Fast Forward: The Changing Landscape of Sports Media

Jeffrey S. Moorad Sports Law Journal Symposium

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Dean Mark Alexander [00:00:15] Good morning and welcome. Welcome here, to the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law. For those who don’t know me, I’m Mark Alexander. Have the distinct honor of being the Arthur J. Kania Dean here at the law school. So I’m just here to say a quick welcome to our sports law symposium. Every year, it’s just an extraordinary conversation. And, this year, I am certain that we will deliver in the tradition that we have had in the past.

I’m so very pleased that we have this emphasis here at the law school, this extraordinary program in sports law. I always think about how we teach folks the subjects, contracts, common law, torts, things like that. But what we can do with our sports law program, is we get the students in a position where they are putting what they’re taught in motion, putting skills in motion. They go to these negotiation competitions. They have a journal where they work on their academic skills. There’s so many ways in which we develop the skills, the knowledge, the expertise, and ultimately, hopefully, I think the career path for our students to move into the world of sports law. And also, as we all do today, we have important conversations about the world of sports law. We contribute to how the law is developing. And, you know, every day you can see a different headline about how sports law is affecting American society. So I’m just very proud that we have the sports law program that is an essential component of what we do.
And in that context, I am particularly grateful for the support of Jeff Moorad in making this happen. You know, the reality is I do all I can to try to run a good law school, but it takes folks like Jeff to be able to expand our work, expand our program into this kind of area. Jeff is a distinguished member of the class of ’81. The class of ’81 is an impressive class. We have folks like Jamie McKeon, who is actually the head of the Morgan Lewis firm, and I’m grateful for their support. They’re supporting us today. I’m just so grateful for the Morgan Lewis firm. Another classmate of his was our beloved professor, Doris Brogan. But, today, I have no more favorite member of the class of ’81 than Jeff Moorad. Jeff has, you know, had an extraordinary career. If there’s a job in sports that exists, if there’s a transaction in sports that has happened, Jeff has been part of it. He has been on every side of labor management and ownership. He sees the transactions, he proposes the transactions, he makes these things happen. He has been truly visionary throughout his career. And he has been a role model for so many who are seeking a career in sports. And on top of that, I will just say that has been my great blessing to get to know Jeff, as an alum, but also as a friend. He always has great stories. He always has great insights. I’m grateful for his friendship. I am, as a dean, grateful for his support of the law school. So, ladies and gentlemen, big Villanova Law welcome for Jeff Moorad.

Jeffrey S. Moorad: [00:03:43] Thanks, Dean. And welcome, everyone. Gosh, we don’t put Annual on the, you know, materials. What is it? 12th annual? 12th annual symposium. Wow. It was, probably 13 years ago that I sat down with, then Dean John Gotanda and kind of laid out a vision for, you know, creating a path for the future for young law students who aspired to careers in sports. And, you know, I made the same pitch to two deans before that. They both looked at me cross-eyed and, with all due respect… And John Gotanda looked at me and said “we can do that.” I’m like, really? I said, “I’ve heard, I’ve heard no twice before.” He’s like, “nope.” He goes, “we can make that happen.” I said, “you know what? That’s outstanding.” And I got behind it. I, you know, stepped up, created the center that exists today. Which is obviously much more developed today than it was 12 years ago or 13 years ago. And we made it a reality. And, you know, I was proud to do it at my alma mater. The dean mentioned Doris, who has been a professor here for probably more years than she cares to remember. We all went to law school together, many, many years ago. But, you know, when I came out of law school in ’81, I had a dream about being in a career in sports. And at the time when I would tell people that they said, “you want to do what?”
I said “no, no, I want to be in sports.” They said, “well, what does that mean?” “Mean,” I said, “I’m not sure what it means, but I’m going to figure it out.”

And at this point in my life, what I care about is helping younger people figure it out. And to the extent that’s possible and more achievable because of the Moorad Center. That’s a good result. So I’m very, very happy about that. I’m also, very pleased, as the Dean referenced, that Morgan Lewis, which is the law firm that I’m affiliated with. I’m the chairman of their global sports practice and I don’t practice law- don’t tell anybody. But, what I do is support the firm and, and support its efforts in sports and in the sports industry. And I’m pleased that Morgan Lewis, for I think the fifth straight year has agreed to sponsor this symposium. So we’re grateful for their support and excited about the day ahead, or the morning ahead. We promised to get you out of here in a few hours.

But lastly, I really want to tell a quick story. And that was, when Tom Gotanda and I sat down those years ago, once we finished our business transaction, the obvious question was, “who are we going to have lead this?” It wasn’t going to be me. John Gotanda moved on and is now the president of Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu. So it obviously wasn’t going to be him. Dean Alexander’s far too busy.

And so what we said was “we really needed someone who came from the sports industry, like myself, who understood, you know, the different elements and aspects of the, sports industry.” And, you know, I called my good friend Ken Shropshire, who was at University of Pennsylvania at the time and said, “do you know anybody who could possibly-” I really wanted to see if he was interested, but he wasn’t, and I said, “do you know anybody who might be interested in an executive director role?” He said, “I have just the guy.” And he said, “you know him!” I said “I do?” I said, “Who is it?” He said, “it’s Andrew Brandt.” He said, “he lives about a mile and a half from the law school right now.” I said, “is that right? I had no idea. I thought he was still the assistant GM of the Green Bay Packers.” He said “no.” He said, “he retired from the NFL and he’s back in Pennsylvania.”

So I called Andrew, introduced him to Dean Gotanda. Gotanda called and said, “oh my God, this guy’s perfect.” I said, “I agree.” And ever since he’s been the Executive Director of the Moorad Center and is really responsible for forging the path that you all get a chance to witness today. So, with no further ado, I’d like to introduce Andrew, who will carry us from here, Andrew Brandt.

Andrew Brandt [00:08:42] Thank you so much. And, thank you, Jeff. Thank you, Dean Alexander. I did end up here thanks to, moving
my wife to rural Wisconsin for ten years. She got to pick the next stop. So she’s from here, and we landed here, and that helped land me here. What a great event that we host every year. I’m so proud of what we’ve done, especially our students.

So what we try to do every year at this event is put on the issue of the year. Look at the landscape of sports and really decide what is it that in 2024 we want to talk about? As you know, so many of you come every year. We’ve talked about NIL. We’ve talked about sports betting. We talked about agents; we’ve talked about concussions. And we decided this year to talk about media. As we’re getting our thoughts together, we’re seeing media move from network from broadcast to streaming. We’re seeing the decline of regional sports networks. We’re seeing the move to the digital media giants of Google and Yahoo and Apple and Amazon. It’s all changing. And what better place to talk about it? A cutting edge topic with industry leaders.

As you’ve seen on your seats we also do a report every year. We call it the Brandt Report, named after some guy. And we look at what that issue is. And now we’re coinciding the Brandt Report with our symposium. The Brandt Report is prepared by our students. And we have student leaders here, Nick and Lindsay, who prepare that report. That’s in your hands, and I hope you enjoy it. Again, trying to raise our profile, trying to make this the best with our best and brightest students. So enjoy today.

Thanks to Morgan Lewis for again sponsoring this great event. We’ll have panels you’ll hear from league executives, team executives. You hear from athletes. You’ll hear from the head of our collective. You’ll hear from media personalities that you may have heard of. And you’ll hear from all sorts of people, from Amazon, commentators in media, industry analysts in media. All this morning. Informative, entertaining. Hope you enjoy it. So without further ado, we’ll bring on the first panel, which will be hosted by Jeff Moorad and Allison Gargano from Morgan Lewis. So welcome. Enjoy the day.

Panel 1: League/Team Views on a Changing Media Environment

Brian Cull, ’92 CLAS, Group Vice President of Integrated Marketing, National Hockey League
Benjamin Dottino, Senior Counsel for Business Affairs, Major League Soccer
Frankie Garland, Deputy General Counsel, Philadelphia Phillies
Ingrid Petri, Vice President of Sponsorship Strategy and Business Development, National Football League

David Reid, Senior Vice President & Deputy General Counsel, Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment

Moderated by Allison Gargano, Partner, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP & Jeffrey Moorad ’81, Partner, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP & Principal, Morgan Lewis Consulting

Jeff Moorad [00:11:23] All right. Welcome, everyone. Thank you all for being here today. And I look forward to hearing your thoughts. An interesting topic. I think I, get the honors of, starting off, I’m going to introduce, a couple of you, starting with Frankie. Welcome. Deputy general counsel of the Philadelphia Phillies. Pleased to have you.

Frankie Garland [00:11:55] And happy to be here

Jeff Moorad [00:11:58] A nice, nice set of experiences, including, it looks like growing up as a Californian.

Frankie Garland [00:12:01] Born and raised in Modesto, California.

Jeff Moorad [00:12:03] So I seem to remember that, and, and a couple degrees from, University of California, Berkeley. Congrats on that. But more importantly, congrats on a great career in sports thus far. Starting off with the Pittsburgh Pirates and now the Phillies. So, we’re looking forward to your views today. Thank you, thank you.

And, and then Ben Dottino, thank you for, for your time today as well, senior counsel, business affairs at MLS. A very interesting league that pushed a lot of boundaries, for sure. And we look forward to hearing your views as well. You know, I suppose as interesting as anything is your NBC Peacock background, especially as it relates to today’s subject. So, look forward to that and look forward to-let’s see your background, I saw, was the Georgetown guy. Yeah.

Ben Dottino [00:13:05] Yeah.

Jeff Moorad [00:13:07] Terrific. Look forward to hearing your thoughts as well.

Alison Gargano [00:13:15] Okay. I’m up. So next we’re going to go to David Reid. I’ve learned everybody’s faces, so I think I got the order. David is senior vice president, general counsel at Harris Blitzer Sports
and Entertainment. Today we call him, although I won’t ask him too many questions, our NBA resident expert. The Sports Group, owns and operates the 76ers, New Jersey Devils, the Prudential Center.

David, your background as a lawyer and in your role today, you handle a wide variety of legal matters, you know, negotiating these agreements, getting involved in a bunch of collective bargaining, employment agreements, etc. So looking to hear your views on the legal side today.

Next up, we have Ingrid Petri. Ingrid is the vice president, sponsorship strategy and business development at the NFL. Before returning to the NFL, Ingrid, you’ve been VP of AG Global Portfolio Sales. So, interested to see hear their views there and sort of your background, coming from there. Worked on a bunch of multi property deals with major brands. Also worked with the NBA, so you’ve got that perspective as well. A lot of NBC news, sports networks, Sports Illustrated again, a lot of media touching a lot of media, areas. And you are an alumni of Villanova, as I understand it, so welcome.

Allison Gargano [00:14:54] Last up, Brian Cull. Okay. That was easy. Group VP, Business Development and Sponsorship Sales at the NHL. Brian, you lead, you’re responsible for a leading Club Business Group, working with all the 32 NHL clubs, develop and maximize revenue generating sponsorship. Again, part partnering with marketing initiatives, implementing the business practices for all the member clubs. Got involved in some of the sports betting business guidelines. I think you joined the league in 2010. Kind of worked your way through it from there. And before you were with, I guess NFL, MLB. So been around in multiple leagues as well. So interested on that take.

Brian Cull [00:15:43] It just means I’m really old. Been around.

Allison Gargano [00:15:48] Welcome. Oh, and you are also alumni of Villanova.

Jeff Moorad [00:15:53] All right, well, thank you. You know, it’s really special. We have all, frankly, the five top leagues in the US represented here. And that’s not only unique, but I think-and by the way, I’m assuming that Harris Blitzer will step up on the NBA given it’s its Philadelphia 76ers ownership and at least claim that league. So that gives us all five. And it’s really a pretty special moment for all of us here. In the spirit of that, I’m curious to know, given our subject today, each of your views about, you know, what the future of broadcasting looks like, in the U.S. and for your particular leagues,
if you don’t mind focusing on NBA, that’d be great. But we’d love to hear just, you know, what’s going to happen going forward with the demise of the RSN model. Obviously, the Diamond Sports bankruptcy and, you know, lots of other, stories that follow. You know, what happens going forward? Are we a digital broadcast platform, across the board? Are we a hybrid? Does linear survive? Curious to know your thoughts. Let’s start with Major League Baseball.

Frankie Garland [00:17:11] Yeah. Well, he mentioned Diamond. I mean, it’s definitely a tumultuous time right now, I would say for this topic in general and specifically to baseball. So I do think some type of hybrid model is probably what you’ll see most likely, at least in the next handful of years. I know, with the Phillies, we are in a fortunate position in terms of our relationship with, with Comcast, and the deal that exists there. But I think we’re also thinking about what the situation is going to look like in three to five, seven years as the Diamond situation sort of plays itself out and the league, MLB, you know, attempts to try to gather media rights so that they can try to maybe create their own digital option. So, yeah, I think right now everything’s on the table with respect to baseball teams. Every team is in a little bit of a different situation given their, you know, where they’re at with their RSN.

But I know with the Phillies, we’re interested in the direct-to-consumer option as soon as we’re able to pursue that. I think that that’s just the reality of the situation. Like that’s what folks are going to want at some point, at least to have that option to just turn on their smart TV and pay $4 to watch that night’s Phillies game on the TV as opposed to, you know, a monthly subscription or annual subscription. That’s not a reality for a lot of clubs right now, for various reasons. But, that’s an example of, I think, where things are going as soon as we can get there. But as for right now, I know Diamond is an example where things didn’t work out, but there are, several RSNs out there, at least, that are relatively strong and will continue to be, I think, for the next few years. So I do think you’re going to see a bit of a hybrid model with at least different teams pursuing different paths based on their current situation. And then, over top of everything, the league trying to, I’d say, have a longer-term strategy to look into options they can provide a sort of a league wide tool, that that folks can pay in to access.

Jeff Moorad [00:19:27] Great. Thank you. MLS?

Benjamin Dottino [00:19:29] Yeah. Maybe just to provide some background before, you know, getting into Apple because I think this is
where I’ll have something to contribute on RSNs. But, prior to last year, you know, our distribution model was very different in that we had, you know, agreements at the national level with ESPN, the Foxes and the Univision’s. And then on the kind of other levels with our clubs where they were able to, you know, enter into local television deals in their respective areas. So it was really kind of a very different model where you had the national level and then, you know, 20 something, RSN deals. And then obviously with, with the Apple deal, that completely changed. All of our matches are now available on season pass. Worldwide, no blackouts, games tournament’s all-star. You know, virtually everything. So in that respect, we don’t have the RSNs and the clubs don’t have those same local deals. But, you know, there still is a linear component to our distribution in that as part of the Apple deal, we were able to enter into, linear deals with, some of the partners that I just mentioned. You know, we have deals with Fox, Univision and Bell that include MLS games, leagues, Cup games. And I think it’s a great model and that it’s not just 20 something years of how we distributed game change overnight. You know, we still have these four-year deals where folks are able to watch our matches as they did in the previous years. And it’s no coincidence that it’s through the World Cup. So I think strategically that is great for the league.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:21:27] Thank you. David, you have a multi-sport view at Harris Blitzer. Obviously understand the mechanics of a lot of leagues. And, curious to know what your perspective is, maybe with a little bit of a leaning toward the NBA. But, just generally what do you think’s happening in this area, in our industry?

**David Reid** [00:21:47] You know, it’s something that we talk about a lot. TV revenue is a big part of our revenue, on the sports team side. Both our local deals and then, you know, the rights, fees that that are distributed as part of the, of the national deals. The NBA is a really interesting one because next season will be the last year under the current TV deal. Right now they have deals with Disney, which is, you know, ESPN and ABC, and then Warner with TNT. I would be surprised- I mean, I’m not involved in these negotiations from the team side- but I’d be surprised if those two properties weren’t involved, in the next deals. But I think it’ll be more than that. As you know, we enter the streaming world more and more every year.

So I think you’ll probably continue to see, like Frankie said, a little bit more of a hybrid. I don’t think the NBA would go to a full streaming model. I think it’s still going to be some traditional cable outlets that would carry games, but I’m sure you’ll see some sort of
component with an Amazon, with an Apple. That would come that would come with it to try to reach a broader audience.

I mean, I think a lot of people in this room probably have subscription fatigue from having to join 12 different things so that you can see everything that you want. But I think the good thing about it is that you’re reaching different people in different ways. I mean, younger fans are more likely to be signing up for streaming, but there’s still a lot of traditional cable users out there. And so I think to go away from it for at least for the NBA, and the NHL, which I know I’m sure Brian will touch on a bit. Probably isn’t the move yet.

On the team side, our six-year deal is another five years, I believe. Which I think actually puts us in a pretty good position right now. Obviously, you touched on the season model being complete chaos at the moment. But the five years really gives us time with a good partner to sort of see where the landscape is going to fall. I think. I don’t even think really, industry experts know exactly where this is going. We’re all sort of watching and waiting. So I think it’s a good position to be in, to be able to sort of see where this lands.

Jeff Moorad [00:24:03] Thank you. We’ll come back to Premier League, which you even have a view of. Look forward to that. Ingrid, the NFL obviously, you know, the leading league in the U.S., for many, many generations. Or at least a couple or three at this point. And, curious to know what your thoughts are on this topic.

Ingrid Petri [00:24:24] Oh, it’s, we’ve obviously we’ve seen continued success. Our ratings have been up year over year in the last few years. We’re still a league that’s predominantly available on broadcast and cable. With that being said, we do have an exclusive deal with Amazon for Thursday Night Football and last season did have a game on Peacock that was exclusive to streaming. With our availability in local markets for them to view that game for free. Thursday Night Football has seen quite a bit of success, and the Peacock game averaged almost 23 million viewers for that one game. And for this upcoming season, we will have a game on Peacock again on Friday night. That will be our game in Brazil, kickoff weekend. So that’s a first of its kind and one that we’re excited to see.

Jeff Moorad [00:25:13] Thank you. And Brian, NHL?

Brian Cull [00:25:16] Yeah, last, last but not least. It’s always tough following the NFL when you’re talking about ratings. When they do 98 of the top hundred shows in America are NFL games. So we are you know, obviously we’re all in a very similar boat when it comes
to the regional sports networks. We have 11 teams that have relationships with Diamond Sports. So a lot of it is just getting them in the best space for what may or may not happen. So it’s a lot of contingency planning. You know, we have one that’s called like the “break glass.” That if one day they turn off, like, how are we going to get our games on the air with the clubs? So a lot of work with our broadcasting group. Obviously, a lot of work working closely with our teams and actually, you know, the other leagues as well. So we all kind of learn from each other. And as these guys said, like, no one really knows.

I mean, I’d love for someone to say they know where this is heading, but, you know, Diamond just, got a deal done with Charter, I think it was yesterday. So they’re not dead yet, apparently. But it is definitely going to be interesting. And there’s just so many more options out there now. I think the NFL obviously with the streaming model that they’re going with, is changing the game and how people look at it. And a lot of people signed up for Peacock last year, so. And then the Eagles are going to be on, this year. So lots, lots of interesting times ahead of all of us. But I think it’s just getting our clubs in the best space, so that they’re prepared for whatever comes.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:26:44] Thank you.

**Allison Gargano** [00:26:45] So, that was really helpful for me just to hear sort of the, the high-level perspective from all of you. I’m going to dig in a little bit on a couple of things you all talked about. Ben, want to start with you, on the Apple TV deal. I think a lot of people see that as revolutionary. You touched on it a bit. And I know short term, right, people say there’s going to be this hybrid, and everybody’s talked about it today. But do you see maybe long term, do you think other leagues will continue to view streaming as an ancillary? Or maybe they will also solely focus? Have you been and maybe the two-part question for me there would be have you talked to other leagues? Have other leagues approached you to sort of talk about how it’s going? And what’s that been like?

**Ben Dottino** [00:27:31] I’ll take the second part of the question first. No. And, the first part of the question, I think it’s really unique to MLS and this model and why it works for our league, that maybe it doesn’t work for the other leagues. You know, I mentioned the way our matches were distributed before 2023. And, you know, all of our deals, both at the local level and at the national level, all of them, expired at the end of 2022, so that when we were, you know, bringing our media rights forward to find, the potential next partner we have
the ability to say “you literally get everything.” Yeah, and I think it’s really just for MLS. It’s kind of, you know, we’re in an inflection point, where it makes sense because a lot of the pain points are solved by, you know, our deal with Apple. You know for our fans, a lot of that was just scheduling, how to watch a game. What time are they on? Not only days of the week, but there was a very strange start times that are like, you know, 7:25 things like that. So now we have like a very streamlined schedule. Our matches are almost always Wednesday nights and Saturday nights. They’re available in one place worldwide. As I mentioned, you know, no blackouts.

But also there’s just a uniformity to our broadcast that we didn’t have in previous years. So, you know, before we would have potentially 20 something different kind of outlets for our matches that are distributed. And you know, the production quality, just everything about it was not uniform. So, you know, with the Apple deal we are now producing the matches which we had never done in you know the history of our league before. And that’s not only just the production side, but you know, we hire the talent that are that you see on season pass. You know that’s for pre, half time, post, our wrap up shows, 360. So I think you know everything about the way our matches are distributed now is just so different than previous years. And like really has you know our fingerprints on it.

And I think the partnership with Apple, you know just kind of allows us to shine. It kind of elevates us. So it’s not only just yeah, they have, you know, billions of users on, you know, a couple billion connected devices. And you know, it’s Apple sports and fitness and news and all these things. But you know, it’s really just for, for our league and where we are, our growth, our revenue, where we’re headed. It’s the right model for us. And some of these other leagues have been around for 100 plus years. And, you know, their viewership numbers don’t seem to hurt. The fact that they’re not, you know, exclusively on a streamer. So I think for our league, it makes sense, but probably not some of the others.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:30:27] Has the Apple deal been more successful than you thought or less so?

**Ben Dottino** [00:30:31] I think more successful. I mean, it’s hard to answer that question when, you know, 4 or 5 months into the deal, Messi joined, right?. So I think that, kind of, just this ensures that it was going to be a success. But I think, initially, I think it’s been very successful. Both in terms of, you know, the viewership on Apple, but then also, you know, you still see great numbers, you know, with
our linear partners. I mean, some of the Leagues Cup games are on
Univision had some like record-breaking numbers for us. Again, it
doesn’t hurt when you get Messi playing in those games. But again,
so I think yeah, it’s just been a success.

And if you read anything that’s in the news, whether it’s from
our executives on the media side or, you know, the Apple executives
like Eddy Cue, all of them said that, you know, in the first year we’ve
exceeded expectations. So it’s great because it’s just, you know, the
start of year two of a ten year relationship.

**David Reid** [00:31:26] And just to, to jump in quickly. I think one
thing that that we’re asked on the NBA and NHL side and I’m sure,
Brian and Frankie are the same is, “do you see yourself, do you see
your leagues going the direction of the NFL, MLS where there’s just
a national deal, right?” There’s not necessarily these local deals with
RSNs. I could see that in the distant future. But it’s very, very compli-
cated. There are teams like the Yankees and the Phillies and baseball,
or the Knicks and the Lakers in basketball, where their local TV deal
revenues are so much higher than the lower tier clubs.

And so if you’re going to have a national model, at least in the
short term, are you giving them a much bigger cut so that they’ll
agree to get out of their deals in order to do that? It’s really compli-
cated. I’m sure it could be done. but I’m not sure that’s, you know,
the next five years. It’s probably longer, into the future.

**Frankie Garland** [00:32:30] Yeah, I would agree with that. That’s
where it gets complicated. You know, if you think your two goals
are making sure as many people as possible can see your game, and
then on the ownership side that you’re compensated fairly for those
rights. Yeah, that’s where it gets tricky when you talk about taking it
all up a level to the league.

But yeah, it’s interesting hearing about the MLS model because
I know at least on the league side or on the MLB side, obviously,
launching the Apple TV broadcast, it’s just interesting to see, new
chances taken with broadcast on the Apple side. I know the reac-
tion to the Apple TV broadcast has been mixed, but I really enjoyed
seeing it just as a different way to watch baseball. And you talked
about how, you know, Apple really sort of adds this sort of brand
element to the MLS. And it’s so palpable when you watch an Apple
TV baseball broadcast, it just feels different than a traditional, you
know, Comcast Sportsnet broadcast. And obviously people have their
different preferences. But I really enjoy seeing new opportunities in
that broadcast field that those different partners are able to provide.
Jeff Moorad [00:33:36] I think Ownership’s motivated on both subjects. One bottom line for sure. But also extending the brand, regardless, whether it’s on behalf of a league or whether it’s on behalf of an individual club. I think both are, are important.

Ingrid- Is there a media bubble? Is it going to burst?

Ingrid Petri [00:34:01] Our deals are locked in for the foreseeable future, which is a good position to be in. And people are going to continue to watch sports content, and especially watch it in real time. And we see through our relationship, again, with Amazon, with Thursday Night Football on Peacock, that we’re capturing that younger fan who is predominantly watching content on their phones through streaming services. So I think as long as we’re able to adapt to that younger fan base, that younger consumer of content we’ll continue to be relevant.

Jeff Moorad [00:34:36] Any other opinions about the media bubble? Is there one? Is it just going to keep going up? Will leagues keep getting compensated at higher and higher levels? Will consumers keep paying more money?

David Reid [00:34:48] It seems I mean, the projections on the NBA side, are that the next, national TV deal will triple their revenue per year. I don’t know if that’s an ambitious hope.

Jeff Moorad [00:35:03] It’s an ambition.

David Reid [00:35:04] Yeah, it’s an ambition. But I’ve seen that in multiple places that they expect that. Again, I don’t think it’s going to come strictly from Disney and Warner. I think it’s going to have to be spread out a bit. But it’s not going to go down. The revenue is not going to go down on the national level. And so I don’t think there’s a bubble that’s about to burst, but I certainly think the bubble is going to change. Maybe there will be multiple bubbles, I guess.

Jeff Moorad [00:35:28] Yeah. So the platform may change over time, but the revenues, you know, theoretically continue to chase live sports.

David Reid [00:35:38] Yeah. And I think the reasons are obviously different. We’ve seen that either starting to burst or it has and that will change. Some partners, some companies obviously have been worse off than others. But I don’t think revenue overall on broadcasting rights is going down anytime soon, given the competition between the streaming platforms and traditional cable.
Frankie Garland [00:36:05] Yeah, I agree with Ingrid. I mean, live sports, I think is always going to have value. And I think that’s going to continue to go up just as people continue to look for, you know, live, authentic storylines, experiences, you know, watching that and a lot of different ways. I mean, I think even this year with the emergence of women’s sports, driving a ton of eyeballs, a ton of storylines, I think the pie can continue to grow in terms of the amount of content that people want to receive and watch. So I agree, I mean, I think the way it’s absorbed is going to change and the structure is going to change, but I don’t see the value in in watching live sports changing anytime soon. Especially in this area, I mean, we’re lucky to all live in a region, Philadelphia, where people are very into sports. And, yeah, I don’t see that changing anytime soon.

Allison Gargano [00:36:59] So I’m going to come to you, Brian, and go back a little bit to the conversation I was having, with Ben on consolidation into one network. I know the NHL chose to split it today, but have they considered it or are you guys considering it? Alternate altering that partnering with one network or streaming platform? And how do you see that?

Brian Cull [00:37:22] So we’re probably an interesting case study for this, because we were a one broadcast platform before our most recent rights agreement. So we were on NBC, and it was a wonderful partner for us, but we just got to a point where we were looking for kind of that next step and that next partner. To these guys’ point, we went out to a marketplace and had unbelievable success with both ESPN and Turner.

So I think what you can’t underestimate is the power of those broadcast partner. So I can speak from having been at the NHL a long time when we were in on ESPN, you would see us during the playoffs. They would have Barry Melrose on for like two minutes to do playoffs, and that was it. We were never on shoulder program, we were never part of the discussion in any of their other shows. Now you have Pat McAfee with us. He has a section called Hockey Is Awesome where he talks about like, cool stuff that went on. He was I mean, we don’t promote fighting, but the Devils Rangers game the other night, everybody on ESPN was talking about it, like how wild it was. You know, and then even on Turner, you have someone like Charles Barkley who is a huge hockey fan at halftime of an NBA playoff game saying “this game is boring as hell. I’m watching hockey in my green room.”

So I think those different platforms and extensions that we didn’t necessarily have before. And as I said, NBC was a wonderful
partner. But looking to grow the game like what other options are out there? And we were lucky enough to have, you know, two wonderful partners who were just pushing the game forward. And I also think there’s just an availability issue. You know, when you’re on one broadcast partner, you’re on maybe 1 or 2 channels. Now we have over 200 games are broadcast in season either on ESPN or Turner properties. So I mean, just that, you know, people, you know, buddies of mine be like, “where the hell’s NBC?” You know, whatever channel is on, like trying to find it. Like, that was always a tough thing for people to do. And now it’s so much easier for people to access our games.

And then there’s also, like, some fun extensions we’re doing with kids. Like we did with Disney XD, where we put a game via Big City Greens. So it was basically we had a live stream of a game using cartoon characters. We’re doing another one using like super heroes coming up soon on Turner. So those are just the types of opportunities that we would have never really had before that we’re lucky enough to have now.

Allison Gargano [00:39:43] Yeah, yeah. It’s a unique perspective to sort of come from one network and then expand.

Jeff Moorad [00:39:49] David, your principles seem to be acquiring just about everything in the industry. Obviously not all under the Harris Blitzer umbrella, but, you know, Josh Harris with the Washington Commanders, David Blitzer with Real Salt Lake and the Cleveland Guardians. You know, the, the portfolio is obviously growing on the professional club side. And I’m curious to know, do you sit around in the Harris Blitzer world and think about how to aggregate your broadcast properties? You know, granted, you have league restrictions, but, you know, are there opportunities to carve out pieces of each of those clubs, in multiple sports? You know, could the future involve Harris Blitzer Sports and Entertainment Channel or something of the sort?

David Reid [00:40:47] I doubt it. I think everything is always discussed internally, what makes the most sense? We are somewhat unique. There are others like us, but our properties or our sister properties, in the case of the commanders and guardians and some of the others that you mentioned, they’re not all in the same market. And so where an MSG has, you know, Devils, Islanders, Rangers, but then also the Knicks, people sign up for a platform like that because they might be a fan of two or more teams. I think the same with monumental when they launch theirs. But if you can find a Crystal
Palace, Devils, Sixers, Guardians, Commanders fan, that doesn’t work for HBC. I would love to meet him or her. So, I don’t see that in the immediate future.

I think a good example recently, I don’t know if everyone knows that, Fenway Sports, which obviously owns the Red Sox. They have a joint venture with a TV, a streaming, platform. And Fenway also owns the Penguins and Liverpool. But when the Penguins RSN deal was up, they didn’t fold them into NESN, just because of the market. So, I think that’s probably not something that would happen in the near future unless it, you know- This landscape’s changing, so never say never. But I don’t see that soon.

Jeff Moorad [00:42:12] Yep. Makes sense. Ingrid, I’m curious to know how sponsorship has been impacted by the shifting platforms. You know, whether it be linear, digital, you know, how does that impact the sponsorship business of the NFL?

Ingrid Petri [00:42:27] No, it’s certainly benefited us all. The brands were in conversations with, both our current partners and new prospects all want to reach that Gen Z, Gen Y audience. And again, we’re capturing them through our streaming partners, and Amazon and Peacock, and also still capturing them across all of our linear partners as well, and also our NFL, from NFL network to NFL plus, and also an extension of that would be behind the scenes content we have on our social channels and our social partners as well. And telling that behind the scenes story that captures that younger fan, that then draws them in, to our games. So it’s certainly, it’s been helpful from a sponsorship perspective. And I think as long as we continue to innovate with our partners. This past season, we launched QR codes that we enabled through our partners commercials, which was a first and a way for them to engage with our fans beyond just that 30 second spot.

Jeff Moorad [00:43:25] So partners are looking to sponsorship partners to activate through the league in different ways? And I would think the social side of it probably is the most unique, going forward.

Ingrid Petri [00:43:40] I would it’s telling that 360 story around the league. So from social media, we can capture what our partners are doing on site at the NFL draft that’s coming up on April 25th. We can continue to tell that story across our linear partners and streaming partners. Also utilizing our players to really help market with our sponsors to amplify their stories. I think when it’s a win-win when we can work across all aspects of the NFL.

Allison Gargano [00:44:14] Does anyone else have a perspective on the sponsorship deals with your leagues? I’m interested.

Brian Cull [00:44:19] Yeah, I mean, I’ll jump in here. I think, you know, one of the things that we did that ties into the broadcasting side is last year we changed to they’re called digitally enhanced dashboards. But essentially, instead of having the static dashers that are broadcast back to a home market, we now give the home and the away team the ability to control the inventory for the dasher board. So if you’ve seen a game recently, you know, usually it’s a total take-over. So one brand will control, all the advertising that you see as the puck goes up and down the ice.

You know, before there’s 24 camera-visible signs that would be during a game. Now it’s almost limitless. We can do animations. Partners can change our messaging period to period or rotation or rotation. But the biggest thing is when the Rangers would come play the Flyers. The Flyers dasher boards were being broadcast back into New York’s marketplace. Now the Rangers control that inventory, so essentially doubled their dasher board inventory. And it’s just been cool, like there’s a lot of different things we can do with it moving forward. We can do like gamification. So when it’s a power play, it’s a power play presented by Peco or wherever your power play partner is when there’s a goal scored, that goal brought to you by whomever.

And it’s amazing because we started working on this seven years ago, and the cost was like astronomical, where we’d have to, replace the dasher boards in every arena. And it was going to be like a three-year process to get that done. And now it’s all done through artificial intelligence. And it’s literally a game changer for us and for our league and for our partners as well.

Frankie Garland [00:44:19] Yeah. And I think Ingrid’s point about the 360 content to like my wife is obsessed with Drive to Survive and we’re now like a huge F1 household. I think watching that program I mean, it’s so well done and it’s such an interesting way to get people into a sport. But just thinking about the amount of sponsorship opportunities in shows like that. Like the amount of exposure that all those brands, who, who sponsor different elements of F1, the eyeballs they’re getting through a show like Drive to Survive. I think about that in the context of other leagues who might be trying similar programing; you know, and what that’s going to do to outfield wall signs on a baseball team that happens to be on like, a drive
to survive like show and the amount of exposure they’re going to get, how those deals are going to be negotiated based on, you know, content like that coming up. So in addition to the live matches, it’s going to be interesting to see how that ancillary programing is, is monetized and negotiated, because I’m guessing given the success of shows like Drive to Survive, everyone’s going to want to get in on that as a way to increase interest in teams in sports.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:47:09] Well, speaking of Drive to Survive, the producer Box to Box which did a fabulous job and won many sports Emmys for their productions, is now working with the MLS. Curious to know your views on the future of that. And, you know, do you see that as being a long-term project?

**Ben Dottino** [00:47:32] I do this is for me personally. I mean, I got to work on this deal, so I’m also just very excited about it. Also, a huge F1 fan out of nowhere after just watching one episode of Drive to Survive. But for me, it’s like Apple, Messi, then Box to Box Films because I think it is going to be that important for the league, for fans, for creating new fans. And, you know, for folks who don’t know Box to Box films, but, you know, they made all this fantastic content, not only Drive to Survive, Full Swing, Breakpoint, I mean, just so many other programs. You go to their website, you’d be surprised at how many other pieces of content they have out there that’s not just, you know, Drive to Survive, which is the thing that they’re most well known for. But I’m just I feel really fortunate to work, you know, internally with my content distribution team because they, you know, years ago identified Box to Box as the partner that they wanted to bring this show to life because, you know, they’re so experienced. But they’re just so, like, damn good at what they do. Because I had no interest in, in F1 or anything like that. And you’re just immediately hooked after watching a few minutes, so.

So our partnership with them, you know, started this year. It’s, at least this, this season is going to be, you know, an eight-episode, season that follows the 2024 season. And they started filming, you know, basically at the start of the year. And, it’s going to be great because it’s going to tell, you know, all of the storylines as they develop naturally. And that’s part of what Box to Box does so well. But also just, you know, just bring some drama out of the league and what just really pulls folks in. And that’s the players, the transfers, the rivalry, the history. And it’s really getting to that, that that 360, you know experience that that that our fans want. So for me it’s so exciting and it’s something I get to kind of work on every day. So yeah, it’s gonna be great.
Allison Gargano [00:49:40] Since we are at a law school after all, I have to ask one legal question related to that. Yeah. What have been some of the legal conversations with negotiating that deal?

Ben Dottino [00:49:51] Yeah, that’s a great question. This this deal was, not exactly, easy in a sense. Not not because of the Box to Box folks, but I think it’s just the nature of these types of projects. So, you know, not only do we have the agreement with Box to Box, but then there’s also the distributor, whoever that may be, which, you know, just coincidentally happened to be Apple in this case. So the kind of nuance of, you know, drafting and negotiating those agreements is really interesting. But I think like more to your question about the legal issues, there’s a couple that were on, you know, the drafting and negotiating side and that are on kind of the day to day that I deal with that, that I could touch upon.

So I think there’s going to be like three buckets and that’s probably clearances, access and then like review and approvals. So I mean, these are obviously things you negotiate that are in the agreement. But then it comes down to practice when they’re actually out in the field and they’re shooting, and you have 29 clubs and they need to, you know, access every single part of the stadium or the locker room or the players and kind of how do you manage that on a day to day basis?

So, you know, starting with, I don’t know if I mentioned creative but creative is definitely one. So, you know, our team is intimately involved in the in the creation of the series. And I think that’s what’s going to help, you know, make it so great. So we have, you know, we have creative approvals in terms of, you know, certain storylines that are told, personnel that are involved in the project, and things of that nature. So, you know, our content distribution team is basically in constant contact with Box to Box, which is great.

Access is probably the most important because, without access, you don’t have a show. And, you know, I don’t know if folks are recently, but, you know, Breakpoint, which is, you know, their series on Netflix, that focused on tennis, you know, was not renewed. And, you know, there’s a lot of things cited in the article about why it wasn’t renewed. But one of the things they highlighted was lack of access. So that’s something we also manage on a day-to-day basis, again, with all the clubs and players and storylines. And, you know, we’re constantly finding a way to give them the kind of unfettered access they need to make the series great, because if you don’t have that, it’s not going to be great, and then there won’t be multiple seasons and then, you know, just reviews and approvals. It’s everything you’d expect, but it’s essentially just being able to, you know, help
tell the story. It’s almost help Box to Box tell the story because they
don’t have all of the history of our rivalries and our in our league
and our, you know, 20 something year history. So I think, you know,
being involved in that process, getting to, you know, see content
before it gets kind of to a final stage and to have some approvals over,
you know, not only our brand and IP, but you know what we want
the show to really be about. So it’s been great because they’re super
professional. And I think it’s again, it’s something I’m really excited
about. I think it’s going to be great. Great.

Jeff Moorad [00:52:52] As we wrap up, one last thought from each of
you about the future of sports broadcasting as it relates to your own
leagues and involvement, right?

Brian Cull [00:53:03] Yeah. I’ll go first. I think for us, we’ve seen an
explosion over the last three to five years, in women’s sports. So the
growth of both girls and women’s hockey, one of our great stats is
our friend development. People say when you create a hockey player,
you create four or five different fans. So that’s their parents, their
grandparents, their aunts and uncles, people who want to have a
connection with them. But we’ve seen it, you know, we’re working
with their kick off, it’s been pretty successful so far and trying to
see where that goes. But just think that increasing that viewership is
going to be vital, and it’s just something that’s going to keep going
up and up as we keep investing in women’s sports.

Jeff Moorad [00:53:50] Ingrid?

Ingrid Petri [00:53:51] And building on that, we will, the NFL for
the first time will have the NFL flag championship taking place this
July in Canton, Ohio. Our broadcast partner is ESPN, and we’ll have
women playing flag on a national broadcast level, which is really
exciting for us. And that will lead into the Olympics in 2028. So I
would see for us the success of having more women playing football
and then increasing interest in the NFL overall through that.

Jeff Moorad [00:54:19] David.

David Reid [00:54:20] I think it’ll just be interesting to watch all
the different models and what comes of them. I mean, I think we
haven’t touched on, you know, the Phoenix Suns went to a com-
plete over the air model where they got to the point where they were
running a promotion, where you could come pick up a TV antenna
to put on your TV. So that if you put it, if you go completely over
the air, you’re reaching more fans. But there the short-term revenue
is lower. There’s the direct-to-consumer model, which the Vegas Golden Knights, launched right after the Stanley Cup victory and trying to build up subscriptions that way. And then there’s obviously IRS ascends the completely national deals. So I don’t I’m fascinated to see sort of where this lands for each of the leagues and how they treat it. So it’ll be interesting.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:55:10] Ben?

**Ben Dottino** [00:55:12] Yeah, for us, the die is kind of cast. But I think there’s a lot of just interesting kind of technological elements that we’ve like integrated into our broadcast that I think there’s still a lot more room to grow. And I think one example is that, you know, while our clubs don’t have, you know, local television deals, they can still enter into radio broadcast deals, which, you know, on stage doesn’t sound so exciting. But, you know, we, you know, starting I think a few months into last season, we were able to actually integrate those radio, you know, audio cars into the season pass products. So you could listen to, you know, your radio broadcasts or call a game while watching on season Pass, which I think is incredible. And I think it’s just one example of, you know, just how much more room for growth there is.


**Frankie Garland** [00:56:01] Yeah. I think, you know, for the Phillies talking more on the club side than the league side, our goal is just going to be to get our games in as many people’s hands as possible. However, whatever form that takes, I think, you know, we’re in a really exciting window of Phillies baseball and a lot of excitement, especially in, you know, younger folks who are able to kind of grow up with this team talking about, you know, young teenagers and kids. So we’re lucky in that we have a really great broadcast partner in Comcast, and a station that has, you know, three of the four major teams and, and the Eagles, too. If you think about pre and post-game that do really well on that channel. So a really strong RSN partner and continuing to explore, you know, the direct-to-consumer options that are just going to get our games in front of as many people as possible.

**Jeff Moorad** [00:56:54] Allison, my co moderator, thank you. And thanks to all of our panelists for a great panel.

**Allison Gargano** [00:57:00] Thanks all.
For our second panel of the morning, I wanted to focus on the player side. You just heard a great panel about league and team executives’ views on changing media. You heard about the move from broadcast to streaming. You heard about all the ways the different leagues are adjusting to the new reality of media coverage and sports. Now I want to get the player side more of a view from players themselves. Player groups, unions, people working with name, image, likeness, etc.

I want to introduce my colleagues here. Dana Gross from Morgan Lewis is helping me moderate. I want to introduce Kevin from the Major League Soccer Players Association. You heard from Major League Soccer executive – here’s the other side from the player side. Kevin, an athlete himself and I believe a Supernova, right? Undergrad and grad here at Nova. Khalil Wilkes, a star alum of this program. We share a passion with a couple schools. We’re both Stanford grads. He was center on the football team. He gave the ball to Andrew Luck every play and Khalil has worked in NIL in a variety of roles and now is with William Morris Endeavor in New York. Great to have him.

We have Randy Foye here. National College Player of the year in 2006. 11th draft pick in the entire NBA. Is it – no – 11th? Seventh, sorry. Seventh draft pick overall in the NBA draft. 11 years in the NBA. And now we have him here as our friends of Nova Head, who’s running our collective here in this new world of college athletics, which we’ll talk about.

We also have the two-time Big East Player of the year, first team All-American, third overall draft pick in the WNBA last year. Maddy Siegrist is here. Let’s welcome our panel.
Maddy, I want to start with you. Obviously, you have seen the way that players and media interact for many years, and it’s just that we are at a true inflection point of sports and media. But we’re also the true inflection point of women’s college basketball, as everyone knows. And all the excitement going on today and tonight. What changes have you seen since being an athlete here? Now being in pro sports and now working with Villanova women’s basketball.

Maddy Siegrist [00:03:22] Well, thanks for having me.

Andrew Brandt [00:03:24] It’s great to have you. We’ve been trying to get over here for a while.

Maddy Siegrist [00:03:28] I think in the last few years, just to see women’s basketball grow so much. In terms of, like, media attention, I think the biggest thing was the branding of March Madness. It wasn’t until 2 or 3 years ago that the NCAA tournament was able to call the Women’s March Madness, March Madness, and I think since that’s happened, it’s really propelled women’s sports in general and women’s college basketball. And, you know, you see the viewings of all the games. I hope everyone watches tonight. I don’t know who you guys got tonight, but it’s just been great to see the amount of media coverage. And I think it’s just going to continue to grow. And, you know, people want to watch it. And I think that’s been evident.

Andrew Brandt [00:04:11] And Kevin, you’ve seen it. We had been up here from Major League Soccer. Talk about the transformative Apple deal. That’s ten years with Apple. No other way to see the games. But it’s an all-in-one – talk about it from the player side. What have you heard from the players side about that deal?

Kevin Garcia [00:04:29] So first, thank you for inviting me to be here. I graduated in 2012 and I love coming back here. And thanks for giving me another reason to come back. My visits are always too far apart, but always good to come back and reconnect with old friends. So with the Apple deal, I think the headline that all the players were focused on was the $2.5 million number – $2.5 billion number.

Andrew Brandt [00:04:53] A little different.

Kevin Garcia [00:04:54] A little bigger, over ten years. And I think, from the player perspective and the PA side, our job is always to sort of dig into the deal and to the deals and make sure that we understand the implications that it has for the players, because it’s our job
to disseminate that information, make sure our guys are all caught up with, the inner workings of the deal.

So, that was summer of 2022, where we were going out in market and making sure that we were meeting with those players. I specifically handle two Spanish and Portuguese speaking players, so I have to vary my approach a little bit and make sure, they’re understanding the information, and in their terms.

So, there was a lot of excitement around it and there’s also, a piece of it that’s IMR that I can get into a little bit later, which is, incremental media revenue. But essentially, I wanted to make sure that the guys understood sort of the changes, that led to, unlimited access with Apple having that, virtually unlimited potential to just show the game across any, platform or, I guess, any market in the world. That means a lot for our league because of how diverse our player pool is. And that’s the number one question. How can my family see the game? So that was the number one thing. And that was a big, positive for the players. I think having a fixed schedule every Wednesday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. local time, with some exceptions, because of the linear deals with Fox and Univision, you’re going to have some of the games that maybe fall out of that, that fixed schedule.

And then we also saw less blackouts. I think even when I was a player, when I was left behind, when I was injured, I didn’t make the game day roster. It was frustrating because a lot of the games were blacked out, or families from across the country or even in other markets weren’t able to see the game. So I think having access to the game today is much easier for families and their players.

And I also just want to touch quickly on, sort of like the impact Apple has had. We’ve obviously been able to bring virtually the best soccer player, in soccer history. And with that came a bit of a media circus last summer, where we’d seen nothing like it, where there was, sort of reporters covering Miami training for roughly two months straight. And it was new for all the other guys. I think everyone focus is on Messi and the other Barcelona stars that came along with him. But a lot of the other guys hadn’t been used to that exposure and they didn’t have the media training. So I think as a PA, it was our job to arrive and make sure that they were coached up on what they could and couldn’t say and sort of what their rights were as players. So it’s a lot of excitement. But at the same time, we also have to sort of level with the guys and make sure that, we take a step back and sort of analyze the deal and know what their protections are as a result.
Dana Gross [00:07:33] Just to hear you, Kevin. So with Messi coming over at the new Apple deal, new obligations for players, different expectations for participation and then perhaps in the prior deal that you played under as a player. Can you talk to us about how that has changed, how those obligations change, what’s new?

Kevin Garcia [00:07:51] Yeah, so with the previous media deal, we had ESPN. We also had some of the other linear deals with, Univision and Fox and just with speaking with some of my colleagues, some of the previous media obligations were just the TV crew would show up at the away team’s hotel the day before the game. There’d be sort of a roundtable discussion. And then you would have interviews at the halftime of the game the following day, and then post-game interviews. That was about it.

Now, with now with Apple, we’re seeing some of these featured series player spotlights. They have all these like, unique storylines that they can create and sort of increase fan engagement, exposure for each player, work on their branding. And it does, have a lot of value for the players. And so in that it’s athlete branding, it’s exposure to different markets, it’s building, sort of that, connection with the audience. And so that resonates a lot with our younger audience.

And so with, with the players, we see a lot more media obligations. And sometimes the guys aren’t all coached up on how much access they have to give. So with Messi coming and all the media exposure that that team was getting last year, we wanted to make sure that the guys knew, that those, that that access, those interviews, had to be held at facilities at the hotel. They didn’t have to open up the doors of their, of their homes. They didn’t have to expose their families to that. All the content had to be focused around the sport and nothing else. So guys have that framework in place in those guidelines if they want to maybe act more outside of the scope of what the media policy is, then they’re welcome to do so. But at least they know sort of what their protections are.

Dana Gross [00:09:33] And from your players perspective, that access to an Apple producing high quality pieces for broadcast and/or docuseries for their streaming channel, that’s critical from your perspective.

Kevin Garcia [00:09:47] As far as their access? Well, I think as a as speaking as a player, I think it’s great because it gives a chance for the players to work on their branding, work on their narratives, not just
with the league and with Apple in their clubs, but also a big part of it is our commercial partners are now seeing it a younger audiences and it’s increasing, the audience for it. So I think that you have different tiers of how it benefits the players. I think from the PA side, we’re concerned because we want to make sure guys who don’t want to be in the spotlight are protected. And so we want to make sure that that’s clear.

Andrew Brandt [00:10:19] Randy and Khalil. I want to talk about we’re going to talk about NIL, but let’s focus on media for a second. In terms of what you’ve seen with young players and their approach to media and what is changing in their world. We see a lot of young players cutting out the middleman with their podcasts, with their direct access through social media. How do you advise on that and are there – what are your major concerns where that’s going?

Khalil Wilkes [00:10:49] Yeah. So. Hi, everybody. Khalil Wilkes. WB Sports, working and NIL from the agency standpoint. I think our clients are doing a great job in the media. Obviously, you have your media obligations that your school provides you, but then on top of that, there’s great opportunity for you to monetize your NIL through some of the things that you do in the media. Right. And I think that plenty of student athletes have already started to benefit from some of the influence that they’re being shown, maybe on interviews, get to know their personality more, hear more about their story. And that’s leading to brand partnerships that are aligned with that.

In terms of things that are cautioned, right. Obviously, working with brands, you’re now the ambassador of this brand if you’re working with them and of course, not saying anything that’s going to get away from you having the best NIL or best image out there is one thing that we definitely talk to our clients about. In terms of agents, I really hope that they’re at least helping with some of the media obligations or at least public speaking of some of these student athletes, because the microscope has just gotten that much wider now with NIL. Not only are the fans watching, right, but now there’s new fans, which are the brands that are now watching. So, at all times and making sure that these young, you know, as early as 14 years old for high school student athletes that are doing an NIL all the way through to, you know, 22, 23-year-olds, you know, advising them that you are an adult, you know, especially in this new space when you’re making adult money. These brands want you to hold yourself in the best esteem possible. So, something that we’re always thinking about. I’m always looking on ESPN and other reports hoping that
none of our clients are saying anything too bad about our agency, number one. And then on top of that, their universities or any of their brand deals.

**Randy Foye** [00:12:39] Well, thank you. Andrew, appreciate you having me here today. When I think about the social media platform, I think about 2012, when Instagram occurred and we were in Memphis, Tennessee, and we were getting ready to play the Memphis Crazy when I was playing for the Los Angeles Clippers. And everyone was taking pictures and, you know, putting on this little website or slow platform, and I was hesitant to do it.

And I look back and I look at Blake Griffin doing it, and I remember one day from just, you know, Sean himself dunked the ball. He had 20,000 followers in one day. And I look at it as, I was late and just looking at the way that, you know, multiple athletes from the NBA to the WNBA to the NFL, just all across the platform has profited from social media. I look at, you know, where I'm at now. I'm close to 50,000 followers. But I was more active on Twitter. And when I look at the way, you know, Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese, the way they monetize their social media platform is genius because these brands, they want you out there.

A lot of, you know, your collegian athlete or your professional athlete, your lives private, and you don't want no one to see what you're doing. But when you put yourself in a space, where are you out there, where you're on TikTok and you're constantly collabing with different organizations, I think it's important for the kids because now when you think of these contracts, these contracts are, you know, six and seven figures, just because, you know, you're allowing a company to use your name, image and likeness. So for myself, I wish I was more proactive in that area, but watching what's going on with these young kids in the way we represent these young kids now, I would tell these young kids, especially with social media, be careful, but dive in headfirst.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:14:36] Maddy, I was a big fan of the way you handled media the past couple of years here, and I see Caitlin Clark doing the same thing. You're obviously the focus here. You're the best player. You're the one the media wanted to talk to. And you always brought in your teammates and you always talked about your teammates and this selflessness that throughout our program I saw. I mean, I'm sure that was something that was not even conscious of you. Something you wanted to do to include your teammates the way you did.
Maddy Siegrist [00:15:10] Well, thanks. I think for me, just realizing, you know, some people are just given a God given talent and everybody on a team goes to practice does lift, film. There’s so many things that go into it. And just because, you know, one player maybe has, you know, more points or more rebounds or makes every shot that day, it doesn’t – like your teammates, you wouldn’t be there without them. You wouldn’t be there without, you know, the person that guard you in practice every day. You know that fouls you instead of like letting you get an easy layup. And I think, for me, just realizing I would never be in the position I am today without my teammates. And I always wanted my teammates to feel like that. It was never, you know, me and then them. We were all together and, you know, for us to be successful, you know, and have the success we did last year, it was going to be, you know, because of the team, not because of me.

Dana Gross [00:16:08] I guess this is for everybody. But, you know, on the same theme, like. How would you advise your teammates, your athletes, your clients, how to handle social media in general and how to pick the people that you’ll sponsor, endorse as an athlete?

Maddy Siegrist [00:16:30] Well, for me, I would say I was pretty late to the game with social media up until I think my sophomore year of college, I was private on every form of social media. I just, I wasn’t a fan of it. I didn’t like it. And then eventually you realize, like you as an athlete, you know, this is your brand, you are almost a business and you have to give more access. And I think, you know, kind of what Randy said, you can pick and choose. And I would be careful and I would advise my teammates, you know, myself, anybody who has to be careful with what you share because it’s going to be out there forever. I feel like every parent says that to their kid when they’re getting social media, but especially as an athlete, you know, we see all the time people getting in trouble for something they tweeted ten years ago, and maybe they had ten followers then, and now they have a couple million. And it’s just, you know, be careful because it’s not going to go away. But as an athlete, you definitely have to dig into that.

Randy Foye [00:17:28] Yeah. So I would say, use it as a tool. Because, you know, if you do something like Maddy said, if you do something, let’s say if you’re 14 years old and you’re on Twitter and you tweet something out and let’s say at 24, you become this superstar athlete, someone’s going to dig that up. So someone’s going to try to use that as a weapon against you. So just be careful and understand that, you know, sit with social media. Everyone around the world can see
it. Right. So just use it. There’s brands that will come after you. Be outgoing. Use it as a tool where, you can use it as a public speaking tool, to not only help you, but to help your family. You know, a lot of kids that, you know, we deal with in certain demographics, use it to, you know, earn capital. And that’s how I look at it. Don’t use it where you’re out there bullying someone. Use it in a way where you helping your family, and you’re helping yourself on your own platform because it’s your brand.

**Khalil Wilkes** [00:18:27] I mean, we also advise our clients to think about brands and products that they actually enjoy and truly enjoy, because just the organic support or promotion of a deal just comes across way better than just doing it just for the money. Also doing the social media posts the right way the first time with the brands. Because brands do talk. So if you don’t have your FTC disclosures in there or, you know, from a compliance standpoint, brands talk about those things, right?

And then on top of that, just continue, even if it’s a smaller deal, bigger deals do come. It just is more so about the repetition of showing that you can be a great ambassador for a brand. And I think that, you know, before I even worked at the agency, I worked at a startup that was a marketplace. And during those times, we had a lot of student athletes that were just promoting, you know, social media posts for 50 bucks or a hundred bucks for the local pizza shop or Kelly’s – or not Kelly’s, but a couple other brands and products.

So but eventually, once brands are seeing how well you are able to connect with your audience, right. These brands love the fact that these are hard to reach markets. Right? Student athletes are around other college students. They’re hyper localized. So if you want to, you know, specifically point out the Villanova area or Philadelphia, you can reach them through social media of these ambassadors and student athlete ambassadors. So, you know, first, picking your interest, right, doing it right the first time and then just repetition.

**Kevin Garcia** [00:19:58] And just to add on that, I think that there’s two sides to it that I’ve seen happen in practice. You have the positive impact of it with the branding, your exposure, your ability to connect with, with audiences all over the world. And then there’s sort of even teammates that I’ve played with, they’ll, they have one type of teammate who will maybe publish or sports specific content, and then other teammates who maybe just show every single aspect of their lives. And I think, I’ve seen some of the more, veteran guys like World Cup veterans to make it more specific and they don’t really
show much of their private lives because they don’t want that kind of scrutiny on them in their families. So I think when I’m speaking with players, I’m talking to them about that and making sure that they’re understanding the risks and exposures of maybe sharing every little detail about your life and even holding some controversial views on public platforms. I think in just in my time as a player and as a PA rep, I’ve seen players – and even if it wasn’t the player saying maybe it was someone in their family and their families a reflection on the player. So those players have been ousted by fan bases in MLS or in soccer in general. Supporters’ groups are important to organizations, and they’ll make their voices heard if the player or their families interests don’t align with the groups. And so it’s sad. But I think the training and the education is an important piece of it that not a lot of our guys get, especially the international guys, because they have varying education levels and they come from all different markets. So I think it’s something that we continue to think about and want to make sure that we’re buttoned up and we’re able to educate guys on that as they continue to monetize their platform and look after that, the ugly side of social media.

Andrew Brandt [00:21:39] Okay. We have to talk a little bit about name, image, likeness. You heard of it? The college sports world is changing by the moment. We talk about it in classes all the time. We’ve had symposia about it, but I wanted to stay away from it as a complete subject. But we have talked about with this panel because we’ve been talking about the same thing, media and branding together. And that’s, of course, this new world of college sports and the changes that are going on. Like I said at the moment, by the moment, day by day, Randy, you probably didn’t know what a collective was, nor did I, two years ago. Now you’re running one.

Randy Foye [00:22:19] Yeah. I never knew that was coming. But, if all of you guys are here, if you really want to support Friends of Nova I would go to friendsofnova.com.

Andrew Brandt [00:22:29] Talk about Jay tapping you a couple years ago.

Randy Foye [00:22:32] Yeah. We’re in a soup right now, so that’s why I’m up here, saying um a lot, but, yeah, I didn’t know what a collective was when Coach Wright came to me and he said, “hey, you know, I want I need you to spearhead something.” And it’s important for the university. At that moment, I thought he was going to ask me
to be the head coach, but. He had other plans for me, to deal with our student athletes. And I ended up coming down, meeting with Mark Jackson, athletic director and Ashwin at the time, who was our number two. This athletic director now at La Salle University.

And the moment I walked in the door to meet with them, I knew it was important. And I knew they needed my help. And the way they broke things down to me, they said, hey, we’re going to do it this way, and we’re going to do it the right way and the way we’re going to do it the right way, we’re going to start you, you’re not going to be working for the university. You’re going to be working for a third party, which is Blueprint, and start working with Blueprint and right away hit the ground running. A ton of conversation with our alumni about what we were trying to do, that I was a trusted face. Ashwin was also a general manager with me, whose assistant, coached our men’s basketball team, and we just hit the ground running, and we went out and we educated and informed our alumni on the importance of support in our NIL efforts.

And we had some guys step up and – because – to be, successful on NIL space. Like free agency and NBA – MBA open for the court of I would say four months, but it really kicks in I would say the last three days, and I would do it the same way with, with the transfer portal. I just think there is too many moving pieces. I think that there are too many kids jumping into the space looking to be compensated at a high level, which I don’t agree with.

But here we got a great team. A lot of our teammates are in the building right now. And the way we’re doing is we recognize that, you know, myself and Baker Dunleavy, we have been a part of basketball our entire life. So, you know, when someone’s trying to take advantage of the system, right? And, you know, from GMs to agencies, you know, we know everyone. I know everyone playing in NBA solo. So we know the market. So the guys that we want to bring in, we want them to be a part of the community, which is the university in the shoe, which is the V. If you don’t want to be a part of that, if you want to be – we don’t want you here. And I think that’s how we address our resume. That’s how we address every meeting. You have to want to be a part of the community. We have a competing collective. And our collective is going to put you in a space where you can be compensated with the best of them. But the most important thing for us here is protected and V.

Andrew Brandt [00:26:02] I’ll just echo that real quick. The free agency part that Randy talked about with the transfer portal. I come from a background in professional sports. You need four years in
the NBA, four years in the NFL, six years in Major League Baseball to be a free agent. And there are salary caps. Right now in college sports, there’s no salary cap and there’s free agency after every year. So every year is a new year. They’re one year contracts. And as Randy said, beyond all the things we hear about college sports, that may be the most troubling. And I want to get Maddy’s reaction to that, because you were with a group that was together so long, I saw the bonding you had on and off the court. And now your reaction to what’s going on.

Maddy Siegrist [00:26:48] Yeah, I just think seeing how quickly it changed from, you know, my first I think it was two years at Villanova. You couldn’t have a camp in the summer, you couldn’t sell t-shirts that you couldn’t do anything to get compensated. And then how quickly it changed from one extreme to the other. I think there’s so many things to think about. I think it’s great that college players are able to get compensated. I don’t know if anyone thought it was going to be as crazy the last two years. And the transfer portal. Now, you don’t have to sit out. So I think it’s, you know, that was a big deterrent for people to transfer because no one wanted to sit a year. But that coming with NIL has just really opened it up. And I kind of look back at, you know, me getting recruited in high school, and now it’s like, forget just picking the school you want. Now it’s, you know, players are worried about compensation and like how – yeah, it’s just you know what the school is going to do for them instead of like I remember coming to Villanova and I was like, oh, I really hope they want me. Like I really, really hope that, you know, I hope that the game doesn’t lose that. I think, you know, with the Covid year has made it, you know, all the players have gotten an extra year of eligibility and this is the last year of it. So I do think hopefully the transfer portal calms down a little bit.

Khalil Wilkes [00:28:10] Yeah. I also think about it as a recruit, you know, when I was being recruited, you chose a school because of the principles of the school and the coaches that were going to be there and the facilities, you saw yourself being there for a four year to five year contract. And now, I mean, I don’t even know in terms of if I’m advising a recruit on where to look at schools, right? I love my experience at Stanford, but if somebody gave me $300,000 out of high school, I would have not been in Palo Alto. I would have taken that money. And we’re going to figure out what we’re going to do with this with this degree.

Andrew Brandt [00:28:40] So much for academics.
Khalil Wilkes [00:28:42] But I mean, what is the, you know, what is the educational value, right? And we know that Villanova is a great school, but we can’t put an actual dollar amount to it. Right. It’s a little bit different when especially right for a lot of these student athletes coming from a background that they’re coming from. $300,000 is life changing money for them and their family. Right. And and when I say 300,000, that’s not just, you know, a one off. This is happening at almost every single power five school. There’s somebody making close to that to go to their school and to play a sport.

So in terms of advising, right, that’s even gone into our world from the agency standpoint, they want counseling in terms of what school to go to and what to do in the portal now. And can you have these conversations with the collective on our behalf? So it’s just a new space. It’s exciting, but it’s in terms of trying to predict the future and what it looks like for the student athlete. It’s a little bit scary in my opinion, especially knowing that in a professional it’s only a door for 1%. Right. What are the other 99% of the student athletes going to do with whatever degree that they have? Right.

Dana Gross [00:29:51] And so like in today’s current environment where the courts have shut down the transfer of permitted the transfer portal. Opened it up. Where they’ve essentially handcuffed the NCAA’s efforts, you know reel in collectives and outreach to the athletes perspective or otherwise. From a from an agency perspective, how does that change your day to day? And has it been materially different or and just talk us through how that works.

Khalil Wilkes [00:30:18] It’s just mainly changed the scope of representation. You know, what the client expects from us. And in terms of just now we’re talking more to collectives. When I was first starting in the space at NIL I was talking to compliance officers, people from the university, and now I’m talking to the Randy Foyes. You know, most of these collectives don’t have a Randy Foye that they’re talking to. I’m talking to whoever else from the collective. But, it’s mainly just the expectation from the student athlete. It’s not just about the brand deals. For the most part, they know the collective is going to have them for those brand deals, or they’re going to negotiate on that side. It’s just more so how do you pitch me to a new school so I can get a bigger, more money?

Kevin Garica [00:30:58] So I just had a quick follow up question because I’m new to this too, and I wish this was around when I was a player. And my buddies have all talked about it, but are you seeing a lot of mismatches with players who are going to schools in their
first year? Maybe their principles didn’t align with the institutions or the collectives. Are you seeing more of an increase in transfer portal usage in the first couple of years?

**Khalil Wilkes** [00:31:19] Yes, but I’m not really sure. It’s about the ideals of the school as much as about just leverage of saying, you know, I had a great year and I have three more years of eligibility. What does that price point really look like for me at this university? Right. So at the end of the day, it is still leverage. It is very much about monetization. So a lot of times you see after the, you know, first, second year they’re transferring out, which to me, I mean I would rather that than them start a degree for three years and be a part of the school and then leave for the next two. But in this new space, you can’t hold guardrails around these student athletes.

**Randy Foye** [00:31:53] Yeah. I just want to – when you think of the way that we’re aligned, Friends of Nova and the university, we always think of the we being placed here at the highest end. You think of the athletic department, Lamar Jackson and his leadership, and then you think of development with Kevin Knowler and his leadership. I talk to people all over the country, different universities and different collectives and presidents and collectives. No one is aligned like this place, because when you think of the money, that we have to go out and raise for our student athletes, at a lot of schools, you can’t go and say, hey, well, university advancement, I want to talk to your top ten guys that have donated to you over the past, let’s say five years or 20 years. We can do that at Friends of Nova because of the way we’re aligned.

Even though with these injunctions from Tennessee and Virginia DA suing and the NCAA and it has opened it up where, collectives can go out and actually recruit, so I can right now, I can go out and I can go say Jersey, because you can put high school players in the NIL deals. I can go out and find the best high school basketball players in ninth grade, and he can be a friend of Nova. Just put it that way. He could be – we can take care of him that way.

But the way we are aligned, with our athletic department and our university, we would never do that. You know, our number one priority, is to make sure that we’re aligned. So if I’m having a conversation with someone, if someone’s on our team having a conversation with someone, we want to make sure we let Mark Jackson know the athletic department. And we want to make sure we like Kevin Nolan at university have asked me, I think I would say probably five places around the country that’s operating that way. And Villanova’s one.
Andrew Brandt [00:33:44] Yeah, we had Jay up here, Coach Wright a couple of months ago. And I said to Jay, so how did you handle this changing environment? And he said, “well, other than quit?” So that’s what we’re dealing with. And we’ve seen a lot of coaches sort of walk away and maybe even move to the pros where it’s easier job than in college. But speaking of that, Randy and Maddy, I want to talk about the inclusion of the women’s side, because a lot of collectives, a lot of schools, it’s kind of – you know, they kind of ignore the women’s sports. So let’s hear about that.

Maddy Siegrist [00:34:22] Well, I can speak from my experience personally, but Villanova is one of the only schools, I think, in the Big East, and a lot of that has it on both sides, the way Villanova does. You know, there’s a few programs in the country probably like top ten that, you know, the women are getting compensated. Not similar to the men, but almost. And I would say like Villanova has really in the last – since Friends of Nova has come has really made it a priority, with, you know, women’s basketball as well, which I think is really important. And seeing in the last few years, the way the market has been growing with women’s basketball now, like all the games are on ESPN for the first time this year in March Madness, I think, you know, Villanova gets that, friends of Nova gets out. But I can’t speak for other schools. I’m not sure, you know, it’s the same all the way around.

Randy Foye [00:35:14] Well, first of all, I just want to say thank you to Maddy Siegrist. Because it has to be, an appetite. And what she did, a year and a half ago here was unbelievable. Our men’s team, let’s be honest, they were struggling. And Maddy put, you know, Villanova basketball on our back. And we had so many people come out the woodworks and say, hey, we want to sponsor Maddy Siegrist. They had the appetite for women’s basketball. But being the person, that she is, she said, I’m done here. Broke all the records. She’s the GOAT here, for basketball. And she said, “I want to go to the next level.”

So we look at everything, that’s there for us, in the kitty, and we say, wow, we have all of this, capital for our women’s team. And what was there for Maddy? We were able to, break it down and give it to every single, women’s basketball player. So, like she said, we’re one of, I think, only two teams in the Big East where, we have every single women’s basketball player under contract with Friends of Nova. We have every single men’s basketball player under contract. We have one women’s soccer player, under contract. Cause it’s about appetite.
We, me and Devin Hassinger who’s here today. Front row. We meet with every single Olympic sport weekly discussing on how we can help them and what through their alumni base to support, women’s soccer, women’s lacks. What can they do to help them in this space? And we do this. We do this weekly. So I would say around September will probably have at least 7 to 9 teams under contract with Friends of Nova will be compensating them.

Khalil Wilkes [00:37:05] And that’s super rare. I mean, most collectives mainly work with the high revenue driven sports, especially men’s sports. So I actually saw a study by, not a study. Jason Dullser major guy in the space, that 95% of collective deals are going to men athletes and male athletes. And since they’re, you know, separated from the university, they’re not receiving any educational funds from the state. They have been able to get around title nine scrutiny. And now there are court cases in University of Oregon and as well as the Drake Group, sending, you know, a letter to the Office of Civil Rights saying, listen, like, not only are we supposed to be, you know, having the same proportionate treatment in our scholarships, in our facilities, but also in the marketing of our publicity and NIO opportunities. So, I love the fact that Friends of Nova is doing it the right way, but most collectives are – specifically, they’re mainly trying to give money to the quarterback and to the point guard.

Randy Foye [00:38:08] And when you think of collectives and NIL it’s completely different. Collective where the representation of our alumni is a fan led alumni, led collective to support all Villanova student athletes. But when you think of name, image and likeness, it’s completely different. Where it’s Blaze or Coke or Pepsi wants to give someone, a million bucks, you got to think we’re in a, a sports market here in Philadelphia. So you’re going to get up to the Phillies, the Philllies best player, the Sixers best player or the Eagles best player, or you’re going to bring that Pepsi money or Lay’s money to the Villanova’s best player. A lot of times, majority of the times it’s going to go to the professional athlete. But when you think about a place in Lawrence, Kansas, there they are, the professional team there where there’s no one else around. But that that school and that team, here, 90% of the dollars, I would say 96% of the dollars that are raising and given to our student athlete this off the backs of our donors.

Andrew Brandt [00:39:18] That’s awesome. We got to wrap up soon. Last couple questions I got to ask you, Kevin, just between us, no
one’s listening to any inside stories of recruiting and signing Lionel Messi. We won’t tweet it.

Kevin Garcia [00:39:41] So I think this ties into IMR a little bit. So with Messi’s arrival, he had multiple tiers to his deal. It was revenue sharing with Apple. It was revenue sharing with Adidas. I believe there’s some ownership stake in there somewhere for him when he’s done playing on top of a salary, that he gets from MLS. MLS is a single entity structure, which is like the only sports league like that in America. Everyone else. And so with MLS that you have these individual investors and they can launch these franchises in their city. So, everything’s run through MLS. So we essentially have access to all of the contracts, but we don’t have access to all these other deals that players signed outside of that. So with Messi specifically Adidas, we don’t have access to Apple. We don’t. But it did. It did sort of impact IMR a little bit. And that’s our, incremental media revenue provision that we’ve negotiated in our last CBA, which essentially, if we hit a certain number if the leagues hits a certain number, a portion of that is going to be funneled back into the salary budget for each club. It’s split evenly for each club to make sure that we lift that salary cap a little bit more, because there’s still a pretty strict salary cap on the league, and it’s growing, year over year. But we still want it to grow and especially take advantage of the time Messi’s here, considers unique and with the audience that we’ve been able to capture in the last year, we want to make sure that they have staying power. And part of that is helping grow the league and bring in more talent to the to the league.

So with the revenue sharing piece, for us, it was a foot in the door. It’s something that we have never been a part of and something you see in other sports. But essentially, as a rule of thumb, we want to get to a point where we have 48% of revenue that’s going from the league, that’s going straight to the salary budget. So that player salaries continue to rise. They continue to get compensated fairly. And there’s another part of it too, where we want to include gates and merchandise and, ticketing and even apparel because we have a deal – the league has a deal with Adidas. So we want to make sure that, there’s the opportunity there to, to talk about more revenue sharing across the board for, for other aspect.

Andrew Brandt [00:41:51] And sold a lot of pink jerseys.

Kevin Garcia [00:41:54] A lot of pink jerseys. A lot of my family members were asking that. They seemed to think that I had access to all the MSU jerseys, but yeah, a lot of, a lot of, a lot of Miami support. I
mean, we’ve even seen when he travels, to away teams, we see them sell out and it just there’s so like a lot of price gouging. There’s tickets, shoot up 10x. So it’s really crazy to see the Messi economy sort of take everything by storm.

Andrew Brandt [00:42:21] Yeah. Last question. Maddy. I think everyone in here, including me, would pay a lot of money to watch these games with you tonight. What are your predictions for the Final Four? We’re such a such a moment for women’s basketball.

Maddy Siegrist [00:42:37] Well, I think they’re going to be some good games. LSU, Iowa is going to be tough to top. That was that was great. But I think South Carolina they’re definitely going make the championship I think. And then the next game I’m a little torn because UConn like you know, in the Big East, maybe I should root for them. But I’m also not a fan. So maybe I’ll, I’m torn in the second game, but I think it’s going to be exciting for sure. So sure, so everyone watch.

Andrew Brandt [00:43:05] It’s been a great panel. Kevin, Maddy, Randy, Khalil, thanks for being with us.

Panel 3: In the Trenches: Changes in Production and Programming

Kevin Hopkins ’06 VSB, Vice President, Excel Sports Management
Michael McCarthy, Senior Writer, Front Office Sports
Betsy Riley, Senior Coordinating Producer of Live Events & Prime Video, Amazon Studios

Moderated by Andrew Brandt, Executive Director of the Moorad Center & Professor of Practice, Villanova Law & Kyle Winquist ’24, Moorad Fellow & Member of the Sports Law Concentration

Andrew Brandt [00:00:22] Panel three of our panel for today. We’re moving it along. What a great symposium so far. We continue to have the best and brightest up here. Look at it from a production, programing, commentary side. Want to introduce the panel, first one of our student leaders is here Kyle Winquist is going to help me moderate this one. Introduce Mike McCarthy. There’s no one more plugged in to what’s going on in media. He’s now in Front Office Sports, long career covering the media and seeing all the changes. Mike is here. Betsy Riley is here, who’s with Amazon has really
transformed Thursday Night Football. I was lucky enough to work with her when I did some commentary for Thursday Night Football a few years ago on Amazon. Her experience is vast, is massive in this industry. And Kevin Hopkins, a great friend of the program Excel Sports, has seen it all in sports. From the player angle, he is the man in golf who started the match between Tiger and Phil in all its iterations since and representing continuing the theme with Maddy Siegrist representing not only top women’s golfers, but a player named Caitlin Clark as well in basketball. So we’ll talk about that. Welcome the panel.

Mike, it’s been a while. You have seen some changes in sports media. Everything we’ve talked about in the first couple of panels, going from you could only watch on three channels, NBC, ABC, CBS to cable, to our RSNs to where we are now with streaming. I just love your overview. If you could give us your 30,000 foot look right now.

Michael McCarthy [00:02:09] Yeah. Thank you Andrew. We’re seeing seismic changes right now. You know, sitting next to Betsy, we’re seeing streaming tech giants entering sports in a big way for the first time with Thursday Night Football and Apple from a previous panel, we’re seeing the death spiral of the cable bundle and the impact on local sports. Where are you going to watch your local sports now? Are they going to go back to broadcast TV? Are they going to go to streaming? Is a white knight like Amazon going to step in and you know, it’s really got everybody thinking what is next? I think the bubble will continue. I’ve been hearing for 20 years that the media rights bubble is going to pop. I don’t see it happening, Andrew. I see sports as the block that’s holding up this Jenga puzzle of programming. And I see everything else falling by the wayside before live sports starts.

Andrew Brandt [00:03:08] Betsy, you’ve moved from NBC to Amazon, and that is kind of the microcosm of what we’re talking about. So talk about your experiences.

Betsy Riley [00:03:17] Yeah, I mean, I think back on- How about now? I think back to when I sat in a college classroom in 2002, and a professor who happened to be right, talked about convergence and this idea that we were all moving toward one box, doing everything. At the time that sounded like landing on the moon, you know, it was just so farfetched. It felt like that will never happen. And I’ve lived through it within my 20 plus years in the industry. I’ve watched it happen. And I think for, for me, I learned a ton about my craft and the craft of sports television production at NBC. And you started to
see what you just described. You know, rights were moving to streaming partners, and streaming partners needed an expertise in sports television productions. So what's old was new again. Suddenly Amazon needed to staff up and build Thursday Night Football, and it just so happened that I had many, many years of experience on Thursday Night Football.

But I think streaming has provided me with the opportunity to really think differently about how we deliver sports to fans. And that doesn't mean that you're necessarily seeing things in 3D, or that sports are appearing on your tabletop in your living room. That's possible. Those things are possible. But it does give you the opportunity as a producer, as a creative to think about what an OTT, an over-the-top platform can offer fans. And that's a really inspiring blank canvas for creative, for a producer. So I think for me, it's been really fortuitous to be in the industry throughout this period of convergence, throughout the advent of and dawn of streaming, and to really have the opportunity to forge forward into this new chapter and kind of wrap your creative arms around the blank canvas.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:05:37] Use a great word convergence. That's really where we are. Kevin, you've seen it from the player side, but you created a made for TV event and on TNT. So you are sort of in the ground floor of this and you've seen it progress since.

**Kevin Hopkins** [00:05:57] Yeah. It's funny. So I'm, I say I'm all golf all the time, although that's somewhat of a lie, but I, I've been really lucky to work with great partners. Right. Warner Brothers Discovery has been through a lot of changes over the, over the years. And I would say made for TV golf, going back to the old skins games, and the battles that Tiger used to do, in the early 2000 and late 90s. And it's interesting to see where that model is as a, as many of you who are following the world of professional golf, there's a lot going on right now. And, you know, a lot of things that I've been lucky to work on and the partners that I've been lucky to work with, have been on the good side of golf right now. We try and bring entertainment. So whether it's the match and you've got Charles Barkley, you know, with a mic in his hand, you know, talking smack to Tom Brady in the middle of the fairway. It's just different, right?

And we as content creators and ultimately sellers now, we're engaging the Amazons and the Netflix. You know, we were lucky to run the first ever live sporting event for Netflix last year. I think everybody was waiting to see what Netflix's plan was going to be. And it's been very unique, right? They didn't do a league deal. They went
and did something around their owned IP. Whether that was Full Swing, the success of Full Swing and the success of Drive to Survive. And now you look at some of the things they’re doing, they’ve got, you know, Tyson versus Jake Paul coming up here this summer.

So I think it’s a time right now where it’s great for creators. And I think from Betsy’s perspective, as a buyer from an Amazon side of things or Netflix or Apple, what makes sense for their programing for their fans? How do they get more people to subscribe, or buy into it? So it’s a great time, on both sides right now. Probably a tougher time for the traditional networks, which is why you see something like, “Spulu”, right, with ESPN and WBD and ESPN coming together. So it’s certainly an interesting time.

Kyle Winquist [00:08:12] All right, Mike, I want to go back to you a little bit. So you’re a storyteller. And I think I’m, I think we’re all curious to know, in light of all the media changes that have been going on recently, how have you had to adapt your, your techniques to, to getting stories out there to, attracting different audiences? I’m wondering if you could elaborate on that a little bit.

Michael McCarthy [00:08:32] Yeah, it’s a great question, Kyle. When I started in the business, you were one thing only. You were a newspaper reporter. You were a TV person. You were a radio, star. Now you have to be a little bit of everything. I taught multimedia sports reporting at Rutgers for ten semesters, and I told my kids, “you’ve got to be good at everything” You know, and I think about what I have to do. Now to Kyle’s question, just in the last week or two, I’ve been on national TV. I’ve had several radio hits. I’ve hosted a panel like this online, and that’s on top of all the writing I do for Front Office Sports. So, so really, the key to the future for journalists, sports journalists especially, is to be multimedia. And if you’re not multimedia and you don’t think you could do it, then practice. Try it. Keep doing it until you get good. Because if you’re not, then somebody else is going to be doing it instead of you.

Andrew Brandt [00:09:33] Mike, you were talking. Kevin mentioned Spulu. I think we should explain it because I’ve seen you write and talk about it in your appearances. And where do you think it’s going, and what do you think the, that represents as an app where you can get your live sports”

Michael McCarthy [00:09:52] I think Spulu is a Hail Mary pass by these linear networks to try to get into the streaming game. They don’t even have a contract yet. They don’t even have a signed deal.
All they have is a press release and a CEO. So I’m still wondering if Spulu will completely get off the ground, Andrew. Or if it’ll be still-born in some case. What it is basically is a skinny bundle. You have these, networks coming together, you know, to try to offer a product that they weren’t offering before. But the cable companies are, as you know, losing it over this. The feds are going to be looking into it. So I give it 50/50, Andrew, that this thing ever takes place.

Andrew Brandt [00:10:37] Betsy, we worked together in 2018 when the NFL on Amazon was just so unique and such a novelty. And people, I’m sure are saying to you all the time, “it will never work.” So now it is mainstream. It’s like, yeah, it’s on Amazon Thursday Night Football. It’s the only way you can watch it for the next ten years. You got to feel like you’re at the ground floor like this is this is common now, right?

Betsy Riley [00:11:03] Yeah. I mean, I remember distinctly sitting around a kitchen table with my family, debating the decision. Whether or not I should go pursue this wild idea to do TNF multitrack audio on Amazon. And I’m one of four kids. We were all sitting there, and I think, it was a split table. You know, I think half of my trusted, you know, advisors thought this was kind of a silly idea, and this was too risky. The other half of the table supported the risk and encouraged me to jump and promise that, you know, they they’d, tune in every Thursday night. So we got sort of my parents and the grandparents used to, learning how to tune in on Thursdays on Prime Video.

But there was risk. It was certainly something that had never been done before. I suspected that it would be where we were heading. I think people who follow the industry all suspected this is where we were heading. And I was excited to really try something that was different and that afforded me different opportunities.

So when we worked together on Thursday Night Football, we Amazon at the time could only adapt the audio. We did not have the rights at that time to change the video feed. So we were taking Fox’s video but could modify the audio. Which was a really interesting creative opportunity. You know, you think about if you’re a Philadelphia sports fan, some people like listening to Philadelphia sports with the Philadelphia announcers, not the national announcers. Some people might like Spanglish or Portuguese. Some people might like listening- we actually had Charles Barkley come on and, you know, sort of did a watch party, an audio watch party. So it was a really neat opportunity to think differently about the production and what a production could be by really sort of dissecting the ingredient
of audio and thinking about what fans might like to listen to while watching the game.

And so I think, again, it came back to kind of the creative desire. I love television production. I love what I do. I’m a self-proclaimed television nerd, and it was the opportunity to really dissect different aspects of the production and to really consider what’s essential for the fan. What can we do to change that might be sort of lovable or more lovable for a fan? And what do you sort of have to hold on to from the linear past? Because that’s the best way to do it. So it was a really neat thought exercise. It was a really neat experience, but without a doubt it was a risk. And half my family probably thought I was crazy.

Kyle Winquist [00:14:24] Kevin from, from a golf perspective, with your work with the match, I was wondering if you could you could talk a little bit about some of the legal challenges you faced when you were trying to get the match up and running as it relates to, you know, getting it on TNT or some other options you were looking into.

Kevin Hopkins [00:14:40] Well, I think whenever we’re trying to come up with a new event concept, there are hurdles that you need to clear with the tour first and foremost. Player schedules are always interesting. But Turner and the team at TNT Sports really had a vision. They wanted to get into golf. They, at the time, I think, had, early rounds of the PGA Championship. So they had a little bit of golf, but not really. And they were boxed out because of the, the contracts with NBC or CBS. So really what they did was create their own franchise. And it’s not, easy and it’s not inexpensive, to go and do that.

And here we are, you know, nine versions later, and hopefully with a 10th later this year, of creating a franchise that I think has been different, right? I mean, Betsy was just talking about, giving consumers different options, right? I mean, it’s I watched the Super Bowl on Nickelodeon for the first quarter because I’ve got a four and a two-year-old. You know, the Manning cast. I don’t know how much ESPN’s paying Joe Buck, and Troy, but if Peyton and Eli are on their couch, and bad zooms with whoever they’re talking to, I’m watching it. You know, on Peacock, I watched a full stream of just Caitlin Clark. Just. They had it. They had a Caitlin cam, so I watched it. I think the networks are understanding that even if the core customer is there to watch the live event, there are different ways to consume it. And I think that’s the challenge that you look at. And in any event that we
try to produce, how do you try and cast as wide a net as possible and get as many people to view it and enjoy it in whatever way they want to enjoy it?

Andrew Brandt [00:16:33] Mike, we know the NFL is king, and 98 of the top 100 programs are NFL and $110 billion contract. Let’s put them aside. Where do you see the big trends in sports media among the leagues, among individual sports? What are your big takeaways where we are now?

Michael McCarthy [00:16:51] The biggest, current news right now is, the NBA’s upcoming media deal. The NBA and WNBA are negotiating the media deal together. I believe somebody on a previous panel, thought they might triple their rights fees. Andrew, I don’t know if they’re going to triple it. I know they’re going to double it.

And I would say that this is also a great time for the WNBA to break off Andrew and do their own thing from the NBA. The WNBA is current media rights are comically low compared to men’s sports. And with Caitlin Clark coming in and Angel Reese coming in, you know the WNBA is going to be, you know, a juggernaut, next season. So that is, you know, one of the things I’m watching.

The other thing I’m watching, too, is the, you know, the future of streaming. You know, we were at, the Superbowl this year. Everybody was talking about could the Super Bowl one day be behind a paywall? Right. Could it be on Amazon? Could it be on Peacock? Like Kevin said, you know, could it be a pay per view? So all these things are on the table now. Goodell says that won’t happen during the course of his, commissioner ship. But who’s to say what the next commissioner is going to do with the Super Bowl? So right now, Andrew, it just feels like everything’s up in the air.

Kyle Winquist [00:18:10] So Betsy used to work at NBC sports prior to Amazon. I’m wondering if you could talk a little bit about the biggest change you’ve seen since coming to Amazon from NBC? Obviously, you know, streaming is going crazy, but in terms of your role, I’m wondering if you could talk a little bit about some of the biggest changes.

Betsy Riley [00:18:26] Yeah, I would say, you know, every company’s different. Every company has their own identity. But I think there were there are two things that have been really different in my experience over the past two years. One, the idea of a blank page. So you’re truly starting from scratch at Amazon. And you might say,
well, NFL football has been broadcast for a long time. That’s true, but not at Amazon. Amazon’s a tech company. So you had to build every department from the bottom up. You know, you’re really building your sales department, your commercial control. Things that you take for granted at a linear television station had to be built. And when you’re building, that forces you to answer some existential questions about how you want to build it and I was so lucky to work at NBC. It was a dream job, and I learned so much and so much of what I learned there was because it had been done that way in the past, for ten years or 15 years or 50 years. And you’d walk the hallowed halls at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and you could feel the history oozing out of the walls. That just wasn’t the same at Amazon. So you were building and faced with really sort of core questions about why you were building in a certain way. And when you’re forced to answer those questions, it really sort of kind of crystallizes the difference. You’re building something from scratch. You’re building, of course, like your talent team, your graphics package, your music. You’re composing music for the first time. So there’s sort of the stuff that the fancy and can recognize. And then there’s the entire infrastructure behind it that has to be built. So that was different. Just this idea of blank page building from scratch.

The other thing that was different is that it’s a tech company. So the access to resources was different. And I’m not talking about dollar amounts. I’m talking about, you know, your colleagues in the hallway adjacent to you are data scientists and engineers, and it’s just a totally different group of peers. So I in fact, after our first season as an example of this, had the opportunity to travel to Tel Aviv, Israel, to meet with a group of data scientists, and it was very open ended. It was sort of like, let’s go see what we can do, how we could collaborate and make something interesting for Thursday Night Football. And so when you start to meet with people who are very different from you, with very different expertise experiences, you have this opportunity to build differently. We came out of that summit with some ideas, a very full whiteboard, and we ended up innovating and finding a path to innovation. Last year we actually released something called Defensive Alerts on Prime Vision, which is one of our alternate streams. And it was really neat because we used a machine learning model to predict the likely blitzers. Now, I’m not saying that can’t happen anywhere else, but that felt very uniquely Amazon because you have colleagues who are different, people who think differently. You’re in a tech company, and so you have the opportunity to innovate in ways that are just different from, I think, a traditional linear media company.
Andrew Brandt [00:22:08] And that is fascinating. And along with that, I’ve heard you talk about this, Mike, that you’re capturing—you Amazon or NBC, Peacock, etc., the data. Right. You said data scientists, you’re capturing all the data on these millions of viewers. Correct. I don’t want to sound too much...


Betsy Riley [00:22:29] You know, I think. I’m going to say like it’s interesting because TNF, you mentioned the 98 of 100 top programs were NFL programs. I believe TNF on Prime Video was the first Nielsen rated streaming property. So again, like to do that as a streamer was really interesting. You sort of had to back into and reverse engineer how you were going to sort of get data in a way. Amazon is very particular about privacy and customer privacy. So you we ended up being Nielsen rated so that we could get to data and information in a way that’s actually entirely consistent with the way our linear counterparts do it.

Kyle Winquist [00:23:21] Kevin, with your players, have they expressed any interest in like the changing landscape of media to you? Do they do they have a preference one way or another?

Kevin Hopkins [00:23:32] Yeah. I mean, I think this is the best time to ever be a sports fan. You know, you can as we were talking about, you can watch in any way that you want or consume in any way that you want. But it’s what I love to see is they’re used to just—and Mike may not like this from a traditional media perspective, but I think the players have kind of taken ownership of how they want to be perceived and how they want to share their thoughts. Right?

I mean, it is if you would have asked me in 2016, are we going to be listening to or watching a podcast of, you know, Jalen Brunson and Josh Hart? You know, because they’re roommates and people care about it and want to hear their opinions on things. I would have thought that you were crazy. You know, LeBron James, probably one of the busiest people in the world is now doing, you know, a podcast weekly with JJ Redick and Draymond Green in between games is giving his views. So I think from an athlete perspective you know you look at what Peyton’s done with Omaha Productions. You look at what Brady’s done with his. Mahomes has his own production company. They are very much trying to own their brand, their messaging, their partners, and their fans. And, and I think, you know, there’s just there’s when I was a Villanova basketball fan, when I, when I
went here, you could either listen to Jay’s, show from Gullifity’s or you could go and watch it in person, and now you can watch it anywhere, if you wanted to, to follow, you know, your favorite sport or your favorite team. So I think it says as good of a time to be an athlete in this world and have an interest on the media side. It’s incredible, this action.

**Michael McCarthy** [00:25:22] It’s a problem for us. I know it’s a problem for, traditional media because basically the athletes are cutting out the middleman. And as Kevin said, they’re choosing to tell their stories directly. They all have their own podcast. They all have their own production companies. And that makes it, you know, difficult for us to cover them in the way we used to. I will say one thing, I think when athletes do their own, tell their own stories, I don’t think you’re going to get the full story. I think you need to get the press release version of the story, the story that they want to tell. So you’re not going to get the kind of warts and all coverage you would get from traditional coverage.

**Betsy Riley** [00:26:02] Yeah. And I think to add to that, it’s really interesting. It’s an interesting challenge for us because if a fan is going to come to us on a Thursday night, we’re aware they have access to information in so many different ways. So they’ve already heard the athletes tell their story. They probably already know the scores of the day. So our duty to our fans and our customers is totally different than it was even ten years ago or five years ago. So you have to find, you know, ways to add entertainment, journalism, context, color, whatever the thing might be. It’s not enough just to sort of show up and, call the game and assume that America’s been living, you know, without their phones, and sort of with their head buried in the sand. That just doesn’t happen. That’s not how fans exist today. So it is a challenge to kind of cut through all of that and find a way for the broadcast to offer something that is still, worth tuning in for.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:27:08] I think what Betsy doesn’t say is she’s very modest, what a producer does. I never knew this, but in a broadcast of a three-hour football game, maybe they use, I don’t know, 5 to 10 graphics. She prepares like 60 graphics. Okay, so it’s a blowout in case they go to some little tangent on a player. It’s amazing how much producers prepare that’s not used. I was shocked. Excuse me, I was shocked.

**Betsy Riley** [00:27:35] Yeah. You prepare for so many possible outcomes, but at the end of the day, the ball is kicked and you’re
following a game. And so your job is to document the game and to really take what the game gives you and provide additive value. And I think you can tell when you’re sitting at home on the couch when there’s a tangent that doesn’t quite make sense. Or sort of a misplaced graphic. And I think that the art behind the craft is preparing for everything and then using restraint in the moment. Again take what the game gives you.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:28:19] Like we were talking about this backstage, the height, I believe, of cable like ESPN, 100 million cable homes. And now we’re at roughly 70 million. Where do you see the future of cable and where do you see this? We talk about the RSNs. Are they dying or are they still around now? They’re kind of back with the diamond bankruptcy settlement. Amazon’s part. Part of that. This is where’s cable going? Where’s RSNs going?

**Michael McCarthy** [00:28:49] I think cable is going down. I think the model is crumbling. I think we could bottom out at around 50 million homes, which is, Andrew says is staggering. In 2012, ESPN was in a broadcast network like 100 million homes. Now it’s down to 71 million. Well, all you gotta do is do the math on all that subscriber fees that they’re missing, and then you realize why, ESPN is cutting back.

What I see happening is cable surviving, but in a very reduced level. I see streaming giants like Amazon, coming in and taking over more and more sports. I even think that a tech company like an Amazon or an Apple will just go in and buy companies, Andrew. I mean, if you’re Amazon or Apple, why do you have to get into a bidding war for sports rights? Why don’t you just buy Paramount Plus and inherit them from CBS Sports? Why don’t you just buy NBC Universal and inherit their NFL rights? I mean, Apple has enough money, you know, in their couch cushions to afford a deal like that. And so does, Jeff and, and Betsy over here. So I really see that’s where it’s going. I think the tech giants are going to come in there right now. They’re dipping their foot in the water, and Amazon is certainly leading the way because Betsy is being very modest. But what she didn’t tell you is that Thursday Night Football is earning an audience that’s fully a decade younger than linear TV viewers. And every time I talk to the NFL, they’re they’ve managed to mention that fact that we’re getting, you know, viewers who are younger, tech savvy, all that. So, I know the NBA is very interested in Amazon. As I said, the NBA’s media rights are up. And, so I really think that’s the way it’s heading. Andrew.
Andrew Brandt [00:30:35] We got a show of hands. Who’s cut the cord? No cable. It’s a generational thing, obviously. But again, I teach a class here when I ask that question. 100%. 100%. 22 to 25 year olds. No cable. So that’s where we’re going. Comments on that?

Kevin Hopkins [00:31:00] I mean, I think I think the first panel talked about the power of live sports. And I do think there will always be a home for wherever those live sports choose to live. I’m a sucker for it. I did not cut the cord, because even if there’s one game that I can’t watch for whatever reason, there’s a blackout. It’s not covered by this. I, you know, my wife hates it because I pay for everything. So I’ve just. I just have the I have every single app. And, you know, I’m juggling the apps and, you know, hopefully they’re trying to make it easier. But, you know, Betsy and I were speaking about this before the panel, but it’s just normal. Like you said at the beginning, I know Thursday night I know what I’m going to. I’ve got Prime up and I’m watching it. And you know, I’ve got Charissa and Ryan Fitzpatrick and I’ve got the Al and Herbie on my screen. So I, I think that they’re from a sports fan perspective. We’ll always follow, wherever it’s going to go. And to Mike’s point about the bubble. At some point somebody’s going to want to, want to purchase it, and we are all going to want to watch it. So I don’t see that changing anytime soon.

Kyle Winquist [00:32:12] Betsy, another question for you. So recently, you were part of producing the first all female NFL announcer’s booth. I’m curious if you could talk about the inspiration behind that. What led you to make that courageous decision? It’s remarkable.

Betsey Riley [00:32:29] Yeah. That was Thursday Night Football on Prime Video with Hannah Storm and Andrew Kramer. And you know, I think again, this was part of the thought exercise. Will fans, how can we reward fans who love football but want to digest it in a different way? Now with Hannah Storm and Andrea Kramer, you have two of the preeminent storytellers and really pioneers in the industry. They were some of the first women in locker rooms or on sidelines. And so this wasn’t that risky. You know, you had you had two fantastic television personalities and storytellers.

But what it afforded us to do is, again, to think critically about fans and to think about how we could present NFL football to a broad audience in a way that was just slightly different. And, you know, this is something we’ve all learned from a young age in school history. It sort of matters who has the microphone or who has the
pen. And, you know, there are a lot of ways to broadcast a sporting event. There are a lot of lenses through which you can tell the story of that sporting event. And Hannah and Andrea were two incredible voices to work with. They are passionate about the game of football. They are incredible storytellers. They know the game so well, having covered it for so many years. So it was different. But it wasn’t risky. It was different because it hadn’t been done. But I think it allowed us the opportunity to show fans there are many ways to enjoy the game, which is, again, something we’ve all talked about. Sort of this it doesn’t have to be one size fits all. You can meet your fans and different fans with sort of different packaging.

Andrew Brandt [00:34:29] Mike, we see, maybe you can make sense. You know, we see ESPN with huge profits, huge revenues, yet cutting layoffs every year. Every six months we see the NFL cutting employees at NFL network. Having $20 billion of annual revenues. What’s behind all these changes?

Michael McCarthy [00:34:51] It’s a great question, Andrew. Make it make sense, right. Literally an hour before I came on the stage, I got word that the fourth ranking executive at ESPN, Norby Williamson, was out after 40 years. So I spent the hour leading up to this panel, writing that story. Now, they used to say about Norby Williamson, if nuclear bomb went off in Bristol, the only survivors would be Norby Williamson said. And yeah, that sure enough, you know, here’s the ultimate survivor who’s out.

So I think what it’s happening is it’s being driven by the bottom line. Disney takes so much money out of ESPN, Andrew. Over the years, ESPN has been the ATM machine for Disney. Bob Iger would not be Bob Iger if not for ESPN. Because ESPN gave him the billions of dollars in profits to buy Marvel and all these kinds of companies. So I think, on the one hand, it’s Disney that’s sort of mandating these cuts on the NFL. And I really don’t think they want to be in the media business anymore. Andrew, I don’t. I mean, they had a great little morning show going, Good Morning Football. Anybody here watch Kevin Hopkins. Great show. Right. Great chemistry. And you know and they’re moving. They’re going to, you know dump the cast. And I just don’t think NFL the NFL wants to be in the media business I think they’re you know so successful other way selling their rights for 110 million over the last 11 years that they don’t want to be a network. So I really think that this is kind of a tell, Andrew, that they’re trying to exit the business, maybe sell NFL network to ESPN or another company and just get rid of it.
Andrew Brandt [00:36:37] Kevin, where do you see it? I mean, you’ve seen golf go through a lot of interesting iterations. We’re not going to get into the LIV situation. But there was a dramatic investment in golf. You were speaking in my class on the same day. Yeah. From some NFL owners, from some private equity.

Kevin Hopkins [00:36:56] I mean, we can talk about LIV, too, you know? I mean, I actually want to do the show of hands. This is just for me. Who here watched LIV golf this weekend on the CW network? That’s what I thought. Okay. You know, it’s a very interesting. It’s the craziest time that there’s ever been from a golf perspective, right? The tour is fractured. A lot of the a lot of the, I don’t want to say, favorite players, but there’s been some big names who have gone over there, right? And, and the, the groups that have probably, took advantage or in the best position based on this are actually the major championships. Right.

So those will be the only four times this year, starting next week, at Augusta, where the best players truly around the globe are playing together. And you’ve got Phil Mickelson and Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau going up against Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy. It’s it is the, the PGA tour model right now I feel is an unsustainable one. They have invested a lot. They just took in $1.5 billion, from private equity and with an option for another 1.5, that will go towards the players. The players are now the first ever equity owners within their own league. It is wild to see the changes that have happened.

At the same time, it’s not healthy for the sport. It’s not healthy for the fans. I think if you’re a, a Saturday, Sunday, you have golf on in the background because it’s when you take your naps at 2:00. I think that it is, it’s a sad state right now where, where golf is in. I am hopeful that, there’s a framework agreement with the Public Investment Fund. I’m hopeful that, a structure comes together where, these players can be together again in the future. I do think that, the ones who have stuck around because I’m, I’m somewhat of a while. I do nontraditional on the golf side. I still am a traditionalist and I think that the history and the legacy of the PGA tour means something. I think that the players who have chosen to go and play in LIV, are otherwise other than four tournaments per year, you know, rendered meaningless at this point. And they’re playing on a, on a tour where not one hand in this room was raised. So and after everything that we’ve talked about for the last 20 minutes, where you can consume sports, how you’re consuming sports, that’s pretty telling. So, a wild time for the sport of golf. I hope that there is a, a brighter
horizon here in the future. I think that there will be. But it is, there are going to be some interesting meetings, under the tree in Augusta next week.

Andrew Brandt [00:40:01] I want to pull on that thread quickly because nobody’s watching the CW. Nobody’s watching live on the CW. But with 600 billion private and public investment fund funding the tour doesn’t matter to them. Will it ultimately matter to them with unlimited resources?

Kevin Hopkins [00:40:20] I mean, I think at some point they’re still businesspeople. So I think that’s been the, you know. So I work for a company that represents a lot of the best golfers in the world. And, we have to do our job for our clients. So we brought nearly all of our top tier talent, offers. But we asked the appropriate questions, that they needed to hear, that we couldn’t get answers to from the team at LIV. Which is, are there going to be world ranking points? Will I be able to play in the major championships? It the answers to all of those were unknown or no. And and I think you see the, the even the players who have gone over, they’ve collected hundreds of millions of dollars and now they’re trying to argue their way back, or trying to say, well, now it’s fractured or it’s like, yeah, you fractured it. So I don’t know. Yeah.

I talked about sustainability from a tour perspective. Right. Because now the tour is trying to combat, you know, to keep their top talent. Purses have gone up, ratings have gone down, fields have gone down. So how do you justify that you we’ve now seen for the first time in the last few years turnover from a title sponsorship perspective, whether that’s Wells Fargo or Farmers Insurance or Honda, which was the longest running title sponsor on the tour.

So it’ll be interesting to see how things change in the sport of golf over the next, 6 to 18 months. Yasser and the and the team from a private investment fund perspective. I mean, they just invested or are trying to put $1 billion into tennis, right? And it’s kind of a footnote, right? It’s a battle and a battleground in golf. But now it’s just like, oh yeah, it’s okay. Everybody’s doing it. So, I don’t know. I don’t know if they’ll get tired of, you know, the money that they’ve spent, for the lack of audience, whether that’s on the grounds or from a viewership perspective, or is just a means to an end of having a seat at the table in the world of professional golf.

Andrew Brandt [00:42:27] Our time is flying. We got to wrap up with this question. We’ve asked every panel sort of go down the line the
future of sports media, in your opinion? Next one, two five, ten years, Mike?

**Michael McCarthy** [00:42:39] Couple of things. I see multiple screens becoming very important. Anybody here watch NFL Red-Zone? Right. The octoscreen where you can watch eight games at a time. I think that’s really going to be the future. You know, it used to be Andrew. You had to go to Vegas with your buddies and sit in, you know, sportsbook to get 18 games at the same time. Now, you could see that. And the second thing I really see happening, and Kevin hit on this brilliantly is mega casts, customization. You watch the version of the game that you want to watch. You watch it in in Eli instead of Troy Joe, you watch it from a ceiling cam. I mean, the Super Bowl, they had doink cams, which I thought was, brilliant. And they put some cameras into the field goal posts so they can get new cameras. So I really see customization of how we watch it. The games that’s going to be the wave of the future.

**Betsey Riley** [00:43:39] Yeah, I’ll piggyback on that I think customization, personalization. So watching your sport how you want to watch your sport. Whether that’s with fantasy information, your fantasy team information on the screen if you’re a gambler, betting information on the screen. I do think fans are going to continue to demand the sports their way, which is exciting as a content provider.

**Kevin Hopkins** [00:44:08] Yes. I think I think storytelling that we’ve talked about is also, going to be the future. We’ve seen it, you know, Drive to Survive. Hard knocks for years. Right. Which I thought was groundbreaking 24/7. You know, now they’re doing in season, right. Amazon’s also had, their own version. I said it earlier. I think it’s the best time in the world to be a sports fan. And I stand by that. I think it’s only going to get better. I think when, you know, I used to have to go out early to, go shopping on Black Friday. I don’t have to do that anymore because I can stay at home and watch football and order it from a QR code on the screen, because Betsy won’t tell you this, but they have all my information already, and they know what we’re going to buy. So, I think that’s the future.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:44:59] Speaking of information about Kevin, if you watch the celebrating at the Iowa game the other night, you saw Jason Sudeikis. Sudeikis? and right behind him. Kevin.

**Kevin Hopkins** [00:45:12] There you go. I was with Ted Lasso. It was great. It was a lot of fun, and I, I mean, this this goes to, I think, some
of the changing, and the momentum certainly in women’s sports. But it has been must watch television in the Hopkins household. It’s been incredible to see what Caitlyn has done for the sport, and for the country. I was at that game on Monday night, and it was incredible. I can’t wait to watch tonight. And certainly pulling for her to make it to the championship in Cleveland.

Andrew Brandt [00:45:44] You got little kids. They got to stay up….

Kevin Hopkins [00:45:46] Up, I got jerseys, I got everything. So yeah, it’s. And Jason was great. He was wearing a sweatshirt, from, the media company together that Alex Morgan is all put together. But on his on the back, I was sitting right behind him, but he was. It says “everybody watches women’s sports.” And I hope that that’s a sign for the future of, of what we’re doing in the game. And, you know, you saw what Maddy’s doing, and she’s incredible for this university. But I think everything, is leaning that way as well. So I’m excited for the future women’s sports.


Panel 4: On the Air Media Personalities’ Views on a Changing Media Environment

Andrew Brandt, Host, The Business of Sports podcast; Columnist, Sports Illustrated; and Executive Director of the Moorad Center & Professor of Practice, Villanova Law

Angelo Cataldi, Former On-Air Host, 94.1 WIP Sports Talk Radio and Author, LOUD: How a Shy Nerd Came to Philadelphia and Turned up the Volume in the Most Passionate Sports City in America

Howard Eskin, On-Air Host, 94.1 WIP Sports Talk Radio and Sports Anchor, FOX29 News Philadelphia

Brian Westbrook ’01 VSB, On-Air Host, 97.5 The Fanatic and Former Philadelphia Eagles All-Pro Running Back

Moderated by Sydney Baxter ’24 & Janie Pierson ’24, Moorad Fellows & Members of the Sports Law Concentration

Andrew Brandt [00:00:18] Okay. For our final panel of the day, we want to look inside media from actually the personalities, that do media. None of these panelists need much introduction and I’m not going to do much. But for those of you who are in this area, you certainly know the voice and the sound of Angelo Cataldi from WIP.
He’s got his new book out you see up there. So he’ll talk about it in an ebook and audio. You all know Howard Eskin from WIP and Fox. And, you know, Brian Westbrook. I’m going to put on my media hat too because I work in that area as well. And, we’ll have a nice discussion. I want to introduce our moderators, two of our star students that have really helped me throughout their time here. They’re both rebels. They’re moving on to Morgan Lewis and to the NHL. Welcome Sydney Baxter and Janie Pearson.

Janie Pierson [00:01:29] All right. Thank you so much. Thanks for sticking it out here. It’s been a long day, but it’s been great. I’ve heard a lot from a lot of different people. Broadcast networks, the teams, leagues. Really excited now to turn the conversation over to the personalities themselves. So we’re going to start off nice and easy. If everyone could just talk us through. Angelo, if you’d like to start, how you got into sports media and just sort of your journey to where you are now.

Angelo Cataldi [00:01:55] Well, thank you. Thank you very much for having me. I’m here because Andrew Brandt was a kind of a regular on our show for many years. And, I think it’s safe to say he was the smartest guy we ever regularly put. I’m sorry, Howard. Now I’m leaving Howard out of all that. And people who heard our show probably would realize that’s kind of a low bar. But it was still. It was still worth saying.

I’m really happy to be here to talk about this because it’s the one thing in the seminar I just listened to the symposium that wasn’t covered, where we’re presenting sports in all these different ways, and however you want to have it, you can have it. No, there’s one way, we’re not having it. And that’s honest analysis in a game by broadcasters who are not affiliated with the sports themselves. And that’s because the sports would never sign off on that. All right? And I’ll start this by telling you who really in our city was the first one to connect with the fan base by presenting strong opinions in an entertaining way? Howard Eskin. Howard paved the way. You got to understand, when I went to radio, I had no experience in radio whatsoever. So I had to steal from people, right? And at the time, Howard Eskin owned Philadelphia Sports Radio. And Howard Stern owned the rest of it. And they both knew what to do. And that was provide provocative points of view that resonate with the audience. And we’re getting less of that than we ever have. And I think that’s a big problem.

Andrew Brandt [00:03:53] Hi, guys. I. When I left the Green Bay Packers 12 years ago now, I really wanted to do two things with the
rest. It was sort of the third chapter of my career in media and academia, and really is take people behind the curtain, really uncover what really goes on in sports, primarily football, but all sports from a business point of view, from a legal point of view, from an inner workings point of view of operations. I started writing, which I had loved to do before getting into being an executive in sports. And executives don’t write. They write emails. So I love writing, and I started writing first with ESPN and then with Sports Illustrated. On the broadcast side, I was lucky. I admit, a lot of people want to go in to broadcasting, and they just don’t be at the right place, right time. I entered this new media world for me in 2011 when, lo and behold, the Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, National Basketball Association, and most importantly, the NFL were going through labor disputes, strikes, lockouts. Remember that word, lockout? And ESPN and Fox and NFL network needed someone who was educated and had the ability to articulate this to the country.

Now, many times my ESPN producer would be in my ear saying, Andrew, dumb it down, dumb it down. And I’m like, “it’s pretty dense. It’s hard to dumb it down.” But I looked at this as a way to educate readers and podcast listeners and viewers and now students on what really happens. Not the sanitized version and not from people who don’t know these kind of things and break that down. So it’s been a great experience for me to be able to do that through columns, through newsletter, through podcasts, through television. And I love it. I think it’s a way to take what I appreciate doing for my students and for media is taking complex topics and sports, law and business and breaking them down in digestible ways so we can have a better understanding and make it clearer for us to have these discussions.

Howard Eskin [00:06:14] I am stunned. I am overwhelmed. That Angelo Cataldi to start this discussion off complimented me. I don’t know how I’m going to go through the rest of the day. Although I have a first pitch to throw out tonight at the Wilmington Blue Rocks. So I’m going to have to compose myself to throw it over the plate.

But nonetheless, I. I always wanted to be in sports, and that was my vision. My father was a was a big sports fan. Season tickets at different teams. He played a lot of sport, not professionally, but played intramural and I go out there, but I just wanted to be in the business. So when I started, I started at a classical music station in Washington, DC as a production engineer. I was not on the air then. I was a disc jockey at a station in Gaithersburg, Maryland, right outside of Washington. And Rod Stewart, who I just met a couple of
weeks ago and mentioned it to him and he didn’t remember me, but he remembered, the situation had him on my radio show before he had his first big hit. But I was doing music. I made $1.60 an hour at a radio station in New Jersey playing music. And I was the guy on the air. But I always wanted to be in sports.

And then eventually I got seven years into my career to do talk radio at an FM station, which was WWDB it was, 96-5. And developed whoever or whatever, I’ll say whatever I am. And that radio show got me my first TV job at Channel Three. They called me because, you know, I was opinionated, controversial. I said things which unfortunately doesn’t exist that much or if at all in television sports now doesn’t exist. And it’s I’m not going to criticize any specific person, but it is boring to watch local TV sports. Boring. Because they don’t say anything. I’ve already seen those highlights 15 times on my on my phone.

But I developed something, got a TV job, then left there to start. Channel 29 was the first person they hired. They hired to be an anchor on what was a new 10:00 news. And then it really started to roll. There was a fella who was a general manager of WIP at the time, and WMMR was the same company, and he said, you’re only doing a 10:00 news. Can you do a sports talk show in the afternoon on WIP? I said, “yeah, I’ve done it before. I enjoy it.” I only have a 10:00 news. “Yeah, I can do it in the afternoon”. The guy’s name was Mike Craven. He wanted to make it an all sports station eventually, which would eventually, obviously, as we know, was. And then I did hits on WMMR. I did TV, I did radio, and then it really started to roll. I, I just I’m who I am. You know, I with this guy over here, we had I don’t know if it was arguments, but there’s things I said that Brian Westbrook just didn’t like. It’s okay, it’s okay, I was there. You want to say something to me? I’m there.

Multiple players have threatened to beat the living daylights out of me. And now we’re friendly. Mitch Williams wanted to punch me in the bleeping mouth. “Step outside.” Obviously, he knew that wasn’t going to happen. Managers. Players. I just said what I believe, but I came there. If you want to come after me. I don’t know why or how this happened, but I really enjoy it. And I was asked again today, and Angelo is relishing in, in the retirement stage of his life and people “when are you going to retire?” I don’t know if they want me to or whatever.

I said, if I can spell the word, maybe you can help me, but I’m having fun. I enjoy it. And at times I still enjoy ribbing players. Man that’s fun. And management? No, I just I just try to keep it real. I’m just trying to have fun. And if you’re not having fun, you’re not
trying hard enough. And that’s. And that’s why even when Andrew asked me the same thing. When Andrew asked you to do something, you can’t say yes quickly enough. And that’s why I’m here. Because I’m going to have fun. I might not say everything people agree with, but I’m going to have fun. You had fun with me too, right Brian?

**Brian Westbrook** [00:11:54] It’s hard to follow that. Oh, yeah. We came to see a fistfight between you and Angelo, I think. You know, for me, I played in the NFL for nine years before that was here. So I’m certainly proud and happy to be back here. I’m on the sports law board, and it’s a pleasure to see everyone here and to see what Andrew and Jeff have really established here at Villanova. And I see people all around the country in our movements around the country with my family. And to see other Villanovans that show the same spirit and love for this university and have come from come from this program in particular, is absolutely awesome to see. So I’m certainly happy to be here today.

So for me, really played nine years in the NFL and immediately went into TV and radio locally. Comcast WIP for a short bit, then 97.5. The Fanatic after that, and then did some national stuff as well. And you know, I love the game of football. I felt that I could express what I saw as a player to the fans. It was super important for me to be able to sit across from guys like Angelo and Howard and be able to say, “yeah, I know that’s how you think about it. And I know that may be how a fan may perceive it, but let me tell you the perception of a player.” Let me tell you perception of someone that has put in the work on the field with another 53 guys around you, and then you have to go try to perform that on Sunday or Monday or Thursday. And sometimes that perception is different. The reality usually is different about how we feel about it, what we think about it and how we go about our business. There are times it’s easy to sit on TV or radio to say some of the things I heard Angelo say and how I would say, but as a player, this is your life, right? This is your livelihood. And some of these things. Why some players just didn’t agree with what Howard was saying. Some of them may have been true, most of them weren’t, but some of them may have been true. I give Howard’s a good friend.

**Howard Eskin** [00:14:02] Most of them.

**Brian Westbrook** [00:14:03] I give him a hard time. But, you know, I think we see things from a different lens. And that’s why I believe we have some networks now, they certainly go out of their way to have players on there so that America, the fans, can see the view of
the players and what we go through to get to this point, to be a professional athlete. So happy to be here today.

**Sydney Baxter** [00:14:25] Thanks so much, Brian. And speaking of that, having this player perspective, I was wondering if yourself and Professor Brandt could speak kind of on any challenges with the transition from a professional career with inside of sports to a career now in media that’s outside looking in?

**Brian Westbrook** [00:14:44] Well, I think the biggest— I wouldn’t say it was a challenge. I think, you know, when you’re a player, you never really in a professional field, meaning you’re not in the workplace. So there were times there’s, this is a small thing, but there are times when you’re talking to your friends and you’re just having a regular conversation, and you’re not using all the words that you would use on TV or the radio. And so you have to get used to that.

I also believe that, you know, not the, you know, Andrew mentioned dumbing it down. Now, there are times when you live in the sports world and you talk sports so much that you have to be able to explain it to people so they can understand it. So it’s not, you know, hit a gap, hit the b gap and then, you know, move your way to the line back and get to the second level, get to the third level. There was a time in sports where people just didn’t understand that type of conversation. So now you have to kind of slow it down just a little bit and say, hey, there is a linebacker that is five yards off the line of scrimmage and then work your way from the linebacker to the safety. And so there are times that you have to understand that as a player, you’re not just talking to your friends in a locker room. So the slang has to be cut out just a bit. But also you have to kind of put it in phrases and sequences that can be understood by everyone.

The other thing as an athlete that is sometimes tough is that when you are on air, it’s a conversation back and forth. As an athlete, you’re getting asked questions all the time, so you’re not really that well versed at asking questions and engaging in the conversation. It’s question answer, question answer instead of, the inter quote, the conversation between a producer, between a host and yourself is. So there is a little bit of difference. And it takes time. It takes the reps. A lot of these younger, you know, people that are, that come from the sports world, it just takes reps and reps and reps to be able to get it done and to be able to do it well. One of my good friends like Reese, you know, afternoons on WIP, I remember when I first got him and he was good already, but he started working on weekends, nights and weekends. He would work, I would listen. Told me
it would be midnight and we’d be on. He’d be working his craft and he continued to get better and better and better. Learn baseball, learn hockey, sports that he didn’t watch very much of. And now, you know, I think he’s just one of the best sports talk shows that we’ve had in our city. And it’s because he put in the work. And so for the athletes, you know, you want to be able to quickly go out there and talk about sports and you use your body to be really good at sports for a long time now. You got to use your brain a little bit and that’s a bit different.

Andrew Brandt [00:17:19] Yeah, very similar to Brian although not on the player side, but more the management and the agent side. You know, when I’m doing when I have been doing articles or TV commentary on an issue that’s going on, say, between players and management, on a contract negotiation, on a collective bargaining agreement, on an issue like concussions or whatever it may be. Sometimes I would talk to colleagues, former colleagues, that are running teams or working on the player side. And I remember getting a question something like, Andrew, “are we talking as colleagues and friends or are we talking like you’re media?” You know, and I didn’t really understand the difference. But there is this view like, well, if I tell you this, I don’t know if I want it out there. And that’s sort of being confidential. And I try to address that in the best way I could and be professional and tactful.

The one frustration I’ve had and continue to have with media is sometimes naming and, kind of putting in a box topics to make them sell better. And I understand that’s the business. But all those, those months, and two years actually, I was doing commentary for ESPN about the athlete activism issue and Colin Kaepernick, especially. Every segment they labeled anthem protests. And I would say, well, it’s not really an anthem protest. It’s more about this and that and brutality and whatever it may be. And they’re like, no, no, it’s anthem protests because that sells, it’s a quick hit and those kind of things, you learn in media, you know, you have to do these titular things to get viewers and to make sure that happens. What I am proud of, though, through all the changes in media, I continue to sort of I write long, I talk long. I explain, and there does seem to be a market for that. This is not. Sometimes I feel like we underestimate the intelligence of our audience, and I’m proud to say it’s out there.

Howard Eskin [00:19:28] Can I, kind of address something to Brian and the question was to Brian to go into media, I’ve noticed how difficult it is for players when they go into media to really know what
they see or express what they see and have total honesty. Because now you’re on the other side. It’s not about criticism. It’s about I’ve seen “he’s not playing well or that’s a mistake.” And you can address that. But I find more and more players having trouble adjusting to the honesty because that’s what the listener, that’s what the viewer wants. And, some players adjust to it quicker, some players don’t adjust to it. But that’s got to be really difficult when you go and some of these guys you played with. “But you got to be honest to the viewer and the listener and I have sometimes I have issues when I listen, I mean, no, that’s not right. “What are you dumb, are you kidding me?” So I just I know that’s difficult, and I don’t know how difficult it was for you. Brian.

**Brian Westbrook** [00:20:48] Yeah. That that is something, you know, again, as an athlete, you’re being criticized every single day, right? And kind of the last thing that you want is someone that has been in your position to criticize you for something that happens all the time. There are times where, you know, on air personality, they just don’t understand enough about what the things that we go through. And so it’s easy to criticize, it’s easy to point out, well, he’s not trying. He’s not doing this well every day. We’re trying to get better every day. We’re trying to do the right thing to win. And so you’re right.

Usually for athletes, when they get into the media, you don’t want to start criticizing, especially people that you play with. You don’t want to I don’t want to go back on the air and say, LaShawn McCoy should have had 200 yards instead of 100 yards a year. LaShawn McCoy this, that and the other. That’s just not what we do. And I think as you go further and further in the profession, you start to learn, okay, there’s a different way to do it, to criticize in a different way. More like, you know, I’m used to seeing LaShawn McCoy average 150 yards per game. You only have 75 yards today. I’m hoping that he gets back to the 150 yard rusher that we used to see. Instead of some people’s way of saying and saying LaShawn McCoy sucked today and, hopefully he’s better next week, right? So as a player, you hear that. And so you try your hardest to stay away from that. “He sucked today.” And you know, the truth is as you get more experience and more reps, you get more eloquent in how you deliver things. And again, when you’re a player, that’s just not what you’re doing. You’re not trying to be eloquent. You’re just stating the facts. And so it takes time for that to develop and that that’s part of the difficulty.

**Howard Eskin** [00:22:30] Truth will set you free.
Brian Westbrook [00:22:33] There is a way to say truth that is acceptable for everybody, right? My wife has told me that. She’s like “that’s not the way you say things.”

Angelo Cataldi [00:22:43] Former players have a major disadvantage when they go into media. Brian Westbrook knows a heck of a lot more football than I ever will. When something happens on a football field he’s far more likely to be able to identify it than I am. But he is hamstrung by the fact that if somebody really screwed up brutally, he has to hold back. He’s in the fraternity. It’s the only former player I ever worked with who didn’t care at all was Hollis Thomas, one of your teammates. Hollis would comment like if I were doing a show a few months ago when I would have called for the firing of Nick Sirianni with maybe 3 or 4 games to go in the season. He had lost the team. He had no idea what he was doing, couldn’t fix what was wrong. I would have said that. Hollis is the only athlete I ever work with who would have said, “true that. That’s that.” Yeah. They’re right. He would. All the other ones. Like if I grease with it, he would go. “No, what are you crazy, the guy’s got a 31 and 7 record before the slump. You can’t do it.”

This is the part people don’t understand in sports media unless you’ve seen it for a long time. It’s people like Howard and us- and I would know is a hell of a lot more than I do to is on the sideline for every single game. Right? But we don’t have to tell you the truth. We have to tell you ours. And if our truth lines up better with the millions of people that are watching the game, we’re going to connect more than a player is going to is the players got.

He doesn’t want to walk into a locker room. DeAndre Swift fumbled the ball. Oh why Brian Westbrook was a way better running back. And he was. How can he criticize them? How can he say that guy is not paying attention when he needs to? He can’t do it. We can. We have that freedom. And that’s to me an ingredient that is it’s less and less likely for you to hear now than ever before. Because teams now the Eagles, they can’t wait to call your bosses or call somebody to say you’re out of line with what you’re saying. And you need bosses to say sorry. He’s going to say what he wants. That’s what talk radio is. It’s a tug of war the whole time. But I would prefer to be the way I am in the way Howard was, and that we can give an opinion without worrying about the repercussions if we walk into a locker room. Which, by the way, I never did the last 33 years.

Howard Eskin [00:25:26] But. I am just going to correct something was just said. Nick Sirianni did not lose the team. I go there every
day. Now, I'm not in there in that locker room all the time. They sucked and their defense was brutal, brutal. They couldn't tackle. They probably couldn't tackle me. That's not the head coach. They coach things in. And Jalen Hurts wasn't the same quarterback. I've talked to the coaches. The nonsense they say in the news conference is B.S. You know, it's just it's handed to them by public relations people. And I get it. John Tortorella was the best the other day. He holds back with nothing. But he did not lose the team. That team was just bad. But you can't go 31 and 7, and then put his whole career where he's made the playoffs three straight years, the Super Bowl in his second year and say he lost the team. I tried to check. I look for it, I checked I. just nobody and there's players that will talk to me because I am there, that will talk to me and give me the truth. And I tell them not to bullshit me, give me the truth. And he didn't lose the team. They were just, I think it just fell apart because they didn't have enough talent. And that's where. All right.

Angelo Cataldi [00:26:54] That's baloney. All right. I hate to say it. I haven't been on the air with Howard a long time. There were 10 and 1. They were doing pretty well. Yeah, it was a shaky 10 and 1 but it was 10 and 1. The problem is this with Howard. Let me try to explain. That's that weird little situation. Howard asked it. And by the way, this I there's never been a better sideline reporter than Howard. I watch the games but listen to Merrill and Mike and Howard because Howard's faster with the injury reports. He's got opinions he gives during the games. He's a very good sideline reporter. He is completely compromised by that position whether he acknowledges or not. Because if he goes out and calls for the firing of the coach, now he's standing next to him before the next game. That's awkward, right? That's not so easy.

And then he's got to hear from Bob Ling and the PR people, Howard, why should we let you on the sideline when you think what you think, Howard has to soften the blow. I'm not gonna say he pulls the punch, but he's not going to give you the full shot that he would have before he had that assignment. So many people and sports media now are compromised by connections with teams, business relationships. WIP is the flagship station of the Phillies and the Eagles. So you got to worry about what the business partners say about it. The only way to do the job is to not get that close. The way I see it. You give your honest opinion regardless. It doesn't even have to be right. It's your opinion. People are going to tune into your show to hear your opinion because they're going to know it's pure. I didn't make friendships with anybody that I talked about in sports.
When I did cover teams, I dealt with a ton of animosity in the locker rooms because I wrote what I thought. The more honest you can be, the better you’re going to be at that job.

Howard Eskin [00:28:53] I’m not compromised, I’ll tell you that. I have ripped players on the air and I stand next to those guys too. So I see what I see. If the coach isn’t good enough, I’m going to tell you he’s made mistakes. And I’ve told him to his face. And I’ve told coaches, it’s just, you know, I know it’s- And he’s right. Angelo is right. It is difficult. I get beat up by the Eagles more than anybody else because I do say things and I just I got to live with that. I got to suck it up and move on and just, you know, be who I am.

Janie Pierson [00:29:29] So to zoom out and talk maybe more generally about Philadelphia, Philadelphia sports fans- obviously a very passionate group. So maybe talk about the changing throughout the season, ups and downs. How does it change, covering a team as a player, as a former player? The coverage, are people tuning in more when something really bad happens? Negative news is that what drives forces? Like how is that experience throughout a season, throughout your careers, seeing the ups and downs and just in general?

Angelo Cataldi [00:30:06] It’s changed insanely. All right. And, the only time in the year I’ve been retired that I wanted to go back was when a former intern of mine, Jack Fritz, on the afternoon show with WIP, which had a reputation for being the toughest of any sports station in America on their own teams. Came out when Trey Turner was hitting 230 in August and said, why don’t we organize a standing ovation for him? Now, look, I have my disagreements with Howard. Howard would not be organizing a standing ovation for a guy hitting 230. And they pulled it off and they got all those people to stand up and cheer. And then he started to hit. And two, I have two thoughts. One is, “I’m a dinosaur.” I mean, my God, that’s what we are now? We got to encourage guys who were stealing 30 million a year and not even playing like a guy worth 3 million? And the second thought I had was, damn it, it worked. And it was like that. That was kind of signal to me that the way I did, it might not be the way it’s done anymore. It’s changing. And maybe that’s because the fans are changing. Maybe the next generation is not as scrutinizing and is demanding as the generation that I talked to.

Howard Eskin [00:31:32] I think people on the air pander at times to the fans. And because, in the world now they call them hot takes
their opinions, their hot takes. But they just say what they think will get people angry, excited. Whether it’s real or it’s not real, whether it’s accurate or not accurate. And that’s the world that I had to transform from. I don’t always agree with it. I try to be, try to find out what’s right. What’s wrong, whether something is really happening or not happening. But talk radio is the minds. It is the minds and formulate the minds of the fans. And, that I don’t know that that’s always a good thing. It’s it creates for great radio. But I don’t know that that’s always a good thing. But that’s what talk radio, sports talk radio is. And I try to inform and entertain. I don’t know, the information is I mean, there’s information on the radio obviously, but it’s more entertainment than it is information. And I just, but I think sports talk people kind of pander in what they want to complain about. And that’s and that’s a big part of it, too.

Andrew Brandt [00:33:05] I moved here from a small town called Green Bay, Wisconsin, and they’ve never seen a place wrap themselves around a sports team like they do. And I one of the reasons I got out of there, because it was hard to even come out of your house and not be asked about the Packers. I didn’t think that I would see that again, but I have. Obviously, there are more teams here, a lot more teams than just one with the Packers. But Janie, use the word passion. I don’t know if there’s a stronger word than passion. I do a lot of national media. I do a Twitter with hundreds of thousands. I do a lot of things, but I never get as much reaction walking around as I do when I come on in with Angelo on WIP. It is a powerful medium in this town. And again, I thought Green Bay was the max, but I think this is it.

Sydney Baxter [00:34:03] And I know we’ve talked a lot about your respective careers. And how do you go about building the brands you’ve built in as media personalities, and how do you see that kind of changing with the changing landscape of media?

Howard Eskin [00:34:19] I never look at it that way. I just watch trying to be myself. I mean, I enjoyed sports so much. I enjoyed talking about it. I enjoyed hanging up on people always. And that was part of the enjoyment. And I learned early in my career at that FM station before I went into television and before WI, the program director said to me, says, “you don’t have to be nice to everybody.” And I never forget that comment. It was I said, he says, “if you disagree, then disagree.” And, but it is. I never thought about a brand.

I know I don’t want to say this in an egotistical way. When we started doing shows at the Borgata in Atlanta, Angelo did it. The guy
that was running things back then, almost at the beginning, a little over 20 years ago, is when they opened up. And shortly thereafter, I met with ten people from the Borgata. And the one thing and I never forgot this, and I never really thought about myself that way, says, we’re going to be a brand and you are a brand. And I was the first one to do a show there. But I never thought about, you know, and players talk about their brand and the NFL made their brand. I mean, there’s great players in the NFL and great players in every sport. But without the leagues being there, but and without WIP it wouldn’t have happened for me. I don’t I just don’t I just hey, listen, I just I’d like to be one of everybody else.

I mean, I know people listen to me on the air and, there’s a college. Goldey-Beacom College in Wilmington is going to honor and given me an honorary doctorate on May 3rd. That comes from what I did, but it’s because I enjoy doing what I did, and I never thought about it as a brand. And the one in my commencement speech- and I’m going to start writing it soon with the writer. I want to relate to students. Work hard, be responsible. And I was always doing that. And it just worked.

One of the coaches and I’ll say it was Mike McDaniels. I was at the owners meetings and he said, and I’ll never forget this. And there’s a book apparently out “talent is overrated. Hard work beats talent all the time.” And, you know what? He was right. But I never thought about myself other than doing that. And whatever happens, happens. If it works, it works. If it doesn’t, I’d be out of my ass somewhere. And that’s just the way it is.

Brian Westbrook [00:37:06] That’s not true. Hard work does not always beat talent. That’s just that. That’s just not true.

Howard Eskin [00:37:12] Well, I’m not that talented.

Brian Westbrook [00:37:13] Yeah, but I think if you work really hard and you outwork someone that is more tailored to you, then you have a chance. But if you’re Michael Jordan, it’s not going to be outworked by somebody just because he’s a super talent. He works hard too.

Howard Eskin [00:37:14] Well he’s exceptional.

Brian Westbrook [00:37:15] We don’t agree on anything actually. So I think, but we do actually agree on this. You know, for an athlete it wasn’t about building a brand for us either. It was being who you are, being a respectful person, being the person that you are to your
teammates and on the field. And then when you have an opportunity to be interviewed, you know, just try to shoot people straight and give them the answer that they were looking for. And then really afterwards- and things are changing right now. Things are changing the way that people are viewed.

And I think you see more people making a concerted effort to build a brand and to build from what they have now to go to the next level. You see guys on Fox, you know, even LaShawn McCoy and DeShawn Jackson, they’re saying, I’m listening on TV. But my next move is that my own podcast. And try to monetize that. There’s always the next move in for me. And this is probably not the best thing. It wasn’t about the next move. It was about where I was at currently trying to be the best. I was there and then allow the next move to kind of handle itself. But, you know, we see a lot of people players now doing is trying to build a brand and that brand equals money. You know, if you’re a caring person that you get an endorsement by this company and that person that this company and it all, it depends on what brand you have developed and built, because now it equals money. Prior to, you know, the last 15, 20 years, it wasn’t solely about that.

**Angelo Cataldi** [00:38:57] I want to clarify something Howard said before. He said that, he’s worked hard. And I think Brian also agreed to that. No. Howard hasn’t. Howard loves to say to people, “I never had a bad day in my life.” Let me tell you the truth about Howard. He never worked a day in his life because covering sports for him is not work. This is the best advice you could give to any kid at Villanova right now. Find something you love to do and then find somebody to pay you to do it. You’ll never work a day. I was in order to get into sports.

I was at a paper in in my hometown of Providence, Rhode Island, and I met with the executive editor, and he said, we don’t have any openings. And I went, I’ll do anything to become a sportswriter. And he said, “I’m going to put you on action line for one year.” You have two core businesses that screwed over their customers and tell them that they either pay up or you’re going to write it up in a column. It was, it was legal extortion. And we got we got a ton. I mean, I did it for a year was an awful job, 9 to 5. It was terrible. But at the end of the year, the editor said to me, okay, I’m going to let you cover high school sports. And I worked my way up from sports. And from that day I didn’t work again. It was no work because it was fun. It was what I enjoyed. And that’s what you got to get. Howard Eskin, probably close to 70, I’m guessing. Right. He’ll never retire. I was talking to
Lloyd Remick before who represents Meryl Reese. Meryl Reese’s 80. Mel will never retire because they’re not actually working. It’s fun. That’s the key. That’s the secret. Love what you’re doing, and it’s not actually work.

Andrew Brandt [00:40:58] I’m nicely situated here, aren’t I? Syd asked about branding, I mean, the branding we talked about with the college athletes, it’s become this buzzword branding. Who the hell knows what branding really means? But you learn along the way. You know, when I entered this new world of media, there’s this thing called Twitter now X. And I’m like everyone, it starts out like most people. No one cares what I do. And then there was this Facebook where the guys, you know, “I’m going to pick up my son at soccer.” Who the hell cares about that? But then I’m like, okay, I have an article, I’ll put it out, I’ll do this. I have a TV appearance, I’ll put it out. And then I realized, oh my God, this thing kind of works. And then you put out little lines. I put out something about a player getting arrested, and I sort of said, there will be lawyers. And it became a catch phrase every time I say that now thousands of people seem to retweet it. And when something goes bad in sports, they go, Here’s Andrew Brandt, his line. And then you just learn like, oh, this is how it works. And I think social media is like a pinball machine. You throw something up. Sometimes it comes right down, sometimes it pinballs for hours, days, whatever it is. So this is ever changing. We talked all morning about ever changing media. Social is part of it. And you sort of have to- I know you don’t have a Twitter do.

Angelo Cataldi [00:42:26] I used to have it. I’m. Yeah. I’m listening to Andrew and all I’m thinking is you went viral a few times, right? People were and I went, wow, Andrew Brandt’s a hot take artist now that.

Andrew Brandt [00:42:37] Oh no.

Angelo Cataldi [00:42:37] He’s too cerebral. That wasn’t intended. Right? What was it like for you when all of a sudden everybody was talking about a tweet or something that you sent out?

Andrew Brandt [00:42:49] I don’t know how to do a hot take. I’m a lukewarm taker. But I guess some things do get attention. And again, that’s I think we’ve talked a little bit here about freedom. Like Brian. We talked about that where I’m not worried about a team, a league, even Villanova giving me that that breadth, which I appreciate, where I can be free and liberated to say what I want. And I’m not going to
Howard Eskin [00:43:24] Social media is not social. And it’s not media. And that’s there’s so much anger on social media. It’s not all anger. And I find that, you know, I just I try not to pay attention to it anymore. But when there’s a report- I use that word loosely. Then the media, whether it’s radio and TV, well, reports say it’s on social media 50% of the time. It’s nonsense.

I tell you, these people are always looking for something to get you. And I’ll never forget. This is unbelievable. It was a joke. I couldn’t figure out what was going on. I put out a tweet as I’m about to go on Saturday morning, and by mistake, I don’t know how I did it. I included my daughter’s picture on there who was all dressed up for Taylor Swift. She sent me a picture when she went to see Taylor Swift in Los Angeles. She works for. She’s a manager at a music company now. She’s really achieved a lot. All my kids have, thank God. But so the picture went up and I’m saying, what the hell am I getting all these retweets for? They thought I was a pervert, looking through, looking through the internet and I, it was like, are you 3.9 million views? Because they thought I was a pervert. I mean, is this what you want? Yes, it was a joke. It was. It was unbelievable.

Andrew Brandt [00:45:03] She famous now?

Howard Eskin [00:45:08] She is, I’ve been telling you. We’ve seen both sides of it. I had. I made a mistake on a name one time. I’d have a quarter, a quarter of a million views because I called Andrew McCutchen, Lawrence. Because I remembered the football player who was a running back and. Yeah, at, at spring training, Andrew McCutchen was back in a quarter of a million views because I had the wrong name. I mean, get a life. But anyway, I just I had to go off on that a little bit.

Janie Pierson [00:45:42] Well, I think we’re starting to wind down here, but this is actually a nice segue.

Howard Eskin [00:45:46] We’re winding up. Trust the wind up.

Janie Pierson [00:45:49] That works too. But I guess we’ve talked about a lot about the impact or not impact of social media, maybe, and how that intertwines with radio, written, TV. What do you guys think is next for the next step in sports media? Brian, if you’d like to start.
Brian Westbrook [00:46:07] I think we’re seeing it already. We’re seeing players taking the lead in saying, I don’t want anyone else to disseminate my message. I’m going to do it myself. And that’s with social media. You know, that their ability to tweet and text or whatever it is and as well as their own podcast, their own, their own media platforms. LeBron has a platform. Sue Bird has a platform. There are so many players with a platform. They’re saying, we want to take our words and express them to our audience in our way. And I think that’s powerful. Now, a lot of people that are in the industry, probably Howard and Andrew, I mean, Angelo. They probably don’t see you that way and they may not see it. I think I heard a young man earlier mentioned, like, you know, that’s not how it’s supposed to be and not conducting. Well, that’s how the players conducted in. If you want firsthand reports and accounts from players, then this is the way of the future. This is exactly how you’re going to get it. And I appreciate that. I mean, there has been times...And it’s interesting and I was just listening to you, Howard, and I don’t know that you were mad about the misspelling of the name and the retweets and stuff like that, but people were criticizing your work the same way. You were criticizing every player’s work. And so.

Howard Eskin [00:47:19] It’s a name.

Brian Westbrook [00:47:20] Well, but listen, there was a mistake, right? And as a player, you make mistakes on the field all the time and you get criticized for that. And then when you get retweeted, however many times you come here and say something about that. So that’s how the players feel.

Howard Eskin [00:47:34] I didn’t cost myself a game.

Brian Westbrook [00:47:37] But you cost yourself your integrity for spelling the name wrong. Your job is to get his name correct. So it’s the player’s job, in your view, to never make a mistake. My point is that the criticism at times it’s been harsh, the criticism at times not knowing the entire story has not been completely fair. But I think now the players are saying, okay, instead of saying someone else is going to tell my story, I’m going to tell it myself. And whether the fans respect or like it or not, this is just the truth from my view as a player. And before I came into an NFL meeting with Andy Reid, Andy Reid, one of our first meeting, he said, listen, the media is not here to protect you. It’s not here necessarily supports you. What we believe in, Andy believed, was the media is here to divide you as a team. And your goal as a team is 53 guys to stay together at all times. And we want to keep
things in-house. And there were many times where things were not kept in-house. And obviously there were different reasons for that. Joe Penner was a reason for it. Some of the coaches, some of the players were reasons. But, you know, we’re trying we were trying to keep it together as a team. And it was tough to do that at times. And a lot of it was because some of the reporters, and, you know, it was it was getting things were getting leaked all the time. And now the players are like, okay, well, the things are going to get leaked is going to get leaked from me and from my words in my mouth and the way that I think and I think it’s a great opportunity for guys. It may not be in the journalistic view from others, but it’s a great opportunity for guys to express themselves and the way that they see fit, and that’s important.

Howard Eskin [00:49:21] And they do that with podcasts. LeBron James, who I am not a fan of. Great player, but he’s all about himself and he’s still a great player, but he’s all about himself and he just he wants attention in every way, shape or form. So he’s doing the podcast with JJ Redick. Somehow the subject of chess came up. “Oh yeah, I play chess.” Never played chess in his life. It’s like trying to make himself sound smart. Come on, man, just say, hey, listen, I never played chess. I don’t know how to play chess. And I never played chess, but he’s trying to make himself… So when players, my point is, when players do podcast, they tell you what they want you to hear, that it may not be accurate. That’s a small thing, but it may not be accurate. And that’s why they’re doing podcasts.

Brian Westbrook [00:50:11] But that’s what you and Angelo set up here said from the very beginning. It may not be the complete truth. It may not be the truth, but it’s my opinion.

Howard Eskin [00:50:19] And playing chess was not an opinion.

Brian Westbrook [00:50:22] Let me stress the truth a lot. He may have played chess. You don’t know.

Howard Eskin [00:50:25] I tell you what, I play in chess, and I haven’t played for 20 years.

Andrew Brandt [00:50:32] I think, you know, we’ve talked a lot about the future. The future is obviously the word multi. It’s multimedia. There’s just not TV people, radio people, podcast people, all TV people. It’s multi. And I kind of noticed this long time ago, 6 or 7 years ago when even Beyond Sports will obviously like a Pat McAfee
in sports, but also major podcasts. The question is like, well, who are they with? Are they with NBC or are they with ESPN or they with Fox? And the answer is no, they’re not with anyone. They’re with themselves. Like, they don’t need that. And I’m like, wow, you can do that? You can do that. You don’t need the muscle of ESPN behind you to be a media personality, to be maybe not the biggest star, but create your own thing. You know, again, young people I talk to all the time. I met a young person like, what do you know? You want to be in sports, want to do that like everyone says. And then he sort of, he sort of slips out. Yeah, I do a podcast about South American soccer, but only 30 people listen. I’m like, you’re ahead of the game. You got 30 people. Go for it. Keep going because your peers aren’t doing that. They’re not putting out a podcast that gets 30 people to listen. He goes, yeah, but it’s only 30 people. That’s a lot. You’re a kid, 30 people. Go for it. This is how you separate yourself. This is how you differentiate yourself. So the barriers to entry are gone. Now you just have to rise above the flooded market. And it’s tough.

Angelo Cataldi [00:52:14] To me, the future of media is taking a page of the past. There’s one thing that has always worked in sports and always will. The simple premise of good versus evil. When people watched women’s basketball, I was one of them, the other night, to me, it was good versus evil because I can’t stand Kim Mulkey, that woman. She is obnoxious and always seeking attention. I couldn’t stand her, so I wanted Caitlin Clark to beat her. It’s been that way forever. Right it is. Oh, that is the one constant in sports the most. They were talking on the previous panel of why LIV? No one’s watching it. There’s no personalities there. Yeah. If they got a Tiger Woods, a great player who is also a jerk. He got so much attention because some people rooted hard for him and a lot of people rooting hard against them. There was this tension. There was this feeling that that’s what it took. The most highest paid guy, ESPN, is Stephen A. Smith. Why? Because he’s polarizing. He makes flamboyant, provocative comments in an entertaining way, and people take sides. That’s never going to change. What probably will happen as you add the elements of podcasts and other people trying to get into that game, is that they’re going to have to adopt an extreme position and try to get attention that way. And, to me, no matter what changes there are in how they deliver the sports to us, that’s going to always be the key to its success.

Howard Eskin [00:54:06] I and just let me add, I think now in our business, sports talk radio is just going to get at a higher level. Be it
sports and news are really the only thing you listen to on, you know, music you can get. I’m sure they listen to music stations, I get it, but there’s so many other places to get that. I just think it’s going to take a rise. I think the future of sports talk radio is really not reached its height yet. Especially with the passion in Philadelphia that people have for their teams. It’s just, it’s mind boggling. It’s unbelievable. So from that standpoint. And that’s why I enjoy it. And I’m sure that’s one of the many reasons that I love continuing to work. Because I know it’s just going to go up and up. There’s a few I mean, everybody’s trying to be sports talk radio. The newspapers are trying to be. They try to write like they’re writing for sports, like they’re in sports talk radio. So I think that level and I think that future is very, very I mean… we haven’t gotten there yet. We haven’t gotten to the top of that. And hopefully, as CBS 60 minutes does, we’ll do overtime because we’re not done yet. But I know we’re done. You guys have a lot more questions.

**Andrew Brandt** [00:55:27] Speaking of that, we’re going to have to wrap. I want to indulge you before applause to hang around two more minutes. I want you to meet the editor in chief of our Moorad Sports Journal who is co-hosting this event. But before she comes up and hopefully you stay around two minutes to listen to her. Thanks to our star students who are on to bigger and better things. Sydney. Janie. They’ve helped me so much in their time here thanks to Brian, Howard, Angelo, thank you so much. And here is Anna, Anna D’Eramo to wrap it up.

**Anna D’Eramo** [00:56:09] Thank you, Professor Brandt. Hi, everyone. My name is Anna D’Eramo. I’m Editor in Chief of the Jeffrey S. Moorad Sports Law Journal. Thank you so much for all of you attending the 2024 Jeffrey S. Moorad Sports Law Journal Symposium, focusing specifically on the changing landscape of sports media. Wrapping up, there’s a few people I’d like to thank for the success of the event and our program this year. Of course, thank you first to Jeff Moorad for funding and supporting the Moorad Center. With your generosity, you’ve given students and so many in this room the opportunity to develop the leadership and professional skills needed to pursue a career in sports law. We’re all so grateful. Next, I’d like to thank Morgan Lewis for your generosity and sponsorship of today’s event, and for Dana and Allison for moderating. You both were wonderful.

I’d like to thank all of our Villanova staff and students for helping coordinate and put on this event, starting with Dean Alexander and our administration. Thank you so much for your continued
support in hosting this event every year. Professor Brandt, our Executive Director, thank you for your leadership. It’s been a pleasure working with you this year. Sam Myers, your help, and the help from the event planning team has been instrumental in putting on this event this year. We would be completely lost without your guidance and expertise. So thank you so much for your support throughout this year.

I’d like to give a huge thank you to Brenna Golden. Brenna is our managing editor of symposia, and she’s worked tirelessly to put this event on. She is very dedicated to today’s event and this journal, so we’re also thankful for your role. In addition, I’d like to give another huge thank you to the Moorad Sports Law Fellows for their partnership throughout the year in planning the symposium. It’s been a pleasure working with each of each of you. And last but certainly not least, thank you to our panelists. Thank you for coming from all over the country and speaking on these sports law topics. Your panels were absolutely incredible today. And again, thank you everyone for coming.