

Kornheiser in, Michaels out in MNF crew change

By RONALD BLUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK
Do you believe in switching networks? Yes!

Al Michaels appears headed to NBC after ESPN hired former quarterback Joe Theismann, Washington Post columnist Tony Kornheiser and Mike Tirico as its Monday night broadcast crew.

Michaels had been with ABC since 1976 and had been the play-by-play voice of "Monday Night Football" since 1986, when he replaced Frank Gifford.

A four-time Emmy-Award winner, he is best known for exclaiming "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!" when the United States upset the favored Soviet Union in 1980 Winter Olympics hockey.

NBC takes over Sunday night games next season from ESPN. John Madden, Michaels' broadcast partner for the past four seasons, agreed in June to a six-year contract with NBC.

"Al was not comfortable and let us know he was not comfortable with our vision of where we are going," ESPN executive vice president John Skipper said after Wednesday's announcement. "Back in November, he said it was the greatest job ever invented. So sometime between the last couple of weeks and November, apparently he had a change of heart."

At a news conference July 26, Michaels said he would remain with "Monday Night Football" when it switched to ESPN after 36 seasons on ABC. He was to be paired with Theismann, who had broadcast Sunday night games on ESPN with Mike Patrick and Paul Maguire.

"I feel like I'm a creature of Monday night. I'm home, and I'm staying home," Michaels said then. "The three words 'Monday Night Football' resonate like no other."

Skipper was evasive when asked about specifics on Michaels, saying only a satisfactory resolution had been reached.

Pat Gibbons, a marketing representative for Michaels, said he could not reach the broadcaster. NBC Sports chairman Dick Ebersol did not return a telephone message left with a spokesman.

Mike Breen will replace Michaels as the lead NBA play-by-play announcer on ABC/ESPN. He will be joined by former NBA coach Hubie Brown, hired in December 2004 as the analyst.

Colts

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

tackle Tarik Glenn said after an audible groan. "I'm here to enjoy this game. Thank God I was able to play in the Pro Bowl and let some of that anger out."

The Colts won their first 13 games of the season to send shivers through the 1972 Miami Dolphins, the only unbeaten team in NFL history.

Then came a 26-17 loss to San Diego on Dec. 18, ending the Colts' quest for a perfect season but allowing them to begin postseason preparations four weeks before their first playoff game since they already had home-field advantage.

Many thought that would make the difference, since the speedy Colts got to play at home and indoors after losing playoff games in cold environs like New England in recent years.

Next came tragedy. Four days after the loss to San Diego, Colts coach Tony Dungy's 18-year-old son, James, was found dead of an apparent suicide.

"There's nothing to prepare you for what he and his family went through," Manning said. "That's where you separate football and life."

There's no way to know if that had an impact on the team, which rested most of its regulars in the final two regular-season games and then had a week off before falling behind quickly and being eliminated from the Super Bowl chase by the underdog Steelers.

A lot of attention was focused on one comment Manning made after the playoff loss, that there were protection problems on the line.

"He said it out of frustration," Saturday said. "I understand that. I didn't take it personally. We didn't do a good job that day."

Now much of the focus has shifted to James, who becomes a free agent March 3.

James said he wants to return to the Colts "under the right circumstances."

"Edge is going to be all right," he said. "I can play. Right now, I've got a Colts helmet in my hand. If there was a problem, I probably would have taken the horseshoes off."



AP PHOTO
Actor Bill Murray, left, holds up his ball after making an eagle on the 18th hole during the celebrity challenge of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am golf tournament Wednesday in Pebble Beach, Calif. With Murray is playing partner Andy Garcia.

Sunshine at Pebble Beach

Course's beauty part of its appeal

By DOUG FERGUSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif.

As anniversaries go, this is one the PGA Tour would like to forget.

It was 10 years ago at the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am that Jeff Maggert took a one-stroke lead into the weekend and never hit another shot. Rain hit the Monterey Peninsula, and with one hole at Spyglass Hill under water and a bleak weather forecast, tour officials felt their only option was to cancel the tournament.

It remains the only time in the 69-year history of the tournament that no one left town with a trophy.

That was but a distant memory Wednesday, when a morning sky still speckled with stars gave way to a horizon of orange and blue as the sun climbed over the most picturesque peninsula in golf.

AT A GLANCE

What: PGA Tour AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am
Site: Pebble Beach, Calif.
Schedule: Today through Sunday
Purse: \$5.4 million
Winner's share: \$972,000
Television: 3 to 6 p.m. today and Friday, USA; 3 to 6 p.m. Saturday and 3 to 6:30 p.m. Sunday, WISH-Channel 8

"Is this not the most beautiful hole in golf?" J.L. Lewis said as he stood on the 18th tee, watching the turquoise surf crash into the rocks, blending the white spray with the green grass and cypress trees.

Phil Mickelson is the defending champion when the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am gets under way today, a tournament known for its mix of celebrity and CEO amateurs, six-hour rounds, bumpy greens with 360 players spread over three courses and a strong roll call of champions. Twenty of the past 25 have won majors.

Weather is no longer a topic.

"I think '01 was the last time I played here," Chris DiMarco said. "This is the second time I've ever seen the sun here, so that's good."

The last time rain interrupted Pebble Beach was when Tiger Woods rallied from seven shots behind on the final seven holes to win in 2000.

Woods stopped coming back two years later, frustrated by the greens, but Pebble Beach has such tradition it does fine without him.

Vijay Singh, who won two years ago, has not missed this tournament since 1994. Davis Love III has never missed Pebble Beach since turning pro, and he'll be making his 20th start this year.

Love was in the hunt in 1996 when the tournament was canceled. He was two shots out of the lead in 1998 when rain forced a six-month delay and Mickelson won in August. He was there when rain cut short the event to 54 holes in 1999. And he remembers the outcry that Pebble should move to a different spot on the calendar.

"This is the year we point to and say, 'See, we should always play,'" Love said. "It can get good."

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