

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

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Evan Dexter
Grace Senko
Kurt Benkert
Fred Gaudelli
Paul Burmeister

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: On today's call we have two of our commentators -- Paul Bermeister, who will host and provide play-by-play, and Kurt Benkert, a former NFL quarterback, YouTuber and Madden NFL expert. In addition we have NBC Sports Executive Producer of NFL Fred Gaudelli, EA SPORTS Vice President Brand Madden NFL and College Football Evan Dexter, and the NFL Vice President of Media Strategy and Business Development Grace Senko.

FRED GAUDELLI: We're excited for Saturday's EA SPORTS Madden NFL Cast live on Peacock at 1:00. For about the past eight weeks, we've had really tremendous collaboration with the NFL, EA SPORTS, obviously the home of the legendary Madden NFL franchise, and Genius Sports, which is providing the next-generation data, really the technology behind all the route tracing and the video game buttons on Madden that you'll be seeing on the screen throughout the game.

Professionally, really looking forward to this. It will be the first time we're trying to do an all cast at NBC Sports and doing it with the Madden game. I had the great fortune of being John Madden's producer the last seven years of his broadcasting career. A great friend for 20 years.

Had some really memorable times picking his brain about the advent of the video game and what led him to it and all that. And he will be foremost in my mind and has been foremost in my mind as we've all tried to strategize what this all cast should look like on Saturday.

We're proud that Peacock will be the exclusive home, the exclusive stream of this all cast. As I said, it's the first sports all cast that we're doing on Peacock. And based on



the great success that we had during the Parris Olympics, the Gold Zone, the multiview coverage, all the different venues, obviously Peacock has debuted the multi-view in the Premier League as well. So for NBC, just a tremendous platform for us to be debuting this Madden NFL all cast.

Once again, really excited for Saturday, and I will turn it over to Evan Dexter at EA SPORTS.

EVAN DEXTER: My name is Evan Dexter. I'm the VP of brand for EA SPORTS Madden NFL. And just as Fred said, I'm really excited to talk about the Madden cast. This is something we've inspired to create as the most immersive and data-powered football broadcast that's ever been made. And using Madden NFL's brand elements to transform a viewership experience for football fans that creates more storylines, teaching and education around the sport of football but in an incredibly entertaining way that connects to John Madden's vision for a video game over 30 years ago.

And we've got a fantastic set of partners at NBC in the NFL and Genius and with all of our broadcast talents. Add Fred said, we have not just amazing partners with NBC from a capabilities and broadcast standpoint, but also from a personal connection and legacy with John Madden himself.

And we've got talent in Kurt and Paul and a few other folks who are not on the call today that sort of perfectly walk that line between EA SPORTS Madden NFL's relationship with the sport of football and walking both worlds between authentic NFL football and virtual football.

We're really excited about it. We think it has the chance to be the smartest and most entertaining alternative or augmented broadcast designed specifically for football fans. I can't wait to talk more about it.

GRACE SENKO: Similar to what Evan and Fred have hit on, it's always awesome when we get to work with our partners. And this opportunity is really exciting because we get to work with three of our key partners in NBC, EA and Genius on this project.

For us at alternate telecasts, it's a great opportunity for us to reach and engage different segments of our fans. And it's been awesome to collaborate across EA and NBC to



bring this execution to life. And also I'm really excited by the game on Saturday afternoon, being just a different and better window to potentially be reaching the younger audience of those gamers. Really excited for Saturday.

PAUL BERMEISTER: To echo what my friends and colleagues have mentioned just about the excitement to do this for the first time and to be a part of something that involves the NFL and the Madden game, with its immense popularity.

I think about John Madden and I come back to a little bit of what Fred said. I grew up in an era where so many of my greatest memories watching football and listening to football, John Madden's voice was the soundtrack of that. And I think he always had an element of teaching and coaching that you could certainly detect within his analyzing on all these broadcasts.

And I know a number of people -- there's so many fans out there who have really taken their understanding and their learning of the National Football League and how it's played, it kind of started or expanded through their play of the Madden game.

I think bringing those two things together, along with the massive popularity of watching a big-time NFL game, to see how it all goes together and how it looks and sounds, to be a part of that is something I'm super excited about.

There are people running this that are incredibly good at what they do. I think our analysts have a real passion and understanding of the Madden game, and also have great cache within the National Football League with their time playing. I will be there in a support role as the play-by-play/host. And I'm just really excited about the potential to explore this space and see where it goes. And I can't wait for Saturday to get here.

KURT BENKERT: Super, super excited to be able to do this. I think this game has been near dear to my heart and has been a way for me, exiting the NFL to transition to something I'm passionate about, to use the game as a teaching tool all over the Internet, on YouTube, on Twitch, on Instagram and all of it.

And now to be able to blend the game in a way that I know people that played Madden are really used to with a broadcast view that people enjoy the NFL game on Sundays, Thursdays, Mondays, all of that.

I'm really excited to toe that line and weave this in to so how much parallel the game has to the real game itself. I'm also really excited to see the tech overlays and all the data behind the scenes that will come to life on the screen

and the viewing experience that people haven't seen before that I think will resonate really well with the younger audience and with people that are used to seeing it in the video game that way.

I truly think the sky's the limit with this. I'm excited I'll be able to be a part of the first one. I'm really looking forward to seeing where it goes because I think it's going to bring the game to people in their living rooms in a way that has never been done before. I think people are going to learn a lot while also being entertained. I'm excited to get this rolling.

Q. My question is mostly for Fred and Grace. Some of the other all casts we've seen within the NFL have been trying to reach very new audiences, make it additive. Who do you envision as being the target demographic for this one?

FRED GAUDELLI: Look, we're going to produce this all cast for the avid Madden game player. Over on NBC, we've got a traditional football broadcast that will be done exceptionally well, but it really didn't make a lot of sense for me to do something akin to that.

There's millions and millions of Madden fans, and I think we have to really serve them in this game and try to find that perfect blend between the video game, the real game and merge them together. So the short answer is, Madden enthusiasts are our target audience.

EVAN DEXTER: I think that's absolutely right. And I would double down to also say that we hope that this is going to really appeal to average football fans in general.

I think rather than present this as an alternative broadcast, as the NFL has done in previous instances with partners like Disney and reimagine football in the lens of different IP, I think part of what we're doing here is augmenting existing football for all football fans.

I think what Madden has a unique opportunity to do is to take some of the brand ingredients that are most thought of as living in our game, things like OVR ratings, and overlay them into a broadcast that can appeal to Madden enthusiasts but also just to general football fans.

I think we can start to visualize things like mismatches, if the 99 receiver is lining up against an 82 overall Madden-rated DB, being able to show that to a football audience in a way they're going to inherently and immediately understand is part of the goal.

So hopefully this appeals to Madden enthusiasts, but also just really augment the entertainment value and the

education for football fans overall.

GRACE SENKO: I think similar to Fred and Evan, it being on Peacock also versus the primary telecast, also potentially reaching that younger gaming audience there. And as Fred mentioned, I think this will probably resonate most with those fans that have played the game, but to Evan's point also being able to talk about the different ratings mismatches and otherwise will also be -- the commentary will still be accessible to a wide, wide range, I think, of fans.

Q. Kurt and Paul, I saw on the press release there was a screen shot of the studio. And just wanted to ask how the studio looks, how it's going to function, and if it's different than any studio you've been in before.

KURT BENKERT: I cannot speak to the studio segment because this is the first time I'm doing broadcasting. But it's really cool how it's going to be set up. We'll be sitting in chairs watching the big screen with a bunch of different things going on on that screen. And Paul will be off to one side. Henry, our Madden pro, will be off to another side handling some replay stuff.

And it's just really more cozy and more of a relaxed set than being in a booth. I'm really looking forward to see how visually it shows up on screen for people at home.

PAUL BERMEISTER: Follow up to what Kurt said, it's a much different setup than what I'm used to in the booth on Saturdays, if I'm calling a Big Ten game, in the sense I would normally have my analysts right next to me. And we can kind of look at each other and we're very used to kind of how that feels throughout the game.

In our studio setup, as you pointed out, it's quite a bit different. I'm kind of off to the corner by myself and I'll have in front of me some of the assets I'll have in the booth. I'll have a program monitor, a stats monitor, a stats person and my spotter next to me helping me that way. So in that way it's all very similar.

But Chad and Kurt and Henry will be kind of in front of me, to the right. We'll have the giant projector screen in front of me to the left. So I'll be keeping an eye on my analysts and the screen in a different way than I would during, I guess, quote, a normal broadcast on a Saturday from a traditional booth. But I will have some of the things right in front of me with my spotter and stat person and the screens I'm used to looking at. That part of it will be very similar.

Q. Evan and Grace, this question is for you. Do you see what's going to take place on Saturday as the

beginning of a road where ultimately, with the Super Bowl, with a playoff game, a regular season game, you can have, let's say, the ultimate all cast, where you not only get the overlay of the Madden NFL stats you can call them up. You can interact with them. You can do multiviews of either the game or the actual events. You can place sports bets, et cetera, et cetera. Do you see that road happening and starting with what will take place Saturday?

GRACE SENKO: Yes, I think, first and foremost, across the board we've been working with our partners over the last few years to continue to continue to innovate the viewing experience, especially with the digital platforms and the capabilities that they have, there's a lot more we can test there.

So whether it's working with Sunday Ticket and a lot of the different interactive features that we worked on there with Google. Also across the board we've done different betting shows, different betting executions. There's also a number of all casts across all of our partners that we've done with ESPN, whether it's the Mannings or the Simpsons or Toy Story, the animated replications with Amazon Prime Vision, with Nickelodeon, and the games that we've done for the Super Bowl and Wild Card.

I think we're in the stage of really continuing to work with our partners to test different executions and then continue to build on them and incorporate those learnings to make them bigger and better. But as we look forward, again especially going back to those digital platforms, there's definitely ways that we can continue to personalize these experiences for our fans on top of and amplifying what we're already doing through the primary game telecast.

EVAN DEXTER: Some of those concepts are great, too. Grace and the NFL have so much rich history in the alternative broadcast space with so many different partners. And there's entertainment value and unique positioning points for every one of those partners that makes them special, particularly for the audiences that they're designed for.

I think you were just highlighting some of the ways in which EA SPORTS, Madden NFL can make a broadcast special, some of which are going to show up here. We intend to, on Saturday, have the performance on field through the Madden cast map backing into the game in near real time. If a receiver has an incredible catch in traffic, we'll have that reflected in the game through live ratings adjustments.

We're blurring the lines between real and virtual as it's happening on the field. And our opportunity to take that deeper as we go through future partnerships and future

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

augmented broadcasts is really kind of limitless.

The fact that we're very much in what we at EA SPORTS sort of call the Madden generation of coaching and players at the NFL level makes it very, very natural. Like, we hear all the time you see in headlines all the time players like Tyreek Hill using the game to scout rather than watching tape. Or we hear Mike McDaniel talk about learning through Madden and honing his coaching skills through Madden.

There's so much natural intersection here and our ability to blend concepts to really impact each other between virtual and real world that are meaningful and entertaining to football fans and the Madden fans, I think, the sky's the limit on that.

GRACE SENKO: I would just go back and also add that more broadly a lot of these different augmentations that we're making to the broadcast, in terms of visual overlays and otherwise, are really a result from our Next Gen Stats proprietary data tracking platform that we have and the improvements and enhancements we've made there. And also we're working with Sony and Hawkeye on limb tracking and opportunities there.

As we continue to make more investments in that platform and that data becomes stronger, it also serves as the backbone for even more of these executions to come.

Q. Fred, Paul and Kurt, doing these rehearsals the past two months, what was the most interesting thing that came out of them, the most unique thing that might surprise fans?

FRED GAUDELLI: For me, this was always the big mystery for me was you're not going to have the normal cadence that announcers would have in a sports broadcast. And that was done purposely because that wasn't going to really make a lot of sense for what we were doing. So the play-by-play guy has a traditional role. He sets the formation. He calls the play. He tells you who made the tackle. He gives you the game and then he says what the down and yard is. And then the analyst might come in for a replay.

I really envisioned Kurt and Chad really speaking over the play quite a bit or at least before the play with a traditional play-by-play announcer would come in and kind of telling people what they see, what they think is going to happen, how you might access this in the game or, hey, in the game, if this situation occurs here, you know, defensively I'd like a double mug blitz here to get the ball out of the quarterback's hands.

In watching these rehearsals -- we did two games now, Sunday night game two weeks ago with the Chargers and Chiefs, and this past Sunday with Seattle and the Packers -- just how the cadence has involved where Kurt and Chad are really taking the lead. Paul is making sure that all the Is are dotted and the Ts are crossed, and really kind of quizzing them about the game but how it would manifest itself in the video game.

So one of the real cool surprises for me has just been the announcer cadence and how it's evolved.

KURT BENKERT: I can add on to that real quick. I think the biggest thing I was surprised by is comparing it to a normal broadcast how little visual indicators of what's going on are actually happening, where now that we've added in the X factors and the trails and the superstars and the buttons over people's heads, it's really easy to speak over the top of it in reference to like what we're seeing with our eyes versus, if I say in a normal broadcast a nickel defender is blitzing, a lot of people at home don't know what a nickel defender is if they're not avid football fans or people that know the game inside and out. Where, on this, I can say see the X factor right there, he's coming off the edge. In my opinion it brings it more to the level of people watching it from home versus sometimes people get spoken over the top of with terminology and all that.

So I think the visual aids are what, in my opinion, shocked me of how well they kind of wove it all together for people that will be listening.

PAUL BERMEISTER: For me, and obviously I'm going to see this through the lens of my role, but the most unique thing for me has been -- and really the most interesting part of these rehearsals for me -- is trying to come down to the spot and finding the balance between, as Fred mentioned, the traditional play-by-play and then what this broadcast, what this very specific broadcast could use most from someone in the host play-by-play role.

And I think for me I'm kind of looking at it like I want to anchor the play-by-play needs that are there. They're much lesser than what I'm used to during the fall and I think what people are used to hearing from the play-by-play person.

But this broadcast also isn't void of play-by-play needs altogether. It's not going to be a giant part of it, but we don't want it to be gone. And I also kind of want to be the curious fan out there who keeps conversations going between Kurt and Chad and tease up conversations about rating mismatches that we may be seeing out there. So it's been a lot of fun for me even though it's been -- I don't want to say totally different -- but significantly different than

the play-by-play I'm used to, to give it just enough play-by-play without overdoing it, with also being a part of the conversation and kind of a conversation starter as more of a podcaster as this kind of broadcast needs.

FRED GAUDELLI: Just one other cool thing has just been the involvement of Genius Sports and what they've been able to add to this on almost a weekly basis. We started out with the route trails. Then we had the icons for the X factors and the superstar players. Then we added the buttons that you would see if you were playing the game on an Xbox. We've got the personnel packages for offense and defense on both sides of the screen as it is in the Madden game.

So the authenticity of the Madden game has really developed to a really good place right now, and I think all the Madden fans are really going to sink their teeth into that and enjoy that on Saturday.

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