

Sportcentered

"On the Case:" the ravings of an ESPN addict

Which Sportscenter do you watch?

Uh, all of them.

A few weeks ago, the Entertainment and Sports Network, the self-proclaimed Worldwide Leader in Sports more commonly known as ESPN, celebrated its twentieth birthday with a special anniversary show.

To this columnist, the passing of this milestone represented a chance to sit back and reflect on all that has come and gone in the world of sports television since ESPN debuted live from Bristol, Connecticut in September of 1979.

Private eyes

During the past two summers, I worked at Fox Sports and ESPN, respectively. Through my internships I was able to see first hand the ins and outs of modern sports broadcasting. I found out what exactly sot, bump, infinite x and y and chiclets are. I learned the off-air personas of the on-air talent. I learned that Steve Lyons really is psycho, that Stuart Scott's eyes really do look that way, that Chris Berman is a very large, loud man, and that there is nothing to do in Bristol, Connecticut, at night, but there is a whole lot to do in Los Angeles. As if I didn't know the last one already.

I have seen from the inside and the outside what modern sports television is about. The behemoth that has brought us ESPN, espn2, ESPNNews, ESPN Classic (nee Classic Sports Network), ESPN Cooking, ESPN Sewing, CNN/SI, Fox Sports Net, the X-Games, the Gravity Games. Monday Night

Football, Sunday Night Football, Tuesday Night Football, Thursday Afternoon at 3:52 p.m. Football, and Dick Vitale, is a continually growing monster. The public's appetite for sports programming has grown so large it seems the only sporting events not televised

birthday, my mind harked back to a simpler day, a day when I didn't know more than 50 people who could name more than one contestant, let alone any, in the World's Strongest Man Competition. Forbes Cowan and Riku Kiri, thank you very much.

At first, ESPN was just a tiny station in a field in The-Middle-Of-Nowhere, Connecticut. Now they are a nine-building, five-TV network, one-radio network, one-magazine, four-website, gargantuan conglomerate, ruling the lives of 18-35-year-old men everywhere.

these days are the ones here at Brown.

Being an avid fan and a commentator-of-sorts on the radio, I am as big a fan as anyone of this market saturation. ESPN is the first channel I turn to when I get home. The second is Classic Sports. Yet, hearing that my summer employers were having their twentieth

The way we were

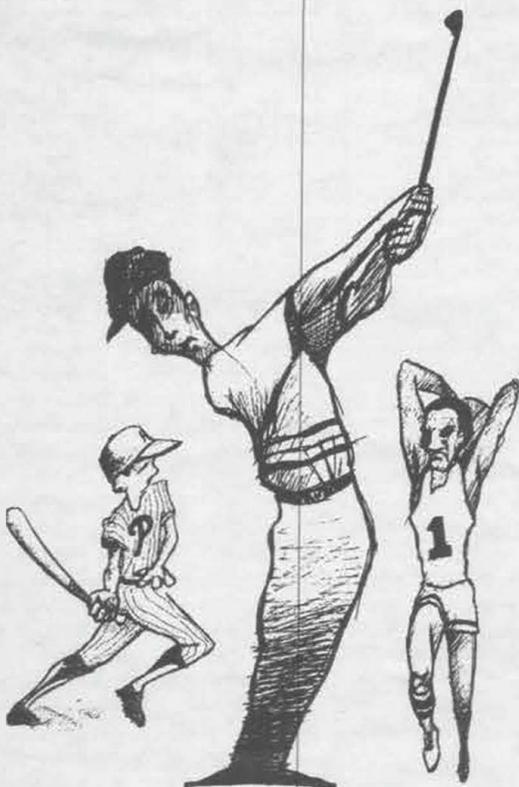
When ESPN burst onto the scene, (well, burst isn't quite the right word—it was more like a plop,) oh so long ago, I was but a young boy of one, and sports TV as we know it did not exist.

It was a simpler time, when the Buccaneers, Astros and Broncos still wore orange, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar still had hair; a time when more people watched Big Bird and Snuffalupagus than Dan Patrick and Kenny Mayne. A young man wanting to follow sports actually had to open the newspaper, and was forced to read Ring Lardner and Clair Bee for sports nostalgia. There was no ESPN.com or Classic Sports Network.

There was only Howard Cosell telling it like it was.

Then there was a balding, six-foot-four, booming young man who had graduated from Brown in 1977 with a degree in Economics and had called Brown sporting events on Brown Student Radio. This loud gentleman was known as Boomer and would become the icon of all that represents ESPN. This was, of course, Chris Berman, who, along with Bob Ley, are the only two original on-air talents still at the Worldwide Leader.

Of course Berman and ESPN weren't always the be-all-end-all of sports. At first, they were just a tiny station in a field in The-Middle-Of-Nowhere, Connecticut. Now they are a nine-building, five-



Ryan Jackson

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TV network, one-radio network, one-magazine, four-website, gargantuan conglomerate, ruling the lives of 18-35-year-old men everywhere.

Yet as I sit down to watch my third Sportscenter of the day, I wonder, am I really better off? Do I really need to be able to turn to ESPNNews 24 hours a day and see Ian Paige, Suzy Kolber, Dave Feldman, Kevin Corke, John Buccigross or, god forbid, Melissa Stark giving me the latest in sack dances, slam dunks and home runs? Do we need catcher cam or helmet cam? What about jock strap cam?

What happened to Vin Scully telling me about Mike Scoscia moving the runner over, or Johnny Most describing Danny

Ainge coming off a pick to drain the fifteen foot jumper?

Video killed the basketball star

In the desire to get on Sportscenter, players keep coming up with new ways to create the spectacular, astounding or downright amazing. Yet in so doing, many young athletes have neglected the fundamentals, all for the sake of good television.

This summer as I watched baseball games in the screening room in Bristol and decided what plays would be in the Brewers-Diamondbacks highlight on Sportscenter or Baseball Tonight, I got caught up in this mentality as well. Viewers do not want to see sacrifice flies or run-scoring fielder's choices in their forty-five sec-

onds of highlight. It is not, as they say at the network, good video.

A friend of mine was cutting the highlight for a Devil Rays game this summer, a game in which the D'Rays lost 7-1. However, that one run was a Jose Canseco home run. The game was allocated a one-play highlight. Guess what that one play was? Canseco's homer.

So as I sit on my couch, pizza stains on my lip and popcorn on my shirt, I wonder weather it just might have been better back before ESPN, before the fireman's olympics, badminton, or the nine ball billiards championships were televised. Perhaps then Brown would have a point guard who could hit a jump shot.

Then I hear a familiar sound

coming from the television ... da da duh, da da duh ... and I think to myself, 'I wonder if Jose hit another one.'

Then I realize ... life before Sportscenter?

Are you crazy? How did they ever survive?

Casey Shearer B'00 was a production intern (i.e. coffee boy) at ESPN this summer