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COMM 773

Sports Communication & Culture

Activity 7A: Who are the Power Brokers In Sports (10 points)

1. Select 5 of the most powerful people in sports
2. Use the electronic library and google to locate biographies of these five people.
3. Write a 500 word biography of power in which you cite all five of these power brokers and determine how they obtained and use their power. Refer to the research. Use Sage to help you organize.
4. Post
5. DUE March 30

The following is a list of five of the most powerful people in sports. They are listed in no order in particular. One thing that it is important to note...is that there are no women appearing in this list. Maybe someday in the future this will change, but as far as the sports industry goes today, it is currently male dominated.

Roger Goodell Commissioner, NFL

Roger Goodell at 48 years old is the Commissioner of the National Football League. The NFL is big business, to be more specific a \$6 Billion dollar big business. Growing up Goodell was a high school jock, lettering in three sports. His father was a republican senator from New York. His career at the NFL started out in 1982 and grew from there. He started out as an intern in the public relations department. He was a diligent and quick learner and moved up the ranks to become the key deputy to former Commissioner Paul Tagliabue. In the article "Roger Goodell: The Most Powerful Man in Sports," Goodell was cited as being "put in charge of initiatives that drove the NFL's growth over the past decade – billions of dollars in TV rights deals, corporate sponsorships and new stadium construction." He tends to look at the NFL as more a large corporation with 32 divisions with the fans as customers. He surrounds himself with various businessman who have similar interests – Bob Iger (Walt Disney), Jeff Immelt (General Electric), and Sam Palmisano (IBM). He has brought many things to the sport of football including a new venture to host overseeing games in order to gain international fans as well as the possibilities of incorporating technologies that would allow the players to communicate with each other throughout the game.

George Bodenheimer President, ESPN

Another innovator in the field of sports is George Bodenheimer, president of ESPN Sports. Bodenheimer, like Goodell, believe that integrating technology is key to the future of his business. His accomplishments in this area include: ESPN pay-per-view, ESPN Motion, and ESPN High Definition simulcast. In 2003 he was also promoted to the head of ABC Sports overseeing Monday Night Football, NBA finals, and College Football Bowls. Bodenheimer, who started out in the mailroom at ESPN is now

making decisions about the NHL contracts worth \$600 million. He already expanded ESPN's programming to include talk shows, and made for TV movies and is looking to expand this area.

Phil Knight Chairman, Nike

Another power broker in the sports arena is the chairman of Nike, Phil Knight. Knight turned his small "Blue Ribbon Sports" company into a multi-billion dollar enterprise which is now Nike. According to a biography written on Knight in Stanford's Alumni News, Knight "has made more money from athletics than anyone, ever. With a net worth of \$5.3 billion, Knight ranks sixth of Forbes' latest list of the richest Americans." The article also states that Knight "understood and captured the zeitgeist of American pop culture and married it to sports." Knight understood American culture and their desire to worship sports stars as heroes. Phil Knight, now in his sixties, is a shy, lean, casual executive. He is a former runner and "has been portrayed as mysterious, inscrutable, eccentric, unpredictable, idiosyncratic, shy, aloof, reclusive, competitive and a genius." He was raised in Portland, Oregon, has been married for over 30 years and has two sons. He did his undergraduate studies at the University of Oregon, was in the army for one year and went to Graduate school at Stanford University. His visit to Japan changed his life, including their cultures and low production costs. In 1971 he named his company Nike after the Greek winged goddess of victory and the rest is history.

Rupert Murdoch Chairman and CEO, News Corp.

And, how can we discuss power broker without mentioning Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch, a newspaper publisher and media entrepreneur, influences sports in the many areas in which his News Corporations, Ltd deals with including: television broadcasting, magazines, books, electronic publishing, and film and video production in the United States, the UK and Australia. He was born in Australia in 1931 and was the son of a famous war correspondent Sir Keith Murdoch. His career started out at Worcester College in Oxford and working at London's Daily Express. Part of Murdoch's "proven formula for boosting circulation...emphasis on crime, sex, scandal, and human-interest stories with boldface headlines, prolific sports reporting, and outspokenly conservative editorializing." In the 80's and 90's he bought many publications including the Chicago Sun-Times, Village Voice, New York Magazine, London's The Times, and the Australian and many communications ventures including Twentieth Century Fox and book publishing companies like Harper and Row. Nowadays, Murdoch latest big venture involves expanding his empire to the World Wide Web with his purchase of Myspace.com.

Michael Jordan NBA great; minority owner, Charlotte Bobcat

The one athlete on my list is Michael Jordan. Not only is Michael Jordan the greatest basketball player of all time, he is also a gold medal winner and owner of a NBA team. As far as I can remember Michael Jordan is the first major sports celebrity. His accomplishments include Rookie of the Year, MVP, 14-time All Star and many more. In addition, he had many endorsements including his infamous Nike campaign "Air Jordan." He was born in Brooklyn, New York, attended the University of North Carolina, and played for the Chicago Bulls. NBA.com states that "Jordan's personal style was equally authentic and unique as his basketball skills." In 2000 he obtained ownership of the Washington Wizards. His accomplishments are never ending, he also has written a book entitled, "For the Love of the Game: My Story."

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