postponing games or playing in empty arenas, the calendar makes the latter seem the more likely course. The leagues have only eight and seven weeks remaining, respectively, before the scheduled start of their playoffs. And they play in arenas that are typically heavily booked at this time of year.

At Staples Center, which is home to the Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers and Kings, there are only five open dates remaining in March and two in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

▲ The outbreak forced this FIBA Asia Cup qualifier in Taiwan on Feb. 21 to be played in an empty arena.

► UPFRONT CORONAVIRUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

April, according to the arena's published schedule.

So far the WTA and LPGA have been affected the most, a result of their global reach. The WTA canceled the Xi'an Open, which had been scheduled for April 13-19 in Xi'an, China.

The Miami Open issued a statement that it was proceeding with its plans for the tennis tournament that starts on March 23, adding: "We are working with our partner Baptist Health and following CDC guidelines closely to ensure a safe environment for everyone involved in the tournament."

The LPGA canceled all three events in its Asian swing because of health concerns and travel restrictions. League of Legends has suspended its esports league in China, but so far its world finals event is still set for the end of the year at Shanghai Stadium.

"Let's face it, you've got a huge number of people crammed into a little space, there's all kinds of inadvertent touching and so on and so forth that occurs," said Dr. David Persse, professor of emergency medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and director of the City of Houston's Emergency Medical Services.

Persse noted that past major epidemics and pandemics like MERS, SARS and Ebola in particular, were stopped with people taking basic precautions and paying attention to their personal hygiene. "What stopped those epidemics was people staying home, washing their hands, covering their cough, in particular staying home when they're ill," he said.

As of last week, more than 50 cases of the coronavirus had been confirmed in the U.S., but no deaths, based on CDC reports.

If the coronavirus spreads and evolves, Persse expects health officials to emphasize social distancing at gathering spots: "That means if you're at an office setting and you're in a meeting, try to make sure there's enough space between people so that if somebody should happen to cough or sneeze, it reduces the likelihood of the person next to them getting it. Frankly, they should be doing that now with the seasonal flu."

At the Stadium Managers Association annual conference in February in Phoenix, several MLB ballpark operators said they would likely produce in-venue PSAs reminding fans to wash their hands and stay home if they are sick.

"If a fan is worried about contracting a virus, chances are they weren't going to be heading to any large public gatherings anyway," said one sta-



dium veteran. "So I think what I would say to an arena or any venue, a convention center, anything like that is, 'Look, you need to be smart.'"

Phelps said venues should have prominent signage encouraging fans to wash their hands, and have hand sanitizer readily available. She said venues at a minimum should make sure their employees are not going into work sick. "If anybody was going to get sick and pass things around, they'd be a great candidate because they see so many people."

In many Asian countries, airports, arenas and other large gathering spots monitor the temperature of people entering the building. Venues should

even consider that drastic measure if a significant outbreak happens in the U.S., Phelps said.

"So for example, would they do temperature monitoring for any person who's coming into the arena? Just like they check your bag? It's the same idea," Phelps said. "And I'm not saying that that's what they might do, but if they're trying to stay open and there are cases in their area, you would have to say to yourself, 'How can I prove to the health department I'm creating a safe environment?'"

Phelps said if venues don't already have a crisis management process in place, they should do so immediately.

"For a sporting venue, hopefully they

have some sort of crisis-management process and whoever's running those organizations and those venues should have really good situational awareness about what's going on in your state, your region, and frankly, even the teams that might be playing there," Phelps said.

In the event of an outbreak in the U.S., teams and venues could expect to deal with local government entities on the next moves.

"Generally in the United States, local health authorities make the call to shut down a sporting event or any large mass gathering because of the risk of a communicable disease like the coronavirus poses," Persse said.

Local governments would take their cues from the CDC for how to contain an outbreak. In a worst-case scenario, Persse said, the federal government could get involved and declare martial law to force the end to large gatherings such as sporting events.

On the liability front, Lita Mello, senior vice president of facilities at K&K Insurance Group, which insures arenas and stadiums, said venues looking for coverage specifically for coronavirus would likely be unable to find it on the insurance market because it's now a pre-existing circumstance. Venues that have a communicable disease add-on to their venue cancellation insurance may or may not have coverage, another K&K executive said, based on specific scenarios spelled out in the policy.

Russ Simons, managing partner at Venue Solutions Group, a Nashville-based consultancy that advises venues on best practices, said the time for arena and stadium executives to think about how they will approach the coronavirus is now. Staffed largely by part-time workers and contractors, many of whom don't get paid when they don't work, stadium and arena managers could face a problem.

"I would say right now as an industry I don't believe we're doing a very good job of communicating expectations to our employees and making sure that they're making good decisions that don't put the rest of us at risk," Simons said. "And we're certainly not prepared to take any action."

"It's not like when it happens and all of a sudden you've got a whole bunch of employees missing, and there's an indicator there," he said. "What do you do if you don't have staff? How does that materially affect your building and how can you operate? How do you re-prioritize it?" ❌

Staff writers Bret McCormick, Bill King, Mark J. Burns, Eric Prisbell and David Broughton contributed to this report.

Top sponsors giving LA28 strong start

DELTA AIR LINES has joined Nike as the second top-tier sponsor of Los Angeles 2028, and a third one is coming close behind: Comcast is finalizing terms as well, sources said.

Fourteen months since the launch of U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Properties, the Games' sales arm, those three deals — worth at least \$200 million each — give the organizers a strong start toward their \$2.5 billion domestic sales goal, and prove that there is demand for the big-ticket deals from some corporations.

But the sheer price and scope of the offering remains a hurdle for others. Wells Fargo was closing in on a deal with USOPP in the past year for the retail banking category, but backed off after new CEO Charles Scharf came aboard in October, sources said. A deal is still possible but is at least six months away.

Wells Fargo had concerns about the price tag for the eight-year sponsorship with the main payoff still so far in the future, as well as the joint sales strategy with NBC Universal, which requires these "founding partners" to also commit to spending \$200 million on ad time. Olympic sponsors are accustomed to con-

sidering their media buy on a case-by-case basis even if the sponsorships are long-term deals.

LA28 and NBCUniversal argue that any brand interested in playing a top role in the Games should want to buy the media, so they can have both "the idea and the megaphone," in the words of USOPP CEO Kathy Carter. That may be true, but companies won't come to that conclusion easily, said Terrence Burns, executive vice president of global sports at Engine Shop.

"The astute, big brands get it, but I think there's a big education part of this for LA28 that they're going to have to undertake with potential sponsors and suppliers," Burns said.

Comcast's involvement as a sponsor is not a surprise, given its heavy commitment to the Games via subsidiary NBCUniversal's long-term rights deal. One source said the financials of the Comcast deal were agreed to as part of the NBC-LA28 sales partnership, but its precise assets still must be negotiated. This is familiar territory for NBC — consider NASCAR, where NBC Sports is a broadcaster and Comcast's Xfinity brand has naming rights to the

minor-league circuit. Back in 2005, then-NBC owner General Electric signed a global Olympics sponsorship deal to augment its media rights, a relationship that survives today, seven years after Comcast acquired the network.

The Delta deal, which is slated to be officially announced on March 2, makes the airline the first non-incumbent to strike a deal with LA28. It knocked out longtime U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee sponsor United, which decided last year to not pursue an extension after 40 years with Team USA, according to a source familiar with the company's thinking.

Experts are watching the turnover closely, because of the extraordinary escalation from the sponsorship fees charged by Team USA while they're competing in overseas Games (priced in the low-to-mid seven figures annually) to the jumbo packages that include rights to the teams at Beijing '22, Paris '24, Milan-Cortina '26 and LA '28.

United is currently paying \$4 million annually for USOPC rights, or less than 10% of what Delta will pay starting next year including both the sponsorship fee and NBC media buy. Nike and Comcast are both current USOPC sponsors.

BY BEN FISCHER
AND TERRY LEFTON

USL execs look to future as 10th season prepares to kick off

BY MARK J. BURNS

THE UNITED SOCCER LEAGUE is launching its 10th season this week with a new television deal, two expansion teams in its Championship division, and a new soccer-specific stadium in Louisville that USL President Jake Edwards called a "watershed moment" for the league.

Edwards and other senior league executives are already focused on key initiatives, though, that could grow the two-tiered league over the next five years. Among them are rounding out expansion both in the top Champions division and in the lower League One, on-boarding more soccer-specific stadiums and executing the league's most robust commercial strategy to date.

"It's about looking at the next decade and the 2026 World Cup as a good North Star within that period to accomplish a lot of the things we're working on to move this forward," said Edwards.

Edwards said there's "no magic number" for total clubs he'd like to see in each division — the Championship has 35 teams, while League One boasts 12 — but he did say he would like to see the latter approach "the upper 20s, perhaps the low 30s" in the future.

He added that the USL Championship is in possession of 10 applications from cities that would be interested in having a club, saying that "six or eight"



Expansion club El Paso Locomotive FC reached the Western Conference final last season.

of those could be approved. Among those with proposals in place are Buffalo, Des Moines, Iowa, Oakland and Providence, R.I., but an expansion club won't be awarded without the completion of a stadium project.

"I hope we can conclude that over the next three or four years, certainly before the World Cup," added Edwards of expansion. Nine clubs have come on board in the past two seasons alone.

Championship-level clubs in Indianapolis and Oklahoma City, as well as Albuquerque, N.M., of League One, are also working through their own

stadium development process. Previously, the USL team came first followed by a stadium, but in recent years that's reversed in some cases, according to Edwards.

"The size and scale of these clubs is significant enough where you can't risk it," Edwards said, now pointing to Louisville City FC and its new 11,700-seat Lynn Family Stadium that hosts its first game on Saturday. "You have to have a long-term stadium ... that blows the doors off."

The San Diego Loyal SC, co-owned by longtime U.S. star Landon Dono-

van, and Miami FC are joining the Championship this year. As part of a three-year deal with ESPN announced last August, there will be 18 regular-season games from the Championship each year that will air on ESPN2, ESPNEWS, ESPNU or ESPN Deportes, as well as the USL Championship Final. All other games will be streamed live on ESPN+.

The league doesn't have any existing sponsors but is now in the first full season of a new long-term agreement with Premier Partnerships, which is currently selling league-wide sponsorships. The Santa Monica-based agency is also selling presenting and title

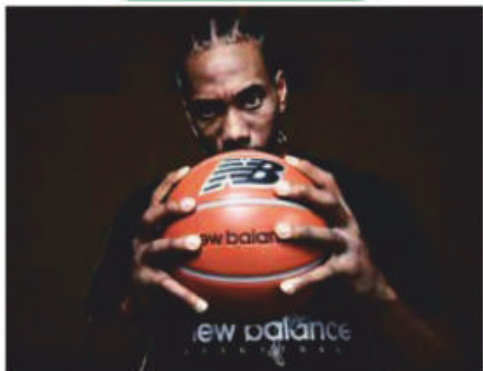
sponsorship deals. USL Executive Vice President Court Jeske said the league has a blank slate, meaning sponsors could be exclusive to the league and those that do a USL deal might be able to opt into specific club agreements. He said that the USL isn't entertaining deals for fewer than three years.

"The last decade has been focused on growing the league, growing the footprint of the league and raising the quality of clubs we have," Jeske said. "Now, we're at the inflection point where we need to commercialize what we've built."

The Market

A MEASURED LOOK
AT THIS WEEK'S
HOLDINGS

BUY



BALANCE OF POWER

New Balance's longtime ad campaign was "Endorsed By No One" and the brand was a non-factor in basketball. Then it signed perennial All-Star Kawhi Leonard in 2018 and last week it announced a new deal to be an official marketing partner with the NBA. Leonard's star power and the likelihood he'll get plenty of air time during the upcoming playoffs should be a big boost to the company.

SELL

SINCLAIR
BROADCAST GROUP

SIN BIN

Ever since **Sinclair** agreed to buy the Fox Sports-branded RSNs last year, it has been dropped by Dish Network and, as of last week, YouTube TV. The local channel that it launched last week with the Cubs still hasn't been able to work out a deal with Comcast, owner of Chicago's biggest cable system. Sinclair's executives could not have foreseen these carriage problems happening all at once.

HOLD



NEW MAN IN MOUSE HOUSE

Disney CEO Bob Iger stepped aside last week and handed the reins to **Bob Chapek**, a surprising move and one without a clear sense of what it could mean for ESPN. Chapek and ESPN President Jimmy Pitaro have a long-standing relationship. But the cord-cutting issues that have plagued ESPN for the past several years still aren't going away.



Data looking at such things as a player's average performance on a specific hole will guide bets that are offered and placed.

PGA Tour sees Action Network deal as way to ignite betting

BY JOHN LOMBARDO AND BILL KING

THE PGA TOUR will provide proprietary data gathered through its ShotLink technology to the gambling-focused Action Network website in a first-of-its-kind content deal that aims to drive interest in golf betting.

Using PGA Tour data, Action Network will create a "GolfBet" branded area on the site, with the goal of attracting avid golf fans and getting the site's audience of hardcore sports bettors to start wagering on golf. Along with data, Action Network gets rights to use PGA Tour video in the U.S., though not streamed live. GolfBet will not carry PGA Tour branding, at least at its launch.

"We want to provide a deep and rich content experience for fans who are just learning about betting on golf or for a more advanced bettor to have the tools to make informed decisions," said Norb Gambuzza, senior vice president of media and gaming for the PGA Tour. "We want to not just present data but also work on the development of data tools and enhance the functionality."

Consumers will not be able to place bets on Action Network's site. Instead, working with PGA Tour data, Action Network aims to help bettors make a wider variety of bets on golf elsewhere in real time by providing information on player performance on certain holes at specific courses and tournaments.

"If you want to experiment with different players on different courses,

and how they perform in certain conditions," Gambuzza said, "that functionality would be really compelling content from our perspective."

Golf largely has been ignored by bettors because wagering opportunities typically were limited to who would win a tournament, where a player would place and who would win a head-to-head matchup. But the PGA Tour hopes that the emergence of in-play betting, allowing for bets on the outcome on any single hole, or even any given shot, will ignite interest.

"It's a sport that is conducive to betting. There are so many variables that it made a lot of sense. We realized that golf is integral to the experience on our platform."

Working with betting data distributor IMG Arena, the tour has developed a product that will integrate the live ShotLink feed with historical data to help sportsbooks set odds on players on individual holes and shots and to resolve bets in real-time.

Action Network will use some of those same components to create predictive products for its premium users.

"It's a sport that is conducive to bet-

ting," said Patrick Keane, CEO of Action Network. "There are so many variables that it made a lot of sense. We realized that golf is integral to the experience on our platform."

Gambuzza would not disclose financial terms of the deal, which is tied in length to the tour's media deals that end in 2021.

"The betting space is a topic of significant interest with all of our media partners," Gambuzza said. "Having this deal sync up with our media deal was important."

Partnering with Action Network allows the tour to avoid the lengthy, costly effort to create a similar product on its own PGATour.com site, Gambuzza said. It also gives the tour a degree of separation from a service that helps users bet on its events.

The tour's gambling content deal with Action Network is the latest component of its betting strategy that began in 2017 with a deal for an integrity program with Genius Sports followed by a deal with IMG Arena to license its official, live scoring data to international betting operators that begins later this year.

"We're going to give [Action Network] video, give them data, collaborate on functionality and push fans there," Gambuzza said. "We're going to talk about Action Network content on our digital platforms and social platforms. But we've got to do that in a matter that is not obtrusive or too direct or in our fans' faces. We're going to wade into the pool instead of jumping in, and experiment a bit."

USGA elevates marketing efforts around U.S. Open

THE USGA IS ROLLING OUT a new “From Many, One” branding effort around the U.S. Open to boost fan engagement during the organization’s premier event.

The branding platform includes a broad year-round ad campaign in support of the “From Many, One” tag along with videos, testimonials and social media content on USGA digital and social outlets that will document golfers’ experiences at the U.S. Open.

“As our biggest brand, it is important to invest in the growth and the development of the U.S. Open,” said Craig Annis, who in January was named chief brand officer of the USGA. “We want to strengthen the brand. The goal is to develop the brand platform to drive audiences to attend and to watch.”

Typically, the USGA’s marketing around the U.S. Open has been held only

during the few weeks leading up to the tournament and targeted mainly around the host market of the event. This year’s U.S. Open is set for June 18-21 at Winged Foot Golf Club in New York. The new campaign aims to create a dialogue on a year-round basis, Annis said.

BY JOHN
LOMBARDO

The branding campaign includes a series of spots, some featuring actor Don Cheadle in a “E Pluribus Unum, Baby” spot that looks at the U.S. Open from the perspective of a viewer watching

players from past tournaments struggle and finally win.

“The idea is to showcase the human spirit and triumph and to connect people more emotionally to the brand,” Annis said. “Our goal is to cut through the sameness through our creative.”

So why Cheadle? “He loves golf and he has the swagger and attitude,” Annis said.



The new year-round campaign touts the event, which generates \$165 million.

The effort to grow the U.S. Open brand is critical given that the event, one of golf’s four majors, generates \$165 million, or about 75% of the USGA’s total annual revenue. The USGA makes about \$70 million in profit from the U.S. Open, which funds the 15 other USGA championships, including the U.S. Women’s Open, and other USGA initiatives such as youth golf programs and golf course sustainability efforts.

The USGA hired Los Angeles-based Zambezi as the agency of record on the new branding work.

The USGA unveiled the campaign at its annual meeting on Feb. 29. The spots began running Sunday on the Golf Channel with extensive print, digital and broadcast buys to follow. Media buys also will be aimed at networks airing tournaments leading up to this year’s U.S. Open.

“We will be in as many outlets as we can,” Annis said. “It’s a 360-degree approach and we will continue to build. You will see a consistent level of engagement across all channels. This is more than a tagline, it is a storytelling platform.”

Bryant memorial another test for Staples Center logistics

BY KARN DHINGRA

STAPLES CENTER has been the site of remembrances for pop icon Michael Jackson, Lakers play-by-play announcer Chick Hearn, Grammy Awards producer John Cossette, Grammy-nominated hip-hop star Nipsey Hussle, and now Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna.

Each had its own unique logistical challenges.

“As somebody who’s been doing this for almost 35 years now, both at the Forum and at Staples Center, there is no blueprint,” said Staples Center President Lee Zeidman. “There is no book you can read on how to handle these types of events.”

In 2009, Staples Center had to deal with hosting the Ringling Brothers Circus while putting together Jackson’s memorial. In 2019, Hussle’s memorial was followed by a 25-mile procession from downtown through the rapper’s South Los Angeles neighborhood.

As soon as Feb. 24 was selected for the memorial service for Bryant and his daughter, Zeidman looked to the calendar and started working out how best to weave the event into one of the busiest arenas in the nation. Nearly 20,000 fans and VIPs would attend.

The Thursday preceding the Bryant memorial, Staples Center hosted a Los Angeles Kings hockey game. The next day, Friday, had a Lakers game.

Saturday featured a doubleheader with the Clippers and Kings, where the basketball court had to be converted into an ice hockey rink for a game that evening. On Sunday, a day before the memorial, Staples Center hosted a Lakers and Kings doubleheader. A Clippers game was scheduled the same day, several hours after the memorial.

The packed schedule left no time to rehearse for the Bryant memorial or test floor configurations. “That said, everything came together,” Zeidman said. “We did everything off of our calves and we did everything off of how we’ve operated the building over the last 21 years.”

All told, Staples Center hosted eight events in five days that were attended by a total of more than 160,000 people, including the Bryant memorial.

The day of the memorial presented challenges as well, as Zeidman and his team were tasked by the Bryant family and the Lakers with putting as many Angelenos into Staples Center as possible.

“So we came up with doing it in the round,” Zeidman said. “Now doing it in the round gave us two great advantages. A, we could put 20,000 people in the building versus 18,000 or 19,000 for a basketball game depending on the setup. And B, it allowed us to convert the building over much quicker because we didn’t have to worry about an end-zone stage or sound and lights hanging over an end-zone stage,

and it would allow us to be ready for the Clipper game no later than 3 p.m. that afternoon as well.”

Ticketing to the memorial was coordinated by the Lakers with the approval of the Bryant family. Ticketmaster handled the ticketing, which was mostly distributed digitally. Tickets were sold for \$224 for the lower bowl, and \$24.02 for the upper bowl, with proceeds benefiting the Bryants’ Mamba & Mambacita Sports Foundation.

“We had no ticket issues or challenges on the day of the event, which is pretty phenomenal for something that went on sale so quickly and was pretty much all mobile ticketing, sans a few thousand that were commemorative tickets for family and friends,” Zeidman said.

With the number of VIPs that attended the memorial, Staples Center set up two areas with direction from the Bryant family and the Lakers. One area was a ramp coming down out of the venue’s main tunnel, where dignitaries, NBA players, friends and family entered the building. Another VIP entrance was set up at the southwest part of the venue, which leads into Staples Center’s suite levels.

To help limit crowds outside the building, officials encouraged people without tickets to stay away, and restricted vendors who tried to sell merchandise. Video of the ceremony was not shown outside, to further discourage unticketed onlookers.



Indian Wells' innovation a slam for players, fans

BY BRET MCCORMICK

MINUTES AFTER RAFAEL NADAL WON the 2013 BNP Paribas Open men's singles tennis title, earthmovers rumbled into action on the other side of the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, the initial steps in a major 50-week project to build an 8,000-seat Stadium 2 just in time for the next year's tournament.

As Nadal celebrated, images of the construction equipment flashed onto the big screens in the stadium.

"That was a 'you have to come back next year' moment," said BNP Paribas Open Chief Operating Officer Steve Birdwell.

For the desert tennis oasis in Southern California, the past decade has had plenty of these moments under the ownership of Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, whose estimated wealth of \$65 billion makes him one of the 10 richest people in the world according to Forbes. He bought the dual ATP-WTA BNP Paribas Open and the (now) 150-plus-acre Indian Wells Tennis Garden for \$100 million in late 2009. This year's tournament, starting on March 11, offers a chance to look back at 10 editions of an event characterized by ceaseless innovation and improvement.

"I think everything has changed in the 10 years," said Birdwell.

Indian Wells has become the world's premier non-Grand Slam tennis tournament during Ellison's tenure. WTA and ATP players have voted the BNP Paribas Open tournament of the year in both the premier mandatory and Masters 1000 categories six straight times, and its attendance has recently flirted with the 500,000-mark, a barrier historically reserved for the four Slams.

Consistently improving the experience of sponsors, players and fans has been the impetus under Ellison. His resources and willingness to invest in the Tennis Garden turned many fan comfort ideas into realities: shortening food concession lines by expanding dining options; adding more restrooms and hundreds of palm trees and shade structures on-site; and increasing parking acreage.

Other tournaments had already incorporated fine dining into the tennis tournament experience, but Indian Wells took that concept a step further. When tournament organizers first raised the idea of bringing a restaurant on-site in 2013, "Larry talked about a Nobu on-site," said Steve Simon, who worked at the BNP Paribas Open for 25 years before becoming the WTA's CEO in 2015. "Then he talked about a Wolfgang Puck [concept restaurant] on-site. He definitely had very, very high visions and knew that he could deliver against it, and I think you've seen the results."

SETTING THE BAR

Improvements and innovation at Indian Wells under Larry Ellison's ownership:

■ **INFRASTRUCTURE** — Renovation of Stadium 1; increases in parking, restrooms and Wi-Fi capacity.

■ **SETTING** — Added 500 palm trees and several giant shade structures around the grounds.

■ **PLAYER EXPERIENCE** — Use of Hawk-Eye line-calling technology on every court, the only tournament in the world to do so; equal prize money paid to women's and men's singles champs; improved player food options.

■ **FAN EXPERIENCE** — Added three permanent restaurants in new Stadium 2, including a Nobu overlooking live tennis action.

Indian Wells Tennis Garden's beautiful desert setting near Palm Springs and state-of-the-art facilities make the BNP Paribas Open both a fan and player favorite each March.

The tournament not only built a permanent Nobu restaurant but incorporated it and two other restaurants into Stadium 2's construction in a way that allows patrons to overlook the court and watch tennis while they nibble on oysters with wasabi salsa or black cod with miso. Indian Wells is a rarity in the pro tennis world, where fans can sit in a permanent — and public — restaurant overlooking live action.

Players were not left out of the changes. Birdwell said the tournament has improved the players' lounge and dining options at least two times each since Ellison took ownership. Indian Wells installed Hawk-Eye line-calling technology on all of its courts — the only event in the world to do so — and it was the first dual ATP-WTA tournament to offer equal prize money to its men's and women's singles champs.

"They really do love coming to the BNP Paribas Open," said tournament director Tommy Haas, a former top player himself. "The proof is in the players from both tours voting us tournament of the year six years in a row. They see our unwavering commitment to making their experience world-class, and that matters a lot to them."

For European sponsors like BNP Paribas, which has a California-based affiliate named Bank of the West, the tournament leads to increased brand recognition in the United States. And the Instagram-worthy mountainous backdrop provides a perfect setting for hosting and impressing clients. Jean-Yves Fillion, CEO of BNP Paribas USA and chairman of CIB Americas, said that BNP Paribas and Bank of the West host around 2,000 North American and Latin American clients during the tournament's two weeks. The French bank, one of tennis' top overall backers, first sponsored the Indian Wells tournament in 2009 and extended its title sponsorship in 2018 for five more years.

"Twelve years ago, the tournament was a very good tournament," said Fillion. "I think what we managed to do was take it from good to great. And if we continue to work so well together then we have to move forward."

Peggy Michel, BNP Paribas Open vice president of sales, said the tournament's focus on providing excellent service began with former owner/operator Charlie Pasarell and has been maintained under Ellison's ownership. Pasarell told Michel to never tell a sponsor "no."

"You have to take care of your sponsors, you have to take care of your players, and you have to take care of your patrons," said Michel.

Birdwell said there are no major projects on the tournament's list at the moment, including no plans for construction of a third major stadium that had been mentioned in previous years.

The two-year renovation of Stadium 1, the second largest tennis-specific stadium in the world, crossed a huge item off the to-do list in 2017. BNP Paribas Open single-session capacity has grown from 30,450 in 2010 to 43,220 for this year's event, while total attendance in 2019 (a tournament record 475,372) is up 40% from 2010 (339,657). With so much room for fans, players and sponsors, the focus more than ever is squarely on continuing to enhance each unique group's experience.

"We're not done innovating," said Birdwell. "The crew here really, really thrives on it."



MAY 20th IN NYC
IS THE
SPORTS INDUSTRY'S
Time to Shine

DON'T BE LEFT ALONE IN THE DARK, VISIT
WWW.SPORTS-BUSINESS-AWARDS.COM



SPORTS BUSINESS
AWARDS 2020

PARTNERS



BELLAGIO® ARIA® MGM GRAND® Mandalay Bay® THE MIRAGE®



T E A L L
C A P I T A L



▶ THE INSIDERS



Leonsis told me the challenge is figuring out the right level of direct-to-consumer services without disrupting other local media deals.

SPORTS MEDIA

Monumental's Zach Leonsis outlines company's strategy for reaching younger audiences

THE NBA CAN point to a lot of legitimate on-court reasons for why its ratings are down double digits so far this season — from star players missing games to poor early-season TV scheduling that featured teams not playing well.

But whenever I've heard NBA Commissioner **Adam Silver** address those ratings this season, he's been

focused on another aspect — one that shows how quickly the media business is changing. In public appearances this season, Silver has brought up the fact that the league's core fan base — the younger demographics — are disconnecting from pay television in record numbers.

During a recent interview with **Monumental Sports & Entertainment's Zach Leonsis**, I

asked what he was doing to get the Washington Wizards and Capitals in front of those younger audiences. During a keynote presentation at a Feb. 21 Sports Industry Networking & Career Conference in Washington, D.C., Leonsis brought up Monumental's social channels, saying he tries "to leverage

them as much as we can."

But like Silver, Leonsis also talked about the promise of direct-to-consumer platforms to get those young fans. The problem is in figuring out how much to use those direct-to-consumer services — the ones untethered to cable and satellite systems.

"It's a difficult and very delicate dance because the cable bundle and the cable model is still very, very strong," Leonsis said. "It's a great value for

consumers and a great business for teams and leagues. Rocking the boat on affiliate deals for major providers like **Xfinity** or **DirecTV** or **Dish Network** can backfire."

When asked about the possibility of teams putting games on a direct-to-consumer service, one RSN executive said it was theoretically possible. But there would be a financial penalty: RSNs would pay a lot less for rights that aren't exclusive to their channel and their own authenticated services.

Leonsis, who runs Monumental's direct-to-consumer service, preached a go-slow approach, saying a rush to direct-to-consumer is not in any league's best interest.

"I worry a little bit about getting ahead of ourselves and thinking that we're going to go all direct-to-consumer right off the bat," he said. "We'll find more of a symbiotic ecosystem between linear and digital."

He pointed to the launch of **Disney+** and **ESPN+** as a blueprint for media companies to build a secondary subscriber base as the traditional pay TV system continues to lose subs. The experience is similar to his **Monumental Sports Network**, a local direct-to-consumer service that launched four years ago and shows Mystics, Capital City GoGo and D.C.-area high school games.

"A direct-to-consumer relationship is far more valuable than a disintermediated one where the network doesn't have any relationship with their viewers," Leonsis said. "When viewers churn out, there's no prospect to retarget them or try to win them back as customers."

"We've learned a lot about what keeps a customer engaged, what kind of video people watch, how to acquire users, how people use different apps for web services, how many people watch, how to convert people from social into a paid bundle. We talk about Monumental Sports Network as a petri dish sometimes."

John Ourand can be reached at jourand@sports-businessjournal.com. Follow him on Twitter @Ourand_SBJ and read his twice-weekly newsletter.



BY JOHN OURAND

Could arena become go-to place for March Madness betting?

I HAVE FRIENDS who make annual trips to Las Vegas for the first two rounds of March Madness. They sit in a sportsbook, make bets and watch the games. I've never been, but they all rave about the experience.

Monumental Sports' Zach Leonsis believes Washington's Capital One Arena could, eventually, become a similar go-to place for locals who can't travel all the way to Vegas, especially after William Hill opens a sportsbook in the arena later this year.

I'll let Leonsis explain: "We are busy practically 250 nights per year. But those nights take place between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. We have offices in Capital One Arena. I go out to the concourse level in the middle of the day, and you can hear a pin drop. It's a 20,000-person building that's totally empty."

"Why can't we think about opportunities to open up the building during the day for viewing parties? I can imagine a day when we have March Madness happening, and the sportsbook is packed and we open up the doors to the arena bowl. We open up, maybe, one of the end zones, and you have 2,000 people watching the March Madness games and renting out suites."

"People really like communal experiences. That's really difficult to replace." — **J.O.**

Fox alum Pierce starts advisory firm

FORMER FOX SPORTS executive Clark Pierce has put out his own shingle, starting an advisory firm called Emerging Media Technologies.

As senior vice president of TV Every-

where, Pierce was the architect of Fox Sports' direct-to-consumer strategy. He left Fox last May and quietly picked up a roster of clients including the Big East Conference, tech startup videoflow.io and

media technology services firm iX.

Pierce tells me that he advises companies on their streaming and digital strategies. — **J.O.**

**GEOGRAPHIC
SPONSORSHIP
BREAKDOWN**



CURATED NEWS
FROM THE INDUSTRY VOICE



10 YEARS
OF ATTENDANCE
DATA FOR THE
BIG 5

9K **CONTRACT RELATIONSHIPS**
ENDORSEMENTS + ATHLETE/AGENCY DEALS

MORE THAN 20,000 CONTACTS



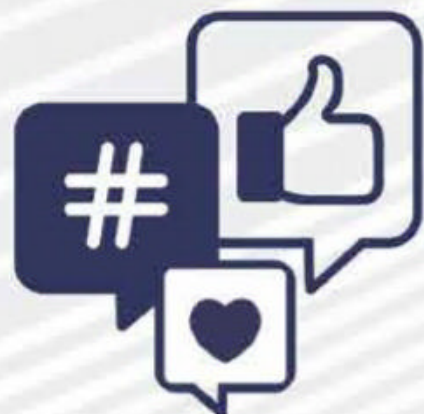
**INDUSTRY LEADING
DATA PARTNERS**



coming soon



coming soon



**SOCIAL MEDIA
METRICS FOR
ATHLETES
BRANDS
+ TEAMS**

**INTUITIVE
INTERFACE**

**PERSONALIZED
DASHBOARD**

**INTERACTIVE
LISTINGS**

Find out how SportsAtlas can
help your business make more
lucrative deals and partnerships
in the sports industry.

REQUEST A DEMO AT [SPORTSATLAS.COM](https://sportsatlas.com)



SportsAtlas

▶ PORTFOLIO SPORTS MEDIA



LEFT: The day before the game, **Jay Bilas** appears on “PTI” to discuss a comment Duke coach **Mike Krzyzewski** made about leadership in college basketball.
BELOW: Bilas joins the rest of the “College GameDay” team, **Rece Davis** (left), **LaPhonso Ellis** and **Seth Greenberg**.

On Tobacco Road With Jay Bilas

It was a fast-break couple of days as the ESPN college basketball analyst prepped for Round 1 of the Duke-North Carolina rivalry, one the former Blue Devil knows well.

IT’S JUST AFTER NOON on Friday, Feb. 7, at the Dean E. Smith Center on the campus of the University of North Carolina and Jay Bilas is sipping from a slender can of flavored Perrier while opining on the misguided actions of the NCAA. At the moment, he’s hammering college sports’ governing body over its disdain for one-and-done men’s basketball players, standouts who head for the NBA after their freshman year.

BY ERIK SPANBERG

This off-air commentary is not at all different from what he will say on camera — why send the message that building a relationship between a player and a college is bad just because it’s not for four years? — the following day.

Bilas, ESPN’s lead college basketball analyst, is surrounded by his on-air colleagues — anchor Rece Davis, former Virginia Tech coach Seth Greenberg and former Notre Dame standout and NBA veteran LaPhonso Ellis — and the production team behind the network’s traveling pregame show, “College GameDay.”

They’re in Chapel Hill for ESPN’s Feb. 8 broadcast of the latest installment in the Duke-North Carolina rivalry, the first of two regular-season meetings, the second of which is on Saturday. Bilas, as is typical of his winter weekends, will co-star in the hourlong “GameDay” telecast at 11 a.m. and then join play-by-play voice



Dan Shulman courtside to call the headline game of the day.

Davis and Bilas have been constants on the basketball version of “GameDay” for 16 years. Greenberg joined in 2014 and Ellis is a rookie this season, replacing Jay Williams, who moved full-time to ESPN’s NBA coverage.

They’re gathered in the bowels of the Smith Center, where the UNC swimming and diving meeting room has been converted into a temporary “GameDay” headquarters. At any given time, 16 or 17 people fill the room, many gathered around a couple of rectangular tables pushed together, with others scattered on short sofas.

They pick at salads in plastic bowls and snack while running through topics and segments for the next day’s show from the court at the Smith Center. Everyone agrees social media as a source of the constant pressure and scrutiny players face is an important issue to be discussed. A rundown of likely top bracket seeds, a weekly feature, is reviewed. And there is mention of

Coach K's advice: 'Don't take special for granted.'

JAY BILAS knows he has a great job. ESPN's lead college basketball analyst says the only part of his job that he considers to be work is the travel.

Even so, Bilas gained a bit of insight from his former college coach, Duke's Mike Krzyzewski, a few years ago when Krzyzewski was coaching the USA Basketball men's team.

That summer, Bilas was in Las Vegas where Team USA was training, and Krzyzewski invited him to a team meeting. He sat in the back while Coach K addressed a roomful of the world's greatest players.

"At the end of the meeting, [Krzyzewski] says, 'OK, when you guys get back to your rooms, there's going to be something waiting. It's gonna be your USA jersey. I want you to do something: I want you to take the jersey and I want you to just lay it on the bed and think about how cool this is.' And he said something I've never forgotten. He said, 'We get to do some really cool things. And if you're not careful, you can start to think that this is routine. It's not routine.' And he said, 'Don't take special for granted.'"

Bilas applies that message to his college basketball assignments.

"I get to go to Cameron [Indoor Stadium at Duke] or Allen Fieldhouse [at Kansas] or the Smith Center and I'm at the Duke-Carolina game. So when I walk into these arenas now, you're kind of looking around going, 'This is what I've always wanted to do and I get to do it. Don't take it for granted.'" — **E.S.**



Coach **Mike Krzyzewski** told Team USA to savor the moment.

a potential snag that may prevent the teams from donning specially designed Nike uniforms — throwbacks celebrating the schools' first meeting in 1920 — as planned. (The uniforms lack the required jersey numbers on the front, but are ultimately allowed by the NCAA.)

FRIDAY, FEB. 7 1:04 P.M.

As the meeting ends, Bilas offers a pronouncement on the sentiment heading into Saturday's game the next day. "We feel like we always feel — like this is our last show."

1:05 P.M.

Eric Montross, a Tar Heels radio analyst who was the starting center on UNC's 1993 national championship team, ambles in to tape an interview with Bilas for ESPN's ACC Network show "Bald Men on Campus."

Bilas, as college basketball fans know, played for Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski in the mid-1980s, when Coach K was in the early stages of building what has become one of the sport's greatest dynasties. Between those long-ago playing days, a role as a grad assistant under Krzyzewski in the early-1990s and what's now a 25-year career at ESPN, Bilas knows just about everyone in college basketball, particularly in the ACC.

The shoot is scheduled for 1:30, but Montross and Bilas are happy to have a few extra minutes to catch up on family and basketball.

1:07 P.M.

Before Bilas and Montross can head for the custom studio inside the "GameDay"-wrapped bus parked outside the arena, Bilas first must pass inspection.

He heads for a chair in the corner of the room, where he puts on a haircut cape while simultaneously holding court with Montross, makeup artist Trish Ferguson and an SBJ reporter. She trims his sideburns, grooms his ears and looks for anything out of place.

Only Davis among the on-air crew sports a full head of hair; baldness is an endless source of amusement. Thus the instant volleys about the cape being superfluous. Bilas, despite Ferguson's makeup brush zipping and zagging across his face, never stops talking, lobbing a steady barrage of zingers and self-deprecating darts before escaping the chair.

By 1:15, Montross and Bilas are on the arena elevator and taking a short stroll from the exit to the "GameDay" bus. The back half of the bus is a mobile studio where, among other things, the newly launched "Bald Men on Campus" is

Former Tar Heel **Eric Montross** stops in for a taping of "Bald Men on Campus."



filmed as part of the 8-week "GameDay" schedule. It airs on ACC Network on Fridays at 9 p.m.

Crew members adjust microphone levels and camera angles, and talk back and forth with remote producers while Bilas, who is 6-foot-8, and Montross, who is 7-0, fold themselves into chairs in tight quarters while trying to look comfortable.

Some of the best moments of their conversation are off-hand observations made before the interview begins. Montross mentions "the thing that no Carolina fans wants to know" is that, in the late 1990s, while playing in the NBA for the Detroit Pistons, former Duke nemesis Christian Laettner was traded to the team and "it was like we had been teammates the whole time."

Montross' anecdote triggers Bilas' memory. He was on the Duke coaching staff when Laettner led the Blue Devils to consecutive national championships in 1991 and '92. He recalls playing tennis with Laettner and the 6-11 center's graceful athleticism. As a diversion at practice, Laettner would walk the length of the court, baseline to baseline, on his hands.

"The two things that were craziest that I remember seeing were [Laettner] doing that and Kevin Love could stand underneath one basket to the side where you inbound the ball and chest pass the ball into the other basket," Bilas tells Montross.

Love, now in his 12th season in the NBA, was in his first and only season at UCLA in 2007-08 when Bilas attended a practice while on assignment for ESPN. As practice ended, then-UCLA coach Ben Howland off-handedly mentioned Love's court-length feat to Bilas, who scoffed. Howland tapped a manager to ask Love to return to the court, where Love proceeded to sink six of 10 court-length shots with chest passes.

As the interview ends, Bilas thanks Montross "because you've made great choices in your life. Not only the choice to attend the University of North Carolina, play for Dean Smith, but the choice to come on this show. And the choice to be bald. Because for you it is a choice. You could have hair on top of your head if you wanted. For some of us, it's not a choice."

2:27 P.M.

Anybody who follows Bilas on Twitter knows his routine of quoting lyrics by rapper Jeezy (who later name-checked Bilas in a song). He also wields that platform as a way of calling out what he views as NCAA hypocrisy. In 2013, as former UCLA basketball star Ed O'Bannon fought the NCAA

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

► PORTFOLIO SPORTS MEDIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

in court over what has come to be known as name-image-likeness compensation, Bilas posted a series of tweets showing that by entering the names of then-active college football stars Tajh Boyd, Jadeveon Clowney and Johnny Manziel in a Google search, their respective jerseys would appear for sale on the ShopNCAA online store. That exercise cut through the NCAA's long-running argument that any connection between jerseys featuring a particular number were not being sold to capitalize on the popularity of a specific player.

Bilas remains busy on Twitter, but his daughter, Tori — who was a “Game-Day” runner while in school at Duke — encouraged him to up his social media game by seeking student expertise each weekend. At North Carolina, it comes from Carrigan Bain, a grad student in the sports administration master's program. She's compiling bits and clips for stories on Instagram (a clip of his grooming session with Ferguson is accompanied by Bilas' greeting to the stylist: “She does this to torture me”). Bain and Krista Meyers, who is on a separate social media mission for ACC Network, follow the crew to and from various shoots.

Meyers asks Bilas, Ellis and Greenberg to shoot a quick segment walking down the front steps outside the Smith Center for an online promo — an assignment Bilas improvises by pretending to stumble halfway down without losing control of his ever-present Starbucks coffee cup. She asks for an encore to make sure everything looks good and, with that, it's back inside the arena.

2:33 P.M.

Next, Bilas heads to the media room, where a small gaggle of reporters asks him why the Tar Heels are struggling (North Carolina entered the Feb. 8 game unranked with a 10-12 record, while Duke was No. 7 at 19-3), who could be coach Roy Williams' heir apparent (Bilas can't fathom the idea) and how players should weigh whether to declare for the NBA draft.

3-4 P.M.

One of Bilas' favorite aspects of his job is watching the home team practice the day before the game. Williams, who was an assistant under Dean Smith from 1978 to 1988, hews to his late mentor's basketball principles. Or, as Bilas puts it, “They have been running practice here the same way for 40 years now.” Bilas is eager to watch how the Tar Heels put their tallest players through the paces: “The way they coach and teach their big



Bilas, Greenberg and Ellis shared a pregame laugh with UNC head coach **Roy Williams** as the countdown to the game continued.

guys is the best I've ever seen.”

4:05 P.M.

Bilas leaves practice so he can appear on “PTI.” Co-hosts Frank Isola and Tony Kornheiser quiz him about Coach K's recent comments that college basketball lacks a true voice. With his calm and considered approach, his decades spent around the game as a player, coach, TV analyst and parent of a player — his son Anthony was a walk-on at Wake Forest — Bilas is frequently mentioned as a possible college basketball commissioner, should such a role ever exist. As for Krzyzewski's remarks, “I think what he was talking about was the overall leadership not

only in the game, but I think it extends to college athletics, period. That's the biggest problem I have. Football was taken away from the NCAA years ago and it's very healthy and I think those two things are related. ...”

5:30 P.M.

Back in the temporary ESPN headquarters in the swimming and diving meeting room, Bilas sits for a 70-minute interview with SBJ. Over the past seven days, he has been part of “Game-Day” at Auburn on Feb. 1, called the Auburn-Kentucky game the same night, and then gone on to Allen Fieldhouse for Texas-Kansas (Feb. 3) and Crisler Center in Ann Arbor for Ohio

State-Michigan the following night. Forty-eight hours later, he arrived in Chapel Hill. All of which is manageable, he says, because Erin Knight, the production manager, knows how to make the trains run on time. “Erin's theory is these guys will shut up if they're caffeinated and fed,” he says, hoisting a cup of coffee in salute. “We're like zoo animals.”

7:30-9:45 P.M.

Because this game is so close for Bilas — a 2-½-hour drive from his Charlotte home — his wife, Wendy, has joined him for the weekend. They parked their dog at the Barker Lounge on Friday morning and then drove to

Bilas takes a shot at picking his top spots

AFTER 25 YEARS as a college basketball analyst at ESPN, Jay Bilas, like Johnny Cash before him, has been everywhere, man. Well, almost.

He may or may not have toted a pack along the dusty Winnemucca road, but, in February, Bilas checked off a new entry when he called his first game at Auburn. A week after his trip to the Plains of Alabama, Bilas still smiles over finding a college basketball venue he had never before visited.

At least two more rank high on his to-do list: Oregon's Matthew Knight

Arena in Eugene and The Pit in Albuquerque, home of the New Mexico Lobos.

As for the many places he has been, his all-time favorite is Allen Fieldhouse at the University of Kansas. When the court is named for the game's inventor, James Naismith, and the crowd chants “Rock chalk, Jayhawk, KU,” what's not to like?

Other standouts for Bilas include Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium, Indiana's Assembly Hall, Michigan State's Breslin Student Events Center, Arizona's McKale Center, The Palestra in Philadelphia (“That's like Wrigley Field”), Kentucky's Rupp Arena (“They bring ice cream

to you, which is a great buttering-up exercise”) and the Carrier Dome at Syracuse, among others.

West Virginia's WVU Coliseum in Morgantown left a particularly strong impression.

Years ago, during Bilas' first broadcast from that arena, he was doing an on-court, stand-up segment just before tipoff when the buckskin-garbed Mountaineer mascot appeared nearby and performed his pregame ritual: firing a powder rifle.

“I almost soiled myself,” Bilas said. “I had no idea that was going to happen. I have my Depends on now every time I do a game in Morgantown.” —E.S.



Bilas and play-by-play voice **Dan Shulman** called another classic UNC-Duke game.

Chapel Hill.

Both Bilases are part of the night before “GameDay” dinner, a group outing to the City Kitchen brasserie that includes on-air teammates Davis, Greenberg and Ellis, plus game producer Jeff Dufine and Bilas’ Instagram mentor, Carrigan Bain.

10 P.M.-MIDNIGHT

Bilas retreats to his hotel room for more “GameDay” and Duke-UNC prep.

SATURDAY, FEB. 8 8 A.M.

The “GameDay” crew returns to their swimming and diving headquarters at the bottom of the Smith Center for a final rundown of the 11 a.m. show. Between now and then, they will take turns going back and forth to the on-court set, where they will appear on various editions of “SportsCenter” to preview the day of basketball ahead.

9:27 A.M.

The Smith Center doors open for students and other fans, providing the live audience backdrop that gives “GameDay” its energy. Students thunder down the arena steps to get the seats nearest the court. They have signs at the ready — “Coach K Eats Raw Spaghetti” reads one — and many wear State Farm giveaway “hats” that resemble an upside down rim and basketball net.

9:30 A.M.

Gone, for the on-air crew, are the sweaters and casual wear of Friday, replaced by suits or, at minimum, shirt and tie. No matter the ensemble, it’s invariably completed with sneakers.

Geoff Brown, the “GameDay” producer, is most definitely not wearing a suit, but Bilas and others have de-

cided he should be. Brown beams: “Jay’s gonna buy me a suit.”

With yet another Starbucks in hand, Bilas begins pondering what might be — wait for it — suitable. Davis references the old Men’s Wearhouse tagline made famous by founder George Zimmer in old heavy-rotation TV ads: “You’re gonna like the way you look.”

Bilas responds: “Nobody else will, but you will. ...”

9:49 A.M.

Bilas heads to the court for a live “Outside the Lines” segment with Jeremy Schaap. The topic: Bob Knight, who retired in 2008 from Texas Tech with the most career wins in NCAA men’s basketball (Krzyszewski now owns the record) but who is best known for his 29-year run at Indiana that included three national titles but ended with his firing in 2000. Later this afternoon, Knight is expected to return to the Hoosiers’ Assembly Hall for the first time in 20 years, a development Bilas says makes sense for all concerned now that Knight has been living near the Bloomington campus again and seems to have made peace with his legacy.

9:57 A.M.

Time for a Tobacco Road “SportsCenter” intro from Chapel Hill. Crew members tell the students to get loud when the cameras roll, with Bilas walking right in front of them in the aisle to hype the Tar Heels-Blue Devils matchup. On cue, they stomp and scream.

10:15 A.M.

Seated alone on the “GameDay” set, with the crowd behind him, Bilas appears on “SportsCenter” to preview Duke-North Carolina. He assures Han-

nah Storm, anchoring from ESPN’s Connecticut headquarters, that he is always welcome in Chapel Hill despite having played for Coach K at Duke.

“I was responsible for more Carolina wins over Duke than Michael Jordan, so they’re very nice to me,” Bilas tells her. For the record, the Blue Devils went 3-6 against the Tar Heels during Bilas’ four years at Duke, including a 1-4 mark in two seasons against Jordan.

10:30 A.M.

Groups of VIPs and select fans line up for a steady stream of on-set photos at the “GameDay” desk with Bilas, Davis, Ellis and Greenberg. Wendy Bilas greets crew members and takes a seat across the court to watch the show.

11 A.M.-NOON

Social media, better governance of college basketball, the anticipated top seeds — almost all of the topics previewed and debated 23 hours ago roll out smoothly as Davis steers his analysts in and out of segments and commercials. Every mention of the Tar Heels elicits a roar, as intended.

2 P.M.

Bilas breaks off to watch Carolina’s pregame shoot-around, chatting with Williams to get a sense of the mood for tonight’s game.

4:30 P.M.

The “GameDay” cast is back in the swimming and diving room in the Smith Center, where two large flat-screen TVs show men’s games airing on ESPN and ESPN2. With tipoff approaching, Bilas is getting ready for the game while Davis, Ellis and Greenberg will head to the set for a halftime segment during the Virginia-Louisville game.

4:50 P.M.

As players from both teams take the court for an initial round of warmups, Bilas chats with the assistant coaches from Duke and UNC.

5:10 P.M.

Another cup of Starbucks in hand, Bilas greets Charlie Jones, the arena tunnel supervisor known for his Carolina blue blazer and warm smile. Bilas calls him “the nicest man in the world” and makes his way around the court in the way of a mayor: stopping for photos, shaking hands, waving hello. Finally, he reaches the cramped court-side ESPN broadcast area, where he stashes his binder of handwritten notes (preferred defensive rotations, offensive

tendencies and so on) and then makes another survey of the court.

6:05 P.M.

Shulman and Bilas are on-court for a final quick preview before tipoff. Bilas says Carolina is better than its record or performance indicates, but will have to play an exceptional game to beat the Blue Devils. Duke comes into the game as a 7.5-point favorite, but the Tar Heels play inspired ball right from the opening tip, and lead most of the way.

6:53 P.M.

“Pretty good half,” Bilas says upon walking into the swimming and diving room for intermission. North Carolina leads Duke, 44-35. Bilas, after stuffing some throat lozenges in his pocket for the second half, nods at a mention of the score and says, “Always expect the unexpected.”

8:48 P.M.

Even expecting the unexpected makes it hard to imagine what happens in the game’s final moments. The Blue Devils come from 13 down in the last four minutes and force overtime when sophomore guard Tre Jones intentionally misses a free throw, runs down the rebound beyond the three-point line, and drills an 18-foot jumper. In the extra period, Carolina leads by five with 20 seconds to go when Duke does it again,

Finally, he reaches the cramped court-side ESPN broadcast area, where he stashes his binder of handwritten notes and then makes another survey of the court.

rallying to tie the score and getting possession after rebounding a missed Jones free throw. He fires an air ball but freshman Wendell Moore, standing near the basket, grabs it out of midair and puts it back as time expires.

“What an amazing finish,” Bilas tells the ESPN audience. “Just remarkable.”

Minutes later, Bilas and his wife make their way out of the Smith Center to a waiting car. When he wakes up on Sunday, Bilas will flip on his tablet and start studying video. His next assignment — Duke vs. Florida State, in Durham — is just two days away, part of ESPN’s Big Monday coverage.

Somebody call Starbucks. ✕

Erik Spanberg writes for the Charlotte Business Journal, an affiliated publication.

More seats, suites and treats: College ballpark spending hits \$256 million

OKLAHOMA STATE'S BUDGET to build a new college baseball ballpark started at \$30 million. That was a decade ago.

From there, the budget ballooned to \$40 million, then \$55 million once all of the bids were in.

"By the time we pay everything off and open the doors for the first game, it'll probably be \$65 million," said Oklahoma State athletic director Mike Holder, who will open the new O'Brate Stadium later this month with the start of Big 12 play.

BY MICHAEL SMITH

The Cowboys' booming budget for a new stadium reflects the increased commitment across the country. Total spending on all college ballparks, including baseball and softball, will set a record this year, topping \$256 million for all facilities that will be completed in 2020, up from \$100 million in 2019.

That mark easily tops the previous record for ballpark spending, which was \$172.2 million in 2011, as well as the \$162 million in projected spending for 2021.

Even Binghamton, far from a baseball power, made news last month when it announced a staggering \$60 million anonymous gift to build a new baseball stadium that will put the school "in the upper echelons of Division I," university President Harvey Stenger declared at the time.

Three huge projects headlined college ballpark construction in 2020: Florida's new \$65 million stadium; Connecticut's new venue, which is estimated at \$40 million as part of a \$90 million makeover of the athletic complex; and Oklahoma State's O'Brate Stadium.

"The biggest difference between ballparks now and 10 years ago is the budget," said Jim Hasenbeck, principal at Studio Architecture, the Oklahoma City firm that designed O'Brate Stadium. "It's more than just the cost for inflation. It's the arms race that we're always talking about. It's not just football. It's soccer, it's tennis complexes, it's baseball and softball."

Holder, the Cowboys' former golf coach who was named AD in 2005, is in the business of winning trophies. His Oklahoma State golf teams won eight national championships.

O'Brate Stadium, Holder said unabashedly, is being built to help recruit the best players and win national titles. Oklahoma State used to be a fixture in Omaha at the College World Series, and while the program has been solid, Holder wants to get back to the days of hanging banners like it did in the old Big Eight Conference when OSU made seven straight trips to the CWS in the 1980s.

Yes, there are significant revenue pieces to the stadium with 11 suites, an expansive 400-seat indoor-outdoor club section and permanent seating for 3,875 fans and 10,000 total. But Holder's goal was not to build a ballpark for the bottom line.

"Baseball is highly competitive, just like all of college athletics," Holder said. "It's incumbent on us — literally in this case — to step up to the plate and make a statement about how committed we are to recruiting the best and brightest, and fielding championship baseball teams."

"The revenue side of it ... we didn't have any grand ideas that our base-



ball program could pay for itself. We have some suites and club seats because that's what people want, but our commitment is to give our athletes and coaches everything they need to be the best, and to recruit the very best."

Both Florida and Oklahoma State elected to build new ballparks rather than spend millions to renovate older ones. Those decisions were based on the land around the ballpark as much as on the new venue itself.

The Cowboys' old park, Allie P. Reynolds Stadium, is approaching 40 years old and its footprint just wasn't large enough to support a new, larger ballpark, the additional parking required and all of the ancillary needs.

The land where Florida's old stadium sits will be repurposed into the site for a massive new \$85 million, 140,000-square-foot football operations and training center that will be right across the street from Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, the Gators' football home.

Kentucky's new \$50 million stadium, which opened in 2019, is part of an athlet-

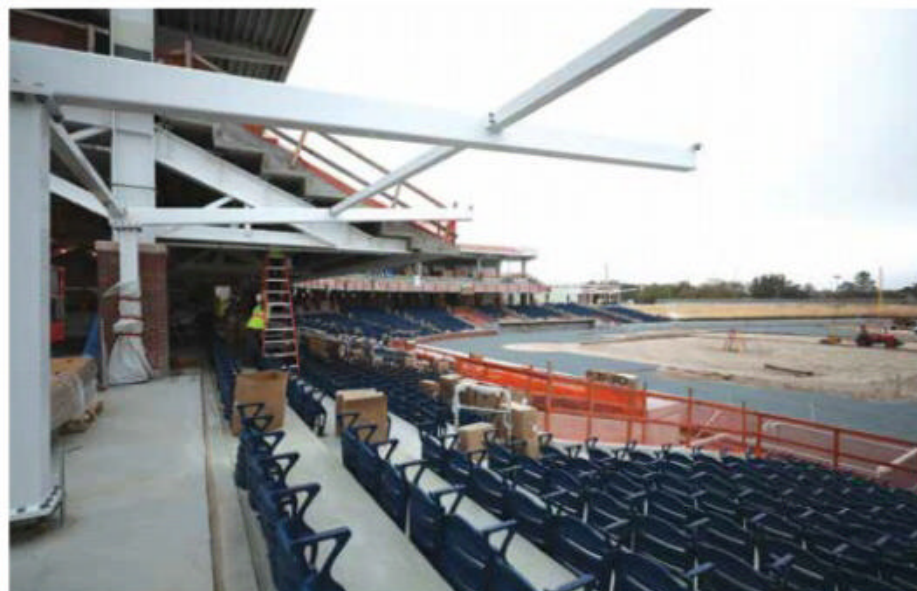
ics complex far from its previous home. Big Blue fans practically needed a map to find Cliff Hagan Stadium tucked away on a small patch of acreage near the middle of campus. The new Kentucky Proud Park is sprawling by comparison, sitting in a prominent location where 15,000 cars drive by each day.

Murray State AD Kevin Saal ran point on the project when he formerly worked in UK's athletic department.

"If you're going to do something right, and do it at an SEC level, it's going to be expensive," Saal said. "College baseball's popularity is exploding right now, as is softball. And these new venues, with video boards, extravagant designs and graphics packages, tell the story of your program."

UConn's new 1,500-seat Elliot Ballpark, which is slated to open by the end of the month, will provide the greatest transformation of them all this year. The Huskies have played at J.O. Christian Field since 1968.

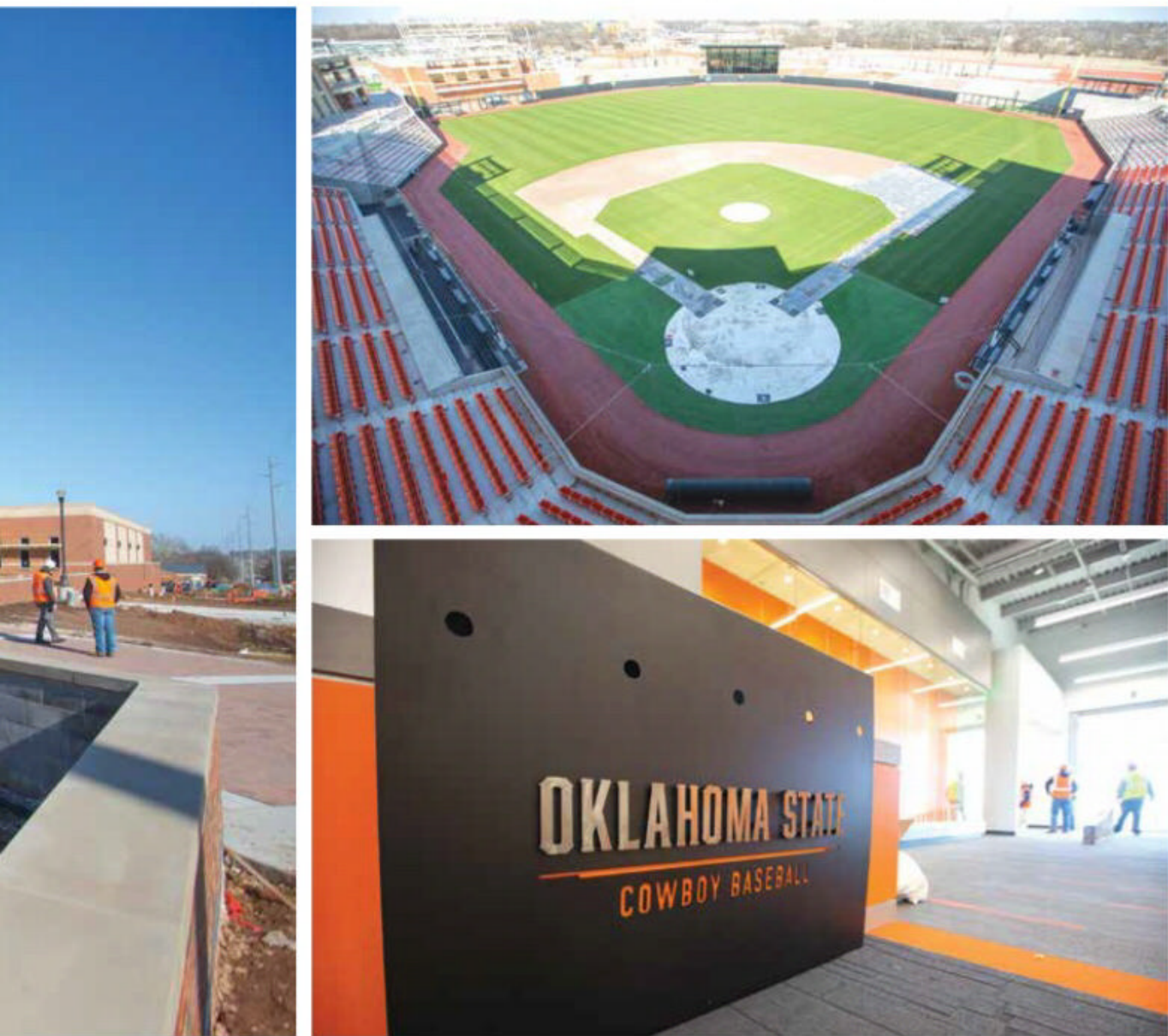
UConn AD David Benedict described the move across the street to Elliot as "15



FAR LEFT: At the top of the spending list, Florida's new ballpark cost \$65 million and holds up to 10,000.

ABOVE LEFT: With a 360-degree open concourse, the park faces northeast with the sun behind it for more shade and cooler viewing.

BELOW LEFT: New food options, more space await fans.



FAR LEFT: OSU has clear goals for O’Brate Stadium: trips to Omaha and winning titles.
ABOVE LEFT: The new ballpark has 11 suites, an indoor-outdoor club and can hold up to 10,000 fans.
BELOW LEFT: The Cowboys will use the their new jewel to help attract the best players.

had no running water, no toilets and a shed for a concession stand. The school didn’t even charge admission for games.

“It was bare bones,” Benedict said, making it even more remarkable that the Huskies have enjoyed so much success in baseball. They’ve made the NCAA tournament field six times in the past decade, helping debunk the theory that facilities alone recruit top athletes.

Elliot Ballpark’s most significant upgrade will be the playing surface — artificial turf instead of grass. It will also have lights, unlike the

PROJECTS OPENING IN 2020

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA BALLPARK	
Cost	\$65 million
Architects	Populous; Walker Architects
General contractor	Brasfield & Gorrie
Capacity	10,000
O’BRATE STADIUM (OKLAHOMA STATE)	
Cost	\$60 million
Architect	Studio Architecture
General contractor	Manhattan Construction
Capacity	10,000, 3,875 permanent
ELLIOT BALLPARK (UConn)	
Cost	\$40 million
Architects	Newman Architects; RDG Planning & Design
General contractor	Daniel O’Connell’s Sons
Capacity	1,500
OGE ENERGY FIELD AT THE USA SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME COMPLEX, OKLAHOMA CITY* (NCAA WOMEN’S COLLEGE WORLD SERIES)	
Cost	\$28 million
Architects	Lloyd Sports + Engineering; Studio Architecture
General contractor	Timberlake Construction
Capacity	7,300
PALMER PARK (VIRGINIA SOFTBALL)	
Cost	\$20 million
Architects	DLR Group; VMDO Architects
General contractor	Jamerson-Lewis
Capacity	524 in main bowl, eventually expandable to 2,500
Note: Facility features an adjacent indoor player development center	
TOINTON FAMILY STADIUM* (KANSAS STATE)	
Cost	\$15 million
Architect	BG Consultants
General contractors	BG Consultants; Mortenson/G.E. Johnson
Capacity	2,344
CLEMSON SOFTBALL STADIUM	
Cost	\$14 million
Architect	Goodwyn Mills Cawood Architects
General contractor	DPR Construction
Capacity	1,000
BAILEY-BRAYTON FIELD* (WASHINGTON STATE)	
Cost	\$10 million
Architect	SRG Partnership
General contractor	Hoffman Construction
Capacity	3,100
Note: Ballparks are primarily for baseball, unless noted. * Project is a renovation. Source: SBJ Research	

years in the making.”

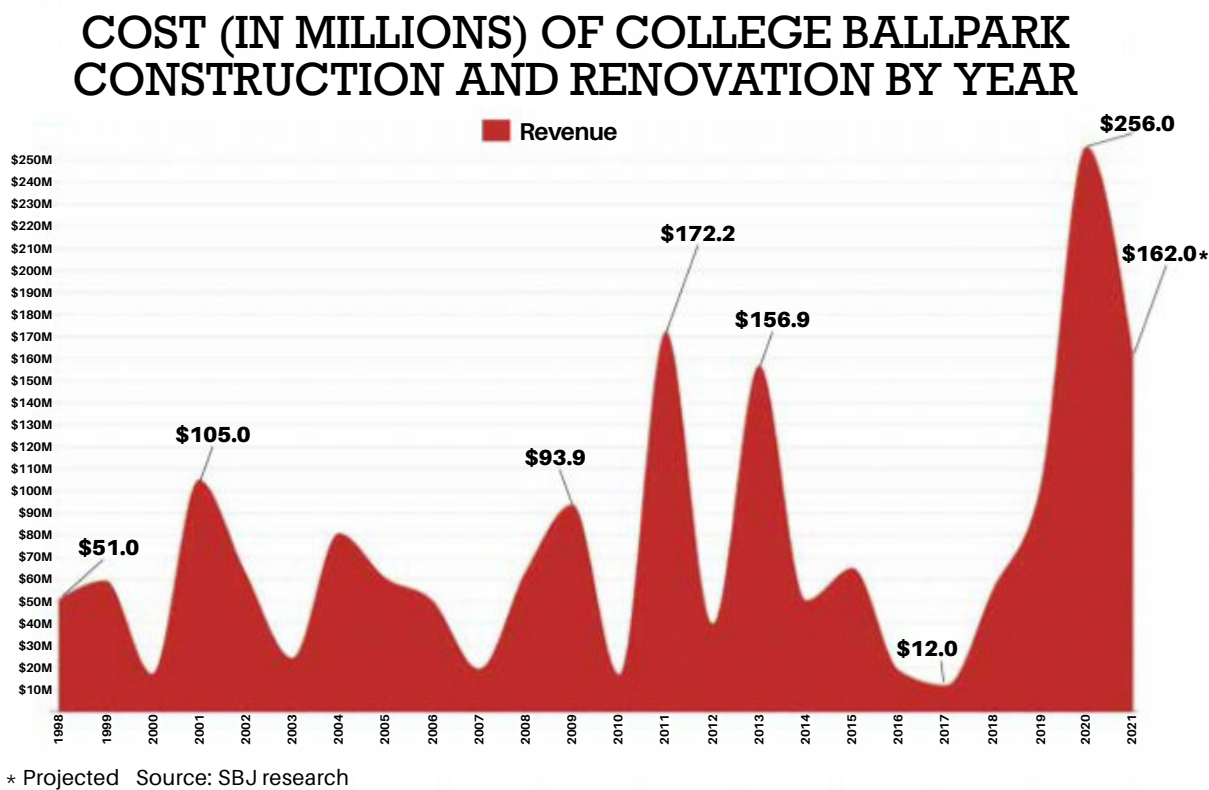
The old stadium wasn’t even a stadium, but more like a high school field with aluminum bleachers. It

old field. When asked if Elliot could provide UConn with a significant revenue source, Benedict said it’s hard to tell. “We’ve never played a night game.”

The surge in facilities, from elaborate premium-seating options for fans to player enhancements like seven-figure pitching labs, have schools spending at levels like never before.

The payoff often is measured in wins and trips to Omaha. When reminded that Oklahoma State was one win away from making it to the CWS last year — only an 8-6 loss at Texas Tech stopped the Cowboys — Holder said, “Yes sir, and I hope O’Brate puts us back in the College World Series.”

David Broughton provided research for this report.



UConn’s new 1,500-seat Elliot Ballpark replaces a 52-year-old stadium.





Marvin Demoff's Quiet Legacy

The veteran agent has long shunned the spotlight, but his roster of hall of fame clients makes him impossible to forget.

BY LIZ MULLEN

MARVIN DEMOFF has been a trusted adviser and confidant to some of the biggest names in sports over a career that spans nearly 50 years.

And chances are, if you're not an NFL or sports broadcasting insider, you've never heard of him.

The one-time public defender became an NFL agent in the early 1970s and built one of the greatest client lists of all time. With Pittsburgh Steelers safety Troy Polamalu's election this year, Demoff has now represented 13 players in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Six clients were named to the NFL 100 All-Time Team. Two of them — quarterbacks John Elway and Dan Marino — were famously both taken in the first round of the 1983 draft.

Yet despite having so many high-profile clients, the publicity-shy Demoff has always shunned the spotlight. There are no grip-and-grin photos from past drafts. He has no Wikipedia page. And there have never been profiles of him claiming to be “the anti-agent,” although those who know him describe him that way.

Marvin Demoff has built a reputation for cutting deals that can work for those on both sides of the table.

“If you would Google, ‘Marvin Demoff’ would not return a phone call,’ you would have more hits than anything else,” said Kevin Demoff, Marvin’s

son and the chief operating officer of the Los Angeles Rams.

Demoff has instead focused on building relationships and has established a reputation for getting deals done that can satisfy both sides of the table. Even if he forgoes the flash that often dominates the headline-grabbing sports agent business.

“They did not make ‘Jerry Maguire’ about Marvin Demoff,” said client Al Michaels. “A lot of agents think they were the model for it. Marvin is not.”



The funny thing is, Demoff’s office is the office of a super agent. It’s on the Avenue of the Stars in the building that houses Hollywood powerhouse Creative Artists Agency. On the third floor, it looks out onto the Century Plaza Hotel, an L.A. landmark that is undergoing a \$2.5 billion renovation.

The office contains all of the things you’d expect to see at a major sports agency, including signed footballs in glass cases and a big photo of the ESPN “30 for 30” documentary on the Elway and Marino draft. Still, such elements run counter to the per-

The Champions

This is the fifth installment in the series of profiles for the 2020 class of The Champions: Pioneers & Innovators in Sports Business. This year’s honorees and the issues in which they will be featured are:

Date	Champion
Feb. 3	Marla Messing
Feb. 10	Tommie Smith
Feb. 17	Jim Delany
Feb. 24	Jon Spoelstra
March 2	Marvin Demoff
March 9	Jim Steeg

sonality of Demoff, who in a two-hour interview was polite, patient, soft-spoken, and self-deprecating.

Nowadays, many NFL agents count their success based on the number of first-round draft picks they’ve represented, but when you ask Demoff how many he’s had, he says he honestly doesn’t know. If you point out his qualities, Demoff will tell you about his defects.

“I don’t have much of an ego,” he said, before immediately coming back with, “I get angry ... Oh, yeah, I get angry if I don’t

get my way. I hold grudges.”

That side, Demoff said, is triggered when someone does something to hurt his clients or his family.

“See, I don’t have a problem with someone who doesn’t do the right thing because they don’t know any better,” Demoff said. “But if they know what’s right and they do something wrong ... then I am not very forgiving,” he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

► CHAMPIONS: MARVIN DEMOFF



How Demoff put together a dream QB duo for 1983 draft

NO DOUBT THE 1983 NFL DRAFT was the biggest year for Marvin Demoff, as he represented both John Elway and Dan Marino, who would go on to hall of fame careers and this year be selected among the 100 greatest players and coaches in the NFL's 100-year history.

For an agent, the quarterbacks presented completely different challenges. Elway was the only No. 1 NFL draft pick ever to choose to play another sport — albeit briefly — over football. Marino had been compared to Elway as potentially the top quarterback in the draft, but was falling fast, based on erroneous rumors.

Elway was a football star at Granada Hills High School in the Los Angeles area before he went to Stanford. He was also a star baseball player who was drafted by the Yankees in the 1981 MLB draft, when he was a college junior.

The Baltimore Colts held the first pick in the 1983 NFL draft, and Elway and his father, Jack, the head football coach at San Jose State, didn't want to sign with the team because they didn't like the disciplinarian style of head coach Frank Kush.

The Elways interviewed a half-dozen agents, including Demoff, in Jack's office at San Jose State.

"I remember the meeting pretty vividly," Demoff said. "I said, 'There is really no reason you can't do something creative. You have the best situation to try and do something different.'"

No player drafted No. 1 in the NFL had ever refused to play for a team, and the drama leading up to the draft and surrounding publicity was a lot for a 22-year-old to handle.

"I was a young man but an old kid," Elway said. "What got me through is the fact I had both of their support. I had dad's support and Marvin's support and we were all on the same page as to what the game plan was going to be and how we approached it."

Demoff had made a deal with Kush and Colts general manager Ernie Accorsi that the team would trade the pick before the draft. The Cowboys, Chargers, Raiders and Patriots were among the teams that tried to make pre-draft trades.

"They said they would trade him ... but no one told that to [Colts owner Robert] Irsay," Demoff said.

Indeed on draft day, the Colts selected Elway in the first few seconds of their 15-minute time limit. That night Elway announced on television he was signing with the New York Yankees. Demoff said Yankees owner George Steinbrenner knew there was a good chance he'd lose Elway to the NFL, but agreed to do a deal anyway because it was the only chance he had to land him.

"I always remember Steinbrenner in his office had a board, and he opens it up and John Elway's in right field. And there was a guy named Don Mattingly at first base," Demoff related. Elway also played in the outfield in college and in the Yankees' farm system.

Demoff asked Steinbrenner what the board represented. "He said, 'Oh, it's the 1985 Yankees.' He says, 'John will be a really good baseball player,' and I said, 'Yeah, but he'll be a hall of fame football player.'"

Meanwhile, the Broncos told Demoff the day of the draft that they had tried to trade for Elway, but were unsuccessful. The Broncos related that if Elway was intent on playing baseball instead of playing for the Colts, they would try again to trade for him. A week later, the Colts traded their rights to Elway for Denver's 1983 and 1984 first-round picks and other considerations.

Marino, meanwhile, had a very different draft

day and agent experience. He met Demoff at the Hula Bowl in 1983 and felt an instant level of comfort with him, Marino said. He told his parents that's who he wanted.

"So I then called Marvin and he said he'd have to think about it. He actually didn't say right away he'd represent me," Marino said.

Demoff and wife Patti are joined by **Dan Marino** (left) and **John Elway**. Elway remains a client while Marino stays in frequent contact as well.

Demoff got permission from the Elways to represent Marino. Then he went to work on a false drug rumor that people were spreading about Marino. The rumor

had sent his draft stock falling.

Demoff called Marino's coach at the University of Pittsburgh, Foge Fazio, who told him, "They are 100 percent false rumors" because players had been tested, Demoff said. Demoff still doesn't know where the rumors started. "I don't think it was malicious," he said. "I think it was just people being misinformed and gossip."

Still, despite Demoff and Fazio talking to all of the then-28 NFL teams to give them accurate information, Marino almost fell out of the first round, going to the Dolphins at 27. But that year he led the AFC in passing yards as a rookie and the next year was MVP.

Many credit the 1983 draft with changing the course of the event because of the heightened drama around Elway and Marino. Six quarterbacks were taken in the first round that year. The ESPN "30 for 30" film "Elway to Marino," which Demoff produced, was based in large part on the meticulous notes Demoff took at the time.

"One of the funny parts — and it kind of speaks to who my dad is, when they did the '30 for 30' on him and they interviewed him, they spent about an hour with him just talking and at the end he volunteered to them, 'By the way, I kept a diary and it had the notes,'" said son Kevin Demoff.

At the peak of their careers — both Elway and Marino were nine-time Pro Bowlers — people often argued who was better.

"I never tried to compare them; it's just not the way I am," Demoff said. "They have never asked me to this day what the other made."

Thirty-seven years later, both Elway and Marino still talk to Demoff on a regular basis. And the two quarterbacks are friends as well.

The Yankees' George Steinbrenner said of Elway, "John will be a really good baseball player." To which Demoff replied, "Yeah, but he'll be a hall of fame football player."



Demoff was a key figure in the ESPN "30 for 30" film "Elway to Marino" that highlighted the 1983 NFL draft.

mistake. "When I was a trial lawyer, way back when, when I got angry at a police officer, I'd do my worst work," he said. "I do believe it's like dating or marriage or anything like that — the person least involved controls the situation."

As Demoff gained more experience, he was assigned more serious cases, including murder trials, and found it was not

something he wanted to do.

Demoff joined a swanky boutique

law firm, but quit after only a short stint, saying he "detested" it. "I wasn't smart enough to realize that if the offer was too good, the job was bad," he said of the high-paying job he quit at the firm.

He then started his own firm with some attorney friends and briefly represented women tennis players before in 1974 turning his attention to football players.



"It wasn't a complicated business," Demoff said of his early days as an agent. "It wasn't anything like it is now. There were not many people doing it."

Demoff was in the agent business before Leigh Steinberg. At that time, the other agents representing football players included Jack Mills, who, with his son Tom Mills, now represents Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield, and Howard Slusher, a flamboyant agent nicknamed "Agent Orange" for his personality and red hair.

In the early 1970s, few players had agents, but Demoff was a pioneer in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23



Demoff is a Los Angeles native, which is unusual for Angelenos of his generation. He's 77 and has lived all his life in the city.

His father was in the wholesale shoe business and his mother was a homemaker. Demoff attended Los Angeles High School, where he played basketball and tennis, and was awarded a scholarship to USC for his work on the debate team. However, since he was a child, he had wanted to go to

buy shoes. "I was home for the summer and he supported himself from the time he was 15, all through law school — selling shoes," Patti Demoff said.

Marvin and Patti Demoff have now been married for 51 years.



After law school, Demoff landed a job with the Los Angeles County Public Defender office. It was the late 1960s at a time of great awareness about civil rights.

"It was the best job I ever had," De-

"I do believe it's like dating or marriage or anything like that — the person least involved controls the situation."

UCLA, so that's where he went and originally wanted to study accounting. "I like numbers, because they are agnostic." A teacher later convinced him to change his major to political science.

He then went to Loyola Marymount Law School where, in the summer between his second and third year, he met the love of his life. Patti Demoff, who was attending Mills College in Oakland, was 18 years old and had stopped in a store in Los Angeles to

moff said. "Our office at that time had a group of 800, 900 lawyers but you usually were in a group of 20 or 30. There was no money involved, so everybody worked well together for hopefully what we thought was right. Most of those cases were victimless crimes. Drug cases."

That early work would one day guide his approach to deal-making as an agent since he learned the importance of remaining calm, even in tense negotiations. Getting emotional is a



A friend and mentor to those in the industry big and small.

A pioneer and champion of diversity.

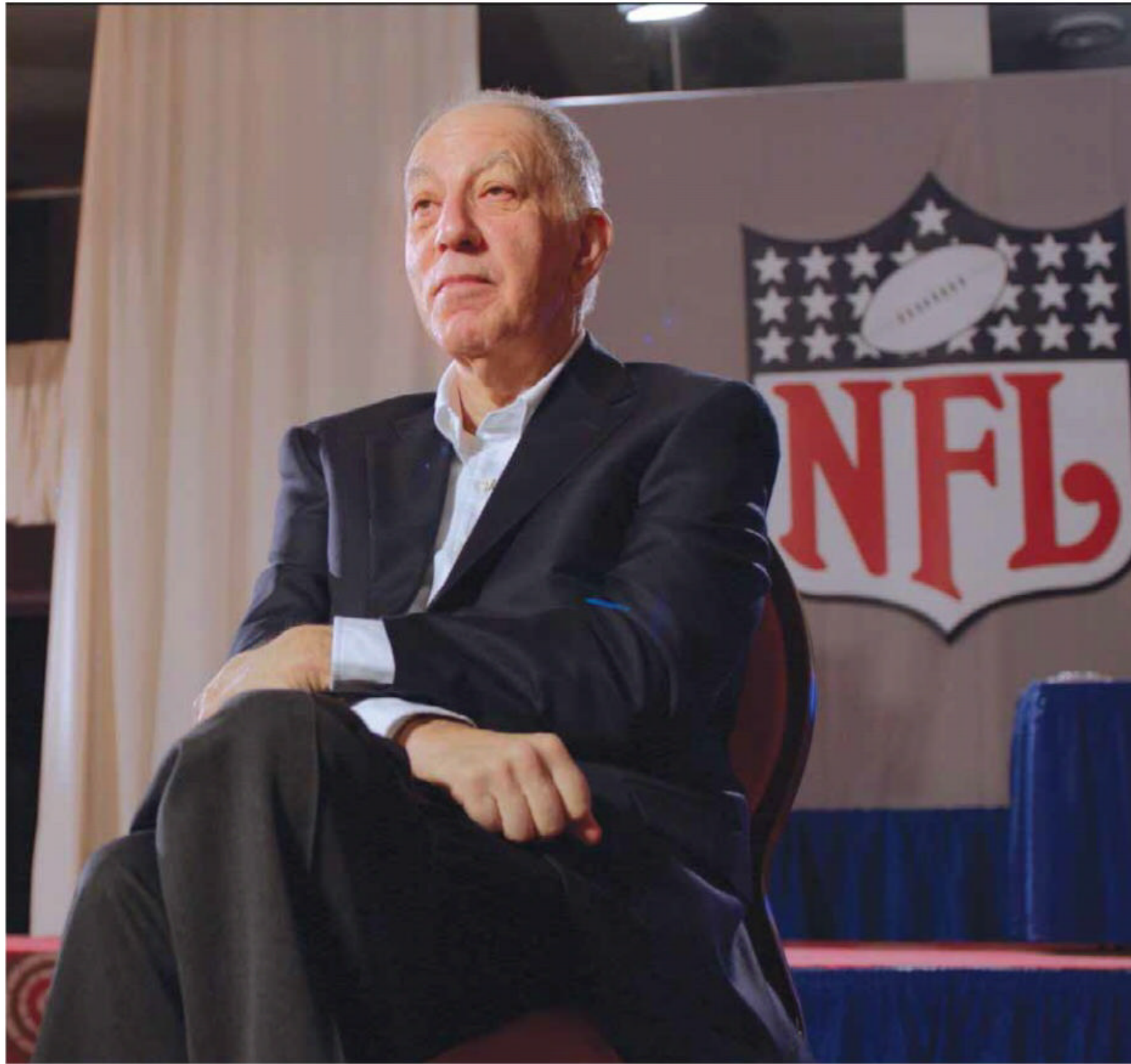
Congratulations, Marvin Demoff.

A true icon and living legend.

— Jim Stapleton

Atlantic Schooners Football Club

► CHAMPIONS: MARVIN DEMOFF



LEFT: Demoff has introduced several creative concepts in NFL contracts, including voidable years. He also has set many financial records for clients, dating back to landing an unheard of \$100,000 deal for **Jack Youngblood** in the 1970s.

Today, Demoff represents about 15 clients, mostly broadcasters. And his reputation is such that some of the biggest names in sports will open up to Demoff about issues they're facing.

"There isn't anything that he doesn't know," said Sharpe, who has been represented by Demoff for 23 years, first as a hall of fame tight end and later a broadcaster. Sharpe said he's counted on Demoff for advice, both personal and professional, and has told him things that only his brother and sister know.

"My most painful things that I had to go through — he knows," Sharpe said. "Marvin knows."

Carmen Policy, the former longtime general manager of the San Francisco 49ers, has a nickname for Demoff.

"Sometimes when I put a call in to him ... I would say, 'Is the Monsignor in?'" Policy related. "Monsignor is a position of the Catholic Church right below a bishop, so this would be a position where people would almost go to confession," Policy said.

Michaels, who has been a Demoff client since 2008, said his brother, producer David Michaels, who is also a Demoff client, goes to Marvin's office in Century City and literally lies down on his couch and talks. It's kind of a joke, but it's kind of serious, too, Michaels said.

"Look, the greatest thing is when you know somebody in your life and there are things that you can share — things that you don't want out for anybody else's ears," Michaels said. "And it never, ever comes back to you, ever. And believe me,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

changing that.

"Players were transitioning to agents," said James Harris, the first African American to regularly start as a quarterback in the NFL and one of Demoff's first clients.

Harris, who played quarterback for the Buffalo Bills, Los Angeles Rams and San Diego Chargers from 1969 to 1981, like his teammates, had negotiated his own deals before signing with Demoff. "You and your teammates would be negotiating with the team, but you really didn't know what to ask for and you didn't know your value," Harris said.

Demoff started representing other Rams players and his work established a verified value of what teams were actually paying players, Harris said. "I don't remember the numbers, but I know it was a lot better than me sitting across from the team and the team saying what they couldn't pay me," he said of his first contract handled by Demoff.

When Demoff got into the business, players were making \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year. "Lee Roy Jordan was making \$50,000," he said of the great Dallas Cowboys linebacker who was the 1973 NFC Defensive Player of the Year.

Demoff started representing players for the NFL draft in 1975. His first client selected in the first round was cornerback Louis Wright, who was taken No. 17 overall by the Denver Broncos. Wright would go on to be a four-time, first-team All-Pro.

By 1983, Demoff had begun earning a reputation as a top agent in the business. That's when he de-

cided to go after a client he really wanted: John Elway (see story, Page 24).



After representing Elway and Marino in the 1983 draft, Demoff continued to represent a stable of not only elite NFL players, but coaches and broadcasters.

In addition to Shannon Sharpe and Al Michaels, Demoff counts Joe Buck and Gary Danielson among his clients. Many agents claim to be selective; Demoff really is.

"I think for the most part he tries to represent good people," Sharpe said. "He reads people very well. If you are not a good person, Marvin is not going to work with you. It's as simple as that."

"He reads people very well. If you are not a good person, Marvin is not going to work with you. It's as simple as that."

During his heyday, Demoff represented between 30 and 40 players a year. The reason? "I'm a very bad delegator," he said. "Very bad. It turned out in the mid-30s, I could do all the work, be on top of my work and have the relationships the way I wanted them to be."

In the 1980s and 1990s, Demoff would take on no more than five new clients a year. "Hopefully they were good players, but I could do three No. 1s, a third- and a 10th-round guy — because I liked them."

"He's a guy who is under the radar but a guy you want to be around because of his intelligence and the brilliance that he has. He has a great feel for people."

that is fairly rare in the representation business."

Elway has been represented by Demoff since that 1983 draft to the present day. "He's been like a second father to me," he said. "My dad passed in '01, so Marvin has been sort of like — as far as business — a great sounding board that my dad used to be. Especially with my job now, as [Broncos] GM. I will bounce different things off him."

Elway says Demoff has the respect and

trust of players and team personnel. Demoff's humility may have a lot to do with that.

"He's a guy who is under the radar but a guy you want to be around because of his intelligence and the brilliance that he has," Elway said. "He has a great feel for people. He has a great feel for situations. And he's really a deep thinker where you really trust everything you talk to him about."

Marino represented himself for his broadcasting career, but called Demoff for advice. Nowadays, he stays in touch with Demoff and calls him regularly.

"Marvin is a true gentleman, but very low key," Marino said. "He's not looking for attention, but knowing that he's probably the best at what he's done who's ever done it. You know what I mean? He doesn't need that attention because he knows he's really good at what he did."



Demoff takes a cautious approach to the agency business: what he says, what he does, the clients he represents, and the deals he negotiates. In the NFL, he's known for his honesty. "You can only lose your integrity once," he said. "You only have one reputation."

"I don't think I ever had a contract with Marvin; we just had a handshake," Marino said. "I don't think Marvin changed. You know, most great people don't change. I think he is the same guy he was when I was 20 years old."

Jon Miller, NBC Sports and NBCSN president of programming, has known Marvin and Patti Demoff for 30 years and says Marvin is honest, fair, respectful, tough and smart, and negotiates deals that are good for the client and good for the network.

"Here is one of the things I think is really unique with Marvin and his current broadcasting clients: They all share great relationships with the networks that employ them," Miller said. "And I think that is a real credit to the way Marvin negotiates the deal and the way that the networks communicate issues back and forth so there is never a problem beforehand. And Marvin would anticipate an issue beforehand, before it even becomes an issue."

Policy negotiated many NFL player contracts with Demoff in the 1980s and 1990s. "I probably raised my voice to him — certainly more so, by far, than he ever did to me," he said. "And I can't honestly recall an incident where he raised his voice to me."

Harris said that in the 1970s, Demoff had the ability to get what the players wanted and still maintain a good relationship with the organization. "He had this legal pad and a sharp pencil and he would write down his ideas where you could see them and understand them."

Decades later, he does the same thing. Sharpe said in his negotiations, Demoff writes down the pros and cons of any offer and then they talk it out.

Demoff has a way of getting what was good for the client not just personally, but professionally, Sharpe said. "If the client wants to stay in Denver, my job is to get him as much money as he possibly wants while staying in Denver. If my client wants to leave, then my job is to get him the most money and to get him to the best situation he possibly can — that's how he sees it."



Demoff credits his wife, Patti, for "98 percent" of his success. While he always worked hard, he was always home for dinner, realizing the importance of family time.

One of his first clients was quarterback Craig Morton. One night Tex Schramm, the longtime president and GM of the Cowboys, called Demoff because Dallas was trading him to the New York Giants.

"And I said, 'Can you call back in an hour, because we are watching 'Rhoda's Wedding?'" Demoff related. "He said, 'I can't because the trade deadline is in 20 minutes.' So he got traded to the Giants."

Agents are on the phone all the time and the Demoff house was no exception. He once had four phone lines and a fax machine in the house.

Demoff has two children: Allison (Demoff) Jacoby, who is his oldest, and Kevin. When they were in college, Demoff would still go to parents weekend,

Dream Team

Marvin Demoff's Pro Football Hall of Fame clients

Client	Year inducted
Eric Dickerson	1999
Mike Munchak	2001
Jack Youngblood	2001
John Elway	2004
Dan Marino	2005
Shannon Sharpe	2011
Larry Allen	2013
Jonathan Ogden	2013
Tim Brown	2015
Junior Seau	2015
Bobby Beathard	2018
Jimbo Covert	2020
Troy Polamalu	2020

which was often on the same weekend as the NFL draft, and he would get extra phone lines in the hotel, Patti Demoff said.

At home, the phone would ring all the time. "People would call in the middle of the night for bizarre reasons that were football-related or whatever and think nothing of it," Patti said. "And I'd be like, 'OK. No. There really needs to be a midnight cutoff.'"

Kevin Demoff said his father went to all of his baseball and other games growing up. Jacoby said Demoff was a carpool dad, who drove her and other kids in the neighborhood to school every day. Jacoby, an attorney, has worked with Demoff since 1997.

Understanding the mystery of Demoff is not that complicated, his daughter said. "He cares about his work," she said. "He cares about his family and he cares about his clients. But he really doesn't care about the fame."

These days, Kevin Demoff is increasingly becoming well-known and influential in the sports business, given his role with the Rams and the new SoFi Stadium under construction.

Said the elder Demoff, "I am much happier people knowing me now as Kevin's father, rather than him being my son."

Demoff has devised a number of creative concepts in NFL contracts, including voidable years, which he did for quarterback client Rick Mirer. (The last years of the contract are void if a player hits certain targets.)

He's set many financial records for clients, including getting Jack Youngblood \$100,000 when that was unheard of in the 1970s, and getting Marino a reported \$9 million in the mid-1980s, which at the time was a record and was fully guaranteed.

At the end of the day, Demoff said, it's not the contracts he's most proud of. It's the relationships that have lasted, some for 30 or 40 years.

"Every day I feel very fortunate." ✕



Coming March 30

Business of Baseball

While Major League Baseball faces an uncertain future, SBJ will examine how the New York Yankees have remained one of the most recognized and lucrative franchises in all of sports.

Advertise In This Upcoming Issue

Contact Your SBJ Rep by March 13

212.500.0705 / advertise@sportsbusinessjournal.com

IN-DEPTH DATA AND ANALYTICS

THE DATA STORY

The ability to interpret analytics that chronicle the game-day journey of fans is a coveted skill for sports properties. BY ERIC PRISBELL

IMAGINE YOU'RE on the data and analytics team for a football franchise and after the season's first few games you receive alarming ticketing data: The bulk of the crowd is entering your stadium an average of only 23 minutes before kickoff.

While possessing that data is important, it's irrelevant if you're not able to understand why it's distressing and enlist other departments to help implement corrective strategies. Is pregame traffic a particular pain point? Are certain gates more prone to bottlenecks? What initiatives should be explored involving pregame in-venue eateries, team stores and overall entertainment to pull more fans into the stadium much earlier?

Data on fans' habits and desires has never been more plentiful and accessible for teams and leagues, with the Golden State Warriors even noting peak decibel levels during in-game entertainment at Chase Center as yet another data point that indicates what fans like. But what distinguishes some organizations' analysts are not their technical chops but rather soft interpersonal skills that enable them to interpret clean data, incorporate other departments and use insights to recommend strategies. Those who can use data to tell the story of a fan's game-day journey — and why they may be entering the stadium gates just 23 minutes before kickoff — are coveted.

"It's very unusual to have someone who has a technology slant and also the ability to interpret it," said Jessica Gelman, the CEO of the forward-thinking Kraft Analytics Group and co-founder of the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, which begins Friday. "That's a hard person to find

and hire. People are like, 'I have all this data.' Yeah, OK, but what are you going to do with it? How are you going to use it to drive change? Data and analytics can be scary words to some people. Translating it is a really important skill."

Interviews with more than a dozen industry leaders paint a portrait of the sports data and analytics world in this new decade, with some executives half-joking that teams are now drowning in business-side data. The level of sophistication among teams varies greatly because of priorities, resources and willingness. And one element that elevates the more sophisticated is the number of those in data and analytics roles equipped with the skills to interpret, translate and efficiently drive data-informed change.

"It's a little bit of art and science," said Neda Tabatabaie, vice president, business analytics and technology for the San Jose Sharks. "How do you translate data with the realities of everything going on with the team and provide analysis that makes sense for the business? It's not necessarily, 'Oh, this is what my regression analysis says' and then close your eyes to everything else going on."

When hiring for data and analytics roles, Tabatabaie receives lots of impressive résumés from those with Ph.D.s, but during the interview processes they sometimes "can't break down a problem or provide you with different steps that they might take to find a solution." The industry, she said, is still plagued by outside stereotypes that data and analytics team members — exact titles often vary — are a "bunch of people sitting behind computers running fancy analysis, and they don't talk to anyone."

Valuable soft skills include pinpointing insights others don't see; working in concert with other departments on strategies; and at times clearly articulating to top-level executives recommendations that may run counter to conventional wisdom or established philosophy.

In the example where the bulk of fans enter a stadium 23 minutes before kickoff, the soft skills would prompt an analyst to use the data to consider and question all possible scenarios, said Bren-

dan McGeehan, director of SPAN-360 at Spectra Analytics. He calls explaining the data the connective tissue in the process.

"You can hire folks with a strictly technical background who can code in 20 different languages, but without any sort of a business or industry background, then that coding can only take you so far," McGeehan said. "There also needs to be some level of soft skills involved. If you actually want the intersection of all of those skill sets, it's pretty hard to find."





WHERE TO FIND ANSWERS

THE BOSTON Red Sox have gone to great lengths in recent years to tailor ticketing efforts to different subgroups of fans. College-age fans, for example, respond differently than young families to some efforts because they are more likely to attend games on a whim. Adam Grossman, the Red Sox's chief marketing officer, said knowing what questions to ask while interpreting data is as critical as having the data sources behind it.

"I'm not on the data science side, but when we think about our marketing efforts, they are sitting sidecar with us," Grossman said. "They give us the guidance and direction of where our efforts can and should be targeted, but it just doesn't end there. It helps from the diversity of skill-set perspective to have enough people in the room to be able to have those important discussions to be able to utilize the data we have to be as efficient as possible."

Some teams may have the insights they seek but not realize it. Don White, co-founder of the artificial intelligence-powered engagement platform Satisfi Labs, said that if a fan asks in an Apple Business Chat about parking options, for instance, sometimes that data is categorized and sent to customer service instead of the ticketing department. In order to gain insights, one needs to know where to find relevant data.

"So I think the big 'aha!' moment is going to be as teams get more equipped at seeing everything, they are going find that there were insights layered



all across the organization everywhere that really should have been narrowed to different places," White said. "But they didn't see it because they didn't have a high-level view of it."

Soft skills are especially valuable if one is encouraged within the organization's culture to derive bold strategies from data. AJ Maestas, founder and CEO of Navigate Research, said organizational leadership is often too conservative and too rarely encourages risk-taking. "It's too easy to make excuses for why something can't be done or why something isn't a priority," he said. "Our industry tends to think very near-term — perhaps because there's so much job movement — and implementing change usually requires near-term risks for long-term gains. If our neighbors aren't doing it, we crawl, walk, and only then run to our future once we see someone else is ahead of us."



TELLING THE STORY

FOR SOME, soft skills are a luxury. For others, they are a necessity.

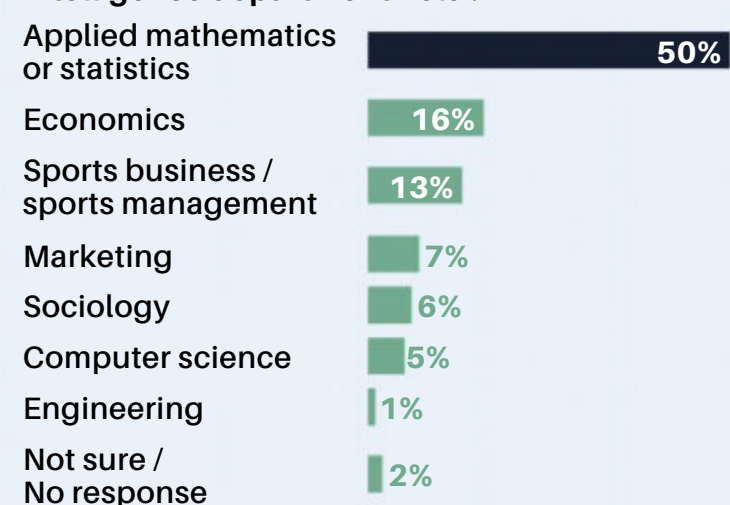
After each game at Chase Center, the Warriors provide their 75-member leadership team with a 15-page report. The report provides data on everything from sales to attendance to food and beverage to decibel levels during various entertainment moments of the game-day experience.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

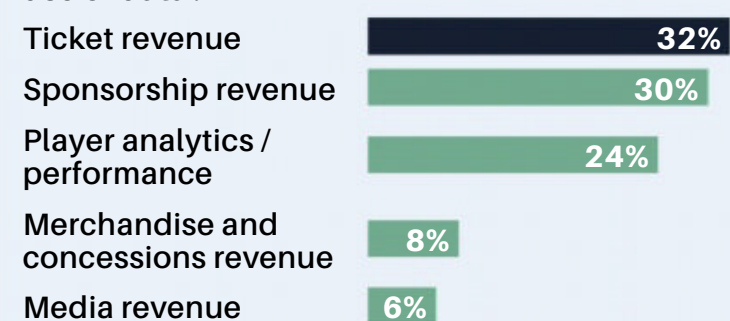
MARKETCAST SPORTS POLL

The following are results from the MarketCast Sports Poll taken in February. The poll includes more than 2,000 senior-level sports industry professionals spanning pro and college sports, brands and agencies.

What academic degree should a candidate leading your favorite team's business intelligence department hold?



Which of the following areas presents the biggest upside for sports properties' use of data?



Source: MarketCast in conjunction with Sports Business Journal. MarketCast provides research and analytics to fuel fandom for brands and properties in sports media and entertainment. Visit www.marketcast.com.



LEFT: The Boston Red Sox rely on their business intelligence analysts to know what questions to ask different fan segments.

ABOVE RIGHT: The change in the decibel level at Chase Center during various entertainment or fan engagement moments is a metric regularly tracked by the Golden State Warriors.

IN-DEPTH DATA AND ANALYTICS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

Brandon Schneider, the team's CRO, said they don't make any decision that isn't informed by data. That culture of analytics fluency is established at the top, with owners Joe Lacob and Peter Guber, and extending to Rick Welts, team president and COO, and beyond. Data is the foundation from which to articulate the rationale.

"If I go to Joe and talk about any decision — ticket prices for next year — and I don't have the data to walk through how to get to that answer, I'm going to be thrown out of his office," Schneider said. "It's never happened because we wouldn't do that."

Echoing that sentiment is Russell Scibetti, the New York Giants vice president, strategy and business intelligence, who stressed that data often doesn't give you an answer but rather several different questions. The communication element is critical, he said, because "you may have the best model in the world, but you need to communicate why, especially if your model says we should do something differently than maybe leadership would want to do. You need to make sure why this is the case and the right direction."

Traditionally when one thinks of research and analytics, a mathematical background and a Ph.D. in economics are viewed as preferred credentials, said Jeff Eccleston, the global head of insights and analytics at CAA Brand Consulting. That's not necessarily the case anymore, he said, adding that "we're looking for people that are analytical and inquisitive and can tell a story with data. At the end of the day, the insights coming out of it are more important."

If you're looking for the future of data and analytics, a window into esports can be instructive. Inside the performance center for Complexity Gaming — majority owned by Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and real estate developer John Goff — across the street from the Cowboys' sprawling campus at The Star in Frisco, Texas, CMO Cam Kelly explained how virtually everyone on this team is fluent in analytics.

In esports, there is less a distinction between data examining audience behavior and data assessing player performance. Kelly will toggle between looking at how to grow an audience on TikTok to looking at enhancing player performance in a particular game. In esports, the industry comprises a generation dependent on understanding metrics.

"If you're in the entertainment and sports industry and you don't have people with the ability to analyze statistics and make informed decisions, that's a code red," said Kelly, struck by the suggestion that some traditional sports executives joke that they are drowning in data. "We look at it as something that is fun to swim in, not something that is frightening that you'll drown in."

Kelly said that if you can't recognize how data and insights tell a story of how to shift habits and create change, you're probably in the wrong business. It's about using data to articulate a fan's journey and strategizing how to enhance and personalize that journey. A coveted skill set: storytelling through data.

"But nonfiction," Kelly said, laughing. ✖



MYTH TAKES



Popular misconceptions in the world of data and analytics
that those entrenched in the field most often hear:

COMPILED BY ERIC PRISBELL

RUSSELL SCIBETTI
Vice president,
strategy and
business intelligence
New York Giants

“It's not a magic pill. Any use of analytics needs context and application. What do we do with what the numbers say? The numbers themselves don't change anything.”



AJ MAESTAS
Founder and CEO
Navigate Research

“The myth is that our industry has truly embraced data and analytics on the business side. It's certainly true on the field, but off it, there are plenty of sports professionals that dismiss data and insights as biased or something that can be used to tell any story someone wants to tell. There are still far more decisions made with bias stemming from someone's personal experience than from biased analytics, and when decision-makers are still largely from older generations, it's no wonder sports has struggled to adapt to younger generations.”

NEDA TABATABAIE
Vice president,
business analytics
and technology
San Jose Sharks

“Sometimes people think more is better. It's the whole Big Data. Then they have it and they're like, 'OK, now what?' I'd rather have one piece of data that I can make actionable versus all of this data that I'm not doing anything with.”



JEFF ECCLESTON
Global head of
insights and
analytics
CAA Brand
Consulting

“Sometimes we deal with clients who feel they have to report on every single metric that is available. What we like to remind clients sometimes is that not everything that can be measured actually matters, and not everything that matters can actually be measured. I think it's really about understanding what is important, what does success look like, what are we trying to achieve from this partnership and then putting a set of metrics in place that actually align with that.”

JESSICA GELMAN
CEO
Kraft Analytics Group

“The definition of analytics is inconsistent. People who have the role and title of analytics, some of them are just working in Excel, others are coding in Python. The level of sophistication really varies widely. That's in part because the sophistication across leagues and organizations varies widely.”



BRENDAN MCGEEHAN
Director of SPAN-360
Spectra Analytics

“Some organizations, teams or clients may feel they need to go to from zero to 60 right away. That's going from no capability to having full built-out predictive modeling and advanced analytics. You maybe need to crawl before you walk and understand what you do have and what you draw conclusions from based on that before you go [all in] into advanced analytics.”

DON WHITE
Co-founder
Satisfi Labs

“A myth is that it's easy to interpret and insights are clear. That's not the case. Data is meant to fortify what you are trying to prove is true or not true. It doesn't always give you obvious things. It usually supports a case you are already considering.”



BRANDON SCHNEIDER
CRO
Golden State Warriors

“There are cases where people get too cute. They're like, I'm going to measure everything and then figure out later what's actionable. We want to be a little more efficient.”



CAM KELLY
CMO
Complexity Gaming

“That esports eclipses the viewership of traditional sports. Pick one, they [some brands, media rights holders] have done it. It's like saying, 'Entertainment eclipses sports,' like, what are we talking about? That stuff drives us nuts. It's a failure and disservice overall.”

What metrics do industry executives rely on?

BY WILL CAVANAUGH

THE EXPLOSION of analytics in sports over the past decade has provided sports properties an array of tools to gauge success in areas such as sponsorship, consumer behavior and brand perception. “Data and analytics are ingrained in every part of our process, from prospecting to pitching, to activating, renewing and growing relationships,” said Chris Insolera, vice president of global partnership sales at Brooklyn Sports and Entertainment.

To better understand how properties are using data to drive business decisions, SportsAtlas polled industry executives about the types of metrics they find most valuable.

VIEWERSHIP

A NUMBER of executives listed viewership data as among the most important and revealing tools for understanding their fan base.

“While it’s not the only currency in our world anymore, it’s still the largest and easiest to monetize,” said Mike Verlander, vice president of sales and marketing at Stewart-Haas Racing. “TV is still our largest reach that executives can understand easily.”

Jay Kaufman, senior vice president of the NBA’s global research and insights, shared that the NBA holds viewership in high regard with a focus on total audience measurement. With the NBA focusing on younger and international viewers, the ability to measure viewership through nontraditional mediums such as OTT and out-of-home is vital and allows the league to acquire a complete view on overall viewership and popularity of content.

“We are seeing continued emphasis on global viewership between our U.S., U.K. and AU clients,” said Norris Scott, senior vice president of Futures Sport & Entertainment. “The global reach of sports continues to be relevant. This is a result of the obvious growth of OTT offerings, the number of international distribution deals for marquee sports properties, but also smaller properties that are considering the globe as one marketplace.”

FAN ENGAGEMENT

DESPITE HAVING many interpretations, executives agree that fan engagement qualifies as an important measure of success.

“The way we think about [fan engagement] is from a ‘phygital’ standpoint — we believe experiencing our sport in person (physical) is key to sparking engagement, but a digital landscape provides a better opportunity to assess what keeps your fan engaged,” said SJ Luedtke, IndyCar’s vice president of marketing. Other executives mirrored that feedback.

John Forese, Rakuten Intelligence’s chief product and data officer, pointed to various attendance-based metrics including the percentage of identifiable attendees and customer lifetime value of attendees, or the total revenue a property can expect from a single fan. Brooks Lambertson, City National Bank’s vice president of sponsorship

ATTENDANCE LEADERS

By league based on percent capacity



Note: Reflects most recently completed season, percentages over 100% earned by standing room

Source: SportsAtlas

activation, also expressed a preference for attendance metrics pertaining to season-ticket holders such as ticket spend and percentage of capacity made up by season-ticket holders. Metrics focused on these committed fans allow the property and their partners to gauge how many individuals will be exposed consistently to their brand, and also measure loyalty with a uniform baseline.

Fan engagement across social and digital appealed to Verlander and Kaufman. According to Verlander, social and digital provide authentic opportunities for integration and allow for engagement that is easily tracked. Kaufman said the concept of total amount of time spent with the property is a primary focus of the NBA. It is more important than ever before because of how many ways fans can consume content. “We look at total time spent on each of our platforms to try to understand both the total pie and how each of the slices of pie exist and are changing over time,” he said.

From a brand’s perspective, one of the most important types of engagement is movement through the brand funnel. Insolera summarized this concept as metrics capturing the value of a partnership to a brand beyond a media valuation such as perception, consideration and intent to purchase.

CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS

WHILE VIEWERSHIP and fan engagement are broadly important, they become even more valuable with the ability to pinpoint exactly who is being reached. As properties and brands face increased competition, executives must know their audience intimately to develop effective strategies. Insolera shared that demographic and psychographic

metrics are extremely important as they help his team better understand and target their audiences.

Kaufman said a deep knowledge of NBA fans is changing their approach to data and measurement. With a fan base younger than other leagues, Kaufman indicated fans are consuming the content differently, such as through NBA League Pass, streaming, social and digital, all of which need to be accounted for when measuring total engagement.

BENCHMARKING

REGARDLESS OF what metrics are being observed, industry leaders were clear that benchmarking metrics such as viewership, fan engagement and demographics against their competition are always necessary. In speaking to competition for the attention of consumers coming from both sports leagues and OTT providers in the marketplace, Kaufman said, “There are so many opportunities for people to consume content on their own time, which is why we are always evaluating what’s working and what’s not working.”

Given the volume of competitors in the entertainment space, the competition for advertisement dollars has grown. As properties sell against one another, benchmarking across various metrics is the primary way a property can prove its worth to the customer.

Because of shifts in consumption, globalization of sports, and escalating competition, top industry executives will continue to assess their analytic toolkit to provide value to their properties and partners.

Will Cavanaugh is a market analyst at SportsAtlas, a new business intelligence platform powered by Sports Business Journal. To find out more, go to www.sportsatlas.com.

SOCIAL LEADERS

Most-interacted-with teams on social, Jan. 14-Feb. 14

EVENTS THAT HAD AN IMPACT ON RESULTS:

- JAN. 26: Former L.A. Laker Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash.
- FEB. 2: Kansas City Chiefs defeated San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl LIV.
- FEB. 14: New York Rangers put themselves in playoff contention with 9 wins in 30 days.

Los Angeles Lakers
89.9m

New York Rangers
24.6m

Golden State Warriors
23.0m

Kansas City Chiefs
19.4m

Boston Celtics
15.5m

Houston Rockets
13.5m

Toronto Raptors
12.9m

San Francisco 49ers
10.6m

Milwaukee Bucks
10.5m

Miami Heat
7.5m

Note: Total interactions on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter over the past 30 days (as of Feb. 14) across MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL teams. Source: GumGum Sports, SportsAtlas

Betting on NCAA athletics could save the amateur system and provide compensation to athletes

WITH MULTIPLE STATES passing legislation and 20 more states considering similar bills, college athletes are going to be compensated for the use of their name, image and likeness — in one form or another. This is no longer a debate.

The NCAA and its conferences are the legal, economic cartels entrusted with negotiating and distributing revenue from media and sponsorship partnerships to their members. A patchwork system of multiple jurisdictions depending on state, public or private institutions will create an unprecedented level of complexity and chaos. Such a system will not only be rife with recruiting chicanery, it will create an employee/

employer relationship at the collegiate level, which essentially eliminates the amateur athlete designation in any of the revenue-generating sports. A federal solution is required if the NCAA wants to continue to maintain control.

In response to these recent state laws and the changing public perception of the function of the student athlete, some interesting ideas have been floated, including one from the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, proposing to create a separate division of large, high revenue schools to compete independently of the mid-tier and lower-tier programs. All of the suggestions we've seen so far have focused either on redistributing existing revenue or on giving athletes the right to seek compensation from corporate sources and/or from the sale of licensed apparel bearing their likeness. One of us works at one of the biggest college basketball schools in the nation and the other works in a state dominated by college football. We've both worked extensively within the framework of the business of collegiate sports. The notion of allowing college players to seek compensation directly from "sponsors" and alumni bases is the same system upon which slimy college boosters and AAU coaches have long been preying and thriving.

We propose a different solution, one that doesn't require redistributing existing revenue, breaking up conferences, eliminating nonrevenue sports, or inviting unprecedented levels of recruiting violations and booster tomfoolery. There are ways to use technology and the unmatched market for college athletics to solve this problem. Working with Congress to draft federal legislation, the NCAA could ensure fair athlete compensation while protecting its status as an amateur sports organization. The answer lies in the data.

When the Supreme Court's decision in 2018 ended the federal moratorium on the states determining how to regulate sports gambling, a new revenue source was opened to all leagues — professional or amateur. According to estimates from Bloomberg News and Forbes, the NBA will generate more than \$300 million in gambling-related revenue for the next six years and the NFL twice that. The four major sports leagues are reportedly generating over \$200 million per year for their data and rights. The NCAA has two of the biggest gambling subject sports in college football and March Madness. Reuters estimates that over \$8.5 billion is wagered on NCAA basketball alone and there are estimates that upward of \$4 billion was wagered by U.S. gamblers on the College Football Playoff. With such assets, the NCAA could easily generate over \$500 million a year for its data and rights.

There are 15,000 D-I men's football and basketball scholarship players. Would an extra \$30,000 a year make players more likely to enjoy their college experience? Or, if the NCAA passed out \$200 million to the 347 Division I basketball schools, then each school could recruit and pay the players of their choice, allowing for all schools to have a good shot at acquiring talent and remain-



Could the NCAA generate millions for its data and rights?

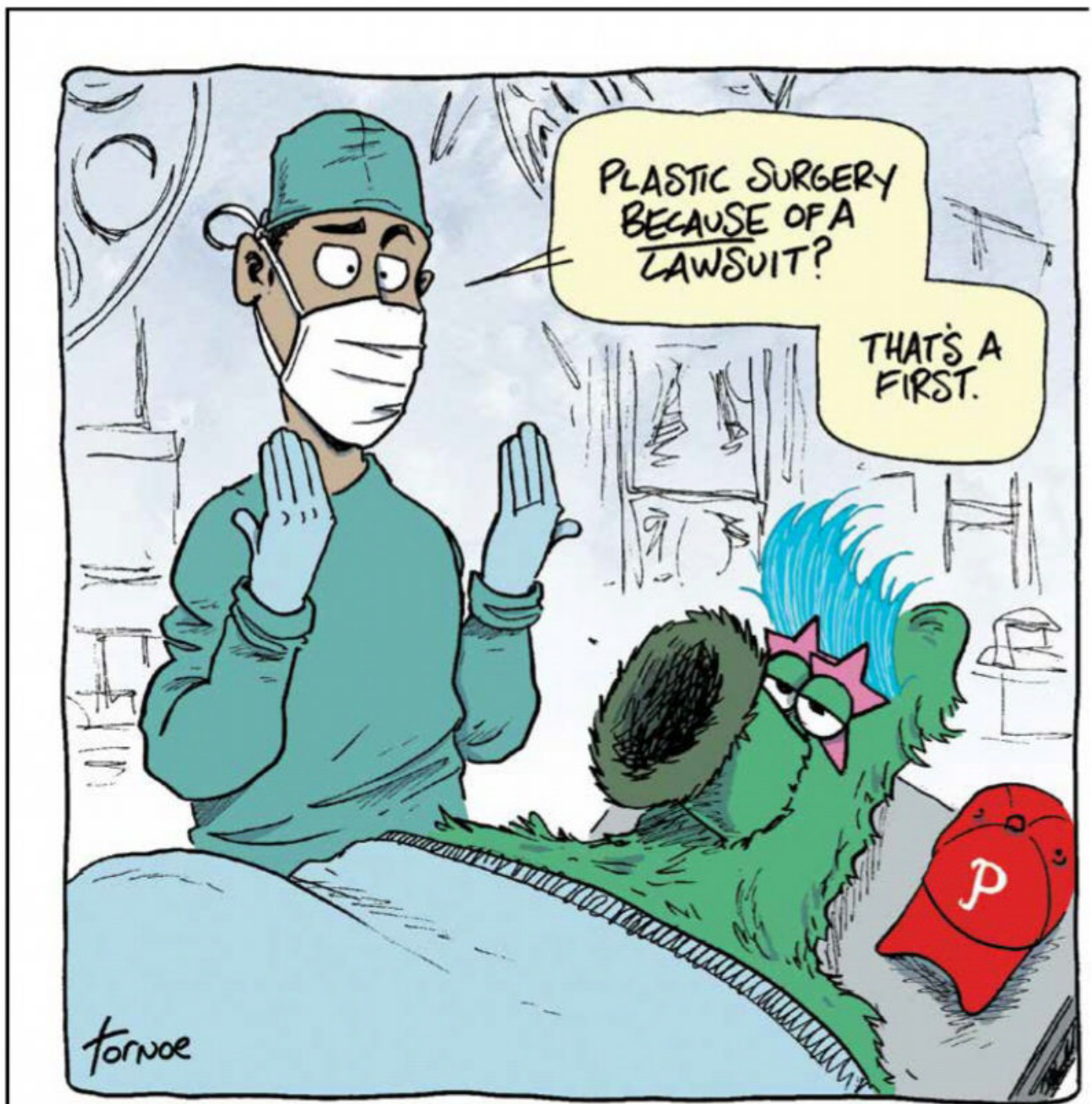
ing competitive. If the NCAA waits too long, it will no longer have the ability to determine its own future. If the NCAA leadership is not careful, state legislatures will create an environment where the alumni at schools such as Duke will sell out of the \$25,000 Zion Williams commemorative jerseys and Ole Miss business owners will pay \$100,000 to feature the Rebels' starting offensive line in a promotional video ... all in the name of

allowing student athletes to be equitably compensated for their names and likenesses.

By acknowledging that sports gambling is a legitimate and legal pastime enjoyed by millions of its fans, the NCAA could leverage substantial incremental revenue into a solution that compensates athletes while maintaining the amateur status upon which the NCAA business model and its core value system rests. Ironically, the NCAA, which has been so vocally opposed to gambling for years, might now need to embrace this legal pastime to save its identity, mission and business model.

Jon L. Pritchett is CEO of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, the state's nonpartisan, free-market think tank. He previously worked as an investment banker, executive and entrepreneur over a 28-year career in private business.

Ed Tiryakian is co-founder of Fandex and in his 10th year teaching at Duke University as a visiting associate professor, teaching corporate finance, business economics and the "Business of Sports" class.



FACES & PLACES



FIELD UNVEILING

Representatives from Nolan Ryan's RS3 Turf joined manufacturer ACT Global in the unveiling of the first NR34 premium synthetic turf field on Feb. 18 at West Orange-Stark High School in Orange, Texas. From left: **Dan Collier**, region manager, ACT Global; RS3 COO **J.J. Gottsch**; RS3 founder **Reid Ryan**; General Sports Surfaces owner **Hector Puentes**; ACT Global CEO **John Baize**; RS3 owner **Bret Sanders**; RS3 President **Garrett Reddehase**; **David Albritton**, director of sales, RS3; **Ryan Reid**, director of baseball, ACT Global.



BASEBALL IN ARIZONA

The Arizona Diamondbacks announced on Feb. 15 during Fan Fest that "Baseball Day Arizona," in partnership by Fox Sports Arizona and Arizona Interscholastic Association, will be on May 2. From left: AIA Executive Director **David Hines**; FS Arizona talent **Brandon Webb**, **Mark Grace** and **Jody Jackson** and SVP/GM **Brian Hogan**; Diamondbacks President/CEO **Derrick Hall**; Diamondbacks players who played at an Arizona high school, Arizona State or Arizona; and FS Arizona's **Steve Berthiaume**.



CELEBRATING WILLIE

Monumental Sports & Entertainment partner Earl Stafford hosted a private screening of the documentary "Willie" at the National Museum of African American History and Culture on Feb. 20 in Washington, D.C. The screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring (from left) NHL veteran and moderator **Anson Carter**; **Willie O'Ree**, the first black player in the National Hockey League and the subject of the documentary; producer **Bryant McBride**; director/producer **Laurence Mathieu-Leger**; and **Damon Williams**, sports curator at NMAAHC.



KINGS ON THE MOUNTAIN

Members of the **L.A. Kings** staff gathered at 7 Falls in Colorado Springs, Colo., prior to 2020 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game between the Kings and Colorado Avalanche on Feb. 15 at the U.S. Air Force Academy.



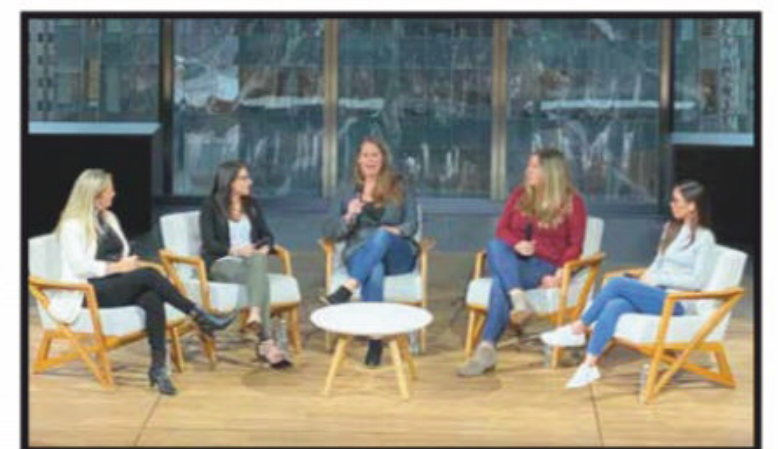
ENERGY PARTNERSHIP

The Philadelphia Eagles announced on Feb. 25 a new sustainability partnership with PDC Machines, which will look to equip Lincoln Financial Field with green hydrogen energy through a SimpleFuel hydrogen refueling unit. From left: Eagles President **Don Smolenski**; **Catherine Carlson**, Eagles SVP, revenue and strategy; **Kareem Afzal**, PDC Machines, VP, business development; and **Jim Petrecky**, PDC Machines director of hydrogen energy, Americas.



MAKE-A-WISH SUPPORT

Syracuse University's Sport Management Club presented a check to representatives from Make-A-Wish Central New York on Feb. 11 during a men's basketball game at the Carrier Dome. The money was raised from the club's 15th annual Charity Sports Auction. From left: **Kate Veley**; Make-A-Wish CNY's director of corporate philanthropy; auction co-chair **Caroline Johnson**; club president **Sam Marteka**; and Make-A-Wish CNY President/CEO **Diane Kuppermann**.



GAMING SUMMIT

From the FTW: For the Women Gaming Summit presented by Spectacor Gaming and Nerd Street Gamers on Feb. 13 in Philadelphia: **Danielle Cohn**, moderator and head of LIFT Labs/VP of entrepreneurial engagement, Comcast NBCUniversal; **Jessica David**, director of marketing, SeventySix Capital; **Paige Funk**, director of marketing, Nerd Street Gamers; **Heather "sapphiRe" Garozzo**, VP, marketing, Dignitas; and **Julie Truong**, director of business operations, Philadelphia Fusion.

CLOSING SHOT



Promos for the bout started on Super Bowl Sunday and continued right up until the fighters entered the arena.

Fighting For Attention

ESPN and Fox Sports set their rivalries aside and put serious promotional muscle behind the Wilder-Fury pay-per-view fight, creating the feel of a can't-miss event.

BY BILL KING

TYSON FURY wasn't the only heavy-weight to pull off an upset when he stopped Deontay Wilder.

The Wilder-Fury pay-per-view fight on Feb. 22 saw unprecedented collaboration between rival promoters and rival networks on a fight that clearly broke into mainstream conversation and generated interest that the once-proud division hadn't seen in decades.

Wilder is promoted by Premier Boxing Champions, which airs fights exclusively on Fox Sports networks. Fury is promoted by Top Rank, which works exclusively with ESPN. To make the fight happen, they had to coexist. For it to succeed, they had to collaborate.

The same situation played out with the same two promoters five years ago when Floyd Mayweather beat Manny Pacquiao in the highest grossing PPV in boxing history. Then, Mayweather, managed by PBC-founder Al Haymon, and Pacquiao, promoted by Top Rank, were locked into deals with competing premium networks HBO and Showtime.

"In today's world where there's so

much content and clutter out there, we couldn't cut through all that without having these two monsters on our side," said Top Rank President Todd DuBoef, who lauded all involved in the promotion for their collaborative efforts, which stood in contrast with some previously combative co-pro-

"In today's world where there's so much content and clutter out there, we couldn't cut through all that without having these two monsters on our side."

motions. "Years ago, we didn't have the challenges of YouTube and Hulu and Netflix and kids on social media, so we were able to build awareness for a big fight with a partner like an HBO or a Showtime. Times are different now."

DuBoef refused to disclose sales, or even discuss specifics of how they were trending. Unlike HBO and Showtime, which often trumpeted their box

office successes, ESPN and Fox Sports have kept buy rates to themselves since entering the PPV business.

Both networks piled content high in the week leading up to the fight.

On ESPN, Fury was the subject of an hourlong interview with Jeremy Schaap that aired at 7 p.m. on Sunday,

Feb. 16. The network had a "SportsCenter on the Road" setup in Las Vegas all week, producing fresh reports. Max Kellerman's weekly boxing show went daily for four days. "First Take" aired from Vegas on Thursday and Friday. And during its prime-time NBA telecast the night of the fight, ABC cut to video of the fighters entering the arena.

Fox took its daily "Speak for Your-

self" show featuring Jason Whitlock and Marcellus Wiley to Vegas, airing on FS1 Wednesday through Friday.

ESPN2 and FS1 both aired the pre-fight news conference and the weigh-in. ESPN and FS1 aired undercard fights from 8 p.m. until the PPV opened at 9. The preliminary bouts attracted 862,000 viewers to ESPN and 441,000 to FS1.

The promotional onslaught began in earnest on the unmatched platform of Super Bowl Sunday on Feb. 2, with eight spots, including two that aired during the game itself, seen by 103.5 million and 101 million viewers, respectively.

"We did a lot of new stuff that was clever and unique to try to get people feeling FOMO (fear of missing out)," DuBoef said. "We're going to be gathering a lot of data from this event. It's going to teach us about consumer behavior. ... When you think about viewing habits and impulse habits and buying habits, we just don't know how they've changed. This is a new world. And it's moving quickly." ✕



LEADERS WEEK
NEW YORK 2020

18 - 21 May

BIG CITY, BIGGER IDEAS

Leaders Week New York is back to unite the US and Europe's most senior sport business executives in the heart of Manhattan.

The world is changing and sport has to change with it. The fight for consumer attention is greater than ever, the media landscape continues to transform, and the availability of new tech creates fresh opportunities.

At every event across Leaders Week you'll find industry pioneers exploring the trends impacting the future of the sport.

Visit leadersinsport.com/LWNY to find out more.

