

The good, bad and boring network sports broadcasters

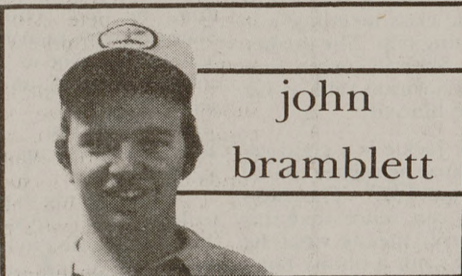
If you watched The Tonight Show earlier this week, you may have heard Johnny Carson mention that February is ratings month for the television industry. Ratings are how the networks evaluate their programming so they'll know to cancel the shows that most people like.

So, in the spirit of the season I've devised my own ratings. I'll be evaluating the men and women who either enhance or hinder your armchair quarterback's weekend — the sports broadcasters.

The areas being examined are football, basketball, baseball, tennis and golf. The awards are being given to broadcasters for excellence in speaking or as the case may be, not talking, and above and beyond the call of duty.

This rating does not evaluate sports reporters/broadcasters on the cable or pay-per-view television network. From what I've seen of USA Sports Network, Home Box Office and ESPN, Ex Sports Professionals Network, they are staffed mainly by network sports and former professional athletes. The first category is football, where NBC's No. 2 team of Don Criqui and John Madden and CBS' No. 1 team of John Madden and Pat Summerall received the highest ratings.

Criqui's excellent knowledge of the game, well as his smooth style, match perfectly with the old San Francisco 49er Brodie. Brodie's honesty and enthusiasm for the game



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overlook the words he fumbles.

Summerall, the former New York Giant place-kicker, is one of the few athletes-turned-announcers who has made the transition so well that he handles the play-by-play.

Madden, the former Oakland Raider coach, is the epitome of color commentators. He explains the game in laymen's terms, and never tells how he would coach the situation. George Allen take note. And with CBS' introduction of the chalkboard, the device that enables the color man to diagram the plays on the screen before the replay, he's even better.

In the college football ranks, ABC automatically gets a high rating because it is the only network that carries regular-season games. ABC's No. 1 play-by-play man, Keith Jackson, is boring but good. The network's highest rated team is Jackson or Al Michaels with Arkansas Athletic Director Frank

Broyles. Broyles owns the same qualities as Madden.

The special awards in football go to Bryant Gumble; formerly of NBC Sports, and ABC's Dandy Don Meredith. Gumble is a journalist first and a broadcaster second and I really love the way Don sings.

The next category is college basketball. The team of Dick Enberg and Al Maguire from NBC is excellent and highly rated. The only basketball broadcast team ever rated higher by this poll was NBC's old team of Enberg, Maguire and Billy Packard. Packard left NBC to become CBS' college color commentator.

There has never been a man with more confidence in himself than Maguire. However, his humor and knowledge of the game enhance the telecast and overshadow his sometimes overzealous confidence. Enberg, an excellent football and baseball broadcaster in his own right, controls the flow of the broadcast the way a good point guard controls an offense.

The highest ratings for baseball broadcasters go to NBC's Joe Garagiola and Tony Kubek. Garagiola is another former athlete who has become a play-by-play announcer. Special awards go to ABC's Michaels and Bob Uecker because of their insight into the game. A hint to the networks: Put Garagiola, Uecker and Michaels together and it'll be an all-star broadcast team.

Gervin spurs SA home victory

United Press International

SAN ANTONIO — Both sides maintained that injured forward Truck Robinson's absence crippled the Phoenix Suns.

But San Antonio had George Gervin and Mike Mitchell, who counted for more than half of the points in the Spurs' 118-112 victory, Thursday night, their first win over the Suns in four matches.

Gervin and Mitchell combined for 66 points to lead the Spurs to a 66-point victory over the Suns in four matches.

into a 6½-game lead in the Midwest Division.

"When Truck is on the floor, they're tougher," said Mitchell, who had 27 points. "He does make a difference."

Phoenix forward Walter Davis said while the Spurs had Gervin to lean on, Robinson's absence left a hole that couldn't be filled.

"We missed Truck clogging up the middle, and also missed his scoring and rebounding," said Davis.

The scoring was even at 31 in the first quarter, and San Antonio pulled ahead by a point, 62-61 at the half.

Then Mark Olberding and Dave Corzine combined with Gervin to keep the Spurs in the lead down the stretch. Four consecutive Olberding free throws gave San Antonio a 100-95 lead with 7:25 to play, and Corzine broke the Suns with two baskets off offensive rebounds in the final two minutes.

"Once again down the stretch,

we really executed and played sound defense," said Spurs coach Stan Albeck. "We felt we should try something different so we pressed them."

Rich Kelley, the Suns' 7-foot center, said: "We decided we were going to run with the Spurs and we did a decent job. But we couldn't stop them at the end."

The Suns were led by Alvan Adams with 23 points. Rookie Larry Nance added 18 as Phoenix dropped its fourth straight.

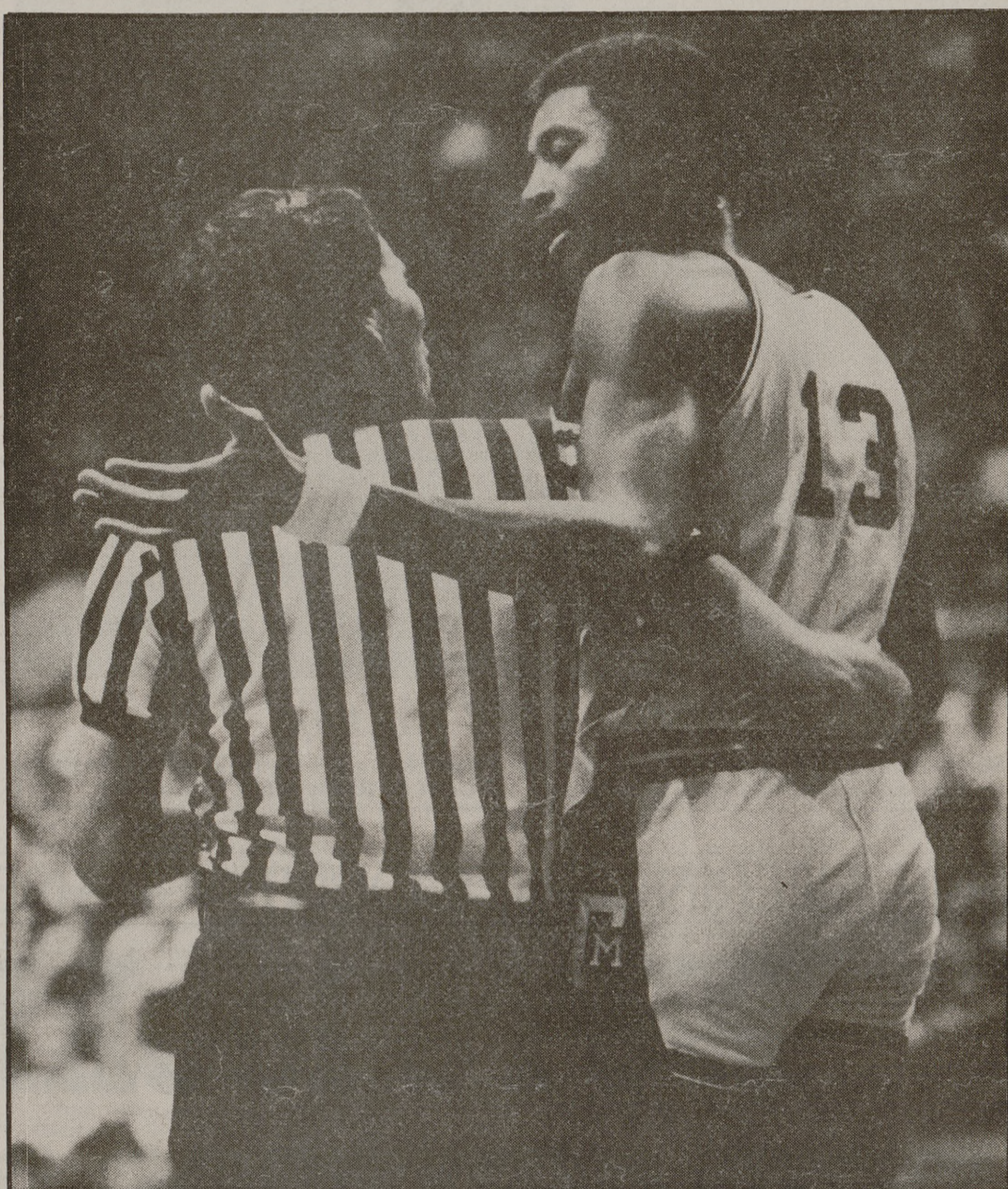
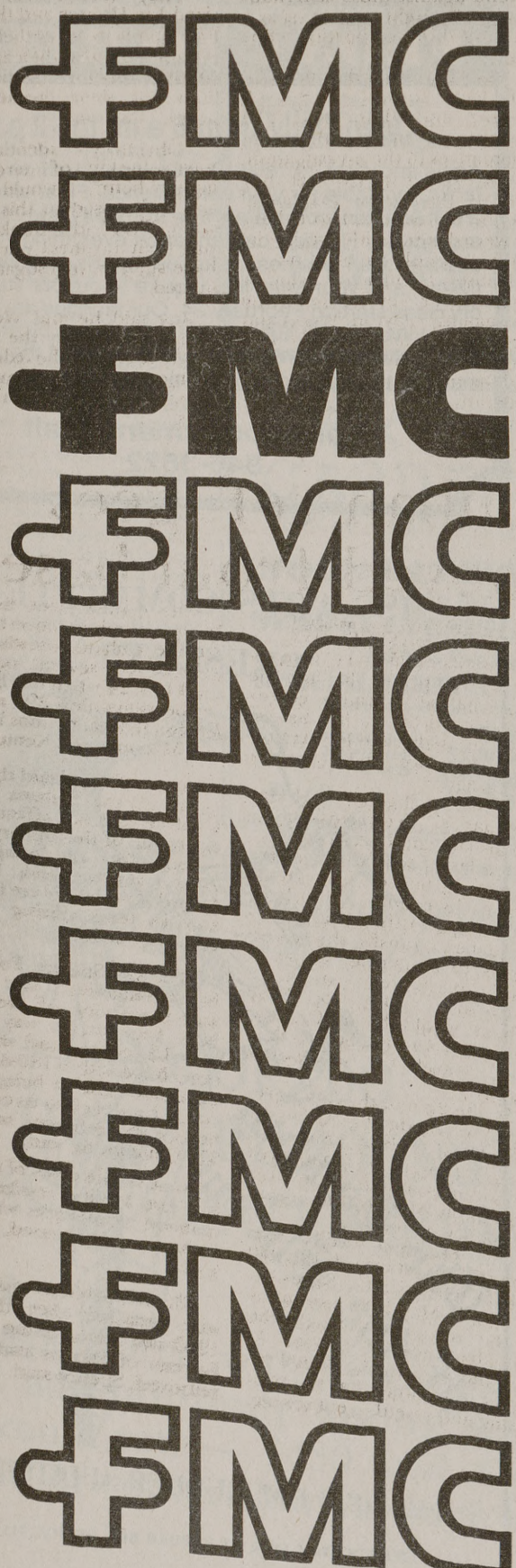


photo by Donn Friedmann

You must be kidding!

Forward Claude Riley of the Texas A&M basketball team strikes up a conversation with a referee during the Aggies' 81-53 victory over Sam Houston State University earlier in the season. Texas A&M, 6-3 in the Southwest Conference after Wednesday's 58-55 loss to the Baylor Bears, meet the Texas Tech Red Raiders Monday in Lubbock.



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