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Public Relations News from
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January 19-20, 2009

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

For millions of football fans watching at home every Sunday, it seems as though NFL games make a seamless transition from the gridiron to the television screen. But spend a weekend with a network production crew, and you'll discover what it really takes to turn the on-field action into televised entertainment—intense preparation, frantic effort, brilliant improvisation, and an artistic genius named “Fish.”

BY MARK BOWDEN

The Hardest Job in Football

IMAGE CREDIT: MARK PETERSON/REDUX

IF YOU WERE one of the millions of Americans watching NFL football on Sunday afternoon, September 21, 2008, you might have caught the humdinger of a finish to the New York Giants–Cincinnati Bengals game. At the two-minute warning, the winless Bengals were up by four points, but the Giants were threatening: they had the ball inside the Bengals' 10, poised to score what looked like the winning touchdown.

Most of the people who witnessed this seesaw battle were watching on CBS. The capacity crowd in Giants Stadium was 79,276 that afternoon, but was less than 1 percent of the game's total audience. More than any other professional sport, football is primarily a television show. Many die-hard fans have never even attended a contest in person. For them, a football game is something that unfolds on their screen in a smooth and familiar way, so commonplace that few give it a second thought. The broadcast arrives in their living room, packaged in stereo sound and in full-color high-definition, shown from constantly shifting angles, from stadium-embracing wide shots to intimate close-ups, all of it smoothly orchestrated and narrated, and delivered up as though from the all-seeing eye of the supreme NFL fan, God Almighty.

But let's give it a second thought. Consider for a moment the complexity of a mere snippet of what you might have seen on the tube that Sunday afternoon:

In the seconds between the return from the two-minute-warning commercial break and the snap of the ball to Giants quarterback Eli Manning, as play-by-play man Greg Gumbel quickly oriented the audience—*It has been a dandy here at Giants Stadium. Two minutes to play. Bengals by four. Giants at the six-yard line. Second and goal. The Giants have one time-out remaining*—the following scene-setting images flashed past in rapid succession:

- * A high, wide shot of the stadium and the walls of cheering fans;
- * Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer watching anxiously from the sidelines;
- * Bengals coach Marvin Lewis looking perplexed on the sidelines;
- * Giants coach Tom Coughlin, head down, talking intently into his headset microphone;
- * On the field, a close-up of Bengals middle linebacker Dhani Jones pointing urgently to his teammates and shouting, positioning them for the snap;

* Manning shouting and gesturing behind center;

* Giants wide receiver Plaxico Burress lined up in the slot, poised, looking back toward Manning; and

* A wide shot showing the complete line of scrimmage as the ball is snapped and the play begins.

Roll back to the beginning of this brief sequence, and here is how it sounded inside the windowless production trailer parked outside the stadium, where two rows of technicians sat beneath the glow of 100 TV monitors, 20 screens across stacked five deep. Staring at this wall were three men: producer Mark Wolff on the left; technical director Dennis Stone on the right; and between them the show's impresario, its director, Bob Fishman, known as "Fish."

Just before coming back on air from the commercial, the crew counted down in unison:

"Five!"

"Four!"

"Three!"

Wolff shouted, "Fish is going to cut some shots!"

"Two!"

"One!"

"Aaaand go!" shouted Fish, a wiry man in faded blue jeans and a loose-fitting, long-sleeved cotton shirt, a headset clamped over a baseball cap. He was leaning up and out of his swivel chair, choosing shots and barking orders, arms elevated, snapping his long fingers loudly with each new command. "Go fan shot! Ready four. Take four! Ready eight. Take eight! Ready one. Take one! Ready 12. Take 12! Ready five. Take five! Ready three—ready two. Take two! Ready three. Take three!"

Camera three, which Fish returned to just before the snap of the ball, offers a wide angle from above that's used to frame the play. In this case, with one eye on the play clock, Fish snuck in one last scene-setting image—Burress lined up and looking back toward his quarterback—before returning to the wide angle as the ball was snapped.

This was just 30 seconds. The entire broadcast would last more than three and a half hours.

IF THE PRODUCTION crew of a televised football game is like a symphony orchestra, Bob Fishman is its conductor. He sits front and center in the dark trailer, insulated from the sunshine and the roar of the crowd, taking the fragments of sounds and moving images and assembling the broadcast on the fly, mediating the real event into the digital one. He scans the dizzying bank of screens to select the next shot, and the next, and the next, layering in replays, graphics, and sound, barking his orders via headset to his crew, plugging into a rhythm that echoes the pulse of the game.

Every bit as much as the athletic contest on the field, this is a performance, an improvisation, a largely unheralded art form peculiar to the modern age. Wolff is in charge of the broadcast; Gumbel and analyst Dan Dierdorf are its voices and faces, but their work exists to complement the show Fish orchestrates onscreen. Having once seen him in action, having peeked behind the curtain in the Palace of Oz, I can hardly watch any other sporting event on TV without picturing this frantic, sinewy 59-year-old man calling shot after shot after shot, half-sitting and half-standing, the dervish behind the professional program smoothly unspooling in your living room and in your brain.

Recently, some cable and satellite companies began offering viewers a chance to, in effect, direct their own experience of a game by selecting camera angles, isolated shots, and replays as they wish. This may satisfy a few eccentric fans who prefer, say, to watch a middle linebacker's-eye view for an entire game, but it suggests a failure to grasp the level of difficulty involved in what happens in that production trailer every Sunday. The television crews don't just broadcast games, they inhabit them. They know the players, the teams, the stats, and the strategies. They interview players and coaches the day before the game. They brainstorm, anticipate, plot likely story lines, prepare graphic packages of important stats, and bundle replays from previous contests to bring a sense of history and context to the event. They are not just pointing cameras and broadcasting the feed, they are telling the story of the game as it happens.

And at the center of their effort is the director, Fish, who seems a more agreeable version of the finicky, exasperated comedian Larry David, whom he resembles, right down to the *CurbYour Enthusiasm* logo on the baseball cap he wears pulled down to his eyebrows. He peers out at the world through wire-rimmed glasses; plays guitar in a group of aging rockers; and loves to talk music, film, politics, journalism ... but mostly, he loves to talk sports. He has won 11 Emmys, and justly so: for those who regard Sunday afternoons in football season as sacred, Fish is nothing less than a high priest.

His camera operators revere him. Out of Fish's earshot they have nothing but praise for him, and this from men (and one woman) with the blue-collar worker's hearty, time-honored disdain for the boss.

"Most of them are assholes," said one, sitting at a round table with four fellow operators, who all nodded in agreement.

"Fish is the best," the same cameraman explained.

"He appreciates what you bring to the job," said another.

"Suppose a defensive back makes an interception," said the first. "At some point, I know, they are going to want to come back to a close-up of him. So when I know they are on another shot, I'll use those seconds to start panning up and down the sidelines, looking for him. Fish knows what I'm doing. Another director might say, 'We don't need that now,' and they wouldn't say it nice, either. I'm thinking, *No shit, but you're going to ask for the shot in 45 seconds, and you're going to get pissed off if I spend 15 seconds panning around looking for the guy.*"

"He never gets excited," says another, "and he has this ability to see *everything*. If you have a good shot, he not only notices it, he uses it. Other directors might say, 'Wow, that's really nice,' and never work it into the broadcast. Fish pulls the trigger."

THE FIRST MAJOR event Bob Fishman directed was the Apollo 17 moon launch on December 7, 1972, when the assigned director fell ill and Fish was the only CBS employee in the NASA press grandstand with a Directors Guild membership card. People noticed that he was good at it. He shifted from news to sports in 1976, and since then he has conducted basketball, football, baseball, auto racing, and Olympic events, as one of a small corps of specialists who assemble and deliver the programs for which the networks pay billions.

Fish grew up in the Virgin Islands, part of a Jewish family that owned a big vacation hotel, a sports-crazy kid with no local teams to follow. For him, pro sports have always been synonymous with television, and like any sincere professional, he cares a great deal about the medium's aesthetics and standards. Nothing annoys him more these days than broadcasts—he mentions the name of one rival network (Fox) with particular disdain—that exhibit a faddish desire to neglect on-the-field action for reaction shots from the crowd. He cites with particular horror one NCAA play-off game on ESPN when the director routinely cut away from the court after a basket was scored to show fan reactions, and thus missed a historically well-executed full-court press.

"There were seven steals!" he says. "Seven! Five of them resulted in baskets!" The team repeatedly stealing the ball was

Kentucky, “and *everybody* knew that they always applied a full-court press after a basket! The steals were critical to their success in the game, and the audience didn’t even see them!”

It was love at first sight when television met football for the first time, in 1939, in a game between Fordham University and Waynesburg College. Even though there was only one camera, mounted on a platform on the sidelines, the magic was apparent. Fans at home enjoyed a view comparable to those of the coaches on the sidelines, and potential sponsors quickly realized that just as baseball came with built-in commercial breaks between innings, football afforded commercial opportunities between quarters and during time-outs.

Nineteen years later, when almost 50 million people, the largest crowd ever to witness a football game, watched the Baltimore Colts beat the Giants in overtime for the 1958 NFL championship, NBC had four cameras trained on the field, and a fifth pointed at an easel with cards reading FIRST QUARTER, SECOND QUARTER, etc. Slow-motion replays and isolated shots were still in the future, but by then the sport and the medium were effectively engaged.

By the time Fish moved from news to sports in the mid-’70s, the union was complete. Since then, broadcast dollars have helped turn players into multimillionaires and owners into billionaires. The medium has infiltrated the game itself, from TV time-outs, when players mingle aimlessly on the field waiting for commercials to end, to coaches’ challenges that rely on footage from network cameras to revisit questionable referee decisions. On the sidelines, coaches and players scrutinize shots from overhead cameras to study tactics and plot countermoves. Viewers watching at home see virtual bands drawn across the field denoting the lines of scrimmage and the first-down marker, and they can refer anytime to a floating graphic in an upper corner of the screen that displays the score, time remaining, and down and distance.

It’s become so hard to imagine NFL football without television that when a power failure shut down all of CBS’s cameras at a packed Ralph Wilson Stadium in Buffalo earlier this season, just minutes before kickoff, the first reaction from Mark Wolff, the stunned producer in the trailer, was “There’s *no way* they are playing this game.”

“Mark, there are more than 70,000 paying customers waiting for kickoff in there,” I said. “They have two teams, officials, whistles ... Why wouldn’t they play the game?”

“It’s just like a weather delay,” insisted Wolff. “They’ll wait until we have the power back, and then they’ll play.”

That day, Wolff was wrong; they kicked off on time in Buffalo and played much of the game without power, no doubt because CBS had several other regional games to offer its viewers. But if the same thing had happened on a Sunday night or Monday night, or on a play-off weekend, or, God forbid, before the Super Bowl, when the whole world is waiting with its bowls of popcorn, kicking off without the cameras might well have provoked worldwide rioting.

Up to 20 cameras and 40 replay machines are employed in the broadcast of big games, offering views and replays of the action from every conceivable angle. Even with all this, the networks constantly strain to find newfangled gadgets to distinguish their coverage. Cameras have been suspended from cables over the field or, in one silly innovation, mounted on the players themselves—the short-lived XFL’s “Helmet-cam”—which on a running back typically delivered a violently jerky, incoherent swirl of bodies culminating in a close-up of the turf. In the Giants-Bengals game, CBS was experimenting with something called “Flow Motion,” which employs GPS and replay technology to track the movements of players. Fish had used it the previous month while broadcasting U.S. Open tennis, where it charted the labyrinthine path traced by, say, Roger Federer during a long, hard-played point. But the system turns out to have little application to the gridiron, where the only distances that matter are measured by hash marks in the grass.

Cutbacks at CBS have reduced what Fish has to work with in regular-season games. There are the three primary cameras,

positioned on platforms at the mezzanine level, peering down over the sideline. These are set 30 yards apart, with camera two in the middle over the 50-yard line. Before each snap of the ball, Fish designates which camera operator will cover the action—generally the one closest to the ball—and the other two operators move their cameras to specific assignments. (One may focus on the defense, for instance, while the other isolates the far receiver.) Camera four is high behind the eastern end zone, and on each play, it frames the middle of the offensive line and then follows the ball, providing another high angle on the action for replay purposes. Camera five sits on a rolling platform behind the visiting bench and moves on a track from one end of the field to the other, giving a field-level view of the action. It is usually positioned about five yards ahead of the line of scrimmage, but when the offense is in the “red zone” (that is, inside the opposing team’s 20-yard line), it sits even with the goal line to provide a clear look at whether the ball crosses over for a touchdown.

These are the basics, cameras one through five, that are used to cover every televised football game, college or pro. The rest are specialty cameras. Six and eight are mounted on three-foot-high platforms behind each end zone, to one side of the goalposts. Camera six is equipped with “Super Slo-Mo,” which during baseball broadcasts can capture the spinning seams of a slider approaching home plate at nearly 90 miles per hour. Fish will sometimes instruct these cameras’ operators to focus on specific players—in this game they were Justin Tuck, the Giants’ gifted pass-rushing end, and Bengals receiver Chad Johnson—in order to put together a video package that summarizes those players’ ups and downs during the game.

Camera seven is roving and handheld, good for close-ups of players and coaches on the sidelines, or of fans in the lower seats, or just to find the eye candy Fish uses to segue into and out of commercial breaks. High at one corner of the end zone is camera 12, or the “slash” camera (since this was just a regular-season game, there were no cameras nine, 10, and 11), which on most plays isolates the slot receiver or, if there is none, the middle linebacker. With the slash camera, camera five, and two of the primary cameras all focusing on individual receivers, it’s pretty much guaranteed that on every passing play, the broadcast will have an isolated shot of the quarterback’s target. On these shots, the camera operators know to frame the receiver from head to toe, and to keep the defender in the picture, so that on replay it’s clear whether the pass catcher’s feet were in-bounds, or whether there was pass interference. (The cameras are operated by a core crew that travels each week with the CBS technicians, and by a handful of local pros who sign on for single games.)

There are other cameras: one called “All-22,” which shoots the whole field from a fixed position high above; one in the booth for when Gumbel and Dierdorf are onscreen; and for this game, one in the blimp hovering over the stadium, which was providing stunning September-afternoon vistas of Manhattan and northern New Jersey. And there’s footage that doesn’t come directly from the cameras—graphics packages, replays, preprepared features about specific players or situations, and so forth—all of which is supervised by Wolff.

But the cameras are all, of course, just tools. The goal is to tell stories with them. The game itself is the primary story, but within it are dozens of subplots. Hence the importance of the pregame sit-downs with players and coaches, which are essentially fishing expeditions for the CBS team—chances to pick up on potential story lines and revealing details that can be worked into the broadcast.

The ideal interviewee is someone like Bengals wide receiver Johnson, a ruthlessly candid player who began his session with Dierdorf, Gumbel, Fish, and Wolff by dramatically asking the Bengals’ PR rep to leave the room. The Giants came into that Sunday riding high—counting their march to the Super Bowl victory the previous winter, they had won six straight games—but Johnson’s Bengals were desperate for a win. They were coming off a losing season, and they’d dropped their first two games. In his conversation with the CBS team the day before the Giants game, Johnson quickly served up a dire prediction: “If we lose tomorrow, we have a chance of going 0-and-8. It don’t get any easier.” (Dire and prescient: the Bengals would not win their first game until the ninth week of the season, over the Jacksonville Jaguars.)

Johnson has a genius for drawing attention to himself. The previous week, he had stirred things up by suggesting publicly that his team's offense was struggling because of poor pass-blocking by the team's offensive line.

In the pregame conversation, Dierdorf, a Hall of Fame offensive lineman with deep knowledge of the game, who knew that such comments drive the big men crazy, asked if the Bengals blockers had "gotten their noses out of joint."

"They better not. Get mad at what?" Johnson asked. "This ain't no fucking time to be sensitive! It's time to play. If they ain't blocking, my ass is gonna look bad."

Johnson, who had yet to catch a touchdown pass in 2008, had also engineered a stunt guaranteed to keep him on the flapping lips of every sports-talk radio and TV host in the country. He had legally changed his name to a Spanish version of the number on his jersey, 85. He was now officially "Ocho-Cinco," although the NFL marketing division had ruled that the name on his uniform would have to stay "C.Johnson" unless he wanted to reimburse Reebok for its stock of unsold jerseys with that name stitched on the back.

Dierdorf and Gumbel pounced on the name change.

"What do you do when somebody goes, 'Oh, there's Chad Johnson!' How do you respond to that?" Dierdorf asked.

Johnson just shrugged and smiled.

"Do you say, 'No, that's not my name anymore'?"

"No," Johnson said, shaking his head with disbelief. "I'm not that serious about it, man."

"What do you want us to call you tomorrow?" Dierdorf asked.

"It's on you."

"It's your life," Dierdorf said. "Your name."

"Hey, it's not that serious!" Johnson protested, dismayed at having to explain the joke. "Call me Chad."

"Did you have your credit cards and driver's license changed?" Gumbel asked.

Johnson looked pained—a wit trapped in a world with no sense of humor. "No, man, I did it to have the name changed on my jersey, that's it. And they messed it up. I'm not sure what they're doing, I just know that they boosted sales of my jersey back to No. 1. It's a money issue."

Then Ocho-Cinco, or Johnson, or Chad, ever the showman, left the broadcasters with a tantalizing tip for their broadcast.

"Here's a hint," he said. "The first play of the game. I'll leave it at that. Don't tell anybody."

THE NEXT MORNING, Fish passed this bit of inside dope along to his camera crew.

"I will tell you this," he said. "Whoever is doing far receiver or near receiver, Chad Johnson, whether we can believe him or not, whether it's the typical player bullshit they give the press, watch for a deep pattern, a deep pass, on the first play from scrimmage... I think they are going to go deep. Johnson says, 'Just make sure you cover me on the first play.' That may have just been blah-blah-blah-blah, but actually, some guys tell you the truth and that actually happens."

When the Bengals took possession for the first time in the game, the TV crew was poised. Moments before coming back from a commercial, Fish reminded his camera operators, “Okay, guys, let’s watch Chad Johnson on this first play.”

In unison, the voices in the trailer counted down the seconds to the return from commercial, “Six. Five. Four.”

“Stand by,” said Fish. “Slow push in.”

“Three. Two. One.”

“Ready five [a close-up of Carson Palmer breaking the offensive huddle],” said Fish. “Aaaaand take five!”

The music started, and as the Bengals quarterback positioned himself over center, Gumbel intoned, *Carson Palmer looking for a breakout game today. He has been very un-Carson Palmerlike so far. No TDs, three picks.*

“Ready three [the play-by-play camera]. Take three!” said Fish, and then, noting the Bengals’ formation, added, “Two wides! Two wides, that’s all.”

Let’s see if the Bengals try to jump on the Giants in a hurry, said Gumbel, like a man who knew something his viewers did not.

The ball was snapped.

Fish: “Pass! Here it is!”

Only, here it wasn’t. Johnson was racing deep, but the Giants defensive line swamped the quarterback immediately, dropping him for a six-yard loss.

Palmer under pressure, trying to get away, and can’t! Gumbel said.

Fish: “Ready eight [a close-up of Palmer with his face in the turf]. Take eight! Ready two [standing Giants fans clapping and cheering]. Take two! Ready five [a close-up of Palmer getting to his feet]. Take five! Ready four [Giants tackle Fred Robbins, who got the sack]. Take four!”

Chad Johnson was flying up the left side, Gumbel said. *Palmer couldn’t get it away.*

There was no chance of completing a pass, Dierdorf said. *He was fighting just to stay up.*

Fish: “Hold four [Robbins lining up for the next play]. Hold four.”

The Bengals would end this first offensive series backed up against their own goal line, 20 yards behind where they started—victims of a sack, a penalty (on the offensive line), and a second Giants rush that forced Palmer to fumble the ball, which Cincinnati recovered. The frustration and disappointment on the field were mirrored in the broadcast booth and in the trailer, where Cincinnati’s failure to execute had cost them the chance to show how on top of a big play they were.

The whole thing seemed like the Bengals’ sorry season in a nutshell, underlining the truth of Johnson’s impolitic insight: no blocking meant no throws, which meant no big plays. As the punt team lined up, Fish called for a shot of the Cincinnati receiver and quarterback walking off the field together.

THE BIGGEST FEAR of any broadcast team is a blowout. The audience changes the channel, and even the camera operators have trouble keeping their heads in the game. “You just want to get the hell out of there and move on to next week, because the game sucks,” says Fish.

T But in spite of the inauspicious start, the Giants-Bengals game turned out to be a terrific matchup, all the more so for being unexpected. “On any given Sunday...,” the adage goes, and in this one the winless Bengals found themselves four points up on the champs, 20–16, with less than two minutes to play. As the Giants conferred during a Cincinnati time-out, preparing to attempt a go-ahead touchdown, the trailer was humming at a climactic pitch. Amid overlapping conversations, sound effects, and shouted instructions from the rows of technicians, Wolff primed his broadcasters and replay operators, and Fish, standing now, barked instructions and waved his hands to some rapid internal rhythm:

“Ready two [Bengals coach Marvin Lewis talking into his headset microphone]. Take two! Ready one [Carson Palmer craning his neck to see the field]. Take one! Ready 12 [Eli Manning walking toward the sidelines to confer with Giants offensive coordinator Kevin Gilbride]. Take 12!”

He’s pretty cool for someone so young, Gumbel said.

Well, it’s in his DNA, Dierdorf replied. (Manning, as most NFL fans know, is the son of former New Orleans Saints quarterback Archie, and the kid brother of Indianapolis Colts star quarterback Peyton.) I don’t think we should be surprised. This is a regular-season game. They are 2-and-0.

Fish: “Ready eight [Lewis from a fresh angle]. Take eight! Ready four [Manning trotting back out to the field]. Take four! Ready five [a field shot from ground level]. Take five! Ready ... aaah ... eight [Manning from another angle]. Take eight! ... Ready four—five [another shot of Lewis]. Take five! Ready three [play-by-play camera]. Take three. Nice shot, Pat!”

As the Giants lined up over the ball, Wolff wanted attention paid to wide receiver Plaxico Burress, a likely target. “Cover 17! Iso17!”

Fish: “Where’s 17?”

Wolff: “Far-side receiver.”

Fish: “Far receiver on camera two!”

But the pass wasn’t to Burress, it was to tight end Kevin Boss, who caught it in the end zone. From outside the trailer came the roar of jubilant Giants fans. Inside, the touchdown ignited a frenzy as well. Fish machine-gunned a mosaic of the scene, leaning toward his array of monitors as the cameras swung violently, finding one telling visual after another, his high-pitched voice squeaking at the upper reaches of its register:

“Ready five [close-up of Manning jumping for joy]. Take five! Ready two [close-up of Boss, still carrying the ball, mobbed by joyful teammates in the end zone]. Take two! Ready three [rejoicing New York fans]. Take three! Ready four [beaten Bengals strong safety Chinedum Ndukwe trotting off the field]. Take four! Ready eight [Marvin Lewis looking forlornly up at the scoreboard]. Take eight! Ready 12 [a pan of cheering Giants fans in the upper deck]. Take 12! Ready two [another close-up of Boss]. Take two! Ready five [a close-up of Manning leaving the field]. Take five! Ready eight [close-up of the shell-shocked Chad Johnson]. Take eight! Ready three [another crowd shot]. Take three! Ready two [a close-up of Boss, reaching the sidelines, still carrying his touchdown catch]. Take two! Ready 12 [Bengals huddling on the field before the extra point]. Take 12! Ready six [close-up of Manning accepting a pat on the helmet from Gilbride]. Take six! Ready four [close-up of Lewis, shaking his head with disgust]. Take four! Ready five [more high fives for Manning on the sidelines]. Take five! Break! Extra point! Ready four [a high shot in the end zone behind the goalposts as the Giants line up to kick].”

Wolff: “Fish, I’m going X, Y, Silver, Moe!”—the lineup of upcoming replay shots of the touchdown. (The replay machines are

given letters, to differentiate them from the numbered cameras.)

Fish: "Ready two [Boss on one knee on the sidelines, having been mildly shaken up on his touchdown play, trainers crowded around him]. Take two! Ready four, aaaand take four!" The extra point was booted.

Wolff: "Are you listening?"

Fish: "Yes! X, Y, Silver, Moe!"

Wolff: "I'll talk you through it."

Fish: "Ready two [another shot of Boss on the sideline]. Take two! Ready X. Aaaand take X! Here it is!"

The replays of the touchdown followed, each from a different angle, the last an isolated shot from an end-zone camera showing Manning celebrating after the play. Then it was time for another blizzard of calls from Fish.

THIS FRENZIED MOVEMENT after the Giants touchdown seemed to mark the conclusion of the symphony, a game-ending flourish. But the game was far from over. "I want to see Carson Palmer's career comebacks!" Wolff shouted to his graphics technicians, who summoned up a graphic showing that the Bengals QB had an impressive record of bringing his team back from late-game deficits. And sure enough, the scrappy Bengals mounted a last-second drive and kicked a tying field goal in the closing seconds, forcing the game into overtime, in which the Giants marched into field-goal range and won it, finally, 23–20, with a well-directed 22-yard boot.

By the end, Fish was hoarse. A police escort waited to whisk him and the CBS crew to the airport ahead of the thousands of fans exiting the stadium. On the plane home, he would review a hastily assembled DVD of the broadcast, which he—unlike his millions of viewers—would be seeing for the first time. Like any other artist, when he watches the program, he mostly sees the things he might have done better.

When I last saw Fish, he was leaving the trailer, getting ready to figure out where he and his crew would be going next week. But I already knew the answer. Whether his windowless production trailer was in the parking lot outside Lambeau Field or Dolphin Stadium, he would be in the same place he is every week of the season for millions of football fans all across America: behind the curtain, lodged deep inside our brains.

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UT will explore generating more money for education from athletics

By Chloe White

Originally published 10:34 p.m., January 17, 2009

Updated 10:34 p.m., January 17, 2009

University of Tennessee officials are discussing how the athletic departments could increase efficiency and possibly generate more funding for academics as the UT system grapples with a projected state funding shortfall of at least \$66 million.

UT President John Petersen has asked athletic directors Mike Hamilton and Joan Cronan to form a team to examine efficiencies in their departments, while UT trustee Doug Horne says the athletic departments should streamline to give more funding to academics.

"We have to look at all matters during these troubled times so everyone can be more efficient," Horne said. "The athletic department is not exempt - it is part of the university."

As the UT system prepares for the budget shortfall, which represents a 13-percent drop in state funding, Petersen said in an interview with the News Sentinel editorial board last week that his request to the athletic directors "makes sense in looking at what the athletic department can do to help academic programs."

UT is one of the few universities where the athletic department supports itself and contributes to academics, UT officials said.

"The athletic department has a separate budget and supports itself, but it could become more efficient and streamlined so it could get more for the academic side," Horne said.

A new Southeastern Conference television contract that takes effect July 1 will mean the athletic department is "going to do more" for academics, Hamilton said. He said he could not comment on the amount of funding, but he said he has begun conversations with campus leaders to determine "where and how we might have some further impact on campus through some of these dollars. ...

"We are committed firmly to finding a way to provide some of that new resource toward campus initiatives," he said. "I don't think that's our place to say where that goes - I think that's the president's and chancellor's place to say where it goes."

In fiscal 2008, the UT athletic department generated a net surplus of about \$5.04 million before making transfers of \$4.54 million to support the UT system and Knoxville campus programs. Its operating budget is \$87.8 million. Surplus funds go into what is "essentially a rainy-day fund" for the department, spokeswoman Tiffany Carpenter said.

UT says its athletics operation is among fewer than 10 departments in the country that receive no funds from state subsidies or taxes.

"I don't think there's an athletic program in this league that has done as much for the university yet gotten less credit for it - I really firmly believe that," Hamilton said. "We have historically been very much involved in being an integral part of campus life and also being a partner in relation to the financial side of the equation - much more so, in my opinion, than others in the Southeastern Conference."

Hamilton said the athletic department spends \$1.375 million per year on academic scholarships for 2,400 non-athletes. In the fall, the athletic department asked staff to cut \$2.5 million from the budget, "which we've done," Hamilton said.

Additionally, Hamilton said the department will give net proceeds from the spring football game to campus. He said tickets have been free for the last three years. "If fans respond to (new coach) Lane Kiffin's first spring game, I think we'll be able to give a nice-sized check (to campus)," he said.

UT-Knoxville Faculty Senate President John Nolt, who sees Neyland Stadium's Jumbotron on during the day and calls it a "visible reminder" of "unnecessary" athletic department spending, said he favors the separation of athletic and academic budgets.

But, he said, "they're very wealthy over there. I certainly would appreciate any help athletics can give us."

Horne, chairman of the Committee on Effectiveness and Efficiency for the Future, said suggestions from the UT community include eliminating "a sport or two."

"Since the athletic department is a separate part of the university's budget, the elimination of sports becomes difficult," Hamilton said.

UT-Knoxville has 20 sports. In order to be a member of Division I-A, Hamilton said a university must have at least six team sports and, as a general rule, the league tries to have two more women's sports than men's. Removal of certain sports, such as rowing and volleyball, has Title IX implications, he said.

"The elimination of sports has significant political ramifications and historical ramifications as it relates to our tradition, so we'd be changing our competitive model as it relates to our peers in the Southeastern Conference," he said.

Another efficiency suggestion was to consolidate men's and women's athletics. Hamilton manages men's sports programs and Cronan manages women's sports programs.

"While there are a few support functions that might be perceived from the outside as duplicative in nature, we have a lot of our support functions that are already consolidated," Hamilton said. "I think we have an obligation to always continue to look for those places where that makes sense, and that's what we'll be doing during this time that Dr. Petersen has suggested."

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Outreach is key for Obama's transition

[Rose Gordon](#)

January 13 2009

When President-elect Barack Obama will take office as the 44th president, he will be facing historic challenges, including a near catastrophic collapse of the economy, two wars, and a much-maligned image abroad.

In November 2008, the Government Accountability Office released a list of 13 urgent issues the incoming administration needs to address during its first year, including food safety and the 2010 Census. But a week before the inauguration, PR pros overwhelmingly said that the economy is the first public affairs issue the incoming administration must address.

“His first, second, and third issue is going to be our economy,” says Douglas Pinkham, president of the Public Affairs Council.

At press time, the transitional Obama government was trying to get a fiscal stimulus package through Congress. “One of his strengths is [his ability] to communicate,” says Robert Mathias, MD at Ogilvy PR Worldwide in Washington. He points to the failed semantics game when the first round of government monetary support was universally dubbed a “bailout,” while the new solution is referred to as a “stimulus.” In fact, a number of public affairs pros remarked not only on Obama's oratory skills, but also on his delivery.

“I think Obama believes in tough love and being very straight with people,” Pinkham says. “Some people will feel scared by [the economic predictions], but they'll feel at least [they're] getting the truth.”

In addition to upholding its promise of greater transparency, the administration is likely to communicate the importance of “shared responsibility” in this economic crisis, he adds, while at the same time issuing a “much wider call for the public to weigh in.” A glimpse of that agenda is on display at [Change.gov](#), where the administration recently added a “citizen's briefing book,” in which the public can weigh in with ideas on issues like healthcare.

Neil Dhillon, North American director of public affairs and MD of MS&L's Washington office, says to gain support, the administration should treat it like a grassroots effort and visit “every market, not just the major cities.”

“The thing that is essential to the American democratic process is we're a nation of ‘individual effect,’” Mathias says. “To have voters with you or to get them to turn against you, it's all about how you explain things... of how they affect you,” the individual.

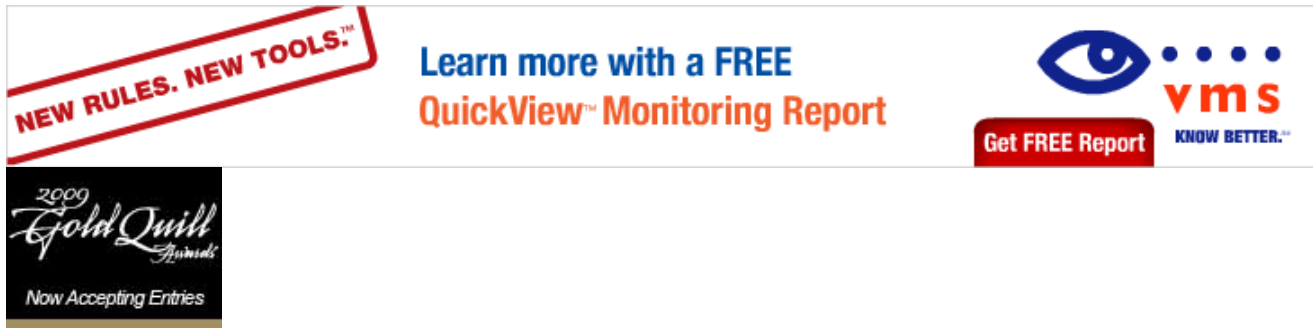
“As people feel included, I think the public [is] going to be behind the president-elect,” adds Josh Gottheimer, EVP and global chair of corporate and public affairs at Burson-Marsteller. He also notes that on a global scale, Obama will have to “immediately engage the rest of the world,” as a demonstration that he doesn't expect to “go it alone” on foreign policy.

Some of Obama's success comes from an ability to engage groups that don't always agree with him and include them in the process. For example, he is reaching out to “all the major industry sectors” on the stimulus package, and “having that broad support is what's bringing confidence” in it, Dhillon says. He's also kept on some of President Bush's previous appointments, like Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, which helps foster a sense of “inclusion” to previous non-supporters.

While Obama rides into office on a stream of goodwill, he will have to manage expectations as well. Every Democratic-leaning organization, from labor unions to environmental groups, believes “they finally have a friend in the White House,” says Larry Parnell, associate professor and director of the masters in strategic PR program at George Washington University. “Keeping people committed and enthusiastic is going to be a challenge.”

Parnell suggests that the administration remind the public he has four years to get it all done. He should let groups know when their issue will be addressed, even if it's number 10 on the list, so no one feels “disenfranchised.”

“It's about setting up milestones and achieving them, and then saying, ‘Look, I said I would do this and here's when I did,’” he says. “This is a communications challenge, writ large – it's lobbying, external, internal... to manage those expectations, moving forward... not having issues fall off the back of the truck.”



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PR could be the winning play for companies' Super Bowl ads

[Erica Iacono](#)

January 14 2009

It's that time of year again. Though still a few weeks away (and sadly without the New York Giants playing in it), there is plenty of buzz about the Super Bowl, the one day a year when people actually watch commercials. Of course, with marketing budgets on the decline and a recession in full swing, it's no wonder that old standbys like FedEx and GM decided not to plunk down the reported \$3 million for a 30-second spot. Others, like Denny's, Teleflora, and Pedigree, are choosing this year as the one to make their Super Bowl ad debut. And longtime advertisers, such as Anheuser-Busch, GoDaddy.com, and Pepsi, remain undeterred and will continue making the investment.

“Our theory on advertising is that when the economy is having some issues, that is not the time to cut your advertising budget,” Barb Rechterman, EVP at GoDaddy.com, told CNNMoney.com.

That thinking is certainly commendable, but given the current state of the economy and consumer consumption habits, those companies that do advertise would be wise to do something that is often spoken about, but rarely followed: make PR an integral part of the Super Bowl ad buy.

Sure, there are always articles written about new Super Bowl ads prior to the game, or Monday-morning media coverage of the best and worst ads, but very often that's it. That simply doesn't make it worth the investment. Companies that sponsored the Olympic Games this past summer in Beijing planned integrated campaigns around that expenditure. As such, the Super Bowl ad should be the jumping-off point or apex of a broader campaign.

In 2006, Dove debuted an ad at the Super Bowl to introduce its “Self-Esteem Fund,” an extension of its wildly popular “Campaign for Real Beauty.” The fact that a company like Dove was advertising at all during the Super Bowl garnered a fair amount of media attention prior to the game. More importantly, though, it reinforced the company's message of self-acceptance and provided a centerpiece to an integrated campaign that used the commercial in online video efforts. I don't think the same could be said of GoDaddy.com's yearly attempts at humor. In fact, I am no closer to understanding the Web site's brand today than I was five years ago, when it first started advertising.

Time and time again, we hear from PR pros that the industry has come so far and that it has a “seat at the table.” If that truly is the case, then PR shouldn't be left in the shadow of advertising for football – and marketing's – biggest game of the year.

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Be Careful What You Post

This particular Twitter posting came back to bite the agency person from Ketchum (New York office) who made some unflattering remarks about Memphis this morning before he presented on digital media to the worldwide communications group at FedEx (150+) people. Not only did an employee find it, they were totally offended by it and responded to the agency person. The kicker is that they copied the FedEx Corporate Vice President, Vice President, Directors and all management of FedEx's communication department AND the chain of command at Ketchum. Mr. Andrews, the Ketchum presenter, did not take into account that many FedExers are native Memphians and are feircely defensive of their city and their company.

Mr. Andrews,

If I interpret your post correctly, these are your comments about Memphis a few hours after arriving in the global headquarters city of one of your key and lucrative clients, and the home of arguably one of the most important entrepreneurs in the history of business, FedEx founder Fred Smith.



Many of my peers and I feel this is inappropriate. We do not know the total millions of dollars FedEx Corporation pays Ketchum annually for the valuable and important work your company does for us around the globe. We are confident however, it is enough to expect a greater level of respect and awareness from someone in your position as a vice president at a major global player in your industry. A hazard of social networking is people

will read what you write.

Not knowing exactly what prompted your comments, I will admit the area around our airport is a bit of an eyesore, not without crime, prostitution, commercial decay, and a few potholes. But there is a major political, community, religious, and business effort underway, that includes FedEx, to transform that area. We're hopeful that over time, our city will have a better "face" to present to visitors.

James, everyone participating in today's event, including those in the auditorium with you this morning, just received their first paycheck of 2009 containing a 5% pay cut... which we wholeheartedly support because it continued the tradition established by Mr. Smith of doing whatever it takes to protect jobs.

Considering that we just entered the second year of a U.S. recession, and we are experiencing significant business loss due to the global economic downturn, many of my peers and I question the expense of paying Ketchum to produce the video open for today's event; work that could have been achieved by internal, award-winning professionals with decades of experience in television production.

Additionally Mr. Andrews, with all due respect, to continue the context of your post; true confession: many of my peers and I don't see much relevance between your presentation this morning and the work we do in Employee Communications.

Be careful, people. In this day and age, you can't afford not to.

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