



## THE NFL. THEY'RE IN THE BIG BUCKS BUSINESS

By Kerry Schmidt 05-08-2005

The NFL and the TV networks signed new contracts last week that will take effect beginning with the 2006 season.

And, there are many changes, from different networks and stations to rotating games to the comeback of NBC to the NFL.

But for old timers like me, the biggest change is nostalgic. I vividly remember the September evening in 1970 when HOWWARD! CO!SELL, Keith Jackson and Dandy Don Meredith went into the ABC broadcast booth and Monday Night Football was born. There were really only three stations then, but the print media all said that football on a Monday night would never last, that no one would watch something opposite "Hawaii Five-O" or other standard fare.

Well MNF is now a household word, but for the first time since that long ago night, ABC will not telecast it. Cable TV, then a non entity, will take over, via ESPN, a station non existent in 1970.

However, in tune with the big bucks theme, it is apropos that both ABC and ESPN are owned by Disney, so it's all Mickey Mouse stuff.

All the combined TV deals back then amounted to less than \$100 million.

Today, hold on to your check books. The new deal(s) signed with NBC, CBS, ESPN, FOX and Direct TV will boost the annual NFL's revenue over 50 % from last year, to an average of \$3.735 BILLION per year.

And, there may be a few hundred mill more! The NFL is considering a separate "NFL TV" package wherein they will televise some Thursday and/or Saturday night games in the second half of the season. Sweet.

How much is this in relation to other sports? It is more than the annual TV revenues of the NBA, MLB, NASCAR, PGA and LPGA, the March Madness business and last summers Olympics. COMBINED!!! Note: Had there been an NHL season last year, the \$38. 72 cents that they are worth would still not have equaled the NFL.

Yes, you read this correct.

That means that each team, before a single ticket is sold, before a single beer is consumed, before a single jersey or cap is sold, before any of all the many other various income producing aspects are counted, receives 116, 718, 750 bucks!

As I stated last week, the payroll of my local team, the Saints, is \$73.3 million. Only the Redskins, at \$118 million, have to sell a couple of brews to make payroll. The SB champs, New England, at \$77, mil sure get a lot more bang for their buck than the Saints.

NOTE 2: For anyone interested, you can go to NFL Players Association on the web and find the total for your team as well as for each player.

But what about the networks that are shelling out these big bucks? How much do they make?

Most of them would not release figures, but it is widely known that ABC was losing nearly \$150 a year on MNF, thus their willingness to pass it to fellow Disney, ESPN.



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And it may make “cents.” “The economics for cable are very different than for broadcasting,” says sports consultant Marc Ganis. “Cablecasters can afford to pay a premium, since they get subscriber fees that networks don’t.”

And, to show you that we are in the tech. age, ESPN will be coming out with their own cell phones before this season that, “Surprise, Surprise,” Gomer, for a fee will allow you to watch MNF on those same cell phones.

Let me see, watch the game on a 2 inch phone or a 52 inch plasma. Hmmmm, tough choice. At least you could call and order pizza on your 2 inch “TV.”

Sunday night’s games will get NBC back into the NFL for the first time since 1977. And they will have an advantage ABC did not have. In the second half of the season, they will be allowed to shift some Sunday afternoon games to their Sunday night show, depending on which teams may present the best match-ups.

As for the announcing teams on all these changes, that is yet to be determined, but I don’t think John Madden and his 7 mill a year are worrying.

Enough NFL bucks bidness.

I cannot pass up a chance to take a double whammy shot at my favorite scumbag sports owner, George Steinbrenner.

He’s in the news this past week because he owns the Kentucky Derby favorite, Bellamy Road. As you read this, the outcome will be known, but as I write this, I hope his horse came in last. Nothing against the horse, just the horse’s ass owner.

So far this season, I love watching him squirm. This jerk has a \$204.6 million payroll for his Yankees, which is over 60 million more than the closest other team. And, he will pay over \$30 million in “luxury tax” (see cheating penalty) for being over the allowed limit.

But here is the part I love. At press time, his team is 11-17, with only two teams in the AL with a worse record! And Wednesday, his 2 mill team lost to Tampa, with a payroll of less than one half of his. Really sweet.

He has smoke coming out his ears, but he can’t fire Joe Torre while he’s in Louisville. If his horse loses, you don’t think he’ll take him out behind the barn and shoot him, do you? Oddly enough, Torre owns part of a horse, Sis City, that is favored to win Friday’s Kentucky Oaks race, the prelim to the Derby.

Boy, would I love to see Torre’s horse win and Slimebucket’s lose. Maybe his 2-ton ego would explode right there on national TV. Now that would be a reality show I would pay to see!

I will watch the Derby, just because, like the Indy 500 or a Super Bowl, of which I have covered four, it is a sports event with great history and tradition.

And I want to be able to, hopefully, watch the Yankee ego maniac be interviewed if his horse loses.

Or if you want to go shopping this weekend, go buy an NFL franchise. Then hold up your city for huge free dollars to subsidize your needy team. Super sweet!