

Sportswriters get a bad rap

By Don Peters
Emerald Columnist

Sports people suffer from a bad rap.

Take sportswriters for example. Most often, they are accused of not really being journalists. They aren't reporters because the events

Commentary

they cover aren't as important as Congressional hearings or natural disasters.

In short, they aren't like other journalists. They're sportswriters, a class all by themselves.

During last week's San Francisco earthquake, ABC commentator Al Michaels did serious damage to that argument.

The Frisco quake will go down in history as one of the best-covered domestic disasters of all time. By a stroke of fate, the quake hit just before the start of the third game of the World Series. Instantly, millions who tuned in to watch the

game knew what had happened.

And for the millions who watched, Al Michaels gave them a detailed account of what was going on.

ABC recorded a virtual lock on televised coverage of the quake. Because they had all their production equipment at Candlestick Park, they were able to hook up with the network within minutes.

While the rest of the country was watching a sitcom rerun, and wondering what the hell was going on, Michaels was screaming at the communication crew to patch him into the network.

It was Michaels, in the first few chaotic minutes after the quake, who came on the air and told viewers what had happened. Then, when Ted Koppel took over, Michaels stayed at Candlestick Park, continuing to give the news bits that filtered in.

Michaels was the first to tell about the collapsed section of the Bay Bridge and emotionally told viewers about the Nimitz Freeway tragedy.

It is ironic how sports and the earthquake were intertwined. Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent immediately postponed the World Series, fearing the contest would overtax the already-wrecked San Francisco transportation system.

The Series was supposed to resume today, but when questions arose about the safety of Candlestick Park, Vincent unhesitatingly suspended it until this Friday. Vincent also said he had no qualms about canceling the Series altogether if it proved too dangerous to play.

So contrary to what some people believe, sports people do know what's going on around them, and sports journalists are journalists first, sportswriters second.

With stories of drug test results, cocaine arrests and conviction records of sports personalities hitting the headlines nearly every day, it's nice to know there are people like Michaels and Vincent around.

Class acts, both of them.

Pac-10 players of week named

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. (AP) — John Jackson, a split end at USC, linebacker Chris Singleton of Arizona and UCLA punter Kirk Maggio have been named Pacific-10 Conference players of the week.

Jackson, a senior from Diamond Bar, Calif., had a school-record 14 receptions for 200 yards and one touchdown in USC's 28-24 loss to No. 1 Notre Dame on Saturday. Jackson now has caught a pass in 32 straight games, four short of the Pac-10 record, and jumped to ninth on the conference's career receiving list.

Singleton, a senior from Parsippany, N.J., led

Arizona's defense in the Wildcats' 23-21 victory over No. 15 Washington State. He made 11 tackles, including three for losses and two sacks. The Cougars had only one touchdown and 298 yards of total offense, the team's lowest game output in two seasons.

Maggio, a senior from Glen Arm, Md., punted four times for a 53.8-yard average with one kick of 72 yards during UCLA's 18-17 loss at Oregon State. Not one of his punts was returned, and three were downed inside the 10-yard line. Maggio leads the conference and is second in the country with an average of 46.2 yards.

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