

CBS NFL Today

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

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Bill Cowher

Nate Burleson

Boomer Esiason

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Hosted by James Brown

THE MODERATOR: What a great look back at our amazing and historic super season last year. That gets us all excited to kick off the season this year. Hello, and welcome to the 2021 NFL on CBS virtual media session.

I am Jen Sabatelle from CBS Sports. I wish we were all together in our studio with you eating boxed lunches, but we can't replicate what we do in person. With our whole team, we put together a great lineup of voices from our NFL coverage to answer your questions today and preview the season.

Our NFL coverage kicks off on Tuesday, September 7, with a new addition of Inside the NFL. This year the Emmy Award winning show moves exclusively to Paramount+. Julian Edelman will make his debut on the show, alongside JB, Phil, and Brandon Marshall. All four gentlemen will join us in the middle session.

Michael Irvin and Ray Lewis will also contribute to the show this season. The NFL on CBS begins with a double-header week one, highlighted by Pittsburgh at Buffalo at 1:00 p.m. and Cleveland at Kansas City at 4:25.

The NFL on CBS is led for the fifth year by Jim Nantz, Tony Romo, and Tracy Wolfson, who will all join us to round out our session today.

Producer Jim Rikhoff, Sean, and Harold will be available, as well.

A little bit of housekeeping before we start. We want to utilize the raise your hand function at the bottom of your screen. When called upon, please unmute yourself to ask your question. Please make sure your name is on your device so we can identify you to ask questions.



We will get to as many as possible today. Please stay on for the duration of the call and we will bring the panelists in to speak with you for each session. Please feel free to ask questions during each session using the raise your hand function.

We'll go first to Sean McManus for opening comments.

SEAN McMANUS: Thank you, Jen, very much. I'm always excited at the start of the NFL season, but this year I'm actually even more excited than I normally am. With the expanded season we've got more Sunday games than we've ever had, and most of us agree that this is the best schedule we've had on paper since the NFL came back to CBS in 1998.

We've got the AFC which features many of the most exciting young quarterbacks in the league. All of our games will be on CBS. They'll also be streamed in the local markets on Paramount+, which I think is exciting.

Once again, our production team is led by Jim Rikhoff and Mike Arnold, and you're familiar with Jim and Tony and Tracy on the sidelines, the fifth year that this team has been together.

I think we've got the deepest roster of announcers that we've ever had, highlighted by the fact that Adam Archuleta this year is joining AJ Ross and Greg Gumble, which I think will be a terrific, terrific team.

As Jen mentioned, once again, we've got a lot of really good shoulder programming in conjunction with show time sports. We'll be producing the Emmy Award winning Inside the NFL; NFL Monday QB returns for its tenth season on the CBS Sports Network, and that other pregame show also on CBS Sports Network comes on the air, plus round the clock coverage of CBS Sports on CBSHQ.

NFL Today, it's the fifth year we've had our current lineup. I'm excited to get that show launched again. Excited that Coach Cowher was inducted into Hall of Fame this past August. Excited about the fact that Nate Burleson won his first-ever Emmy Award for outstanding sports personality studio.

I'm excited about the fact that Nate is also joining the newly revamped CBS Mornings five days a week along with Gail



and Tony, which I think is going to be really exciting.

We've never been, at least since 1998, in a better position with respect to sales. We've sold more inventory up front than we ever have. Our pricing has been amazing, and I think everybody in the advertising community is really waiting to get back to the NFL.

We had a great season last year, but let's face it, in many ways it was dominated by the pandemic. We managed to have an incredibly successful season and an amazing Super Bowl, but there was a shadow hanging over us. And I'm not implying in any way, shape, or form that the pandemic is over, because it certainly isn't. Health and safety is still a major factor with respect to all of our productions and studio shows.

But to have full stadiums, which it looks like we're going to have, to have schedules playing out as they're supposed to, I think people are really waiting for NFL football, and I think it's going to be a great distraction and a great refuge from a lot of the things that are going on in our country right now.

We're set at CBS Sports. We couldn't be more ready, and I think we're going to have a season for the history books. I couldn't be more optimistic.

Q. Here in Boston it's been a pretty exciting off-season; the Patriots went out and spent a boat load of money in free agency. They drafted a quarterback in the first round; now he's going to be the week one starter. Just curious you guys' thoughts, who is this Bill Belichick? What has he done with the Bill Belichick we're used to seeing? What do you make of how aggressive he's been in the off-season? What do you think he's trying to do?

BILL COWHER: I will say this: I think when you look at Bill Belichick, the one thing I've always admired about him is the ability to adapt to the personnel he has around him. I think the one thing he went out and did in this off-season, getting two tight ends, Jonnu Smith and Hunter Henry, because that's always been something that's a part of our identity, trying to update their skill positions.

And certainly now with Mac Jones coming over and taking over as the starting quarterback as a rookie, and I think Josh McDaniels is a perfect guy to lead him, to groom him, and I think it's a team that you'd better be careful not to overlook.

They have a very good defense, and I'm sure Bill Belichick will have them playing with a little bit of a chip on their shoulder.

NATE BURLESON: I'll jump in. I was waiting for Boomer and Phil to talk. Not only are they our quarterbacks, but they talk the most on the show. Let me jump in and say this about this team: Bill Belichick is making one of the boldest moves I have seen him make in quite sometime. The biggest question I have is not about the coaching staff, but it's how much of the playbook Mac Jones know.

For them to let go of Cam Newton, that says a lot about this quarterback, and we've been hearing it. He's coming out of Alabama. He's ready for this pro system. He's very smart. How intelligent has he been over the last few months during the off-season?

But more importantly than all of that, forget the storylines, forget them cutting Cam Newton and Mac Jones being the quarterback, I'm looking forward to early October. That match-up, Tampa Bay Buccaneers in New England, Tom Brady returning and this young Mac Jones, where people make a lot of comparisons. I'm not sure I see the parallels this early in his career, but it is going to be a fun matchup to watch.

Either way it's exciting for the AFC East, and I wouldn't count out the Patriots. I know they had a down year last year, but I would bet that they don't have two bad years in a row.

PHIL SIMMS: First off, to say that we talk the most on the show is the biggest lie you've ever told in your life, so go to confession when this is over.

The other thing is, too, how much does Mac Jones know this offense? I would be safe in saying all of it. He's got it all. He ran it at Alabama. They're doing many things like that. In fact, he's showing all the skills right now during three preseason games that he showed at Alabama and why he deserved to be a first-round draft pick.

It's going to be exciting. Bill Cowher said it. They're very multiple on defense. They've got guys that can play three different positions. I think they're going to have their own little scheme this year on the defensive side that's going to be unique, and I've never known Bill Belichick not to be aggressive. He's not afraid, and that's what makes him -- just one reason why he's a great coach.

BOOMER ESIASON: You know, out of all the rookie quarterbacks getting ready to play this season, Mac Jones, in my opinion, has the best chance to succeed because he has the best team. They've got Matt Patricia back on the sideline as their defensive coordinator. They're loaded on the defensive side of the football.

I think Russell Wilson when he was a rookie for Seattle, they had a team that could support him and he could grow and they were successful right out of the get-go, and I think this is where they are with New England.

I am not surprised at all that Cam Newton was let go. Mac Jones earned this job. He won this job in training camp. Most teams around the league right now do not want to have a significant backup around a young first-round draft pick of a quarterback.

This makes perfect sense to me. Bill Belichick is the best coach in football. I would not be surprised if they win 10 games this year. They will definitely be in the playoffs by the time we get to week 17, believe it or not.

JAMES BROWN: From the football standpoint the only reason I would say I am surprised by the move is how effusive the owner, Robert Kraft was about the big fella last season. To me there's a lot more to this story, but I know there's very little tolerance for anything that folks doing that they're stepping off stride, so I'm interested about that.

But I in no way doubt ever or concern myself with the moves that Bill Belichick has made. He's certainly earned the right to do what he feels is best.

Q. Question for Sean: You got a lot of really good press and a lot of really good viewers last year for your Nickelodeon telecast. I wanted to see what you had planned for this coming season with regard to not only Nickelodeon, but any sort of alternate broadcast that you might do on other Viacom channels?

SEAN McMANUS: Thanks. Good to hear your voice. No other alternate broadcasts. Exclusively for our affiliates is one of the reasons why we buy the NFL, so we want to make sure that we don't impede that in any way, shape, or form.

Although having said that, in the future if there is a simulcast on an alternate telecast that makes sense, we'll take a look at it, keeping in mind the importance that we place on exclusivity for our stations and our affiliates.

Nickelodeon, huge success as you all know with the wild card game. They're going to be doing it again in that same Sunday afternoon late time period during wild card weekend, which is really the best window of the weekend.

Nickelodeon is having some very productive talks with the NFL about potentially doing more programming. It's a demographic and it's an audience that the NFL wants to reach. I think they saw how incredibly effective Nickelodeon can be with reaching that audience.

So it wouldn't surprise me if there is more cooperation between Nick and the NFL, but right now we're focused on the wild card game.

Knowing my friends at Nickelodeon and knowing the CBS production team that's involved with that game, I think you'll see some more amazing graphics and other interstitials that will make that just one of the most entertaining broadcasts of the year.

Q. Sean, about the Paramount+ simulcast, for the live games, is that going to be a strict simulcast or is there going to be any other programming that Paramount+ is going to do around those?

SEAN McMANUS: No, it's a strict simulcast. What you basically see on both 499 and the 999 tier with respect to the NFL is the game that's being seen in your local market, so what you'll be watching is the actual feed from the CBS-owned and operated station or the CBS affiliate in your market.

So that's exactly what we'd be seeing on Paramount+.

Q. Sean, the NFL now has significant partnerships with sportsbooks operators, and I think it's fair to say CBS has been slow to lean into gambling content, both the pregame show and game broadcasts. How much now does what the NFL have with true partnerships now with these sportsbook operators, how will that or does that change your approach to content, gambling content, on studio and game broadcasts heading forward?

SEAN McMANUS: I don't think it changes it a lot. We're trying to thread the needle with respect to how much gambling information that we should put in our studio shows. I think we've done about what the others have done. Some maybe have done a little bit more, but you want to make sure that you are giving information that is not necessarily available elsewhere and that is useful to the gambler but not obtrusive to the non-gambler.

I think that's a delicate balance right now.

We're not including gambling information in our game broadcasts for a variety of reasons. We are this year having more flexibility with respect to gaming advertising in our NFL broadcasts, which is something new, so that's an opportunity with respect to generating more revenue through advertising.

But we're trying to find the right way and what is enough and not too much. I don't think we're missing any trains



right now with respect to not doing more, and when we think it's appropriate and we think it makes the telecast more enjoyable and more informative for our viewing audience, we'll add more information when we think that's important.

Q. Phil and Boomer, I'm interested in the 49er quarterback situation. Based on what Kyle Shanahan did in the last preseason game, it's possible Trey Lance and Jimmy Garoppolo will rotate fairly aggressively. That may be a bit of a deke, but anyway, what do you think of that possibility? What are some of the benefits, obviously, when you have guys with different skill sets, and maybe pitfalls, and does a coach like Kyle Shanahan get the benefit of the doubt in this situation just because of his track record and his offensive mind?

BOOMER ESIASON: I'll start that. First of all, if I were in the middle of this thing and it were me, I would not be happy with it. I'd want to be the defined No. 1 quarterback for the team, either Trey Lance or Jimmy Garoppolo.

Problem which Jimmy Garoppolo, he hasn't been able to stay healthy. That's one of the reasons why they went out and got another quarterback. And if he does decide to interchange them within the game, I don't see why that would be a problem out there in San Francisco.

You know, Trey has only played 17 games in college, so he is really a novice coming into the NFL. They saw something to pick him that high and they do believe in him, so if they had a small package of plays for him throughout the game and utilized different aspects of his game that are differently Jimmy's right now, I don't see how that hurts the team.

But all I know is that if I were the No. 1 quarterback, I'd always want to be on the field, and I know that would create a problem for me personally.

PHIL SIMMS: Well, I hate to always take shots, but you're Boomer, it's all about you, baby, so you've got to be out there, no other quarterbacks.

Listen, it's a fact, they're going to rotate. Are they going to rotate like they did in the last preseason game? I don't think they'll do it like that. I can see Trey Lance coming in sometimes and just handing the ball off and going out.

I think we learned one thing: I don't think Kyle Shanahan is sitting there going, Wow, I trust Trey Lance with the whole playbook. So when he comes in it's going to be very scripted and under control, and I would think a lot of those throws won't be over the middle where there was a lot of

trouble for him in the preseason.

And you've got to be careful and just slowly build this thing up, and then when the time comes, I would expect Trey Lance, when they feel really comfortable with him, he'll be the starting quarterback out there in San Francisco.

Q. Just wondering for the panel your thoughts on the Chargers this season. Obviously Brandon Staley, new coach that kind of came out of nowhere, and also just a follow-up for JB, just your thoughts with the NFL's increased popularity with gambling and the show that started with Jimmy the Greek, just how do you balance maybe the gambling talk during the pregame show?

BILL COWHER: Let me just say this about Brandon Staley. I think when you talk about the opportunity for a new coach to come on, it's a situation where to me he inherited an offense with Justin Herbert that's one of the best in the National Football League, and what they missed was consistency on the defensive side of the ball. He brings them that.

They get Derwin James back, they get Joey Bosa back. I think this is a team that can very easily go under the radar. You've got to be careful. I think they're a sleeper. To me, they are the team that you've got to be careful by not overlooking, because I think they're very talented on offense, as we've talked about with receivers, Austin Ekeler coming back, and Justin Herbert, the year he had.

But this defense with Brandon Staley heading it up, I think it's going to complement their offense.

JAMES BROWN: With respect to gambling, let me just stay in lockstep with what our leader, Sean McManus, said. He's got his finger on the pulse a whole lot better than me with respect to the broadcast implications of that, but I will say this from my personal belief, that given the colleagues with whom I work and how much their finger is on the pulse of the game from every aspect, from our Hall of Fame coach to the two quarterbacks and as gifted a talent as there is in Nate Burleson, what they give the viewing population in terms of insight can translate any way those who may have that interest want to use it.

But I think the formula that we have right now is not hurting us at all from the gambling population. Those are my thoughts.

Q. I wanted to try a Giants question on Phil and Boomer and then a related one for Bill. Ten years ago the Giants won a Super Bowl, and it looked like they were set up to be a consistent winner moving forward. Now they've had one of the worst decades in the

history of the franchise. What do you think went wrong with them over these last ten years that's caused this, and where do they go from here? And also for Bill, having been with a franchise that obviously figured out a way to sustain success, why is it so hard to do that for most of these franchises?

BOOMER ESIASON: Well, I guess I'll start. From my standpoint, the Jets and the Giants have been unstable as organizations at the top. I mean, changing coaches, changing directions, trying to figure out who the quarterback is going to be, maybe staying a little bit too long with Eli Manning, spending a lot of money in free agency, spending a lot of money on their own players and then trading players away.

So you can see the instability at the top of both these organizations locally have really led to a downfall of football over the last ten years.

Hopefully they've got it right now. I think everybody seems to like Robert Sale. Everybody likes Joe Judge. The big question really for everybody is going to be the development of Daniel Jones and whether or not, as he goes into his third year, takes that step that we saw from Josh Allen last year. Josh was kind of a bucking bronco for two years. Finally refined his game under Brian Daboll up in Buffalo and got a huge contract this off season. They totally believe in him, and I think that's where Daniel Jones finds himself right now. Do Giants actually have a future with this guy at quarterback? That's going to be big question moving forward a lot. They spent a lot of money in free agency. I think that they have enough weapons around him now, and with Saquon Barkley coming back, he should be able to be a much more positive influence on their offense and be able to answer all of those questions as this season moves forward.

PHIL SIMMS: You know, I'd say this: You look at the New York Jets, they're in a total rebuild it seems like still right now. The injuries already. I know this, or think this all the time every year. I write it in my notes. If you want a good football team, you'd better have a good offensive line. When you look at the playoffs every year, the top offensive lines are always in there, and that's going to be -- that's the big question with the Giants. I think the Jets are trying to build theirs. I think it's going to be a rough year overall for the Jets.

But the Giants, it's the offensive line. If they could just straighten that out I think that would just help so many people. If Saquon Barkley is healthy, then Daniel Jones is going to have a good year. He throws the ball well, he's good, he's got good size, he can run. I wish he would do it more.

If Saquon Barkley, if he's there, it's going to help that offensive line, which is still not built the way they want it. But it can really mask some of the problems they have up front.

BILL COWHER: I'll say this about the reference to consistency and longevity in terms of having success: The Pittsburgh Steelers have certainly been able to experience that. It starts at the top. It starts with the leadership, from ownership, and it's collaboration.

It's collaboration and communication and transparency throughout the building. You all have to be united in the messaging that you have, and I think that's the one thing that you look at great organizations. You see it up in New England. There's one voice that comes out of there. There's one voice that will come out of Pittsburgh.

But it's a collaboration of communication that exists within the building where everyone is understanding exactly what their roles are, they embrace their roles, and at the same time they don't care who gets the credit.

I think that's the thing that's consistent. And you have to be patient. If you have the right guy, be patient with him. I think sometimes patience is something that's lacking in the National Football League. We want immediate results.

You see the one or two teams, they want to turn it around. That's not sustainable. So getting the right person, having the right messaging, collaboration, transparency is -- that's what gives you longevity.

PHIL SIMMS: Let them just add this, that's a great statement. It does start at the top. But about Daniel Jones, I think it would have to be a complete catastrophe on his part for him not to be the quarterback again next year for the New York Giants.

I think he's got a lot of gray area for him and he just can't blow up or whatever you want to say, but I think no matter what happens he still will be the quarterback for the Giants next year.

NATE BURLESON: I'll add in my two cents on the passing game. I know if they lean on the run game and Saquon Barkley is healthy like Phil was saying, this is a completely different team. Let's not get fooled. Even the short passes out of the backfield, screen games, those are going to serve as the run game for the Giants.

But the wide receivers are going to have to step up. Sterling Shepard looked good in the preseason. I talked to Kenny Golladay about a week ago and I was peppering

him with questions because it's been a little bit of a rough start for him being the big free agent acquisition. He's going to have to step up. Let's not be fooled.

You don't get paid that type of money and not be expected to put up 70, 80, maybe even 100 catches. But in this system I'm not sure they're going to throw the ball like that around. Being with young quarterbacks during the course of my career, especially when I was older, there was more of a focus on the wide receivers catching the ball and making plays after the catch than it is just tossing the ball downfield.

The eyes will be on the play calling and just seeing how creative it can be, because it was pretty vanilla over the last couple of seasons.

Q. My question is primarily for Boomer and Phil, but Nate, if you could weigh in I would appreciate it. I just wonder with Baker Mayfield's contract extension looming, what do you think the Browns need to see from him in his second season under Stefanski, and what do you make of the Odell Beckham and Baker dynamic and how that can be improved? That's the part I wanted you to weigh in, Nate. Thank you.

PHIL SIMMS: Baker Mayfield, I don't think he has to prove anything if he has a year somewhat like he did last year. Why give the extension if you don't have to? I kind of feel that way for the Cleveland Browns.

What he did last year I think it what he really is. I think he's a terrific thrower of the ball. He moves around well. He's got a great first move out of the pocket, throws extremely well on the run, and he has that quality. He's got a photographic memory from what I understand, and he's just kind of a natural leader.

I think players gravitate towards him. He grew up last year. We saw the real talent that he is, and I think after this year is over, he'll get that extension. What it will be, I don't know. I can't even fathom the kind of money these kind of quarterbacks are making.

I'm going to just answer this real quick. This thing between him and Odell, all that stuff is not true. Baker Mayfield is going to play the position. Odell Beckham Jr. is not going to hamper him at all, like, oh, I've got to throw to Odell. He'll throw it to the guy that's open.

BOOMER ESIASON: You know, he almost was ruined until they brought in Kevin Stefanski, and when Kevin Stefanski came in there put everything on lock down and said we're going to run the ball first with Nick Chubb, and of course Kareem Hunt, and we're going to built our offensive

line and take all this pressure off of Baker Mayfield. And we're going to become a defensive team, too. We're going to become one of the more physical teams in football with Myles Garrett. That's exactly what's happened.

Now all of a sudden Baker Mayfield is in the right place at the right time right with the right coaching staff and the right dynamics around him. They proved last year they could win without OBJ, so I've got to believe Odell Beckham Jr. is coming back this year and he is going to want to make a statement. He is going to want to have a great year.

I don't think he's going to be a distraction. I think he recognizes that he's coming back to one of the better teams in the league. This is the Top 5 or 6 team in the league right now on paper, and therefore Baker Mayfield has a chance to sign a huge contract extension. He should probably get one and he should be thankful that Kevin Stefanski came there and got this thing straightened out.

And I'm with Phil on this, there's no problem between Odell Beckham Jr. and Baker Mayfield. Baker Mayfield wants Odell Beckham Jr. on the field. That makes the team better.

So I think this is going to be one of the better teams in the league. They're loaded on defense. They can pass rush. They've got a good secondary, and they finally got the right coach doing the right things and getting the best out of their young quarterback.

NATE BURLESON: I'll further elaborate on what Boom was saying. Kevin Stefanski came over from Minnesota in which the Vikings were one of the best play action teams, and he took that exact same philosophy and applied it to this team, and it's perfect.

I feel like Baker Mayfield more than any other quarterback, not just this year, I would say over the last handful of seasons, he's in the best position for any quarterback in their contract year. There's certain quarterbacks where there's a lot of pressure on. Lamar Jackson. Is he a thrower of the ball?

You look at some of these young guys who you're going to start looking at if you're going to re-up them. They don't have the same type of pieces around them like Baker Mayfield does. If I'm a QB, I would love to have Kareem Hunt and Nick Chubb, great tight ends and wide receivers. I would love to have a coach that puts me in a position where I don't have to throw it 45 times a game.

So if Baker Mayfield just does exactly, almost exactly what he did last year, he's going to get re-upped and get paid big time.

But to Boom and Phil's point, Odell Beckham is going to return to this team hungry but humbled. This isn't the same Odell Beckham from years ago rocking the No. 13 in New York City acting like a rock star.

This is an individual that's coming off his second significant injury and knowing he's joining a squad that did it without him and almost beat the Chiefs without him. I spoke to him. He's one of my favorite guys in the league. I was speaking with him through text, I said, Hey, O, how are you feeling? This is a couple of months ago.

He sent me a video and it's him working out. He's stronger, he's faster, and he's hungry. We'll see if his addition can add a little bit of a lift because they are really just one or two big plays away from being a Super Bowl team.

PHIL SIMMS: Bill Cowher, I just want to add this to capulize this whole thing. Coaching really matters in the NFL. It really matters.

JAMES BROWN: If I could coattail on your point to get Bill Cowher to expound on that, what both Boomer and Nate were talking about, Hey, Bill, Kevin Stefanski, if you could just quantify, I'm loving the system that he's got in place.

You talked about communication, everybody being on the same page. And, oh, by the way, he's also recognizing players who get knockdowns, and guess who led the way last year, and that was Jarvis Landry. So it truly is a team approach. But Bill, can you add to that, please?

BILL COWHER: Yeah, I think the one word that I think about is what Nate used: Humility. Odell has been humbled because Kevin Stefanski, the team is bigger than any other one. It isn't how much touches I get here, how much touches I get there.

Kevin Stefanski is about building a culture, and I talked to him even after the season. First thing was how do you come off a playoff year and then now all of a sudden reestablish yourself? I said, Listen, you don't forget where you came from, but you have to remember how you got there.

So I think the thing is right now the foundation he wants to build is having people accountable. No one is bigger than the team. I think that he takes it one game at a time until he really accomplishes something.

There's a simplicity about Kevin Stefanski that players, they come to them. You're right, Phil, coaching is something. It's about bringing people together, identifying

strengths are, and more importantly the ability to mask what your weaknesses are, but to have people embrace the roles that they have.

That's the one thing he has brought is humility to that football team and unselfishness to the football team, and I think the quarterbacks you can see. We don't see any more commercials. We don't see all that and everything else.

Just let your actions speak for themselves, and I think Baker Mayfield is headed in the right direction because he's got the right leader leading him.

Q. Question for Nate Burleson: Your career has kind of changed a lot in the last nine months. It seems to me it goes back to that Nickelodeon broadcast that got such great reviews, especially your performance. Was that sort of a transformative moment for you or was it something you were thinking about, broadening out, doing a network morning show outside of the sports division? What happened here that brought you to this big moment that you're having?

NATE BURLESON: Your guess is as good as mine. No, I'm joking.

I'm blessed and I'm thankful to be in the position that I'm in. I'll take you back almost a decade. I was at the broadcast boot camp, and ironically James Brown was there talking to us, and I remember being somewhat of a stand-out and the people that were running the broadcast boot camp were giving me a pat on the back and telling me, you know, I if I wanted to do this one day after I retired I'd have a chance, but I walked away from that, and let's keep the theme of humility going, very humble, because even though people were telling me I was good, I felt like I didn't know a lot.

There was so much about the art and the craft about being on TV that I didn't know. I used that as motivation. A few years later after I retired, I walked into the NFL Network, just an 11 year vet coming in to be an analyst, and I remember being in a production meeting and I was saying, you know what, so I write poetry. I don't know if you guys know that. I can do some features poetically. I feel like we should do more stuff out in the streets and we should have these athletes tell more stories. I know we have a podcast division, but I feel like the stories they tell in the green room, they're amazing.

You know what, and also I feel like when we have shows, we should really think about bringing in a live audience. This is LA. We can get stars and athletes and influencers to come to the studios.

As I'm doing what I'm doing, overly excited, like a kid on his first day in school, one of the producers was like, Nate, just chill out, man. You just got here. Relax for a second, dude. You don't have a Hall of Fame jacket. You don't have a Super Bowl ring.

Respect your career, but you just got here. You're in a day camp, so just keep that in mind. I thought to myself, okay, I just need to put the work in. If I put the work in then my voice won't seem like a whisper in these rooms. It will be a resounding voice that they hear.

So many years later I'm in a position where these ideas and these goals of mine are coming into fruition.

To answer your question the very long-winded way, when I retired in 2014 I did have goals of going into daytime morning TV, even being the new version of Arsenio Hall and doing a nightly show.

And now after putting in the work for seven years and learning from individuals like you see here, my time at the NFL Network has been fantastic. So many people have influenced me and helped me along the way.

And I can say the same thing for my time on NFL Today. Bill, JB, Phil, Boom, these guys are -- they're like big brothers that teach me the ways of the world. They're like veterans in the locker room that I can watch and mimic even when they don't know I'm looking at them.

So they've helped shape me and put me in position to take advantage of this opportunity. I didn't walk around telling people that I wanted to transition into morning or daytime TV. I just quietly worked and I waited for the door to open, so I was prepared to walk through it.

JAMES BROWN: I'm like a proud uncle, if you will, having seen Nate at the broadcast boot camp. I've already told this story to my colleagues. I remember when Sean McManus came and asked me about Nate and one other athlete retired that he was taking a look at, and I just said, Nate is out of the box ready for whatever.

But certainly amongst the colleagues here, we know that attitude matters, and one of the most significant things that Nate said when he came to the program is, Look, I know how to be a No. 2 receiver. I can learn from all of these guys. I'm not coming in with anything else but a hungry attitude to add.

I think Phil, Coach, and Boomer, they saw that and they have embraced him. There's no jealousy there. We've got a star on our hands and we're just trying to take full

advantage of it.

And finally, I'll say on the Nickelodeon broadcast, look, I sat there taking plenty of notes. Nate acted like a fifth grader who was basically teaching everybody. I've never been such a big fan of slime in my life, but Nate did it and it was flat-out awesome. That's it.

Q. My question is starting with Sean and then if the other guys want to chime in, feel free. Sean, with all the information that's out there all week and all the shows that there are, has what you're trying to do on Sundays with the NFL Today, has that transformed somewhat compared to when you think back to Brent, et cetera, and then through the years, where we are today because of all the information out there?

SEAN McMANUS: Without question, yes. We have to be more on top of our game, and there's a real premium on our analysts' perspectives and opinions.

We don't need to give a lot of statistics or a lot of background information because a lot of that is so readily available to every fan, and the fans are more sophisticated now, they're much more knowledgeable, they're much more informed. So we've really got to step up our game.

People are tuning in to see our show, not to hear a lot of statistics but to hear the perspectives and narratives that our analysts provide and with our host James Brown adding information, also.

So yes, very perceptive. The NFL Today I think if we were to go back and look at it, back in the 1980s, I think a lot of it would be very basic information. We've gone beyond that right now, and I think people tune in to hear the unique takes that our announcers have, and they tune in for the chemistry and they tune in for the behind-the-scenes reports from the field and from the remotes so that you can hear a Charles Davis or a Tony Romo or Adam Archuleta or whomever from the remote itself giving the absolute latest information, whether it's weather or whether it's inactives or whether it's strategies.

That kind of stuff you don't get from reading information online.

PHIL SIMMS: I want to join in what Sean said. I'm going to be a little -- I don't know what the word about this is, cocky, whatever. When we come out on Sundays, Bill Cowher, me, Nate Burleson, all this. We have information that we have studied all week long that other people don't know. I watch all the shows. That's what we do, and we bring -- I think we bring things that people haven't brought up.

Drew Kaliski, our producer, we talk all week long. We have six days to analyze all the games that go on and come in, and hopefully -- I mean, I feel pretty confident saying this, we're telling you stuff that's not on all week long on all the sports stations. That's what I'm proud of. That's what I look forward to doing, to educating people and telling them something they don't know and they're not going to hear when they turn on a panel that's going to talk about two subjects all week long. So that's how I feel.

THE MODERATOR: We thank everyone from The NFL Today. We're going to switch over to our Inside the NFL, again, moving exclusively to Paramount+ this season. JB and Phil will be staying with us.

Thanks, everyone else.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

