

The Color Analyst's Role

Third course, Second grading period, Week 3

A sports broadcast couldn't exist without a play-by-play announcer. In fact, a play-by-play announcer could call a game completely alone if necessary. But there is something about having a second voice — a break in the action, a story here, a statistic there — that makes a broadcast more vivid and exciting. This lesson will highlight the color analyst and the attributes that come with the position.



Enduring Understanding

The color announcer can add vital experience and content to the sports broadcast. Together, the play-by-play announcer and color announcer make up a team.



Essential Question

What are the elements and attributes that make a successful color announcer?



Objectives and Outcome

Students will gain an understanding of the role of a color announcer.



Suggested Time

One week



Resources and Materials

Tapes of play-by-play and color analyst teams

KBPS Color Duty Chart

"Women in Sportscasting: A Brief History," Lou Schwartz
(www.americansportscastersonline.com/womeninsportscasting.html)

Professional models for color work include Bob Costas, Joe Theismann, and Vin Scully.

"Improving Play-by-Play and Color," *Announcing*, pages 265-274

"Sport," *Radio Production*, page 216-224



Procedure

1. Review last week's discussion on play-by-play announcers and their role in sports broadcasting. Help students define the "color" announcer's role and distinguish it from the play-by-play announcer's.

A case study would be one way of doing this. In June 2005, Robert Dvorchak wrote in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on the retirement of Myron Cope, 76, because of health reasons:

“He has a gargle-with-gravel voice that clangs of vaudevillian shtick rather than the polished prose of his writings. He isn’t taller than a Lombardi Trophy. He has a face made for radio. ... But plagued by health woes that hoarsened his voice and neutralized his once lightning-quick insights, Cope has thrown in the towel after 35 years as the color analyst on Steelers broadcasts. No more yoi [expression when things are going bad] and double yoi [when things are going really bad], you becha, hmm-hah and Zounds.”

From the above, students could discern that the color analyst

- Develops a distinct voice,
- Creates an on-air persona and
- Must be knowledgeable to think and relate information quickly.

In Dvorchak’s article, Steelers executive Art Rooney stated that “Myron put color into color analyst.”

Cope exemplifies the most colorful of the color analyst with his use of:

- Personal or signature phrases and gimmicks (“Towel Dead”)
- Anecdotes and one-liners
- Knowledge of both teams playing and the game, which resulted from
- Experience and Research

In his on-air work, Cope analyzed approximately 35,000 plays.

Not always listed as a trait of a color analyst, but one to consider: Cope loved to write and enjoyed playing with language — he wrote parodies, holiday songs and commentary featuring his favorite opponents (“Dallas Cryboys,” “Wash Dirtyskins”). He was a reporter for the Post-Gazette and Sports Illustrated before he was a color analyst. He authored sports classics, *Broken Cigars*, *The Game That Was* and his memoir *Double Yoi*.

Cope may not be the best role model for the high school color analyst, but he did love the game and did do his research to accompany his antics.

2. Replay the taped games from the previous week. Go over the clips that were reviewed in class, this time focusing on the interaction between the play-by-play announcer and the color person. How did they feed off each other and complement each other’s role? How many of the traits exemplified by Cope are seen in these color analysts?

3. Tape a sports game from the radio. Broadcast and radio announcing differ greatly because in television, the action is there for the viewer to see. Some call the TV announcer, the caption writer of the pictures. In radio, the play-by-play announcer must describe all the detail, down to every pitch, every down and every play for the listener to be involved. Compare and contrast a television broadcast with a radio broadcast.

You might also discuss the need to both complete research before going on air and to think while speaking on mic. The color analyst must complete fresh research for the current game/match; organize it for quick access; plan on appropriate, potential places for anecdotes and statistics; and provide insight for both the dedicated and casual fan.

Failure to think about what one is saying can make a sportscaster wish for a delay button. Lou Schwartz, president and founder of the American Sportscasters Association, includes among his favorite quotations these:

- “The lead car is absolutely, truly unique, except for the one behind it, which is exactly identical to the one in front of the similar one in back.” (Grand Prix Race announcer)
- “Sure there have been injuries, and even some deaths in boxing, but none of them really that serious.” (Ringside boxing analyst)
- “If history repeats itself, I should think we can expect the same thing again.” (Baseball announcer)
- “He dribbles a lot and the opposition doesn’t like it. In fact, you can see it all over their faces.” (Basketball analyst)

4. Make copies and distribute the “KBPS Color Duty Chart.” Discuss the different duties and their order of importance. Why are they in that order of importance?

If possible, obtain a copy of a television or radio broadcast of a football game and examine this duty chart in the context of the game. How do color analysts show their understanding of their duties?

5. Review previous sports broadcasting concepts with students in the context of play-by-play and color announcing:

- Why is it essential for an announcer to “know the sport”?
- Why should an announcer understand the elements of a good sports feature? (Announcers should always be looking for and highlighting the drama of sports while the game is going on. They should understand the human interest element of the teams/players facing each other.)
- How do the ethics of sports coverage affect the play-by-play and color announcers? (Should color analysts be commenting on the “horrible officiating”?)
- Why must announcers have command of the statistics and rules of the game they are covering?

6. Print journalists are told to throw away adjectives or to use them sparingly. Listen to a color analyst. Count and record the adjectives that are used to bring the sporting event to life for the listeners.

7. Bring in a video clip from a recent high school game. Turn off the sound and ask students to practice their color analysis skills.

8. Have students discuss the concept and importance of working as a “team” to achieve a successful broadcast. Listen to a radio team covering a baseball game when there is little action at the plate. How do they work off of each other?

Bring in clips from other recent games played by your school. Have students work in teams performing the duties of play-by-play announcer and color commentator.

9. The sports pages report: “Former Tennessee Titans tight end Frank Wycheck returns for his second season as Titans Radio’s color analyst,” “Former Terrapin standout Jonathan Claiborne is in his sixth season as the color analyst on Maryland’s radio broadcast team,” and “Radio Color Analyst Bill Davidge brings 27 years of hockey experience as a player, scout and coach to game broadcasts on the Blue Jackets.” Discuss the athlete as a color announcer.

Ernie Banks, one of the most popular Chicago Cubs players of all time, is now known for his successful transition into being a color announcer for baseball. Many other athletes have made successful transitions into sports broadcasting. Why the appeal of former sports stars and individuals with longtime sports careers? What do these individuals bring to the mic that a formal education will not give?



Homework

Have students pick a current color announcer and research the announcer’s background, journalism education and qualifications. Students should be encouraged to select radio color announcers, but TV announcers could be selected at the instructor’s discretion. What about the color analyst “qualifies” the person to be a color announcer or an “expert” on the game? Variations on this assignment include:

- Listen to university sports coverage on radio. Evaluate how well the team works together. For example, the University of Texas has a five-station network of Spanish language radio (Cadena Deportiva) for football game broadcasts with experienced play-by-play and color commentator teams.
- Are there any female color analysts on radio? If yes, who are they and which sports are they covering? How do they compare to their male counterparts?



Assessment

As in the play-by-play section, students should be assessed not on their announcing skills or qualities, but on their understanding of the attributes of a good color announcer and how to develop those qualities. Tests, quizzes and activities should be prepared accordingly.



Academic Content Standards

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (Standard 8, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. (Standard 11, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Locate, organize and reference written information from various sources to communicate with co-workers and clients/participants. (F02.2 Career Cluster Project: Communications Skills)

Develop and deliver formal and informal presentations using appropriate media to engage and inform audiences. F02.4 Career Cluster Project: Communications Skills)

Analyze announcing competence. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate the ability to deliver a broadcast production. States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

KBPS Sports: Color Commentary

Duties

Provides more information about each play and gives play-by-play announcer a break. Relates relevant anecdotes about players, coaches and the environment.

Order of Importance

1	2	3
	EVERY PLAY	
<p>ACT AS A SPOTTER FOR PLAY-BY PLAY</p> <p>RECAP SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THAT STEM FROM PLAY-BY PLAY</p> <p>MONITOR GAME STORYLINE</p>	<p>RECAP TACKLER</p> <p>RECAP KEY BLOCKERS</p> <p>ANECDOTAL STORIES ABOUT PLAYERS & TEAMS</p>	<p>FOCUS ON SPECIFIC PLAYER OR MATCH-UP</p>
	EVERY SERIES	
<p>MONITOR CHANGES IN MOMENTUM</p> <p>MONITOR STATISTICS</p>	<p>MONITOR CHANGES IN PERSONNEL</p> <p>MONITOR CHANGES IN OFFENSIVE/DEFENSIVE FORMATIONS</p> <p>MONITOR FIELD POSITION</p>	
	EVERY QUARTER	
<p>SCORING RECAP</p> <p>RECAP STAT LEADERS</p>	<p>OTHER PIL GAMES</p> <p>NEXT WEEK'S GAMES</p>	<p>STATE RANKINGS</p>