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Is Al Michaels Still The Best NFL Play-By-Play Announcer?

By Adam McFarland

When ABC "traded" Al Michaels to NBC this off-season to be their number one play-by-play

announcer for their new Sunday night NFL football package, it became clear that he is still perceived to be the best play-by-play announcer in the business. However, is that perception still a reality?

Michaels began his career back in 1986 on ABC's Monday Night Football, where he remained until switching to NBC for the 2006 season. While at ABC, Michaels was part of several broadcast teams including the likes of Dan Dierdorf and Frank Gifford, Boomer Esiason, Dennis Miller and Dan Fouts, and most recently John Madden. Despite the frequent changes, Michaels always remained because of his innate ability to convey an array of information to the casual viewer.

With NBC's recent signing of Michaels and John Madden to man their Sunday Night NFL booth, it shows that Michaels is still the most sought after announcer in the business. NBC decided to woo Michaels over Fox and CBS lead play-by-play announcers Joe Buck and Jim Nantz respectively, as well as veterans Dick Enberg and Mike Patrick, and newcomers Kevin Harlan and Gus Johnson..

The amazing thing about Michaels (and probably the reason why NBC chose him) is that he is nearly flawless. He rarely misses a call, is always up to date with the latest news, knows the rules, and adds just enough humor. His only real "flaw" may be his desire to mix in references to the point spread and over/under of games despite the fact that the NFL would rather he not.

Of those mentioned above, Buck, Harlan and Johnson have talent but are still too raw, while Enberg is on the tail end of his career. Both Jim Nantz and Mike Patrick can certainly make their cases as the best play-by-play announcer in the sport.

Nantz (paired with Phil Simms) likely was not targeted because of his value to CBS as a college basketball announcer. I doubt that CBS would likely let him go, at least not without a fight. Michaels on the other hand, did not have an NFL job with ABC after MNF moved to ESPN. His only job on ABC was with the NBA, something he wasn't particularly good at.

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With Sunday Night Football moving to NBC, Mike Patrick was left out of the NFL, which is an absolute travesty. Patrick, who will now work College Football for ESPN, handled the ESPN Sunday Night booth with Joe Theisman and Paul Maguire with phenomenal skill. Theisman and Maguire would often engage in pointless arguments and make erroneous statements, and Patrick was able to pull it all together into a somewhat presentable booth. His abilities were most recognizable when he missed time in the 2004 season and was replaced by Pat Summerall for a few games. Those broadcasts were absolutely unwatchable. It is likely that he wasn't considered for the NBC job because he didn't come packaged with a respectable partner (like Michaels does with Madden) and because he doesn't have the name recognition of Michaels. Both reasons are understandable, but make no mistake his skills are on par with Michaels.

In an industry with remarkable turnover and constant competition, Michaels has remained at the top of his field for nearly twenty years, as evidenced by his new deal with NBC. This is a testament to his dedication and work ethic in an extremely difficult and demanding industry.

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Adam McFarland owns the

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) – a

network of sports sites including collectibles, movies, books, video games, and more.

<http://SportsLizard.com>

recently won honorable mention in the Microsoft Start Something Amazing

Awards and was featured in the February 2006 issue of Tuff Stuff Magazine.

The Largest Professional Sports Team

By Jena Luthovski

In America, the largest professional American football is the National Football League. It is made up thirty-two teams that come from American cities and regions. The league is made up of two conferences called the American Football League (AFC) and the National Football Conference (NFC). Each conference is then divided into four divisions that are made up of 4 teams and the four divisions

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are called East, West, North and South.

A regular NFL season is sixteen games. The season is played from September to January. Each team is allowed to one week off. When the regular season ends, six teams play in tournament called the NFL playoffs. The tournament is a single–elimination, meaning that one team only has one chance to win. If they lose that one game, they are out of the tournament and get to rest, wondering how they can make it to the championship next year. The championship is called the Super Bowl and most Americans watch it on TV. They either watch it at home with their family or friends or at bars if they are feeling lonely. The championship is one of the biggest American TV events. The game is held two weeks after the last playoff game in city that has an NFL team or a popular college stadium. One year, it was held only one week after the last playoff game. The reason was because the league had stopped to honor the people who had died in the 9/11 World Trade Center tragedy. After the Super Bowl, one week later, the Pro Bowl is played between the NFC and the AFC. The Pro Bowl teams are made up of the best players in the league.

The schedule and the game in the NFL are very much controlled by TV. Nothing happens without it being documented by a TV camera. When the camera is off, there is no action in an NFL game. Game play only occurs in a game when the cameras are on. It is one of the major reasons that an NFL game is three hours long. By the clock, an NFL game should only be an hour and fifteen minutes. The game is divided into quarters that are only 15 minutes long. There is fifteen minutes for what is called a halftime. Every time there is some sort of break in the play, they go to a commercial. During the commercials, the players are not playing. The schedule is now being changed to make sure that the best teams play on Sunday night. They do not want the slaughters that usually occur on Monday nights when the weakest teams end up playing each other. Weak games mean that no will watch them. They want the strongest teams to play on Sunday night so they will do everything possible to make sure that there are good games on that night.

Jena Luthowski writes about

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