**You’ll Never Listen to It the Same. Using Theories to Better Radio Play-by-Play Description and Storytelling**

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**Introduction**

 The first on-air live play-by-play broadcast was a 10-round boxing match on April 11, 1921 by KDKA in Pittsburgh. Later in August, KDKA did a live broadcast of a Major League Baseball (MLB) game between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies. Later that fall in 1921, the station broadcasted a University of Pittsburgh football game against West Virginia (Harris, 1999). Since then, live radio play-by-play has been boomed on radio dials everywhere. Fans of small high school football, large universities and professional sports can get their sports fix thanks to KDKA’s innovation.

Since 1921, sports play-by-play has stayed on the radio, but has also moved to television and online. This growth in technology has allowed for student media programs to grow. The internet and social media gives journalism students a platform to practice and post their work. Thanks to this, students are given the opportunity to practice journalism at a younger age. While repetitions are essential for a broadcaster’s skill development, many are underdeveloped in theoretical frameworks that drive the craft. Aspiring sports broadcasters get told by professionals to sit in a stadium and call the game into a tape recorder without knowing foundational theories in digestible storytelling, articulate description and voice inflection. These are three key components of a successful career in play-by-play. Most existing literature on these three topics merely scratch the surface when it specifically relates to on-air play-by-play sports broadcasting.

 Stories that broadcasters tell can drive conversations, initiate emotions and connect people on a human level. That’s why sports media should be stocked with descriptive storytellers. Sports are littered with stories that can’t wait to be told. Sports broadcasting is unlike other mediums (print journalism, film and video production) because it demands that story be told while presently unfolding. This unique craft requires the most alert, theoretically framed and polished storytellers. Sports broadcasting needs those who are capable of those three characteristics to be a bridge between fans and players. Unfortunately, these are lacking industry-wide.

 Although sports broadcasting is subjective nature, it should be treated as a science where speech and terminology can be tested through experimentation, theoretical theories about incorporating an analyst can be discovered with research, and principles can be taught through examined techniques. Right now, these practices are untested hand-me-down techniques from different generations that have slowly lost more sight of the theory. This research explores these theories and ideas and teaches students how to apply them in practice and help create a better foundation with their play-by-play. The project found that students and professional broadcasters make these untested hand-me-down mistakes. The students, however, learned the theoretical frameworks, improved their play-by-play foundation from one year to the next and averaged higher numbers than the professionals they were compared to.

The thought process behind this research came from a mutual friend and broadcast colleague Tyler Bradfield. He earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at Ball State University in Telecommunications. Bradfield earned plenty of play-by-play awards during his undergraduate years, most notably a two-time All-American in Sportscaster’s Talent Agency of America’s All-American competition and three-time sports feature Emmy award winner in the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Great Lakes chapter. Throughout his graduate studies, a subsidiary research agenda took form: a line related less to gender criticism within the play-by-play industry, and more about the practical applications of communication theory in conjunction with the art form of play-by-play.

When he was in high school and college, Bradfield sent out demo tapes to various radio play-by-play broadcasters around the country. He took the advice he got from various professionals and connected each piece of advice to a mass communication or psychological theory. In Bradfield’s first year teaching these theories as a graduate student in 2017, he started a group among undergraduates who wanted to do play-by-play. Bradfield presented the research he found on how the brain consumes information. As a group, he and his students tried making connections on how this could help with their play-by-play. He would also listen to two student tapes each week along with one industry professional. They called on these assertions and worked through these problems as a group. In the very first year, Ball State saw a record number of students in Sportscaster’s Talent Agency of America’s Jim Nantz Award rankings, which recognizes the most outstanding collegiate radio and TV sports broadcasters around the country (STAA, 2019). Another success story involving Bradfield’s research was in 2015 at Homestead High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Bradfield presented his research and the teacher of the program recorded him. Bradfield’s research is the curriculum for that class. In Indiana, the state has a high school radio competition each year called “IASB” in Indianapolis. The competition sees participation from 40-plus high schools around the state, and since Bradfield’s presentation in 2015, Homestead has swept the play-by-play category.

With his permission, the same research, theories and ideals were taught to 10 undergraduate students at another university. The purpose is to see if what Bradfield has come up with can remain consistent with a different group of students at another university. The goal of this research is to improve the undergraduate students’ radio play-by-play through the theories and tactics written about and compare where these students line up against other play-by-play broadcasters around the country. These broadcasters include NCAA Division I broadcasters and local community broadcasters. In the end, I created a guide for those students and higher educators who can practice correct fundamentals about radio play-by-play.

**Literature Review**

The basis of radio play-by-play is to describe the action (Hedrick, 2000). The words that describe a physical action in the English language are verbs (Grammar Monster, n.d.). Sports broadcasting demands that story be told while presently unfolding, Hedrick adds. Since sporting events unfold in real time, a radio play-by-play announcer must speak in the present. The way to do that is to describe the action by using present tense verbs.

Since radio broadcasters are limited to just words, they need to use the correct words in order to paint the most accurate picture for their listening audience. In an event that’s happening in the present, they should describe the action using the present tense. A perfect example of applying the present tense verb tactic is, “Johnson dribbles up top, Johnson passes left wing to Hooks.” Notice how “Johnson dribbles” and “Johnson passes” are in the present tense. When a broadcaster shifts through different verb tenses while a play is happening, it can create a mental picture block for the listener. Paint this picture in your mind, “Johnson dribbles left wing and passed the ball to Hooks left wing.” A sentence like this breaks the traditional sequence of tenses rule, which refers to an agreement in tense between the verb phrase in a subordinate clause and the verb phrase in the main clause that accompanies it (Nordquist, 2020). This correlates to radio play-by-play too. An announcer should watch out for the verb tenses that he/she uses because the mental picture becomes jumbled. For example, “Johnson will dribble up the floor and passed to Hooks left wing. Hooks dribbles into the corner.” The listener’s mind all of a sudden gets tangled up in vines hanging from the tree instead of swinging from tree to tree smoothly with the announcer.

There are times when using past tense verbs and future tense verbs are correct. If a radio play-by-play broadcaster is referring to a previous play or recapping a play that happened in the past, they should describe what happened in past tense verbs. If a broadcaster, without a doubt, knows something will for sure happen (free throws, a play review, an inbounds pass, etc.) then the correct verb tense to use is the future verb tense.

There is another verb form that is a common mistake that broadcasters use and should avoid. Those words are participles. A participle is a verb that ends in -ing and describes an ongoing, continuous action. The key words there are ongoing, continuous action. Remember that the present tense verb idea states that radio broadcasters should speak in present tense verbs because those verbs indicate what’s happening right now. Technically, a participle is present tense, but it implies a start to an action, not a concrete end like a present tense verb does. That’s why radio broadcasters should avoid using them, because a pass happens once, a shot happens once and eventually a run comes to an end. This is something “The Art of Sportscasting” and other limited literature doesn’t hit on at all. The book isn’t at fault for that because the book isn’t meant for an announcer’s grammar but rather about building a career in sportscasting. An example of using a participle would be, “Johnson is running up the floor.” While this is correct in the English language, it’s not the correct way to describe one action that takes place. There is an eventual natural end to Johnson’s run, so the announcer needs to indicate that. The way to indicate Johnson’s natural end is, once again, using present tense verbs. By saying, “Johnson runs up the floor” a radio play-by-play broadcaster implies the run up the floor as a singular action. In the example, “Johnson shooting from the left wing.” Johnson just shoots once, then Johnson either makes it or misses it. Participles are a part of the English language; they’re constantly used by people every single day. But when a radio play-by-play broadcaster is describing a singular current action, they want to stay in present tense verbs because they indicate a start and an end to a particular action.

If a radio broadcaster describes the action in the way they write an essay for school, they’ll have a hard time keeping up with the action on the field. Instead, radio broadcasters speak in short, quick phrases to describe the action. Kevin Harlan, who is quoted in “The Art of Sportscasting” and does play-by-play for various national TV/radio stations, is considered one of the best wordsmiths around when it comes to describing action (Hedrick, 2000). Harlan annually does the Super Bowl radio broadcast for Westwood One. When he does football radio play-by-play, he speaks in short quick phrases that describe what’s happening on the field. This following play was taken from Harlan’s Super Bowl LII in 2018:

“Jay Ajayi is in, jersey untucked. He stands at the side of Foles in the gun from the 31 of Philadelphia. Third down and four. Receiver Agholar is in motion. Six in the secondary for New England. Foles looks at it all, his right foot ahead of his left. Shotgun snap. He hands off to Ajayi. Over the right tackle. Got a block 30. Inside the numbers 35. Breaks a tackle 40. On the numbers breaks another tackle 50. Runs down past the 45 of New England. To the 40 yard line. Oh my goodness, what a run. They say his knee hit down at the 43, brought down by James Harrison.” (Football Forever, 2018).

Harlan uses short phrases to keep up with the quick burst by the running back and uses present tense verbs and describes where on the field Ajayi takes the ball. He does say, “got a block” during this play, which is wrong when it comes to the English language. However, it’s difficult to be absolutely perfect when the action comes quick. That will be discussed more in the Methods section. Using the quick short phrases to describe the action on the field is important because a good radio broadcaster wants to be right behind the action enough where they don’t fall too behind or get too ahead of the action. This is called following distance.

This is the same concept student drivers learn when they pursue their driver’s license. Driver’s education teaches that a driver should stay about two to three seconds behind the car in front of them (Kline, 2019). However in radio play-by-play broadcasting, you want to be tailgating right on the action at a half of a second following distance. If a radio broadcaster falls too far behind the action, a listener hears the crowd roar in the background and realizes there was a big play, but the announcer is behind the action. If a broadcaster is too ahead, they guess the outcome of a play and might have to apologize in the future for not being accurate. Hence a radio play-by-play broadcaster wants to be right behind the action so the crowd doesn’t give it away and there’s no, “Touchdown! Oh, no wait, the team tackled him on the one-yard line.” This isn’t something that is measured in the research specifically, but again, it paints a better picture for the listener while the game is happening.

 A theory that will be heavily discussed and looked at in this research is Primacy and Recency Effect. The theory states that in a long list of words and/or numbers, participants are likely to remember the first few and last few words/numbers they heard (Murdock, 1962). For example, Murdock had individuals memorize a list of words ranging from 10 to 40 that he can read out loud. Individuals were more likely to recall the first and last words that were said to them.

Radio broadcasters can apply this theory when performing play-by-play. The first example of applying this can be used during a radio football broadcast. “The Art of Sportscasting” says what a listener wants to know is the time, score, down, distance and yard line (Hedrick, 2000). Based off that information alone, a radio broadcaster should give that information before every snap. This information will be referred to as the Pre-Snap DDY (down, distance and yard line). Once the play starts, a listener might mentally check out, turn their attention to something else or miss the play for other reasons. It’s important for the radio broadcaster to understand that a listener’s attention isn’t always on the radio. That’s why once the play is over, the radio play-by-play broadcaster should give the updated down, distance and yardage (the Post Snap DDY). That way the listener is kept in the loop and there’s no plot hole in the story an announcer is trying to tell. Hedrick’s book states that giving time, score, down, distance and yardage are most important (Hedrick, 2000). He also states that some broadcasters don’t give them enough, so it’s crucial to say the time and score once every 90 seconds. If this needs any further clarification as to why this is so important to football radio play-by-play, think of the way television viewers treat advertising. An advertiser’s goal is to get a viewer (or listener on the radio) to remember their product so next time they’re out shopping, the customer goes out and looks for the advertiser’s product. Compare the positioning of the Pre-Snap/Post Snap DDY to the placement of advertising in a commercial break. Commercial positioning is important to advertisers because viewers are likely to have a higher recall in some portions of the commercial block than others. (Martin-Santana, Reinares-Lara, & Reinares-Lara, 2016). Martin, Reinares and Reinares (2016) were able to support one of their many hypotheses in this research: a spot in the last block of a commercial break had higher recall than any of the other breaks. In fact, the three researchers found that the last commercial in the block multiplied viewer recall sixfold. This makes sense because a viewer may begin to switch channels when the programming they’re watching transitions to a break (Swaminathan & Kent, 2013) and will seek out other programming not in commercial break. The viewer will likely switch back to their programming a few minutes later and catch the final commercial before their programming returns. To reiterate above, a radio play-by-play broadcaster must know that sometimes a listener won’t be paying attention to all of the action. Sometimes the game is treated as “background noise” while the listener cleans or completes other duties around the house. It could also be that the listener is running errands and they’re popping in and out of their car. That’s why Primacy and Recency Effect matter in sports radio play-by-play, because the listener is being reminded of the important information when they’re off doing something else.

 This is a side note that builds off the Pre-Snap and Post Snap DDY, but it isn’t something “The Art of Sportscasting” covers extensively. A radio broadcaster must indicate when the snap is taken. Much like the present tense tactic, this is the snap tactic. It’s something so simple, yet it’s something that slips through a broadcaster’s mind at times, and the results section will show that. Something as simple as “Johnson takes the snap” indicates to the listener that the play has begun. If a broadcaster just goes right into the play after setting up the formation, “hand off to Moore”, then it’s like an old CD skipping through lyrics on a song. The snap is quintessential to the sport, so therefore it should be said. This should be said for baseball and basketball too. Baseball doesn’t happen without the pitch. Basketball doesn’t happen without the inbounds pass. If you want to get real dramatic about how crucial the beginning of a sequence is, if the sun doesn’t rise, there’s no daylight.

 The Pre-Snap DDY and Post Snap DDY tactic is also a form of circular (or cyclical) storytelling. According to the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CEA), circular storytelling is a narrative that begins where it ends or ends where it begins. “This structure hooks the reader and makes us curious about how the characters ended up where they are” (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, 2017). Think of some of the most popular stories, their plot narratives and what they leave the reader/viewer with. Famously, L. Frank Baum’s “The Wizard of Oz” starts in Kansas and ends in Kansas. C.S. Lewis’ “The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe” starts with leaving reality for an alternative reality, only to return to reality in the end. S.E. Hinton’s “The Outsiders” ends with the same sentence it began with. This goes hand in hand with Primacy and Recency Effect because both the Pre-Snap and Post Snap DDY begin with time, score, down, distance and yard line and end with time, score, down, distance and yard line. This is effective because by starting where you end, you place an important piece or thing to leave someone with in the most key part of the whole message, pinpointing the location of the ball in football. Circular storytelling theory also works with team and individual storylines. In regards to broadcasting, a team’s or an individual’s story can change every night whether it’s a key injury, wining/losing streak, an area of the game the team excels in/is poor in, etc. By starting a broadcast with main storylines, building off those storylines during the broadcast (or maybe new storylines come up that an announcer might discuss) and discussing how things changed or stayed the same when ending the broadcast, the story becomes fulfilling for the listener. By saying, “Ohio’s defense is allowing a conference low 60 points per game, but Kent State’s offense is scoring 70 points per game. Something has to give tonight,” a broadcaster (radio or TV) has set the start of a circular storyline if they choose to keep addressing it throughout the broadcast, “Midway through the second quarter and Ohio’s trailing Kent State 30-15. Ohio’s defense has already allowed half of their per game average of 60 points per game, which is lowest in the conference.” If Ohio loses the game, then it’s the job of the sports broadcaster to circle back to this stat after touching on it all broadcast, “Kent State’s offense came out red hot against the conference’s best defense in Ohio. KSU scored 75 points against Ohio’s defense that only allowed 50 points a game coming into tonight.” A team’s story can be formatted much like a novel throughout the season. The book title is the year the season was played, the chapters are each game played and inside is every possession played during that game and how those plays affected the season.

 Much to the example above, statistics can be used to help tell a more effective story. Points per game, yards allowed per game and turnovers per game, all are used throughout a broadcast. However, stats shouldn’t be used by play-by-play broadcasters just to be used. There must be a storyline reason for each statistic used or else the number being used is just a number being used. Because that’s the case, a radio play-by-play broadcaster must frame a statistic to make a storyline.

Framing theory is a popular mass communication theory that says how something is presented to an audience influences the choices the audience makes about how to process that information (Goffman, 1974). This theory becomes important when measuring the storylines and nuggets a broadcaster uses throughout the broadcast. For instance, a radio play-by-play announcer might say, “Ohio is averaging 23 points per game.” The challenge with that, though, is that there’s no meaning behind that statistic. The broadcaster must frame it to make it a storyline for the listener. A radio broadcaster must add something to it, “Ohio has struggled on offense this year, averaging just 23 points per game.” Think of it like this, you want a lot of meat on your ribs, right? Then give the listener more than just the bones. Give them something to chew on and salivate over. By giving the listener a storyline to chew on, that gets them to come back, the storylines and nuggets make the meat fall right off the bone. “The Art of Sportscasting” doesn’t hit on framing statistics and how to use them, which is a problem because broadcasters aren’t getting that information. Statistics are a big part of sports, and they can enhance the storyline of the game. The following is a bit of the psychology of how storylines and nuggets are chosen. There are three functions of media frames that are relevant to sportscaster talk, of any form (TV/radio): selection, emphasis and exclusion (Tanker, 2001). By extension, these become the selection of a stat/storyline, the emphasis of it and the exclusion of other alternatives. There’s a time clock when each of these three are considered (like a relevancy factor) and these three functions are chosen by sportscasters (or in TV, a director or producer, but let’s stick with radio). This next line of thinking comes from authors James R. Angelini and Andrew C. Billings and it applies these three functions. If a sportscaster is watching Ohio basketball and sees that the team isn’t shooting well, then the broadcaster can check the stats and say it, “Ohio isn’t shooting well today, they’re just 2-10 from outside the arc.” The broadcaster is framing this storyline by selecting this statistic (because the sportscaster feels as though the team isn’t shooting well), emphasizing it for the audience (because they feel it’s important to the story of the game), and excluding any other alternatives, such as a superior performance by the opposing team’s defense (Angelini & Billings, 2010). These choices lead to a broadcaster framing a statistic to create storylines and nuggets for their audience. These choices can define success or failure, depending on the route the sportscaster wants to go in. It’s important to stress that framing involves both qualitative and quantitative measures. Storylines and nuggets about teams and individuals keep the listener engaged, it gives them the meat they’re looking for when they order their ribs.

Saying names of the athletes on the air (especially when covering high school games) and telling their stories give the athletes some publicity. A family member, neighbor or family friend may hear the player’s name and become more invested in the broadcast. “You want to mention every kid’s name as much as you possibly can because you don’t know if his grandma is listening or his aunt who’s stationed half a world away,” Allen Buck of 106.7 FM WYFX told the Evansville Courier in October of 2019 (Lindskog, 2019). This also relates to the “For whom?” tactic. All it involves is the radio broadcaster saying the name of the individual and which team they play for on each change of possession. For high school and college sports, where athletes and schools aren’t familiar to the common listener, this is important. Saying, “Johnson for Ohio” or “Johnson for Westerville South” accomplishes three things for the listener: the individual who has the ball, which team/school has the ball and a change of possession. It’s important that the athlete gets the publicity, the school gets their name out there, the listener knows who has the ball and that there’s a change of possession. That’s why “For whom?” is a tactic used in this research.

Basketball has its own set of “important elements” like football (Pre/Post Snap DDY, the snap, offensive formations, etc.) but much stays the same (time/score, court description, circular storytelling, credibility). Something that can get lost in basketball radio play-by-play is saying which team has the ball. The announcer must answer, “For whom?” Which team has the ball? Who has the ball? It’s important for listeners to know “whom” because often the sport gets too fast for the listener to realize which team has the possession, especially if they’re not familiar with both teams. “For whom?” comes in handy when a radio play-by-play broadcaster is doing high school and college games because often those players aren’t as recognizable as the professionals. A radio broadcaster has to understand that their listening audience may not know a lot about the two teams taking place, so answering “For who?” and telling a story draws them in.

 Along with “For who?” an announcer must indicate where the ball is on the court in basketball radio play-by-play. Since the game is fast paced, the listener always wants to know where the ball is on the court. A basketball court is more detailed than a football field. On the basketball court, there is a three-point line, free throw line, elbows, hashes, low post and more. The book “Total Sportscasting” by Marc Zumoff and Max Negin says specific indicators and locations like, “left, right, down the middle and left of the lane” are important in basketball play-by-play (Zumoff & Negin, 2015) Pinpointing where the ball is at such a fast rate (while answering, “For who?”) can be challenging for young broadcasters.

**Method**

 Once again, this is a project based on theories that are thought to paint a better picture for listeners of radio play-by-play. In the beginning of the 2019 academic school year, 10 undergraduate students, ranging in radio play-by-play experience, all gathered to learn these theories and how to apply them to their radio play-by-play. In the results, however, only five undergraduate students remained consistent (more about that later in this project). This presentation talked exclusively about football radio play-by-play, lasted one hour with questions and some debate (some students felt strongly against a few theories but bought into them eventually). The theories were taught early in the school year because some undergraduate students broadcasted high school football the following week, so in order for this research to get going, they needed to implement these theories in their radio calls as soon as possible. That way, they could execute these theories as best as they could and eventually be “graded” on their performance, on how well they painted the picture for the audience. Each undergrad was told that when they submit demo tapes to be graded, they needed to submit six to six and a half minutes worth of continuous (not interrupted by commercial) play-by-play, because that is the minimum length that most employers will want.

 Also for basketball, the students were graded on their present tense verbs, these do not go away; radio broadcasters should always describe the action in present tense verbs because the event is happening right in front of them. Often times the game gets so fast paced a student or broadcaster will revert to a past tense verb a time or two.

 Framing was discussed in the literature review and will be a bigger part of the basketball coding than in football. That’s the case because framing wasn’t discussed with the students during the football radio play-by-play seminar due to human error. There’s no strict evidence that indicate that stats in basketball are used more often than in football, but because basketball is a game of runs and is fast paced, it seems like the stats are more important. The students were coded and graded on the element of framing statistics.

 Another element added to the coding for basketball was the “Same Words” section. Hedrick and his slew of broadcasters state in “The Art of Sportscasting” that broadcaster’s should find many ways to describe the same thing (Hedrick, 2000), “Have 18-25 different ways to say the same thing.” This was taught to the undergraduate students in the football session but was added to the basketball coding sheet because it was such a major problem with the undergraduate students after they submitted their football tapes. The undergraduate students were shown examples of how to describe the same locations on the court differently.

The coding process is a point system of one point and a half a point. For each theory executed properly, the undergraduate student gets a +1 in that theory’s section, but if they don’t apply a theory when they should have or they misuse a theory they get docked -1. For instance, each time a student says “the snap” they get a point. If they don’t say “the snap” they get docked a point. At the end of the tape a score or total were given to each section, how that score or total is seen as “good” or “bad” relies on a few things. A score or total may or may not be a good score pending on whether some of the other theories weren’t met. For instance, if a student says “the Snap” five times but there were a total of 12 plays in the demo, then that student needs to work on indicating when the snap is more because they said “the snap” less than 50% of the time. However, if there were 12 plays and the student said “the snap” 12 times, it would be a good score. It all depends on what is happening in the six minutes or so that was given.

The present tense verb section was scored the same (+1, -1) but the score wasn’t utilized for this section because there really was no formulaic way of saying, “this is a good score.” Unlike a 12-for-12 score for saying “the snap”, there is no hard way of saying a score is good. If a broadcaster said a total of 50 verbs, but they “scored” 32, what does that 32 mean? And what is that score out of? 100? When a student asked, “Is that score good?” It was hard to tell them yes or no. So, an easier way of indicating what is a “good” or “bad” score was used. The system used was the amount of misused verbs was subtracted by the total amount of verbs in play-by-play that were said, then that number divided by the total of verbs in play-by-play that were said to give that broadcaster a percentage score. For example, if a student misused 3 out of 10 verbs, then 3 was subtracted by 10 (10 – 3 = 7). 7 was then divided by 10 to get the student’s percentage score (7 / 10 = 70%). Students seemed to understand this much easier than the +1, -1 score that was used at first.

Along with the present tense verb and the snap ideas that were mentioned, the football coding sections are as followed:

**Pre-Snap DDY** – Down, Distance, Yardage said before “the snap”

**Post Snap DDY** – Down, Distance, Yardage said after the play

**Offensive formation** – Where the offensive players are before “the snap”

**Defensive formation** – Where the defensive players are before “the snap”

**On-field description** – Where the action takes place on the field during the play

**Number of plays** – Number of plays in the demo tape

**Time and Score** – Each time the time and score was said along with the time stamp when it was said in the demo

**Storylines** – Any in-game storylines (i.e. team is on four-game win streak)

**Nuggets** – Stats (must be framed) or tid-bits about players

**Credited a tackler** – A defensive player was credited with a tackle

**Tape length** – How long the demo tape is

The basketball coding sheet is familiar, but has some sections added and others taken out:

 **Verb Tenses** – Each verb used during play-by-play description

 **Same words** – Broadcaster used same verb back-to-back times

 **For Who?** – Broadcaster indicated which team had possession

**On-court description** – Where the action takes place on the court

**Time and Score** – Each time the time and score was said along with the time stamp when it was said in the demo

**Storylines** – Any in-game storylines (i.e. team is on four-game win streak)

**Nuggets** – Stats (must be framed) or tid-bits about players

**Tape length** – How long the demo tape is

These were chosen partly because they are important to “painting a picture for the listener who can’t see the game” (Hedrick, 2000). They were also talked about in the Literature Review and the theory behind them was explained in that section.

Professionals at the NCAA Division I level and local radio play-by-play broadcasters who broadcast local high school games were used as a comparison to the undergraduates in this study. The undergraduates were curious to see where they stack up against other people in the field. Five NCAA Division I and local radio broadcaster were chosen because the author is familiar with their work. The five NCAA Division I broadcasters are from numerous parts from around the country, while the five local radio talent are fixated in a Midwest state in the United States. For the NCAA Division I broadcasters, a select game from their football and basketball season was pulled and a six to six and a half minute portion of that game was chosen for coding. Same goes for local play-by-play radio talent. If a demo tape was found on their personal website or their radio station website, six to six and a half minutes was coded. This portion of the research shows trends in the industry and allows these undergrads to see where they rank up against other radio talent out there. This was a way for the undergrads to see what elements “make” someone an NCAA Division I talent. The goal of this research was to make the undergraduate students in this study better radio play-by-play broadcasters by implementing theories on how to paint a better picture and develop teaching methods for future generations. If they can see what they do wrong and what others do right, then they’ll hopefully find the motivation to work at the things they do wrong and keep up on the current work they do well.

**Results**

 The point of these research questions was to first see if the undergraduate students would improve their radio play-by-play from year-to-year. Then it was decided to put the undergraduate students to the test against other professional broadcasters to see if they could outscore the other set of broadcasters.

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| TABLE 1 (FB) | Student Tape 1 AVG | Student Tape 2 AVG | Final Improvement #'s |
| % of Verbs Right | 59% | 83% | 24% |
| Misused Verbs | 9.8 | 7.4 | 2.4 |
| Pre-Snap DDY | 4.5 | 4.4 | -0.1 |
| Post Snap DDY | 6 | 5.7 | -0.3 |
| "Snap" | 2.6 | 6.4 | 3.8 |
| Off. Form. | 5.8 | 5.8 | 0 |
| Def. Form. | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Time/Score Sc. | 4.6 | 4.9 | 0.3 |
| Time/Score Tot. | 5.2 | 6.2 | 1 |
| # of Plays | 8 | 7.6 | -0.4 |
| On-field Descrip. | 8.7 | 12.8 | 4.1 |
| Storyline | 6 | 3.8 | -2.2 |
| Nugget | 3.6 | 2.4 | -1.2 |
| Credits Tackler | 2.4 | 3 | 0.6 |
| Tape Time | 6:12 | 6:20 | + 0:08 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2 (BKB) | Student Tape 1 AVG | Student Tape 2 AVG | Final Improvement #'s |
| Correct Verb % | 79% | 86% | 7% |
| Misused Vebs | 19.8 | 10 | -9.8 |
| Same Words | 3.2 | 2.6 | -0.6 |
| For Who? | 10.8 | 10.2 | -0.6 |
| On-court Sc AVG | 23 | 26 | 3 |
| On-court Tot AVG | 36.2 | 28.2 | -8 |
| Time/Score Sc AVG | 6.6 | 7.4 | 0.8 |
| Time/Score Tot AVG | 9.8 | 10.6 | 0.8 |
| Storyline | 1.8 | 5.2 | 3.4 |
| Nuggets | 5.4 | 7.8 | 2.4 |
| Tape Length | 6:02 | 6:02 | 0:00 |

Table 1 (FB) right off the bat shows a 24% improvement from the undergrads in the Correct Verb %. This was a problem to start for the five undergrads; they averaged 59% correct verb percentage a year ago, but by the end of football season they used 83% of the verbs they used in radio play-by-play correctly. The students also cut their misused verbs per tape average by 2.4. The number of Pre-Snap DDY and Post Snap DDY went down slightly, probably because the average of plays in the second round of tapes the undergrads sent finished a little lower than the first round. What matters most is how close together the averages of the DDYs, “the snap” and number of plays are. For instance, in Student Tape 1 AVG the Pre-Snap DDY is 4.5, the Post Snap DDY is 6, “the snap” 2.6 and the number of plays is 8. This means, for every 8 plays, the undergrads only said the Pre-Snap DDY 4.5 times (little over half), the Post Snap 6 times (decent), “The Snap” was only said every 2.6 times (this is supposed to indicate the play has started). Like it was said earlier, leaving these categories out is like when a CD skips and passes over your favorite lyrics while singing in the car.

The undergrads learned from their mistakes, though. Their biggest improvement behind the verb tenses was saying “the snap.” In Student Tape 2 AVG, they said “the snap” 6.4 times in 7.6 plays. Do the math and the undergrads missed a little over one snap in their six minute demo. Ideally a broadcaster would want all of the snaps said, but sometimes a color commentator talks too long, or a storyline/nugget is talked about too long, thus missing “the snap” in order to keep up with the action. In regards to the on-field Description improvement of 4.1, this also should make an instructor smile. Student Tape 1 AVG saw 8.7 on-field descriptions in an average of 8 plays. This means for every play there was at least one on-field description per play, which is a good number to start with because if the students didn’t report where the ball is on the field, then they’re missing the whole point of radio play-by-play (Hedrick, 2000). In Student Tape 2 AVG, the undergrads had 7.6 plays and 12.8 descriptions. That’s a much better ratio (1.7:1) at nearly two on-field descriptions per play. This means the students are understanding how to describe where the ball is better; they’re painting more of a picture to their listening audience.

Table 2 (BKB) shows that the undergraduate students did, on average, improve in all categories but two (For Whom? And On-court Tot AVG). The Correct Verb % (amount of verbs used in present tense form) improved 7% from year-to-year, which is a pretty big jump considering how fast the game of basketball moves and how quick a radio broadcaster needs to react to the movement of the ball. In football, there’s more time to process what’s going on. In hoops, there’s a lot less time to describe both the quick motion of the ball and its location. For a group of five undergraduate student ranging in experience in basketball play-by-play to hit their verbs at an 86% average, that is very high. Considering basketball is a fast sport, it was impressive of the undergrads to lower their total of misused verbs in their tapes. To go from 19.8 misused verbs as a group to 10 misused verbs per tape a year later, that’s a hefty year-to-year improvement. There is no for sure theory on why the undergrads decreased in “For Whom?” but because it’s a slight decrease of under one, there shouldn’t be much to overlook. However, there could be a reason for the decrease in On-court description totals (-8). A few of the undergraduates had very fast broadcast styles in their first round of tapes. Radio broadcasters suggest that while it is important to keep up with the action, a broadcaster shouldn’t speak too fast to the point where the listener can’t make out what they’re saying (Zumoff & Negin, 2015). A few of the undergraduates were speaking too fast in their first round of tapes. For example, one student spoke 62 verbs in two minutes in his/her first round tape. The Division I broadcasters that were coded in this project averaged 78.6 verbs in six minutes. The students (and this one in particular) were shown that and given examples of correct flow and delivery. After slowing their pace down, the students’ correct verb percentage was higher (86%), they misused less verbs (10), they closed the gap between their on-court description score and total, which ideally, a radio broadcaster wants to be more descriptive and not less descriptive. Lastly, the undergraduates improved their storyline mark (3.4) and framed more nuggets (2.4).

Table 3 looks at the football coding numbers for the Division I broadcasters and the second round of student tapes. One can tell by the amount of green in the Difference column which compares the two averages and sees green in favor of the students and red not in favor of the students, it shows the students outscored the Division I broadcasters in seven of the table’s 15 columns. This doesn’t indicate that the undergraduate students are better than the Division I broadcasters. This just proves that applying theory to radio play-by-play is a new way of thinking. As described in in the methods column, each Division I broadcaster ranges in “Division I broadcasting” experience.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TABLE 3 (FB) | D1 | STU 2 | Comparison |
| % of Verbs Right | 62% | 83% | 21% |
| Misused Verbs | 14.6 | 7.4 | 7.2 |
| Pre-Snap DDY | 8.4 | 4.4 | -4 |
| Post Snap DDY | 4.5 | 5.7 | 1.2 |
| "Snap" | 0.6 | 6.4 | 5.8 |
| Off. Form. | 7 | 5.8 | 1.2 |
| Def. Form. | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Time/Score Sc. | 4.60 | 4.9 | 0.3 |
| Time/Score Tot. | 5.60 | 6.2 | 0.6 |
| # of Plays | 9 | 7.6 | -1.4 |
| On-field Descrip. | 7.6 | 12.8 | 5.2 |
| Storyline | 3.8 | 3.8 | 0 |
| Nugget | 3.8 | 2.4 | -1.4 |
| Credits Tackler | 5 | 3 | -2 |
| Tape Time | 6:09 | 6:20 | + 0:11 |

In the columns where an actual academic theory is used (Primacy and Recency: Pre/Post Snap DDY, present tense verbs: % of verbs right and misused verbs) the broadcasters scored low. Starting in the % of Verbs right column, the undergraduates outscored the Division I broadcaster’s by 21%. That was something that wasn’t expected because the undergraduates scored way above expectation, while the Division I broadcasters underwhelmed at 62%. For something like Pre-Snap and Post Snap DDY, the D1 broadcasters almost nailed their Pre-Snap DDY (8.4 Pre-Snap DDYs in an average of 9 plays) but that number basically cuts in half in the Post Snap DDY column (4.5). The concerns for the undergraduates lies in the Pre-Snap DDY column (4.4 Pre-Snap DDY in 7.6 plays). They need to be where the Division I broadcaster’s lie, nearly matching their Pre-Snap DDY number with the number of plays. It’s also a bit staggering that the Division I broadcaster’s averaged 0.6 in “the snap” column, the undergraduates out-did the D1’s by 5.8.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 4 (BKB) | D1s | STU 2 | Comparison |
| Correct Verb % | 75% | 86% | 11% |
| Misused Vebs | 19.6 | 10 | 9.6 |
| Same Words | 1.4 | 2.6 | 1.2 |
| For Whom? | 10.8 | 10.2 | -0.6 |
| On-court Sc AVG | 36.3 | 26 | -10.3 |
| On-court Tot AVG | 43.6 | 28.2 | -15.4 |
| Time/Score Sc AVG | 9.4 | 7.4 | -2 |
| Time/Score Tot AVG | 12.6 | 10.6 | -2 |
| Storyline | 3.6 | 5.2 | 1.6 |
| Nuggets | 7.2 | 7.8 | 0.6 |
| Tape Length | 6:04 | 6:02 | - 0:02 |

Like Table 3, Table 4 shows the averages of the Division I broadcasters and the students’ second round of tapes. The green in the comparison column represents a number in favor of the students, while the red indicates a number in favor of the Division I broadcasters. The Division I broadcasters have six columns in their favor, while the undergraduates have four. Right away one would notice the landslide that is the On-court Score AVG and On-court Total AVG (Since a broadcaster could earn -1, 0.5 or 1 in the On-Court Descriptions, these two averages indicate the score of the on-court description column and the total amount of times they said an on-court description, whether right or wrong). This makes sense, since it’s in writing that radio broadcasters should focus on the location of the ball (Hedrick, 2000). The undergraduate students were focused on the motion of the game, describing how the ball is getting to its location. This is a trend that will be discussed later. The Division I broadcasters did have a higher percentage of correct verbs in basketball (75%) than football, while the undergrads stood their ground (86%). Considering basketball is a faster paced sport than football, both percentages are very good; however, the undergraduate students averaged less misused verbs (10) than the D1’s (19.6). The section that was added for basketball, Same Words, was added because the undergraduate students were using the same verbs and descriptors over and over in their football tapes. Ultimately, that section lost them Table 4 and whether or not they outscored the Division I broadcasters. The undergrads averaged 2.4 Same Words per tape, while the D1’s were 1.4. That would be expected, since the undergraduates range in radio play-by-play experience. The Division I broadcasters are older and while they range from Division I play-by-play experience, even the youngest of the Division I broadcasters chosen is 10 years older than the oldest of these undergrads. In conclusion, the undergraduates outscored the Division I broadcasters in 12 total categories and the Division I broadcasters outscored the undergrads in 10.

 Table 5 shows what the football scores of the five local broadcasters scored compared to the second round of student tapes. It’s an overwhelming shade of green, with the local broadcasters barely taking a few categories. The local broadcasters only used 54% of their verbs correctly and averaged 15 misused verbs per tape. A 29% comparison from undergrads to local broadcasters is a pretty large margin. There have been some eye-opening coding results in this project, but none more shocking than the local broadcasters finishing -4.2 in “the snap” column.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5 (FB) | LOC | STU 2 | Comparison |
| % of Verbs Right | 54% | 83% | 29% |
| Misused Verbs | 15 | 7.4 | 7.6 |
| Pre-Snap DDY | 4.5 | 4.4 | -0.1 |
| Post Snap DDY | 4 | 5.7 | 1.7 |
| "Snap" | -4.2 | 6.4 | 10.6 |
| Off. Form. | 3.2 | 5.8 | 2.6 |
| Def. Form. | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Time/Score Sc. | 2.00 | 4.9 | 2.9 |
| Time/Score Tot. | 2.40 | 6.2 | 3.8 |
| # of Plays | 9 | 7.6 | -1.4 |
| On-field Descrip. | 10.3 | 12.8 | 2.5 |
| Storyline | 1.8 | 3.8 | 2 |
| Nugget | 2.2 | 2.4 | 0.2 |
| Credits Tackler | 2.4 | 3 | 0.6 |
| Tape Time | 6:25 | 6:20 | - 0:05 |

This number fell negative because the group failed to announce “the snap” happened. This means the radio broadcaster didn’t start the play by announcing the snap. Every time the play started the snap wasn’t verbally said, a point was taken off for this section. It is very possible to finish negative in a lot of these columns (i.e. present tense verbs) but it wasn’t even considered that any individual or group would finish negative in a column. The undergrads barely edged the local broadcasters in a lot of these columns (storyline and nugget) but they take Table 5.

 Table 6 shows the basketball numbers for both the local broadcasters and the second round of the student tapes. The undergraduate students scored better than the local broadcasters in all but the Same Words column. There was another pretty hefty Correct Verb % comparison (28% comparison) in favor of the undergraduate students. The local broadcasters averaged 25 misused verbs per tape, which is a lot for a 6:12 average tape (nearly 0.5 misused verb per minute). The undergraduates used, “For Whom?” way more (5.7 difference) and scored a lot more in the On-Court Score AVG (8.3) and On-Court Total AVG (8.6). That means the undergraduate students indicated which team had the ball more than the local broadcasters and used more on-court descriptors.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 6 (BKB) | LOC | STU 2 | Comparison |
| Correct Verb % | 58% | 86% | 28% |
| Misused Vebs | 25 | 10 | 15 |
| Same Words | 1.6 | 2.6 | -1 |
| For Whom? | 4.5 | 10.2 | 5.7 |
| On-court Sc AVG | 17.7 | 26 | 8.3 |
| On-court Tot AVG | 19.6 | 28.2 | 8.6 |
| Time/Score Sc AVG | 5.8 | 7.4 | 1.6 |
| Time/Score Tot AVG | 9.2 | 10.6 | 1.4 |
| Storyline | 2 | 5.2 | 3.2 |
| Nuggets | 4.3 | 7.8 | 3.5 |
| Tape Length | 6:12 | 6:02 | - 0:12 |

**Discussion**

 When this project was first proposed, it was meant to just get some students to improve in radio play-by-play. As time passed though, the question was asked, “What is this really for? What can this really be used for to make an impact in the industry?” It was a challenge that the committee who oversaw this project brought up. With some deeper thinking, it came to be a guide intended for future students who want to pursue a career in sports broadcasting. It was said earlier, repetitions are the only way to get better at radio play-by-play. But practice doesn’t always make perfect, unless a broadcaster knows what needs to be done in order to improve. If a radio broadcaster practices the same mistakes repeatedly, the improvement won’t come. A mentor once said, “You’re going to have someone looking up to you.” As much as an 18-year old doesn’t want to hear that (or maybe they do), it happened no less than a month later to this author. This research stems off the saying of Robert Baden Powell, a British Army Officer, writer and the leader of the Scouting for Boys movement: “Try and leave the world a little better than you found it.”

This research will be sent to other broadcasters and educators in the industry. The coding brought up some trends that should be discussed and passed along as food for thought for those in this industry and those who want to get in this industry. The following data were found using Voyant-Tools.org. Starting with word use (since the data in the Tables doesn’t hit on specific words) and the most commonly misused verbs in the football and basketball data. The most common misused verb was “he’ll” (17 times) followed by “brought” (14 times) and caught (13 times). You’ll hear any of these three in a broadcast, guaranteed. “Caught” is common and can be hard to avoid for a broadcaster on any level. Normally when the football is thrown and a receiver catches it, sometimes the broadcaster can’t make out who the player is because they’re so far away from the action or they can’t see a number. So, “caught” is used to let the listener know the catch is made and where the ball is going. “Brought” is like “caught”, indicating that the ball carrier was “brought down” and then the announcer gives the Post Snap DDY or they credit the tackler immediately after. “He’ll” isn’t just the most commonly misused verb in football, it’s also the most misused in basketball as well (34 times) and it wasn’t close. “Dribbling” was the next term at 17 times. Why is this the most misused verb of them all? The word “he’ll” as you learned in elementary school is a contraction of “he will.” These broadcasters used phrases like, “he’ll dribble”, “he’ll curl” and “he’ll take the snap.” Thinking of reasons why this term was so popular, Bradfield and I came up with some theories, the leading one being a bad habit formed in the very beginning of one’s play-by-play career. Often times, young students, or someone who is just starting out in play-by-play, sees the action happening in front of them as fast. Because of that, they need to slow the action down in their brain so it can operate and communicate a message to the audience. This student, or newcomer, slows the action down by relying on the future tense verb to describe it. The future tense carries an extra syllable than the present tense does. This extra syllable gives the brain time to digest the action. For instance, instead of saying, “He shoots and he scores,” the student will say, “he will shoot and he will score.” Those two extra syllables help a beginner stick with the pace of the game. Once a newcomer gets more reps and they’re able to keep up with the action, then this future tense verb gets cut down. Now that they’re able to keep up with the pace, they trim this future tense verb down to the contraction, “he’ll”. Why? It’s fewer syllables. “He’ll shoot and he’ll score” has the same amount of syllables as, “he shoots and he scores.” In this broadcaster’s mind, they’re trimming away extra syllables without realizing the incorrect cognitive message they’re sending. The listener doesn’t realize it either because subconsciously they know the game is taking place right now. If they were to type out everything a broadcaster describes (i.e. this project) they could find themselves all over the place. Broadcasters just haven’t really thought of this being a fundamental problem; in fact, most might write this off as a fundamental problem. If you’re wondering, the majority of “he’ll” came from the Division I broadcasters (25 times in basketball, twice in football).

There are some other common words in basketball that are used that aren’t technically right. For instance, terms like “jumper”, “runner” and “floater.” These “er” terms are actually nouns that someone is using as a verb. Common phrases like, “The jumper” indicating a jump shot, “the right-handed runner” indicating a shot on the run and “the floater” is exactly what it implies, a float shot. If this doesn’t make sense, think of who drives a car – a driver. Jason becomes a driver when the car is in motion. The driver drives the car. Jason drives the car. The use of “jumper”, “runner,” and “floater” became the shorter way of saying, “jump shot” and “float shot.” There was some debate about this among the undergraduates because those are common terms that the audience knows what they indicate. The argument makes total sense, but in terms of the present tense verb idea, they’re words to be avoided when describing a present action.

Another common thing preached among radio broadcasters needs to be discussed. In basketball, location is often prioritized over motion. In the basketball radio play-by-play section of “The Art of Sportscasting” John Rooney, who at the time this book was published in 2000 was calling MLB, NFL, college football and basketball for CBS Radio and the Chicago White Sox on TV, says, “The most important thing in radio (basketball) is to tell people where the ball is located,” then the quote moves down to the start of the paragraph, “That’s after giving the time and score, of course.” Yes, the time and score are the two most important things in radio play-by-play, but while coding the Division I broadcasters and local broadcasters, Rooney’s advice held true. Often there were times when a broadcaster would just call out the ball’s location and not how it got there. Rooney’s example of this as follows, “Right of the lane to Pippen… Left of the lane to Jordan… Baseline right to so-and-so… Free throw line to so-and-so… Shoot from 15 feet…” That sounds more like a TV call. If radio play-by-play is painting a picture for the listener, why just call out the ball’s location and not it’s motion? Motion of the ball should be just as important as location. If this were TV, it’d be a different conversation, but this is the business of painting a picture for our audience. A better example should’ve been, “Pippen feeds Jordan left of the lane, bounces right baseline to so-and-so, skips to the foul line to so-and-so, he rises from 15 feet…” A radio play-by-play broadcaster should prioritize describing the action by intertwining motion and location. That’s how to better paint an accurate picture for the listener.

No matter what the numbers on the coding sheet say, there’s one thing numbers can’t detect: that’s style. A broadcasters’ style is their on-air personality, how they use words, the use of catch phrases, how they inflect their voice, the rate at which they speak, etc. That can’t be graded, it can only be observed. Style is half the battle, though. A listener can rule out a broadcaster based on his/her style alone or a listener can love broadcasters just because of their style. They can ignore broadcasters’ fundamentals and rule them on or off their favorite broadcasters list solely based on their style. Style did have an effect on this project. If it didn’t, you should be worried. That means all broadcasters are the same, when in reality, one speaks faster than another, one is more colorful than another, one is more storytelling driven than another and one won’t tell you the score at all when you’re in the car. Artistic flair makes someone who they are and there’s no wanting to change that here. Although, a student dreaming of doing play-by-play must know this, we have a brain that’s hardwired a certain way of consuming audible communication messages. With present tense verbs, the student will be able to communicate with their listener on a clear basis. There’s no “CD skipping” like mentioned earlier, where a listener is left out of the story the artist (A.K.A. broadcaster) is trying to tell. Don’t assume the listener can color in the picture themselves, paint it for them.

**Limitations**

 There were a few limitations during this research project. The major one was the undergraduate students and their many commitments. Of the 10 students that gathered in the beginning of August, only five of them remained consistent throughout the year and one of those five students graduated early and had a job offer. Of the other five that didn’t pursue radio play-by-play as closely, three of those students chose to pursue other on-campus opportunities, such as the campus TV news station. The other two students became sideline reporters for the radio women’s basketball broadcasts. In the end, five students submitting tapes is more than having none. Their commitment and passion for play-by-play made this project possible.

**Future Research**

This project took theory and applied them to radio play-by-play broadcasting. It was taught to undergraduate students to see if it was easy to apply, then it was tested on five Division I and five local radio broadcasters to see how the undergraduates compared to professionals and see if these broadcasters are applying them as well. Obviously, they’re applying and not applying without knowing and that’s just fine, for now. There are major questions that need to be answered for future research. First, more radio broadcasters in the industry need to be coded, only to help with the sample size and to find more in-depth trends in the industry. Next, future researchers need to ask what the listeners think when these theories and techniques are applied. Do they think there is a difference between someone who has heard about this research and someone who hasn’t? In the end, it’s up to the audience to decide if these theories create a more accurate picture, they’re the ones who are listening in the first place, right?

**Conclusion**

 All in all, radio play-by-play can be better painted and have more engaging stories for the listeners. These theories, when executed correctly, can help fix that. A white paper was made featuring this research’s theoretical frameworks for students and professionals who want a quick refresh of the information. It was also written for those who are curious about the research and want a quick overview before diving into this report. While there are some great resources for play-by-play broadcasters, not many of them focus on key elements of radio play-by-play (saying the snap, answering “for who?”, Pre-Snap DDY, Post Snap DDY, etc.). Radio play-by-play isn’t necessarily a class that’s taught at some universities because of its niche. This report (and the white paper) can change that. Most classes are geared for aspiring students in journalism who want to report the news, produce and direct news television, write, be in public relations plus other things. While there isn’t a set curriculum for play-by-play like there is for those other students just listed, this can be used as a guideline for building a solid foundation. The undergraduates in this study improved their ability to paint the picture better using these theories and tactics from one year to the next. Hopefully these theories and tactics can be used as an academic resource for schools, instructors and other play-by-play broadcasters to improve their craft. “The Art of Sportscasting” says a radio broadcaster’s job is to paint the picture and tell an engaging story (Hedrick, 2000), so why are some broadcasters falling a tad short of that?

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