

# Baseball, O.J. go head-to-head

Ken Schanzer awoke to news Tuesday that only the president of The Baseball Network could find ironically humorous.

NBC, his former network and a TBN partner, would be carrying the three-hour *Dateline* special tonight with the exclusive interview with ex-NBC announcer **O.J. Simpson** at 9 p.m. ET. That goes against the second games of the League Championship Series on ABC. Click, click.

After the ABC and CBS specials on the Simpson verdict affected TBN's opening-night ratings for the Division Series on NBC last Tuesday, Schanzer needn't wonder any longer about what next could go wrong with TBN, whose regionalization concept has been bashed by columnists and talk shows.

"To a large extent, I feel like Pigpen," Schanzer said of the *Peanuts* cartoon character. "There's always a cloud over The Baseball Network's head. It's like Murphy's Law — something usually goes wrong."

In the Division Series, when TBN decided not to go to a conclusion of another game, it was knocked. When it went to the conclusion the next night, the game went extra innings, delaying local news and network programming.

"My son, Thomas, asked me if I was famous," Schanzer says. "I said, 'I don't know, but if I am, I'm not sure I want to be.'"

TBN is finished after this season, with baseball going back to televising every game separately — most likely on Fox and CBS in prime time, with ESPN and possibly TBS handling weekday afternoon cable telecasts. But until the World Series ends (as late as Oct. 29), Schanzer will be a target of critics.

"I'm a big boy," he says. "I can handle it better than some of our people who are working so hard in a difficult situation. Nobody ever said it would be artistically better to regionalize the game. It doesn't satisfy the fans. But in a business sense, the regionalization was supposed to grow baseball's audience, and it has proven to do so and will again this week with the LCS."

► The Division Series' five-night rating of a respectable 10.5 was in reach of CBS' 11.8 for the '93 LCS, which figures to draw higher ratings. With regionalization, this year's LCS should improve on the '93 numbers.

► ABC's weekend Division game ratings of 10.9 for Friday, 9.0 Saturday and 11.6 Sunday all finished first or second in nightly network rankings, which would please advertisers. But if only one game were shown each night in prime time, the average would be a shaky 8.5 or so.



By Rudy Martzke

► Ratings for tonight's Simpson interview figure to be high, with a 30 possibly being achieved for the non-commercial interview.

"We are not going to overreact," says ABC's **Mark Mandel**. "Obviously O.J. will have an impact on our ratings, but anyone who watched Game 5 of New York-Seattle knows how compelling baseball's post-season can be."

## CBS keeps Open

CBS Sports President **Dave Kenin** scored Tuesday, renewing U.S. Open tennis for five years. Meanwhile, executive producer **Rick Gentile** signed play-by-play man **Sean McDonough** for college football and basketball and as a hoped-for lead announcer on baseball for 1996.

► CBS rejected the USTA's price of \$38 million a year, paying \$31 million-\$33 million annually for the Open. That's a sizeable boost from the \$19 million annual average deal that expired, although CBS thinks it can sell the necessary advertising.

The pluses: Kenin wasn't fooled by rumors of Fox's interest, and CBS kept a major sports event after losing baseball and the NFL.

"There were advantages to being the incumbent," Kenin said. "It's worth it. This is part of our continuing (ascent) in sports television."

► The youthful and talented McDonough, CBS' baseball announcer in 1992-93, will broadcast the Orange Bowl as well as many college basketball games. **Jim Nantz** is slated for the Fiesta Bowl.

"I'm confident baseball will come back to CBS and I'm reunited with Tim McCarver," McDonough said. "I used to get annoyed when our baseball was criticized by NBC. Now I think The Baseball Network's playing catch-up to us."

## Musburger returns volley

ABC's **Brent Musburger** filed comments by ESPN's **Lee Corso** that Musburger was offside in disagreeing with Corso's prediction that Penn State would go undefeated and win the Rose Bowl.

Corso joshed Musburger for doing a track meet in Sweden while Corso was studying. Now Penn State has lost to Wisconsin and Ohio State.

"Lee should stop studying and take a trip abroad," says Musburger, who's on the Cleveland-Seattle American League Championship Series. "He wins the Beano Cook Award (for the ex-ESPN analyst who gave Notre Dame's Ron Powlus two Heismans before he debuted)."

Says Corso: "Hey, I said 'State,' only I got it wrong. I should have said, 'Ohio.'"

► On ABC Saturday at 3:30 p.m. ET, Ohio State-Wisconsin goes to 55% of the

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USA, Oklahoma-Texas to 27% and Washington State-Southern Cal to 19%. At noon, Florida-Auburn goes to 42% and Notre Dame-Army to 37%.

## 'Aggressive' hoops

Raycom's ABC college basketball package, which edged CBS in ratings last season and forced the latter to switch to a regional concept, will be "our most aggressive in five years," says **Ken Haines**, Raycom senior vice president. "We'll have 40 games in 17 time periods."

Raycom/ABC conferences: Atlantic Coast, Pacific 10, Big East, Big 8, Conference USA, Atlantic 10, Southwest and Big Ten.

► ESPN's college basketball *Midnight Madness* debuts Saturday at midnight ET with **Dick Vitale** at Maryland, **Larry Conley** at Michigan and **Bill Raftery** at Virginia. ESPN2's show at 1 a.m. ET features Kansas, Minnesota and Mississippi State. ... In ESPN's Jimmy V Charity Classic Dec. 23, Kansas meets UMass and Temple faces Georgia Tech.

## Around the dial

Fox's **James Brown** was honored as National Sportscaster of the Year by the Washington (D.C.) Touchdown Club Tuesday. ... The Los Angeles Lakers' **Chick Hearn** will be inducted into the American Sportscasters Association's Hall of Fame on Nov. 30. ... **Sandra Neil** of Toronto will be Fox's figure skating host for five prime-time shows. ... TVKO's **Seth Abraham** thanks **Don King** "for giving us a warm-up fight to Riddick Bowe-Evander Holyfield Nov. 4." Mike Tyson-Buster Mathis Jr., on Fox. ... ABC's 16.2 for San Diego Chargers-Kansas City Chiefs left Monday Night Football with a 16.9 season average, down 5%.

## TODAY'S SPORTS LISTINGS

Times listed Eastern (ET) and Pacific (PT) when shown nationally. Programs live unless indicated. Check local listings for changes. Alternate programs shown in some areas.

**BASEBALL:** League Championship Series, Game 2, Cleveland at Seattle or Atlanta at Cincinnati, regional coverage (ABC, 8 p.m. ET/5 PT)

**PBA:** Greater Detroit Open, Taylor, Mich. (ESPN, 7:30 p.m. ET/4:30 PT)

**PGA TOUR:** Las Vegas Invitational, first round (ESPN, 4 p.m. ET/1 PT)

**NHL:** Anaheim at Hartford (ESPN2, 7 p.m. ET/4 PT)

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