

INSIDE RADIO®

»FRANK SAXE

Frank@insideradio.com

»PAUL HEINE

Paul@insideradio.com

(800) 275-2840

Friday, April 26, 2013



THE MOST TRUSTED NEWS IN RADIO

Sports radio pivots from information outlet to storytelling medium. Fans once listened to sports radio to find out the scores and who's playing. Now they can get all that and more pushed to their smartphones. That's made the art of dramatic storytelling more important than ever, programmers say, especially as more markets have multiple sports stations. It involves hosts who can relate the backstory behind a big trade or losing streak and do it in a sometimes sensational way that drives tune in. "It's less here's what happened and more here's what it means and where it's going," CBS Radio WIP, Philadelphia (94.1) operations manager Andy Bloom says. Successful sports stations give listeners content they can't get on their smartphone and a reason to keep listening, Cumulus Media sports KNBR, San Francisco (680, 1050) program director Lee Hammer says. For KNBR, that's "hearing from the players, our talent and their opinions and the opportunity for listeners to vent," he says. "You'll find out things that you won't get from your smartphone." Lincoln Financial Media "The Ticket" WAXY, Miami (104.3, 790) PD Tod Castleberry says the success of sports personalities hinges on their ability to deliver insights into why things played out the way they did. That's not always what happened on the field. "You see this collision of sports and entertainment now," he says. "The biggest stories we're talking about is stuff even Hollywood couldn't make up," such as recent controversies surrounding Lance Armstrong, Jerry Sandusky, Manti Te'o and others. "Many of the stories we've covered lately are less about the athlete's performance and more about what makes them tick."

Selling the drama in the male soap opera of sports. Most sports stations grab their best ratings while carrying a home team on a red-hot winning streak. But CBS Radio sports WIP, Philadelphia (94.1) aired no play-by-play in January and finished first in men 25-54 for the first time in more than two years. What drove the station's ratings? In a word, drama. Though the specific drama WIP seized upon likely won't be repeated — the dismissal of Eagles head coach Andy Reid, an extended search for his replacement, a quarterback controversy — milking sports drama to keep listeners coming back for more is very much repeatable. Dramatic storytelling is nothing new to sports radio but its importance has increased on a crowded sports media landscape. "The talent is more aware that it's what's driving the bus," WIP operations manager Andy Bloom says. "And the way we're promoting it is completely new." WIP sells the drama in produced promos like a TV network promotes the thickening plotlines of a scripted series. "What was Jeffrey Lurie doing at Geno Smith's workout," asks one promo. Says another, "The Big Piece wants to re-establish he's the game's greatest slugger." Playing up the male soap opera of sports, the promos are designed to drive more daily listening occasions and longer listening durations with lines like, "You just can't make this stuff up, that's why you have to listen every day." Each closes with a reason to keep listening: "Drama guaranteed." CBS is airing similar promos on sister "Talk Radio 1210" WPHT, using the slogan "Real world drama." While the spectacle's more serious than a star player's hitting slump, the concept of playing up the drama in the day's news is the same. Listen to WIP's Phillies promo [HERE](#)