SPORTS PROGRAMMING IN SMALL MARKET RADIO

by

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ABSTRACT

This project reviews sports programming at small market radio stations in central and northern Wisconsin. The study examines the significance of sports programming at these stations, what type of station broadcasts local sports, and what impact these broadcasts have on the stations and their communities. Quantitative information was obtained from radio stations within the survey area, indicating the type of events broadcast, the number of broadcasts, teams broadcast, and broadcast methods and personnel. From this survey it was determined that virtually all small market radio stations program local sports events, especially on their AM frequencies.

The second part of the research program consisted of personal interviews with officials from these radio stations, who discussed what sports programming means to their radio stations. From this information it was determined that sports programming is an important part of "localism": the way small market radio stations relate to their communities. This makes local sports programming a natural fit on small market AM radio stations, which try to use information programming to attract listeners. Many stations, however, shun sports programming on their FM stations, since sports interrupts the homogeneity or format integrity of a music-oriented station. There are exceptions, however, such as FM stations in areas which are underserved by AM radio. Other FM stations broadcast sports to take advantage of additional revenue and new listeners despite the risk to format integrity.

The project concludes that sports programming is an important part of a local radio station, not only because of the revenue it produces and the listeners it attracts, but because of the way it allows the radio station to bind itself to the community. This programming is especially important in an age of additional media competition, when local stations are looking for ways to give their communities specialized programming which cannot be duplicated by other media outlets.
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CHAPTER ONE
THE RESEARCH PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1900's, when radio became an important part of the American communications system, sports broadcasting has played an important role in programming. From the early days of broadcasting, radio stations have used the broadcast of athletic contests and sports news as a way to attract audiences, bring important events to the community, and earn a profit.

Today, sports programming still plays a key role, not only for radio networks and large market stations, but also for small radio stations in rural or isolated areas. In these communities, many listeners tune in not to hear professional sports teams or major college athletic squads, but to listen for high school, amateur, semi-pro and even little league teams.

This study reviews the local sports broadcasting practices at a number of small radio stations in central and northwest Wisconsin. The project examines the daily sports operations at these stations to
determine how radio stations schedule, broadcast their events, hire their staffs, and to what extent sports programming is emphasized during the broadcast day. The study also seeks answers to more subjective questions surrounding sports broadcasts, such as their significance and impact on the station and community.

The author of this work is a sports broadcaster, who has worked in this field for over twenty years. I served as Sports Director of a college radio station while obtaining my undergraduate degree in Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Since graduation I have worked as Sports Director of radio stations in Cheboygan, Michigan, LaSalle-Peru, Illinois, Rochelle, Illinois, and for ten years prior to finalizing this project, Marshfield, Wisconsin.

ORGANIZATION

This study is divided into a number of sections, designed to give a full report on the small market radio sports industry in the study area.

The first section gives an introduction to the study. This section includes a brief historical statement and a review of related literature. In this section, there is also a justification statement, and
a review of the methodological procedures used in this study.

The second section presents a historical review of radio and the sports broadcasting industry. This area gives a synopsis of the history of radio and how sports broadcasting became an important part of the medium. This section also focuses on small market radio and how sports programming developed at this level of the industry.

In section three, results of the mail survey are discussed. Here, there is a review of the quantitative data compiled in the mail survey, and a presentation of the overall impressions of this data. In this section, comparisons of data and of station methods are included.

Section four includes information gathered from personal interviews. This includes several specific topics which have been focused upon following the accumulation of the quantitative data.

Section five includes final assessments and some recommendations which might be helpful to the industry. This segment also includes suggestions for further study.
BRIEF HISTORY

Sports has played a prominent role in the broadcast industry almost from the inception of radio. In fact, this influence even dates to before the start of our modern radio system. When Guglielmo Marconi came from England to New York in October of 1899 to demonstrate his wireless telegraph, he did so by providing reports of the America's Cup yacht race to a New York newspaper. In 1920, a college football game was broadcast over Texas A & M's experimental station, 5XB. Pittsburgh radio station KDKA broadcast a prize fight in April of 1921, and a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game in August of that year. New York station WJY signed on in July of 1921 by broadcasting the heavyweight title fight between Jack Dempsey and Georges Carpentier. Within the next several years, baseball, football, boxing and other sports important programming tools for many radio stations.

In the early years of radio, most stations were confined to large, metropolitan areas. There were 570 radio stations in the United States in 1925. This

number increased to 618 in 1930, 765 in 1940, and 971 in 1945. Few of these stations, however, were located in rural or underpopulated areas. By 1945, the only radio stations on the air in northern Wisconsin were in Ashland, Eau Claire, Medford, Rice Lake, Superior, Wausau and Wisconsin Rapids. After World War II, when many smaller communities began to obtain radio service, it was only natural that they also provide sports coverage as a way to emulate successful large stations and to localize their programming for the area they wished to serve.

RELATED LITERATURE

In reviewing literature for this topic, little is found concerning the combination of sports broadcasting and small market radio. In fact, few studies have been completed on small market radio at all. Most radio studies concern large markets, and many of them discuss musical formats or news content. Studies on sports broadcasting usually focus on one of two topics: the influence of lucrative broadcast contracts on professional and major college sports, or the effect of

3- ibid., p. 135.
4- ibid., p. 197.
5- ibid., p. 243.
6- The 1977 Broadcasting Yearbook lists the sign-on dates for all radio stations in the United States.
televised sports "violence" (football, boxing or hockey) on the viewer.

The first reference source for a paper such as this would seem to be *Broadcasting* magazine. This is considered a leading trade magazine of the industry, but searches in this publication show little on this topic. *Broadcasting* reports on timely developments in the industry, which often occur in the governmental arena, among networks or corporate owners, or in industry trends which influence readily seen large markets. Few new developments occur at the small market level, and those that do often do not affect industry leaders enough to warrant coverage.

There are some books on sports broadcasting which assist this study in limited ways. One is written by small market sportscaster John Hitchcock, *Sportscasting: A Practical Guide to Success*. Hitchcock's book details some of the fundamentals of the sportscasting industry. It deals with play-by-play and other aspects of the job such as reporting, writing, interviewing and even selling advertising.

A similar book was written by longtime Boston Red Sox and NBC sportscaster Ken Coleman. It is *So You Want to be a Sportscaster* and provides much the same information as the Hitchcock book, although not as
detailed. This book also places more emphasis on play-by-play, while interweaving Coleman's personal experiences.

During the historical review segment of the paper, attempts are made to describe the condition of small market radio sports broadcasting in the earlier days of the industry. In their books, Coleman and Hitchcock discuss those early years. Coleman especially draws on his experiences and those of other broadcasters, and relates the condition of small market radio sports in the 1940's and before. Some of these experiences are very helpful in the historical segment.

Another historical source is The Broadcasters, written by Baseball Hall of Fame broadcaster Red Barber. Barber also writes about broadcasting from a historical perspective. Barber's book, however, deals mainly with broadcasting on the network and major league level, and includes little about small markets.

Longtime New York Mets broadcaster Lindsey Nelson has written two books, mostly about his own experiences. They are, Backstage at the Mets and Hello Everybody, I'm Lindsey Nelson. These books also include historical looks at sports broadcasting. Like Barber, however, Nelson spent little of his career in small markets, so most of his writing concerns networks
and the major leagues. A similar book is *Voices of the Game* by Curt Smith. This is a historical review of major league baseball broadcasting, but has little discussion of small market radio.

Another interesting source is *You’re on the Air*, written by Graham McNamee in 1926. McNamee was one of the early greats of radio, and broadcast many sports events in the 1920's. He was one of the first sportscasters, and developed his skills without the benefit of predecessors. McNamee provides insights in this historical perspective and gives valuable information on some other areas, such as early technology. McNamee, however, also broadcast his entire career in large markets and at the network level, and also worked his entire career when there were very few small market radio stations.

In conclusion, there is little in the literature which aids the main topic of this study. There are some works which help in peripheral areas, but most of the information collected for this study comes from other primary sources.
JUSTIFICATION

There are several reasons why a study of this type is justified. One is that, in reviewing past research, little is found concerning small market radio. Much research has been done on radio in larger markets, or other media, yet a large segment of the population lives in rural communities which are served by small market radio stations. This project presents a unique opportunity to use academic research to explore the relationship between these radio stations and their listeners. Such outlets serve a large segment of society, which warrants a review of their methods and their work.

As mentioned above, there is much research available on radio in larger markets, and it is true that these stations reach more listeners. Because of the nature of small town radio and its reliance upon local involvement, local radio may, however, have more of an impact on the lives of its listeners than large market stations. Big city stations may rely on strict music formats which entertain listeners, but rarely influence their lives. Small market radio is much different because of its presentation of community news and events which directly affect local residents. This
would make the study of small market radio, which has the potential to influence a large segment of society, very valuable.

Not only will such a study lead to better understanding of small market radio, but it may also lead to better understanding of the audience these stations try to reach. Most radio stations make an effort to learn as much about their audience as possible. This study could lead to a profile of the small market radio audience and more understanding of its needs.

This study could also be very beneficial to broadcasters. Broadcasters may concentrate on their own markets so much that they may not be aware of what other stations do in similar positions. This study may give broadcasters a chance to compare ideas in a very important part of their station's operation. An idea that springs from one station in one area could lead to its development as an important tool for many other stations.

This project may also give a condensed view of an important part of the radio industry. There may be many hypothesis as to why radio stations broadcast sports events, but this study will report the actual reasons behind this programing. This study will also provide many of the details of sports programing in
small markets, give an overview to this segment of the industry, and report some standards in the business. There will also be some comparisons between station differences. From a broadcaster's viewpoint, such a study could be a valuable tool for serving the local community and making future decisions.

METHODOLOGY

Most information for this study was gathered from two sources; a mail survey and personal interviews with radio station personnel. Initial quantitative data was obtained with a mail survey, with additional information provided by follow-up interviews.

Although many researchers have conducted projects aimed at the media, this project is unique in several ways. First, this study is aimed at small market radio, and searches show no previous projects in this area. Second, this study is aimed at the radio stations themselves and not the audience. There are many research projects concerning the broadcast media,

* There seems to be no accepted industry definition of "small market radio", but this term is usually given to small cities with a single radio station owner/operator. All of the stations in this study are listed in the Standard Rate and Data Spot Radio Small Market Edition, October, 1989.
but most deal with audience reaction to commercials, violence, news or some other aspect of programming. For these topics, research methods such as content analysis, attitude measurement (Semantic Differential and Likert Scales), agenda setting and others are quite appropriate. This study, however, uses descriptive data. A mail survey, asking simple questions about the current condition of the station's sports programming, is, therefore, the best method for obtaining initial information.

The first priority of the project was to select a sample. Since the study focuses on sports programming in small market radio, and since the study was done in central Wisconsin, radio stations in this area were used. The study primarily focused on radio stations which broadcast sports in two northern Wisconsin high school leagues: the Wisconsin Valley and Lumberjack Conferences. The 15 radio stations which broadcast sports in these conferences include cities varying in population from 3,100 to 37,000. These stations reach a large audience throughout central, northeast and northwest Wisconsin. Many of these communities are served by AM/FM combo operations; that is, stations in a particular market which are owned and operated by a single firm. Other stations, in markets larger and
smaller than those in these two conferences, were also on the survey list because of their unique location or their programming practices, and because information obtained from these stations provided information which could be compared to the other stations. A list of the survey stations may be found as Appendix A.

A list of radio stations in the survey area was obtained from Broadcasting Yearbook. Surveys were sent to the highest ranking station officer who is likely to be on the premises on a daily basis. A station President or Chairman of the Board, for example, may be a corporate owner who is removed from the day-to-day operation, or could be based in another city. A General Manager of Station Manager was likely to be at the station most days. If a person with one of those titles was not found through Broadcasting Yearbook, surveys were sent instead to another person who holds some authority within the station structure, such as an Operations Manager, Program Director or News Director.

The survey (Appendix B) was one-page and required no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Station call letters were filled in at the top of each survey before mailing. Many of the stations which received surveys are combo stations (co-owned AM/FM stations in the same market). In these instances, two surveys were
sent, with one for each station. Stations were asked what local sports events they broadcast, and which local teams they broadcast as primary and secondary teams. Stations were also asked how many local events they broadcast each year, methods used to broadcast events, and also asked to identify their broadcast personnel. There was also a brief listing of times and lengths of locally produced sports reports. The quantitative data obtained from this mail survey produced an information base for the personal interviews.

One of the aims of the survey was to find radio stations which broadcast games involving one school, and only broadcast high school football and boys basketball. This is why the first option for number of events broadcast is 0-30, since a station which broadcast only these games would broadcast about 30 events per year.

* Primary teams usually represent the station's city of license, and most of their games are broadcast, although some may be missed due to conflicts or special programs. Secondary teams usually represent communities outside of the city of license and are broadcast when the primary teams are inactive. For example, at WDLB, Marshfield, Wisconsin, Marshfield Senior High School and Marshfield-Columbus High School are primary teams, while nearby Auburndale High School is a secondary team. A primary team usually has at least 90% of its games on the air. A secondary team may have 50% or more of its games broadcast, but still, only when the primary teams are inactive.
As mail surveys were returned, each was coded with the date and numbered sequentially. Stations were then compared by the number of events broadcast, and the number and length of sports reports. Other data, such as personnel or teams broadcast were also listed, with deviations from the norm noted (i.e., stations which broadcast a game of the week concept which involves a number of teams rather than a primary team).

The evaluation process included listing all respondents and their answers to each question. In reviewing quantitative data, such as number of games broadcast, median and average numbers were determined and there are notes on stations whose practices deviate widely from other stations. The information obtained from these surveys not only gives a statistical view of sports broadcasting in the target area, but also provides reference information which was quite useful during the personal interview process.

Of course, not all radio stations are involved in local sports broadcasting. Although it appears that local sports is a primary source of programming for many small market stations, some decide not to participate in this type of programming. Surveys were also sent to these stations, and interviews with representatives of these stations were very useful in
explaining why some stations do not broadcast local sports.

Surveys were sent to 29 radio stations in November of 1993. Between November 21 and December 23, 21 surveys were returned (72%). A second mailing to non-responding stations in mid-December resulted in one additional returned survey in early January of 1994, bringing the number of respondents to 22 (76%). A third mailing was not used because of the heavy volume of response from the first mailing, and because prior research indicates that more than two or three mailings are usually ineffective.

The mail survey provided this study with a number of advantages. It covered a wide region at a nominal cost, and enabled the project to obtain information from persons who would normally be difficult to reach because of their locales and schedules. The mail survey also allowed direct contact with top officials of stations in the sample. Questions in the mail survey were short and concise, leading to answers which could either be checked in boxes or completed in a few short words. The mail surveys also allowed all respondents to answer the same questions, providing for

an exact standard measurement. More subjective answers were obtained in the personal interviews which followed.

There are disadvantages to mail surveys, notably in the possibility of low response rates. Researchers indicate that some mail surveys feature low return rates of about 20 to 40-percent. Others suggest that response rates of 50-percent are adequate while 70-percent is very good. This project was very fortunate, therefore, to achieve its high return rate of nearly 80-percent.

As the quantitative data from the mail survey was obtained, the information was examined, and areas of interest such as methods, personnel and number and type of events began to emerge. This information was very helpful during the personal interview process and was highlighted during these visits along with more subjective subjects such as impact, role and policy of sports broadcasting.

8- ibid., p. 123.
9- ibid.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although radio has been with us only since the early portion of this century, the idea of instantaneous communication dates back much further. Experiments using sea water to conduct messages were made as early as 1795. The actual birth of broadcasting might date back to 1832 when Samuel Morse began work on the telegraph. This device was in use by the middle of the following decade, and telegraphy was common by the 1850's.

The first use of point-to-point communication via voice was achieved by Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the telephone in 1876. While Bell worked on wire communication, however, other inventors worked with wireless telegraphy. German physicist Heinrich Hertz, building upon theories first suggested by Scottish mathematician and physicist James Clerk Maxwell 25 years earlier, proved the existence of radio waves in 1888, causing a public sensation. Visionaries

11- Sterling, p. 8
could foresee a day when waves could produce telegraphy without wires, cables or other unwieldy apparatus.

Italian Guglielmo Marconi worked on Hertz's ideas at his father's estate near Bologna, and produced a device which could send and receive signals up to two miles. Marconi moved to London to continue his work. In 1896, he sent a message nine miles, and in 1901, he used Morse Code to send the letter 'S' across the Atlantic Ocean. Marconi founded the British and American Marconi Companies, which produced transmitting and receiving equipment around the world.

Canadian Reginald Fessenden made the first wireless experiments in America. His first were for the Department of Agriculture in 1900 and 1901, and he later worked on his own at Brant Rock, Massachusetts. There, Fessenden made the first radio broadcast designed for a large, general audience when he broadcast a program of speech and music on December 24, 1906. The program was designed for crews of ships at sea and was heard as far away as Norfolk. A similar program a week later was heard in the West Indies.

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13- ibid., p. 9.
14- Sterling, p. 25.
American Lee de Forest also made contributions to early radio, first experimenting by transmitting from the roofs of Chicago hotels in 1901. de Forest popularized his wireless machine with public exhibitions, broadcasting from the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904 and from the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1908. The latter program was reportedly heard up to 500 miles away. de Forest also invented the audion tube, which allowed for improved reception of radio signals. This tube became an important aspect in radio’s development, especially after work by Edwin Howard Armstrong, which improved the tube’s reception power and also allowed it to transmit. Armstrong and de Forest both claimed credit for developing the tube, and the two became involved in the country’s longest patent suit over ownership of the audion.

In the decade prior to World War I, more advances were made in wireless technology, and more amateur operators, or "hams", became involved in radio. When the United States entered the War, there were as many as 5000 operators in this country, and about twice that many when the war ended. These early broadcasters

17- Barnouw, p. 23.
18- Sterling, p. 29.
19- Burns.
built their own sets and primarily talked to and listened to one another.

Many early radio experiments occurred at colleges. Charles D. "Doc" Herrold broadcast a regular program of news and music from the College of Engineering and Wireless in San Jose, California as early as 1909. This station, which later evolved into KCBS in San Francisco, was heard over speakers which Herrold constructed and placed in hotel lobbies. Experiments also took place at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where Professor E.M. Terry began station 9XM in 1917 to broadcast weather forecasts and market reports. This station later changed its call letters to WHA, and since it was one of the few stations allowed to remain on the air during the war, its continuous operation gives it a legitimate claim to being the first radio station in America. This station, however, broadcast all of its reports in Morse Code until 1919.

Prior to World War I, most persons involved with radio considered it as a means to broadcast from point to point. They saw radio as one person transmitting to one other person. Others saw radio as something else. As early as 1914, de Forest had his own radio studio in

21- Sterling, p. 40.
22- ibid., p. 42.
New York, with which he broadcast programs of music and news, designed for a mass audience. David Sarnoff also believed in the concept of a mass audience for radio. Sarnoff's idea was the "Radio Music Box", which he developed as early as 1916. Sarnoff wrote Marconi that radio should be considered a household utility, as necessary as furniture or a telephone. He envisioned the Marconi Company manufacturing sets for the general public, and selling 100,000 per year at $75.00 apiece. Marconi executives rejected this proposal, however, and the mass radio concept did not truly evolve until 1920.

After World War I, a Westinghouse engineer, Dr. Frank Conrad, operated a station in his Pittsburgh garage, experimenting with point-to-point communication. Dr. Conrad broadcast programs of music and talk two nights a week, which were sometimes referred to in Pittsburgh newspapers. Local stores advertised radio receivers which allowed the public to hear Dr. Conrad's programs, and Westinghouse Vice-

23- Burns.

* There is some question as to whether Conrad's work with experimental station 8XX was point-to-point or point-to-multi-point. From October 17, 1919 when Conrad first placed a phonograph in front of his microphone and played music over his station, until Westinghouse signed KDKA, Conrad's station was point-to-multi-point. Conrad, however, first signed on his station between June 15 and August 1, 1919, and there appears to be no evidence that he thought of his station as anything other than point-to-point at that time.
President H.P. Davis saw one of these advertisements. Davis then began to realize that the future of radio was not in point-to-point communication between individuals, but in broadcasting to the masses and reaching the largest possible audience. Westinghouse applied for its own station license, and KDKA signed on the air with the election returns of November 2, 1920.

Radio grew quickly in the United States. By 1924, there were 1400 stations on the air. The public grew enamored with the new medium, and that year, spent $350,000,000 on radio receivers. In fact, one-third of the money spent on furniture in 1924 was spent on radios.

Early radio programming was sporadic, with each station responsible for filling its own air time without the luxury of networks of syndicated programming. Virtually all radio programming was live, and much of it was musical, although local stations attempted to fill their airtime with drama, information (news, weather, sports and a lot of farm programming), educational programming and religion. Hours of operation were also sporadic. Although most stations in large markets attempted to stay on the air for most of the day, small market stations made no such effort. An

24- Sterling, p. 59.
25- Burns.
early station in Marshfield, Wisconsin, WGRR, signed-on in 1926, but only broadcast two nights a week, presenting a program of music and religious services.

As networks grew in the 1920's and 1930's, stations turned more of their airtime over to national programming. Many stations also found that sports programming was a good way to fill time, especially since most sports events of this period took place during daytime hours.

From the earliest days of radio, sports played a key role in the industry's development. Soon after KDKA signed on, sports broadcasts were heard on that station and others. Within a year of its initial broadcast, KDKA aired major league baseball, college football and a tennis match. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) began its involvement in radio by broadcasting a professional title fight over its New York City area station. When KYW in Chicago could no longer broadcast opera at the end of the 1923 season, the station made plans to broadcast major league baseball the following spring. Other sporting events, especially college football and boxing, soon followed, and listeners around the nation were soon tuning their

26- Barnouw, p. 71.
27- Sterling, p. 61 and Barnouw, p. 80.
28- Barnouw, pp. 88-90.
dials, listening for the top sporting events of the day.

Until the late 1940's, radio was the dominant electronic communications medium in the United States. Programming was primarily controlled by networks operating on either coast of the United States, and most radio stations were based in large cities. Radio began to change, however, following World War II.

The arrival of television was the biggest factor in radio's evolution in this period, as television shifted network programming and advertisers away from radio. This forced local stations to do much of their own programming, which was often accomplished by the infusion of music. This led, in the 1950's, to the development of format radio, in which stations played a particular type of music, and geared the station's entire sound, including announcers, news and image, around that music.

At first, many stations stuck to traditional formats, playing music of well-known, mainstream artists, in an effort to please all listeners. In the early 1950's, however, stations began to adopt various musical formats, with some playing rock and roll. This format, which became known as Top 40 radio, expanded from about 20 stations nationwide in 1955 to hundreds
by 1960. More and more radio stations switched to Top 40, increasing listeners and profits. This in turn led to battles for listeners, popular disc jockeys, attempts by the recording industry to influence radio, and payola scandals. It also led to factions within the Top 40 format, allowing radio stations in the 1960’s to begin specializing in certain segments of rock music.

Similar growth occurred in country and western music, which was a popular format in rural areas before the 1950’s. By the late 1950’s, this format became popular in other areas such as the northeast, which heretofore was not exposed to this type of music via radio.

Radio also became more accessible to listeners in the 1950’s, and the industry no longer thought of itself as a medium to be enjoyed by persons exclusively in their homes. The invention of the transistor set in the 1950’s led to radios which were portable and lightweight, and much reduced in price. Listeners could now bring their radios with them wherever they went, and they also might have several sets in their homes. Travelers also became a large audience, since almost 70-percent of automobiles in the United States

29- Sterling, pp. 338-341.
30- ibid., p. 341.
31 had radios by 1960.

One of the biggest factors in the recent development of radio is the growth of FM radio. The concept of FM radio dates back to the early 1900's, but the medium was not perfected for broadcast use until Armstrong's work in the 1930's. Major broadcast companies, however, had large investments in AM radio and did not want to replace their systems with FM, despite its better fidelity. Consequently, the growth of FM radio lagged behind. The FCC approved FM use in 1940, and there was a small boom in FM authorizations in the late 1940's, but within several years stations were turning in authorizations and going off the air. There were several reasons for FM's troubles: a change from the pre-war FM band, difficulty in obtaining FM receivers from radio manufacturers, common ownership with AM stations which limited incentive to promote the FM station, duplicate programming on many AM-FM combo operations, and little enthusiasm from advertisers.

The 1950's appeared to be a bleak period in the development of FM radio. There were 737 FM stations on the air in the United States in 1949. This number

31- ibid., p. 352.
32- ibid., p. 142.
33- Burns
34- Sterling, pp. 254-255.
35- ibid., p. 254.
decreased to 616 in 1952, and to 530 in 1957. In the late 1950’s, however, there was renewed enthusiasm for FM, as some ownership groups decided to program their FM stations separately. By mid-1958, there were 548 FM stations on the air, which was the first increase in a decade, and that number further increased to almost 750 by 1960.

Into the 1960’s, FM was still the domain of duplicate programming and beautiful music. Two rulings by the FCC changed this, and made FM an equal partner in the radio industry. The first came in July, 1964, when the FCC ruled that FM stations in markets of 100,000 or more could no longer permanently duplicate the programming of their co-owned AM stations, but must offer separate programming at least 50-percent of their broadcast day. By 1967, most FM stations which were part of AM/FM combos, came under this ruling, and the order was expanded to include smaller markets in the 1970’s. As a result, FM music formats began to specialize as much as AM stations, and FM stations were no longer regulated to classical or beautiful music formats. Second, FM radio received a major boost from FCC directives that radio sets be manufactured to receive both the AM and the FM bands. This made FM

36- ibid., p. 323.
37- ibid., p. 397.
conveniently accessible to many radio listeners who previously thought only in terms of AM. As a result of these developments, FM overtook AM, and after 1977, FM became the dominant medium. In fact, by the late 1980's, FM radio had about 75-percent of the nation’s listeners. Most major market FM stations have maintained music formats, although some professional sports teams have used FM’s as flagship stations (Houston Oilers and Minnesota Vikings). On the other hand, AM stations have looked for specialized formats such as news, talk and sports to help them survive. These formats rely on the spoken word and are not aided substantially by FM’s superior audio fidelity.

In large markets, the number of stations broadcasting sports diminished as music-oriented stations concentrated solely on their format and their target audiences. Many stations, even AM’s, found that sports programming was no longer attractive, and that some other form of programming produced better demographics. Also, professional sports franchises and major college athletic departments began awarding exclusive broadcast rights for their events. Seeking the largest possible fee and the largest potential

38- ibid., p. 465.
39- ibid., p. 488.
audience, these rights usually went to one of the most powerful AM signals in a market. These stations, in turn, were usually the ones which still programed a general format, rather than targeting a specific demographic group through a narrow music format. Hence, as the period of format radio evolved and smaller stations attempted to create their niche through specific formats, the stations which showed an interest in major market sports programming declined, since so many stations feared to deviate from their format to air a sporting event.

Another change in radio after World War II was the growth of small market radio. Smaller communities signed-on radio stations, and radio was no longer limited to large cities. The number of AM stations on the air increased from 543 in 1935, to 730 in 1940, to 881 in 1945, and then, to 2061 in 1950, an increase of 380%. At the close of World War II, there were only six AM radio stations in northern Wisconsin and only five in the upper peninsula of Michigan. This number

* The author finds no published citations to support this claim, but there are numerous examples, such as WCCO, St. Paul; WJR, Detroit; WGN, Chicago; WWWE, Cleveland; WBZ, Boston; WLW, Cincinnati; KDKA; KMOX, St. Louis; KOA, Denver, etc.

41- Sterling, pp. 197-313.
42- The 1977 issue of Broadcasting Yearbook lists on-air dates for all radio stations in the United States.
increased dramatically throughout the late 1940's and the 1950's, so that most small cities in this region were served by a local station.

Many radio stations in small markets took on the general format of popular music performed by major artists, emulating the most popular major market stations. Although they could not match the major markets in procuring talent, these small market stations attempted to reach the widest possible audience by programming music most acceptable to advertisers and listeners with buying power (middle-of-the-road popular standards throughout most of the country, country music in the south and southwest).

Local stations also found that local programming which featured their own community, unavailable anywhere else, was a good way to draw listeners and advertisers. This programming included local news and talk programs, classified ad programs, birthday salutes, birth announcements and obituaries. These stations, looking for programming which would appeal to local listeners, often turned to area sports events, many of which centered around local schools. To this day, this type of programming continues to be a main staple of these small market stations.

SPORTS ON RADIO

The concept of broadcasting sports events over the radio goes back almost as far as the medium itself. The first play-by-play broadcast of a sports event took place in October, 1920, when college radio station 5XB in College Station, Texas broadcast a football game.

As new stations went on the air in the early 1920’s they also got involved in sports. KDKA became the first station to broadcast a major league baseball game when it aired a contest between the Pittsburgh Pirates and Philadelphia Phillies from Forbes Field in Pittsburgh on August 5, 1921.

Harold Arlin broadcast that first baseball game over KDKA. Arlin joined the KDKA staff as an announcer in early 1921, and broadcast two hours each night, except Sunday. His first broadcasts were from a shack on the roof of the six story manufacturing building at the Westinghouse plant, which included a small room for the transmitter and another small room for a phonograph. In the spring of 1921, the KDKA studios were moved to an auditorium within the manufacturing plant, but the acoustics were bad and the studio was moved back to the roof, this time in a tent.

44- Hitchcock, p. 3.
45- Smith, p. 6.
storm blew the tent off the roof, the studios were destroyed and KDKA temporarily broadcast in the open air from the top of the building.

KDKA was interested in all sports, not just baseball. The station's first sporting event was a prizefight in April of 1921, which probably was not broadcast by Arlin. A tennis match followed the day after Arlin broadcast the baseball game, and Arlin broadcast the play-by-play of a college football game between the University of Pittsburgh and West Virginia on November 5, 1921. At one point during the football game, while describing a touchdown, Arlin reportedly yelled so loudly that he knocked the station off the air.

By the summer of 1921, Newark, New Jersey station WJY was on the air, having debuted with the Dempsey-Carpentier championship fight. The station soon became WJZ and was one of three to broadcast a portion of the 1921 World Series. The first Series broadcast occurred on October 5, 1921, with newspaper reporter Grantland Rice calling the action over KDKA. WJZ, New York and WBZ, Springfield, Massachusetts, also broadcast that

47- Barnouw, p. 71.
48- Smith, p. 7.
game, but in a different manner. These stations hired a reporter from the *Newark Call* to describe the action into a phone. Broadcaster Tommy Cowan was on the other end, in a studio at the Westinghouse Building in New York. The reporter told Cowan over the phone what was happening on the field, and Cowan repeated the play-by-play over the two stations.

In 1922, the World Series was broadcast direct from the Polo Grounds in New York over stations WJZ, New York, WBZ, Springfield, Massachusetts, and WGY, Schenectady, New York. The broadcast crew of Rice, W.B. McGeehan and Raymond F. Guy was heard by an estimated audience of five million, but they did not hear the last two games of the Series as they were dropped due to a lack of sponsors. These broadcasts probably did not sound very good, since the stations had to use Western Union and Postal Telegraph lines for their interconnections, and these lines were not constructed for vocal use. AT&T, which would have been able to provide service to these stations, refused to do so because of a policy of not cooperating with rivals of AT&T owned stations WEAF in New York and WCAP in Washington, D.C.

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50- Smith, p. 8.
51- ibid., pp. 9-10.
52- Barnouw, p. 114.
The World Series broadcasts of 1923 were much different, because they featured the voice which became the first great voice of sports broadcasting. In May of 1923, Graham McNamee joined the announcing staff of WEAF in New York. McNamee was hired to do all sorts of announcing, and in August received his first sports assignment: the world middleweight title fight between Harry Greb and Johnny Wilson.

McNamee carefully prepared for his broadcast, visiting both training camps, interviewing the participants and taking notes. He broadcast not only the championship fight, but the preliminaries as well, and since McNamee had boxed himself, he was able to distinguish between the types of punches being thrown, which he felt enabled him to broadcast a more thorough description to his listeners.

The following month, McNamee was assigned to broadcast the 1923 World Series along with Rice. WEAF was joining with several other stations to broadcast the Series along the northern half of the eastern seaboard, and Rice was to do the play-by-play with McNamee providing commentary. McNamee was disappointed at not doing the play-by-play himself, but his feelings

53- Smith, p. 11
quickly changed when Rice tired of the play-by-play burden and left the broadcast in the fourth inning of game three. McNamee took over with impressive results: within a week of the end of the Series, over 1700 fan letters were sent to WEAF for McNamee.

McNamee was the first big name in sports broadcasting, serving as announcer for ten different sports, as well as political speeches and conventions. Following the 1925 World Series, he received 50,000 fan letters. He was soon joined, however, by others who also made a great impact upon the industry.

In the early 1920's, the dominant sport in the United States was major league baseball. Although there were some sporadic broadcasts of baseball games in the first years of radio, the first regular schedule of baseball broadcasts did not occur until the 1924 season. KYW (now WMAQ) in Chicago broadcast its first game on April 23, 1924, when Hal Totten broadcast a Chicago Cubs game at Wrigley Field. KYW broadcast every Cubs and White Sox home game that season, and Totten broadcast Chicago baseball for 21 years. Totten later worked on World Series broadcasts for CBS and NBC, worked on Mutual Broadcasting System's major

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55- Smith, p. 11 and McNamee pp. 50-51.
56- Smith, p. 12.
57- ibid.
league game of the day through 1950, and eventually became President of the minor league Three-I League.

Other Chicago stations soon followed KYW to the ballpark. WGN was the first, with Quin Ryan handling the broadcasts. Although many baseball teams feared that broadcasts would harm home attendance, Cubs' owner William Wrigley believed the broadcasts would promote his club and welcomed as many as seven Chicago radio stations to his ballpark for play-by-play broadcasts. Although Ryan remained WGN's baseball broadcaster for a number of years, his primary position was an executive job with WGN. Consequently, Ryan did no preparation for his broadcasts, and never bothered to improve himself as a broadcaster.

WBBM also broadcast Chicago baseball in the early years, with Pat Flanagan the main announcer. And Hall of Famer Bob Elson first arrived on the scene in 1931, as an assistant to Ryan. Elson remained as a Chicago play-by-play announcer for many years, broadcasting the White Sox into the 1970's.

One of the baseball teams which believed in the positive power of radio was the Cincinnati Reds, and

59- ibid., p. 89.
60- ibid., p. 91.
61- ibid., p. 90.
when Larry MacPhail arrived as Reds President in 1934, he vowed to use radio to promote his team. With that in mind, a young man from Florida, Red Barber, came to Cincinnati to broadcast the Reds.

Barber first heard a radio in 1924, listening to a radio which belonged to a schoolmate. The radio ran on batteries, and the re-chargers took up most of the room on the floor of his friend's bedroom. Barber spent the evening listening to stations from around the nation, including KDKA in Pittsburgh and WSB in Atlanta. He was overwhelmed by the experience, later saying, "Young people have no idea of the excitement that hit this country when radio was young."

Barber began broadcasting the Reds over WSAI in 1934 for $25.00 per week, and his salary was doubled by the end of the season. He broadcast all Reds road games, re-creating those contests from Western Union wire reports. Although MacPhail believed in radio, he still had some concern about its impact on home attendance, and would permit only 15 live broadcasts from Crosley Field.

Meanwhile, other major league baseball teams joined the broadcast parade. Bill Dyer began broadcasting Phillies and Athletics home games in

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63- Barber, p. 67.
Philadelphia in the late 1920’s. Garrett Marks broadcast the first game in St. Louis in 1927, and was replaced as Browns and Cardinals broadcaster by Franz Laux in 1929. Fred Hoey aired Red Sox and Braves games over the Colonial Network in New England starting in 1925. And the Cleveland Indians had their first broadcasts over WTAM with Tom Manning in 1925. WHK took the Indians broadcasts in 1932, and used former Indians outfielder Jack Graney as their play-by-play broadcaster. Manning, however, remained a top Cleveland sportscaster for many years, and did return to do the Indians on television in 1956 and 1957.

In Detroit, WWJ broadcast Tigers games with Ty Tyson, who remained as the Tigers announcer through 1942. While Tyson worked over WWJ, former Tiger outfielder Harry Heilmann broadcast the Tigers to outstate Michigan fans over a network set up by WXYZ. The networks merged when Tyson retired in 1942 and Heilmann became the sole Tiger broadcaster, although Tyson came back for the 1951 season when Heilmann was dying of cancer. Bob Burdette broadcast the first Reds games in Cincinnati in the late 1920’s. He was replaced by Harry Hartman in 1930, and Hartman remained the main Reds announcer until Barber arrived in 1934.

64- Smith, p. 15.
65- ibid., p. 16.
Arch McDonald was the main broadcaster for the Washington Senators, working over WJSV (later WTOP). McDonald left the Senators to broadcast in New York in 1939, but returned to Washington the next year and remained as Senators broadcaster through the 1956 season.

Ten of the 16 major league baseball teams in this period were located in two-franchise cities, which supported teams in both the American and National Leagues. In these communities, one broadcaster often handled broadcasts for both teams. These clubs rarely played in the home city at the same time. Usually, one team played at home while the other was on a roadtrip. The home team was always on the radio, because teams did not want fans to stay at home and listen to the road team. Road games were broadcast when there were no home conflicts. Home games were broadcast live from the stadium while road games were aired via telegraphic re-creation, since line charges and the cost of transportation made broadcasting road games impossible. Most re-creations were broadcast home conflicts. Home games were broadcast live from the stadium while road games were aired via telegraphic re-creation, since

66- ibid., p. 35.
67- ibid., p. 19.
68- ibid., pp. 25-30.
line charges and the cost of transportation made broadcasting road games impossible. Most re-creations were broadcast from the station's studio although that was not always the case. Graney did the re-creations of Indians' games from an automobile dealership, and McDonald re-created Washington Senators games from a drug store basement, filled with bleachers. Even minor league baseball games were available via telegraphic re-creation. As late as the early 1950's, WBIZ-AM in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, broadcast the Northern League Eau Claire Bears, featuring Hank Aaron, and re-created the road games.

Even a broadcast professional like Barber willingly accepted broadcasting road games via re-creation. As he said, "No one dreamed of traveling one or two announcers and an engineer and paying AT&T line charges to do live baseball out of town." Instead, the stations paid Western Union $25.00 per game for "Paragraph One" service. Sending operators at each ballpark would send descriptions of games to anyone who wanted the service; not only radio stations, but also clubs and taverns. The descriptions came in Morse Code, so there had to be a receiving operator, who would then type a description of the game. When Barber

70- Mike Sullivan personal interview, April 20, 1994.
re-created a game, he would look over the operator’s shoulder as the play-by-play was typed. Thirty minutes before the game, the ballpark operator would send the lineups and a weather summary. When the game began, a pitch-by-pitch description of the game would be sent:

Smith up
B 1 L  (ball one low)
S  (strike)

Barber, being a meticulous broadcaster, later protested, asking Western Union to also send what kind of strike; foul (F), swinging (S), or called (C).

Local stations dominated baseball broadcasts, as the networks generally did not get involved in baseball except for the World Series and all-star games. CBS, NBC and Mutual all broadcast the World Series in the 1930’s. Mutual began as a network linking WGN in Chicago, WOR in New York, and CKLW in Windsor, Ontario (Detroit). The group broadcast major league baseball’s first night game on May 24, 1935, in Cincinnati, and asked permission to broadcast the 1935 World Series. Baseball Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis agreed, if the network could add WLW in Cincinnati to its lineup. WLW said yes, if their broadcaster, Barber, could be part of the broadcast lineup. MBS agreed, so Barber broadcast that World Series over the Mutual

71- Westinghouse, The 1930’s.
Network with Bob Elson. Not only was it Barber's first World Series, it was the first since 1923 in which McNamee did not participate. NBC dropped McNamee from the broadcast just prior to the series.

The main broadcaster for CBS in these years was Ted Husing, who did not broadcast a World Series after 1934. Husing had made some uncomplimentary comments about the umpiring in that Series, and he was banned from further baseball work by Judge Landis. Landis was adamant in demanding that national baseball broadcasts be handled by broadcasters who worked baseball throughout the season. Consequently, some of the top national sportscasters in the country, such as Husing, Bill Munday, Bill Stern, Harry Wismer and Bill Slater did little or no baseball broadcasting during this period.

While local and regional baseball broadcasts exploded throughout the 1930's, baseball fans in New York were left out. In 1934, the three New York teams signed a five-year agreement to ban radio broadcasts of their teams. Not only could no New York station broadcast Giants, Dodgers or Yankees games, visiting teams could not do re-creations from the three New York stadia. Owners of the Giants and the Yankees greatly

72- Smith, p. 36.
73- ibid., p. 37.
feared what radio might do to their home attendance, and the Dodgers ownership was in such a chaotic shape at this time, that they went along with whatever the other two teams wished.

Everything changed in New York when MacPhail arrived as President of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1938. He made it clear immediately that he would not renew the anti-radio agreement, and he hired Barber away from Cincinnati to broadcast the Dodgers over WOR for the 1939 season. Broadcasts were live at home and via recreation on the road. This forced the other New York teams to act, and the Giants and Yankees hired McDonald to broadcast their games over WABC (now WCBS). So, 1939 was the first season that all major league baseball teams were on radio.

1939 was also, however, the beginning of the end of radio’s dominance of the national sports scene. That year, television arrived, as NBC’s Bill Stern served as announcer for the first televised sports event, a college baseball game between Princeton and Columbia at Baker Field in New York, on May 17. Barber announced the first televised major league game, featuring the Dodgers and Cincinnati at Ebbets Field on

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74- ibid., pp. 37-38.
75- ibid., p. 39.
76- ibid., p. 40.
August 26, 1939. Also in 1939, television aired its first professional fight (Lou Nova vs Max Baer, announced by Sam Taub), its first college football game (Fordham vs Waynesburg), its first NFL game (Brooklyn vs Philadelphia), and on February 28, 1940, its first college basketball game (Fordham vs Pittsburgh).

Although baseball was the dominant sport on radio in this era, it was not the only sport the American public heard. In fact, one of the leading broadcast organizations of the day, RCA, got its start in radio through sports.

Before 1920, David Sarnoff pushed his "radio music box" idea, aimed at a mass audience, with no success. The excitement caused by KDKA's debut, however, forced RCA to move, and Sarnoff looked for a dramatic way to get RCA into broadcasting. A heavyweight title fight, between champion Jack Dempsey and French champion Georges Carpentier, was scheduled for July 2, 1921. Sarnoff borrowed a portable transmitter which was made by General Electric for the U.S. Navy and not delivered, and obtained a license for Newark, New Jersey, station WJY. Sarnoff hired Major Andrew White of Wireless Age magazine to do the broadcast. He then

77- ibid., p. 49.
78- Coleman, pp. 10-11.
strung an antenna between two Lackawanna Railroad towers and set up his equipment in a galvanized hut which was used by railroad engineers to change into their uniforms. The engineers were upset that they couldn’t use their hut, and radio engineer J.O. Smith slept in the hut to guard the equipment. Phone lines were strung between the arena and the hut, and when the fight began, White did a blow-by-blow description into the phone, while Smith, listening on the other end, described the fight into the microphone. Sarnoff almost had a disaster on his hands, as the transmitter operated at more than its intended power. Luckily for RCA, Dempsey won the fight in the fourth round, and shortly after the broadcast signed off, the equipment melted. In order for people to hear the fight, Sarnoff arranged for radio sets and loudspeakers to be set up at theaters, lodge halls, ballrooms, and bars throughout the eastern United States. Many gatherings were organized as charity affairs with admission charged to aid war-devastated France.

College football also had a large following on radio in the first two decades of radio. In fact, Ty Tyson actually began at WWJ in Detroit in 1922 broadcasting University of Michigan football games with

79- Barnouw, p. 80.
Lawrence Holland. Tyson and Holland sat in regular seats in the crowd with the names of players printed on a laundry board. When fans in front of them stood up, obscuring their view, Holland would tap them on the top of the head with the board. Since Holland was a former All-American lineman, he rarely had to worry about retaliation.

WEAF in New York broadcast its first college football game on October 28, 1922, using long distance lines to broadcast Princeton vs the University of Chicago at Chicago. Four weeks later, WEAF used long distance lines again to air a game between Harvard and Yale.

Not only could radio broadcast college football, it could promote it and make it a big part of the American sports scene. The Rose Bowl in Pasadena became a big event once NBC began broadcasting it in 1927. Former BMI President and Commercial Manager of KFI Radio in Los Angeles, Carl Haverline, worked on the second Rose Bowl broadcast, with McNamee in 1928. The Tournament of Roses Committee asked NBC to allow Haverline to split the broadcast with McNamee, and NBC agreed. Haverline recalls McNamee as enthusiastic, a poet and lyric bard at heart, who painted with a broad

80- ibid., p. 101.
81- ibid., p. 113.
brush and wanted to convey his enjoyment to the audience. In 1928, a pouring rain fell on the January 1 parade and football game, and yet McNamee never mentioned the rain, but talked instead of the beautiful weather in southern California. Haverline protested, but McNamee told him, "I'm running this broadcast; it is not raining!" In that way McNamee taught Haverline that radio is whatever the man at the microphone wants it to be.

As the 1920's progressed, more and more college football was available to radio listeners. For instance, on November 10, 1928, radio listeners had a choice of listening to one of two key games. At 12:30 Central time, the Army/Notre Dame game would be broadcast over WEAF, WGN and WOC (Davenport) with Phillips Carlin calling the action over the NBC Red network. That same game, presumably called by Husing, would also be broadcast by the CBS network, over * stations such as WABC and WBBM. And, at 1:15, McNamee would call the Navy/Michigan game over WJZ (the former WJY), KYW and the rest of the NBC-Blue network. Most

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82- Westinghouse, The 1930's.

*- Barber says that CBS and NBC were notorious for broadcasting the same college football game almost every week, mainly because of Husing's jealousy of McNamee and his later rivalry with Stern. For more on this, see Barber, pp. 51-52.

83- Marshfield News-Herald, November 9, 1928, p. 4.
college football games were aired live through long distance lines, although telegraphic re-creations were available. For instance, WSBT in South Bend, Indiana, broadcast all nine Notre Dame games in 1929 via Western Union reports as this undefeated Irish team played its entire schedule on the road while Notre Dame Stadium was being constructed.

McNamee was the biggest name in national sports broadcasting well into the 1930's, but NBC wanted someone besides Phillips Carlin to back up McNamee. Bill Munday was hired for the 1930 season, and worked for NBC for five years before succumbing to alcohol. Munday eventually returned to the air in 1948 as a reformed alcoholic and did regional and University of Georgia broadcasts. NBC replaced Munday with Bill Slater, who left the network in a financial dispute and eventually became a successful moderator of television and radio quiz shows.

Meanwhile, over at CBS, Ted Husing was hired in December of 1927 to assist Major White in sports broadcasts. When White was ill and couldn't do a football broadcast in Chicago in the fall of 1928, Husing stepped in and became an instant success. Shortly after, White lost interest in radio and moved

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84- Barber, p. 108.
85- ibid., pp. 39-43.
west, and Husing became the number one sportscaster at CBS.

The rivalry between CBS and NBC was very personal to Husing and to McNamee's successors, although McNamee himself never succumbed to any bitter feelings. Husing, however, was very jealous of NBC's success with the Rose Bowl, and was even more enraged when NBC won the rights to the New Orleans Sugar Bowl in 1935, giving NBC two New Year's Day bowl games. Husing finally got his New Year's bowl game, when CBS agreed to broadcast the 1937 Orange Bowl game in Miami. This game began as part of the Miami Palm Festival in 1933, with temporary bleachers borrowed from the American Legion and a crowd of 3500. The Orange Bowl Committee enticed CBS to broadcast their 1937 game, and Husing continually plugged the game during his weekly football broadcasts in the fall of 1936. Orange Bowl officials were concerned that if Husing saw his chicken coop broadcast booth he would walk out, so he did not get to see his facilities until game day, but he helped make the Orange Bowl what it is today; when he broadcast his last Orange Bowl game, the stadium sat 62,000 fans.

Husing, often in need of money, eventually left CBS in 1946 and was replaced by Barber, who continued

86- ibid., pp. 31-32.
87- ibid., pp. 33-34.
to broadcast the Dodgers. His main responsibility at CBS was college football, and in 1946 CBS began broadcasting two games every Saturday afternoon. This eventually led to the CBS Football Roundup, which was a sweep of the top six games of the day.

Over at NBC, McNamee was becoming increasingly valuable to the network as an announcer on the Rudy Vallee Hour and the Ed Wynn Show, and a fulltime replacement was sought. Bill Slater left the network in a dispute over his expenses at the 1936 Berlin olympiad, and Bill Stern was hired as a replacement, and soon became NBC's Director of Sports. Stern stayed with NBC until 1952, when he left for ABC. His career bottomed out in 1956 when he couldn't continue the Sugar Bowl broadcast, and it was discovered that he had a drug problem. Stern was eventually cured, and finished his sportscasting career doing sports reports over WOR in New York.

As the radio industry matured, smaller communities obtained stations and sports broadcasting became an integral part of their programming. By the late 1930's, there were enough small market stations

88- ibid, pp. 36, 145-146.
*- Stern presumably became involved with drugs in order to relieve the pain he suffered as the result of a leg amputation in the mid 1930's.
89- ibid., pp. 50-53.
broadcasting sports that many of the top sportscasters of later years were able to perfect their skills. Onetime Packers television broadcaster Ray Scott began in 1937 at his hometown station in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, announcing, writing commercials, selling ads, and serving as station janitor for $55.00 per month. Boston Red Sox and Cleveland Browns broadcaster Ken Coleman began at Rutland, Vermont in 1947, and later broadcast high school football in Quincy, Massachusetts, calling his first game while standing on a box behind the end zone. Curt Gowdy started by doing high school football in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Chris Schenkel covered high school basketball at a small station near his hometown of Bippus, Indiana. Longtime Baltimore Orioles broadcaster Chuck Thompson got his start at WRAW in Reading, Pennsylvania. And, the well-known broadcaster for the Montreal Canadiens, Danny Gallivan, got his start by broadcasting junior hockey for a station in Nova Scotia. Clearly, small market radio was growing, and sports was emerging as a key component of programming.

In the ensuing years, sports continued to play a big role in radio. All professional sports teams had

90- Coleman, p. 125.
91- ibid., pp. 3, 43.
their games on radio, with some major league teams, such as baseball’s St. Louis Cardinals, establishing regional networks of more than 100 stations. Network radio was not limited to individual teams, however. In 1949, Gordon McLendon began the Liberty Broadcasting System at his flagship station, KLIF in Dallas. From there, McLendon originated his Liberty "Game of the Day." Appealing to radio stations in the south, west and southwest which were out of the reach of baseball team’s network restrictions, McLendon’s network aired a major league baseball game each day, via telegraphic re-creation most days, although there were occasional live games. McLendon’s expenses were $27.50 for the telegraphic descriptions from Western Union, and his announcer’s salary. In return, each station paid its own line charges, had all commercial time to itself, and paid McLendon $10.00 per game. As many as 300 radio stations took these broadcasts each day, giving McLendon a daily profit of up to $3,000.

Major league baseball had regulations prohibiting broadcasts within 75 miles of a major league stadium, so that the local team’s radio network would be protected. That meant that McLendon’s network would not be heard near major league cities, primarily in the

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93- Smith, pp. 112-113.
northeast. The rest of the country was available, however, and the Liberty "Game of the Day" had affiliates in some of the smallest communities in the country, all the way up to Los Angeles and other major west coast cities. After a year of experimenting, the network grew, offering a "Game of the Night", two games on weekends and holidays, and even re-created games featuring teams of the teens and 1920's. And the network continued to grow, with 431 affiliates in 1950.

The well established Mutual Broadcasting System took all of this in, and decided major league baseball on a daily basis could also be lucrative for them. So, in 1950, Mutual launched its "Game of the Day." There were differences between the Mutual and the Liberty approaches. For one, Mutual worked with baseball, paying a rights fee, and obtaining the game's cooperation. All games were broadcast live from the stadium, Monday through Saturday afternoons, with no night or Sunday broadcasts in deference to the minor leagues. Mutual already had the structure of its own network organization in place, and had 350 affiliates for its first season.

The Liberty Network also grew, and for the 1952 season, McLendon planned to charge affiliates $20.00

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94- ibid., p. 115.
95- ibid., p. 117.
per game. Major league baseball, however, took a dim
view of McLendon's broadcasts, and barred the Liberty
re-creations. McLendon sued and lost, putting an end
to the Liberty "Game of the Day."  

The Mutual "Game of the Day" continued to thrive,
however, clearing more than 500 affiliates for the
1955 season. In addition, over 800 other stations
belonged to local team networks.

The Mutual series was quite popular around the
country in areas with no major league baseball, but
that portion of the country was dwindling by 1960.
Expansion and growing local team networks eroded so
many potential markets from Mutual's broadcasts that
the series was stopped prior to the 1961 season.

While network radio broadcasts of baseball grew
during the 1950's, major league baseball teams also
made great efforts to expand their regional networks.
In addition to networks which transmitted the live
broadcasts of each team's games, the Brooklyn Dodgers
established their own re-creation network to serve
listeners outside the northeast. The Brooklyn Dodgers
Radio Network was based in Washington, D.C., where Nat
Allbright re-created games out of a studio for a net-
work which reached throughout the southeast and, quite

96- ibid., p. 133.
97- ibid., p. 148.
illegally according to baseball bylaws, into some other major league territory, such as Washington, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. At its height, in 1953, the Dodgers network included 117 stations, which rivaled the Mutual network for stations in the southeast and gulf coast states, and these broadcasts helped make the Dodgers America's "national team" of the 1950's. By basing the network out of Washington, the Dodgers cut their network costs, since line charges to the southeast from Washington were not nearly as great as they would be coming from Brooklyn. Yet, the network gave the Dodgers a tremendous public relations boost by bringing their games to every corner of the southeast. The network continued even after the Dodgers move to Los Angeles in 1958, but that move eventually killed the network since games were ending at 1:30 A.M. Eastern time and many of the affiliates in the southeast could not maintain an audience at that hour.

Although baseball was America's primary sport in this period, it was not the only one available via national network. CBS continued its Saturday College Football Roundup, covering several games per day, into the 1950's. Mutual began airing Notre Dame football games over a national network in 1968, and this network

now reaches close to 300 stations.

The National Football League, even though it relied heavily on television for its development, did not ignore radio. As early as 1971, the NFL's Monday night football games were on network radio, first on Mutual, and later on CBS. Mutual later re-signed with the NFL, airing selected Sunday afternoon games to a national audience.

As broadcast technology improved in the 1970's and 1980's, and satellite distribution made syndication easier, sports organizations expanded their networks and more syndicators became involved. CBS Radio now holds the rights to major league baseball, including post-season, the All-Star game, and an in-season game of the week package, and also continues its coverage of Monday night NFL football. Both packages are cleared by about 320 stations. CBS also has rights to NCAA college basketball coverage, including the national mens and womens tournaments, which has an affiliates list slightly higher than baseball and the NFL. In addition, CBS plans to begin a college football package in the fall of 1995.

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100- Michael Kropp telephone interview, February 16, 1995.
Today, local radio stations have access to a large number of national sporting events. Major league baseball is on CBS, the NFL on CBS and Mutual. There are numerous national syndicators of college football and basketball, many holding contracts with individual conferences or schools. The National Basketball Association has its own network, featuring a game of the week, and this is in addition to the many regional networks featuring professional and major college teams. These broadcasts are all available for the local radio station to supplement their local sports broadcasts.

SMALL MARKET RADIO SPORTS

As the broadcasting industry grew in the 1930’s and 1940’s, radio stations went on the air in small communities throughout the United States. When World War II began, there were AM radio stations on the air in Ashland, Eau Claire (WEAQ), Medford, Rice Lake, Wausau (WOSA) and Wisconsin Rapids. WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids signed on the air on November 1, 1940. Like most small market radio stations, WFHR was located in a county seat, and considered local sports an important part of its programming. When longtime engineer and executive Arnie Strope came to work for WFHR in 1941,
Arch Davis was the play-by-play broadcaster for Lincoln High School football and basketball. Although there were a number of other schools in the vicinity, the station did not broadcast any other local teams.

WDBC Radio in Escanaba, Michigan, went on the air in 1941, the fifth radio station to take to the air in the upper peninsula of Michigan. In 1950, WDBC's sports announcer, Tony Flynn, left the station to replace Earl Gillespie as sports announcer at WJPG in Green Bay. Flynn was replaced in Escanaba by Mark Zelich, a young man just starting out in the broadcasting business.

Like most people entering broadcasting industry in that era, Zelich performed a variety of duties at WDBC. For his work, he was paid $50.00 per week. This sum was increased to $68.00 when we went to work for WATW in Ashland in 1952, and Zelich received $75.00 in September of 1954 when Alvin O'Konski hired him as Sports Director of WOSA/WILN. This station, technically licensed to Merrill, had studios in downtown Wausau, from which Zelich worked. Zelich remembers the WOSA studios as the best equipped he encountered in that era, and he also recalls one of WOSA's most famous trademarks: a neon sign on the front.

of the building which proclaimed that the station had 1,000,000 listeners each week. Zelich never asked O’Konski if the assertion was true.

As Zelich began his work in Wausau, Jack Hackman was starting his radio career in Marshfield. Hackman grew up in nearby Pittsville, and was a star athlete at the village’s parochial high school, Maryheart High School. In September of 1953, early in Hackman’s junior year in high school, he contracted polio and lost his ability to walk. After a period of recovery, Hackman’s parish priest in Pittsville brought him to Marshfield one day to look for employment. He was hired by WDLB as an engineer, and forty years later, was still working in Marshfield as Chief Executive Officer of WDLB’s parent company, the 12-station Goetz Broadcasting Corporation.

Hackman was not involved in local sports at the start of his broadcasting career, but WDLB was still a sports oriented station. In Hackman’s first few years, two high school age cousins, Don Seehafer and Chuck Johnson, handled WDLB’s play-by-play. When Johnson left for college, Hackman talked WDLB management into

102- Mark Zelich personal interview, October 18, 1994. 
* Seehafer and Johnson went on to own their own stations in Wausau (WXCO/WYCO), Manitowoc and Beloit, Wisconsin, St. Peter and Rochester, Minnesota, and Cypress Gardens, Florida.
letting him become Sports Director, and he held that position into the 1970's when he assumed additional management responsibilities.

Despite his handicap, Hackman was able to broadcast sports events in central Wisconsin for over twenty years. In the early days, WDLB sent a four-man crew to each game. Hackman did play-by-play, and he was accompanied by a color commentator, an engineer, and General Manager Bob Behling, who read commercials. Hackman broadcast games involving Marshfield Senior High and Columbus High School, and unlike other area stations, WDLB also aired games involving smaller schools in the area. Hackman believes this became a common practice in 1952 when nearby Stratford High School advanced to the WIAA state boys basketball tournament, and this practice continues to this day.

Other stations also emphasized sports during this period. When Eau Claire's second AM station, WBIZ, signed on on November 11, 1947, the station broadcast a high school basketball game that night. Local broadcasts were simple affairs. It was strictly play-by-play with no special features such as coaches interviews, although WDLB in Marshfield always ran an interview program with the local coach the day of or

103- Hackman.
104- Sullivan.
the day before a game.

The technology of this period was different than that of today. There were no remote transmitters, and games were not broadcast over regular business phone lines as they are today. Instead, the telephone company installed broadcast loops for broadcast use. These loops were direct lines from a particular site to the station’s studio. The loop provided the station with studio-quality sound, provided that the distance between the remote site and the studio was not great. If an amplifier was not placed on the line, there could be two-way communication between the studio and the remote broadcast site. The cost was minimal; just $10 to $15 per month, plus a small fee of several cents per mile between the site and the studio. Some stations were even able to minimize the mileage fee by having the loop connected to a secondary studio. At this time, it was not uncommon for a station to have studios in other local communities which did not have radio stations. These studios were interconnected by loops. For instance, WFHR also had studios in Stevens Point and Marshfield, and would periodically air local news and features from these studios during the day. When WFHR broadcast a game from one of these cities, they

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105- Hackman.
would have the loop connected to the local studio, and then air the game through the loop which connected Wisconsin Rapids to the other studio. Stations ordered their own loops for each of their games. Unlike today, when stations order phone lines for their own stadia or gymnasiums for use by the visiting radio stations, a station could not order a loop for general use, since a loop connected two particular sites. Besides, the cost of the loop was so minimal that stations did not mind paying the cost for each game. 106

Equipment was not fancy in that period. Hackman broadcast WDLB’s games over a one-channel amplifier, which was battery powered and did not have a VU meter. Headset microphones first appeared in the 1950’s, and Hackman was one of the last broadcasters to use the new device. He preferred a harness which fit over his shoulder and held a microphone which was placed in front of the announcer. 107

Broadcast facilities at the game were also poor. When Hackman began broadcasting games, the only stadia which had football press boxes were in Marshfield, Antigo, Wausau and Eau Claire. Some of these boxes were even too small to house more than several people, and it was still common for the visiting broadcasters --------

106- Strope.
107- Hackman.
to sit in the stands, no matter what the weather conditions.

At small schools, facilities were even more primitive. For instance, WFHR broadcast a football game at Flad Field in Pittsville about 1946 with no broadcast booth and no power. Play-by-play announcer Ed Hanson sat on the roof of his car during the broadcast, announcing the game into a tape recorder which was powered by his car battery.

Local sports was very lucrative to these stations, although sponsorships were sold differently than they are sold today. Rather than sell as many sponsorships as possible, stations sold sponsorships to only a few businesses, which paid a large sum for the privilege. Revenue figures for that era are not available, but those who worked at that time indicate that their stations enjoyed lucrative profits on local sports broadcasts. At WFHR, Crown Auto, which sold DeSotos and Plymouths, was the sole sponsor of Lincoln High School sports for a number of years, until Wood County Bank was allowed to join the broadcasts as a partial sponsor. All commercials were read live at the site, often by an engineer who traveled with the play-

108- ibid.
109- Strope.
by-play announcer to make sure the technical end of the broadcast went well.

WFHR was in an unusual position to be a dominant station in its region because of the unusual radio situation in central Wisconsin. When WFHR signed-on in 1941, it was the only radio station in the area, and WFHR soon opened studios in Marshfield and Stevens Point. WFHR's Marshfield studio remained active into the late 1950's, even though Marshfield's station, WDLB, went on the air in February of 1947.

In Stevens Point, however, WFHR was able to have good success. The Stevens Point station, WSPT, went on the air in 1949, but as a daytimer, which means the station had to leave the air at sunset. Since most local sports events, such as high school basketball and football, are played at night, WSPT had no chance to air live broadcasts of these games. WFHR, therefore, attempted to serve sports fans in Stevens Point. WFHR-FM went on the air in 1946, usually simulcasting WFHR-AM's programming. The stations would split, however, to allow WFHR-FM to broadcast Stevens Point area sports events, featuring P.J. Jacobs or Pacelli High Schools, or the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. These broadcasts of Stevens Point sports over

111- Strope.
112- Hackman.
WFHR-FM began in the late 1940's and continued into the late 1960's. Advertising was sold and the games were broadcasts by WFHR's Stevens Point office, primarily handled by longtime sports broadcaster Bob Daniels. These broadcasts were very popular in Stevens Point, and Strope believes that broadcasting Stevens Point sports events on WFHR-FM led to the sale of many FM radios in Stevens Point.

WFHR broadcast Stevens Point sports into the late 1960's, until the Stevens Point station, WSPT, began to broadcast sports on its FM station, WSPT-FM. Salesman Wayne David did the first play-by-play over WSPT-FM, involving Stevens Point schools, as well as area schools such as Tri County High School in Plainfield.

Sports programming was new for WSPT-FM. Prior to the mid 1960's, WSPT did not make a great effort to utilize its FM station. WSPT was paid a sum by the Copps Corporation each year to broadcast music which would be piped into Copps' grocery stores. The also broadcast commercials for food products which were sold in Copps stores. When Jim Schuh became General Manager of WSPT-AM/FM he ended this arrangement. Although WSPT-FM became a music-oriented station, WSPT-AM (later WXYQ and then WSPO) was still a daytimer, 

113- Strope.
forcing all sports to the FM station.

In the late 1960's, WFHR decided to take sports programming off of its FM station. Bob Daniels was nearing retirement age, WFHR wanted to program its FM station, now called WWRW, with a separate format, and WFHR did not see the need to compete for Stevens Point sports as long as the Stevens Point station was going to air the games. For these reasons, local sports events were removed from WWRW, although UW-Stevens Point sports reappeared on WWRW briefly in the 1970's when the station purchased exclusive broadcast rights from the university.

Although radio stations in small markets lacked the power and resources of stations in large cities, they could sometimes join together to form a powerful group. This took place in Wisconsin, with the formation of the Wisconsin Network. This network formed in 1941, under the guidance of WFHR owner, Jim Schuh personal interview, July 19, 1994.

* Such disregard for FM frequencies was not uncommon prior to the 1970's. Jack Hackman recalls that when he first came to WDLB, the original WDLB-FM was on the air, simulcasting the AM signal. Shortly afterwards, WDLB-FM suffered a technical problem which kept it off the air for several days. When no listeners called to inquire about the station, management deduced there were no listeners, and turned the license back to the FCC. WDLB-FM returned in 1966, and later became the 100,000 watt WLJY.

115- Gennaro.
William F. Huffman, Jr., and the station's General Manager, George Frichette. It was their dream to broadcast University of Wisconsin football, and they brought together a number of stations around the state to share in these broadcasts. The network was based in Wisconsin Rapids with Frichette running it until his death in 1962, when Strope took over and ran the network until its demise in 1988.

The Wisconsin Network had about ten stations statewide, primarily in Wisconsin Rapids, Wausau, Poynette, Janesville, Beloit, Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Appleton, Fond du Lac and Green Bay. Most of these stations were owned by newspapers when the network began. Its primary aim was the broadcast of Wisconsin Badger football. Badger basketball games were aired on occasion, but rarely with full network clearance. The Wisconsin Network did dabble with some other programming, however. For instance, there was a daily morning weather round-up, done by each station along the network. Each station had a send-receive switch in its control room, which would allow it to not only receive network programing, but also send a signal to the network. During the weather program, each station would come on the network line for a brief period and

116- Gennaro.
then give way to the next station, and the program would continue all along the network line. The Wisconsin Network also aired some other programs, such as a world newscast, broadcast from Wisconsin Rapids in the 1940's and 1950's, during an era in which there was little national network news. The Wisconsin Network also broadcast a daily 15-minute noon-hour program, the Maggie and Scotty Show. This program, sponsored by dairy interests, featured country-western music and dairy news.

For some time, the Wisconsin Network faced no competition in network programming, although there were other originations of University of Wisconsin football, most notably from WTMJ in Milwaukee and some Madison stations. WTMJ first entered the network business when WBEL in Beloit requested feeds of Badger football games. Another Beloit station, WGEZ, was affiliated with the Wisconsin Network, so WBEL could not obtain these broadcasts from the Wisconsin Network. WTMJ soon made other sports events available to stations around the state, and that station has since then networked not only the University of Wisconsin, but also, the Milwaukee Brewers, Green Bay Packers and Milwaukee Bucks. When the University of Wisconsin opted to sell

117- ibid.
exclusive network rights to its football and basketball games in 1988, WTMJ outbid the Wisconsin Network for those rights, signalling the end of the Wisconsin Network. WTMJ, in turn, lost those rights to Learfield Communications in 1994.

Today, it may be difficult to understand the importance of radio to these small communities. Longtime radio and television broadcaster Mark Zelich points out that this was before the era of television, and residents of small cities were closer than they are today. Radio stations were part of that and were very much a part of their community. Sports programming was a natural extension of the public service, entertainment and emergency programming which a local station provided to its community. Stations tried to build an image as a community leader, and sports broadcasts played a key role in that image. In one-station markets, the local station almost always had a commitment to sports, and in multi-station markets, the station which did most of the local sports was considered the number one station. Zelich remembers that radio stations in this period had a special relationship with their cities, which was an important part of the structure of the community. Sports, with

118- ibid.
the community, played a key part in this relationship.

Radio stations in northern and central Wisconsin have a rich tradition of sports broadcasting. This project examines the current status of sports programming in the target region by reviewing data compiled from surveys which were returned from the stations. The data will be reviewed and compared, and conclusions on the current status of this industry will be reported.

The next section reports on personal interviews conducted with officials of the surveyed stations. The study examines the effects of sports programming on these radio stations and their communities, and these station executives will give their personal thoughts on this segment of the industry.
CHAPTER THREE:  
THE MAIL SURVEY

QUANTITATIVE DATA

The quantitative data for this project was derived from a one-page survey which was mailed to 29 radio stations in northern and central Wisconsin. The survey was designed to provide information on the number, type and methods of local sports broadcasts in this region. These surveys were mailed to radio stations in November of 1993, and by the end of the year, 22 surveys, or 76% of those mailed, were returned.

In this section, the mail survey and its findings will be examined. WMQA-AM/FM (Minocqua), WJJQ-AM/FM (Tomahawk), and WHSM-AM/FM (Hayward) are each counted as one station because they are usually in simulcast. This section includes a listing of the data compiled from the mail survey, and a discussion of the findings.

The 22 returned surveys actually resulted in responses from 35 radio stations, since many of the stations which returned surveys are AM/FM combo operations. Of these 35, 23 broadcast local sports events (66%), while 12 do not (34%). In addition, 18 of the 22 reporting operators (82%) broadcast sports on at least one of their stations.
These numbers indicate that sports programming plays an important role at radio stations in the target area. In many of these communities, the local radio station is an AM/FM combo, operated by one owner, and sports seems especially important on these stations. Seventeen of the stations which broadcast local sports are AM stations or AM/FM combos. Four of the FM stations which do not have co-owned AM stations (WRLS, WECL, WCFW and WEGZ) also broadcast local sports. Two stand-alone FM's (WYTE and WIZD) do not, and they are located in the competitive Stevens Point market. There are also two AM stations which do not broadcast local sports (WAYY and WISM), and both are in the competitive Eau Claire market. A total of 12 of the 19 reporting FM stations do not broadcast local sports, although ten of these have AM stations which do broadcast sports. All of the operators in single owner markets broadcast sports on at least one of their stations.

Graph number one indicates the number of stations in the survey which broadcast each sport. The survey reveals that of the 23 stations which broadcast local play-by-play, 22 broadcast boys basketball, 21 broadcast football, 18 broadcast girls basketball, 12 broadcast baseball, 12 broadcast hockey, seven broadcast wrestling, four broadcast girls softball, and two
broadcast girls volleyball.

Only two stations which broadcast local sports in this region do not broadcast high school football. They are WEAQ in Eau Claire and WEGZ in Washburn. WEAQ is also the only station which does not broadcast boys basketball. Their returned survey indicates that WEAQ only broadcasts women's sports, so football and boys basketball are not heard on this station. The survey returned by WEGZ indicates that this station broadcasts high schools in northern Wisconsin's Indianhead Conference. These are small schools, most of which do not field football teams, which would give WEGZ little opportunity to air football games.

Graph number two indicates the number of local play-by-play events broadcast annually by each reporting station. The survey shows that radio stations which broadcast local sports in this region vary widely in the number of local events they present. The returned surveys show one station in the 0-30 range, five broadcast between 31 and 50 events per year, six broadcast between 51 and 70, three broadcast between 71 and 90, four broadcast between 91 and 110, and three stations broadcast 111 or more local play-by-play events each year.

Graph number three illustrates the technological
methods used by radio stations in the survey region to broadcast their games. The survey shows that most of the stations in the region use telephone lines and remote transmitters (Martis) to broadcast their games. Seven of the stations use cellular telephones for their broadcasts, while one station uses a hard-line, or loop, and one other uses satellite for broadcasts.

Graph number four illustrates the number of radio stations in the survey area which broadcast local sports reports during a specific day-part. The survey shows that three-fourths of the responding stations broadcast some sort of local sports report in morning drive. Eight of these stations do not broadcast local play-by-play events, but still air sports reports in this daypart.

The survey shows that fewer stations air local sports reports as the day progresses. About half of the reporting stations air local sports reports during the noon hour. Only one-third of the stations air local sports reports in afternoon drive, and only one of these is a station which does not broadcast local play-by-play (WYTE).

Some stations, about 22%, also provide local sports reports outside of the conventional drive times. Three of these stations provide late-night sports
reports. Other stations in this category broadcast local sports in late morning or early afternoon.

About one-quarter of the responding stations do not air local sports reports at all. Only one is an AM station with a local play-by-play schedule: WJMT in Merrill which, according to its survey, does give some local scores within its news reports. The other radio stations which do not broadcast local sports reports are FM stations. These stations are music-oriented, although some do broadcast local play-by-play events. Four of the stations which do not broadcast any local sports reports are in the competitive Eau Claire market.

Graph number five indicates the amount of time per day which each station devotes to local sports reports. Full-service stations devote the most amount of time to sports reports. The top six stations on the list of time allotted to sports reports per day are full-service radio stations, which devote a large part of their broadcast day to information programming, and the first five on that list are AM stations. No station which broadcasts play-by-play events devotes less than five minutes per day to sports reports, except those which air no sports reports at all. Meanwhile, only one station which does not broadcast local play-by-play
devotes more than eight minutes per day to sports reports. That station is WRLO in Antigo, which does broadcast regional network play-by-play such as the Milwaukee Brewers and the Milwaukee Bucks. The bottom four stations on this list all devote four minutes per day or less to local sports reports, and none of these stations broadcast play-by-play events.

Results of the survey show that 15 of the 22 radio stations which broadcast play-by-play events use full-time employees to handle their play-by-play duties (68%). Two of these stations use full-time Sports Directors to handle their play-by-play and sports reporting duties (9%). The other stations use employees who have a combination of other station responsibilities, such as announcing (five—23%), news reporting (four—18%), sales (four—18%), commercial copywriting (two—9%), programming (two—9%), and management (one—5%). Many of these employees handle more than one other station responsibility, so that the percentages and numbers do not even out.

The mail survey identifies a number of facts about the sports programming philosophies of stations in the target area. The average station in this region broadcasts about 70 local play-by-play events each

*— for this segment, WIGM-AM/FM is listed as one station.
year, centering around local high school teams. These stations primarily use standard technologies, such as telephone lines and remote transmitter units to air these events. Most stations use station employees to broadcast these games, with these employees holding other station responsibilities as well. Some stations will hire part-time persons from the community, however, to broadcast games.

DISCUSSION

This segment of the project will discuss the mail survey in further detail, and draw some possible conclusions from information gathered from the surveys. Some of the conclusions discussed in this section will come from the author's own experiences in broadcasting, which include more than twenty years as a sports broadcaster. In those instances when the author draws upon his own experiences to reach conclusions, every attempt will be made to thoroughly explain the process of reaching those findings. Other points made in this section are drawn from a series of personal interviews conducted with radio station officials following the compilation of the survey.

The findings of the returned surveys indicate that sports programming is an important part of the radio
stations in the survey region. This is especially true of AM stations in non-competitive markets, all of which have some local play-by-play on the air. Sports is not limited to AM radio, however, as FM stations also air sports programming. This is especially true for radio stations such as WRLS in Hayward and WEGZ in Washburn, where there is no local AM station offering the same type of sports programming. A number of FM stations do shun local sports programming, though, perhaps to concentrate on a specific musical format.

The numbers would indicate that, in this region, the cornerstone of a station’s local sports programming is high school football and boys basketball. All but a small number of stations in the survey broadcast these sports, and those which do not, such as WEAQ and WEGZ, have specific reasons for not airing these games.

Meanwhile, it appears that high school girls basketball is becoming a key element in local sports programming in this region. Eighteen of the 23 sports stations in the survey now broadcast this sport. The survey does not include, however, how many girls games are broadcast in comparison to boys games, or which games have priority if there is a conflict. The survey results here suggest some questions to be raised during the personal interviews such as; is broadcasting girls
basketball less of a priority than boys basketball; at what stage did stations begin broadcasting girls basketball; and is girls basketball receiving more exposure now than in earlier years?

Like girls basketball, other sports are also receiving additional exposure on radio stations in central and northern Wisconsin. For instance, over half of the radio stations which broadcast local sports air local hockey play-by-play. This is actually a large number, considering that not all communities have local hockey programs. That means that radio stations in those cities do not have a hockey team to broadcast. In addition, hockey is a sport which is often limited to larger schools. There are no schools in this region, outside of the Wisconsin Valley Conference and Lumberjack Conference, except for Mosinee, which have hockey programs. This means that some operations which broadcast sports on two stations, such as WDLB/WOSX and WATW/WJJH, which might broadcast a basketball game involving small area schools outside of the city of license, have no area small schools with hockey programs. In addition, there are stations, such as WCFW, WHSM and WECL which do not broadcast hockey. Like girls basketball, however, the survey does not indicate what priority hockey has in relation to
boys basketball.

Baseball is also a source of sports programming for many of these stations, although much of the baseball season takes place outside of the busy August to March high school football and basketball season. High school baseball is very useful for stations in the Lumberjack Conference. In Wisconsin, high schools have the choice of playing school-sponsored baseball in the spring or in the summer. Five of the seven Lumberjack schools, except for Medford and Phillips, play baseball in the summer months rather than the spring. Four of the reporting stations in the Lumberjack broadcast baseball while one does not. Medford’s WIGM does broadcast some games during the spring season, while three other stations air summer high school baseball games.

Other stations have their pick of high school baseball in the spring and various amateur programs in the summer. The survey does not explain, however, what baseball these stations are broadcasting. For example, WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids airs high school baseball in the spring, but does not broadcast summer baseball. Meanwhile, WDLB in Marshfield broadcasts no high school baseball in the spring, unless a local team makes it to a state tournament. WDLB does, however,
broadcast American Legion and adult amateur baseball in the summer. In addition, seven of the twelve stations which broadcast local baseball are also members of the Milwaukee Brewers radio network, and must fit their local games around the Brewers schedule.

The survey does not show how important local baseball broadcasts are to these radio stations. There would be no conflicts, however, with other high school sports, such as football or basketball. Conflicts would occur with the Brewers or other programs which could be disruptive to the local schedule. Many high school games, for instance, are played in the late afternoon, when radio stations may broadcast lucrative and popular information blocks. Facilities for broadcasting baseball could also be a problem, as road games may be played at remote sites which do not have electricity. Should the visiting radio station have to install a phone line for one broadcast, expenses could be high, and there is the possibility that inclement weather could force the game to be cancelled, meaning that the station would have installed the line for no reason. Many stations broadcast local baseball, but they may use this as a supplemental sport, which they broadcast on occasion, when cost and circumstances allow.
Some stations also broadcast other sports to generate listener and advertiser support. Seven of the stations in the surveyed region broadcast high school wrestling. This includes stations in Wisconsin Rapids, Merrill, Medford, Park Falls and Tomahawk, whose high schools have a history of success in this sport. In this case, a specialized sport has created a market for itself because of increasing interest from listeners and advertisers. Gennaro's WFHR was one of the first stations in Wisconsin to broadcast live wrestling play-by-play, after Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids established a premier wrestling program. These broadcasts began as reports, as Gennaro did not believe that a wrestling match could be aired as a play-by-play event. Eventually, however, WFHR Sports Director Terry Stake developed an expertise in this sport, and these broadcasts evolved into play-by-play events.

The survey shows that communities which have a successful high school wrestling program are more likely to have this sport broadcast by their local radio station. This may not infer, however, that unsuccessful programs are unlikely to have their matches on the air. There may be other reasons why other stations choose not to broadcast high school wrestling.

120- Gennaro.
matches.

For instance, there are problems inherent in broadcasting this sport, and many of these involve the problems the sport presents to the individual broadcaster. Terminology is a major factor, as each of the holds and moves has a specific name which identifies it to the wrestling devotee. These may sound very foreign however, to other listeners, even those who closely follow other sports. Finding a broadcaster who knows these terms, and can present them to wrestling fans and non-fans may be difficult. There could also be resistance from station management who, like Gennaro, cannot envision wrestling as a play-by-play sport.

Wrestling may be very lucrative to stations under proper circumstances. There may have to be, however, a successful program in order to generate community interest, and a broadcaster who has the expertise to present the sport to a radio audience.

According to the survey, only two radio stations in the region broadcast high school girls volleyball. There could be several reasons why so few stations broadcast this sport. One could be the lack of perennially strong teams in the region, which could lead to stronger community interest, and advertiser and listener demand for these broadcasts. Another
problem may be the lack of expertise by broadcasters who, like those who do not know the terminology of wrestling, are uncomfortable broadcasting volleyball. Cost may also be a problem with airing high school volleyball games. Most radio stations belong to telephone line cooperatives, in which they install broadcast lines into their football stadia or gymnasiums for use by visiting radio stations. As these lines are installed in gyms for the high school basketball season, they can also be used by stations which broadcast wrestling, since those sports seasons run concurrently. Since the volleyball season takes place in the fall, winter phone lines have not been installed into gymnasiums, and visiting radio stations would have to install their own lines, thereby incurring much larger costs in broadcasting road games.

Another girls high school sport which does not receive a great deal of play-by-play coverage is softball. Only four stations in the region broadcast this sport. At first look, there may be an attempt to compare this sport with baseball and question why over half of the stations broadcast baseball, but so few broadcast girls softball. There are differences, however, which make comparisons difficult. First, "girls softball" in the survey refers to high school
girls softball and not recreational women's softball. This limits broadcast opportunities to the spring high school season, since other opportunities which exist for males, such as American Legion or adult amateur baseball in the summer, do not exist for females. In addition, while most of the Lumberjack Conference schools play summer high school baseball, there is no summer high school girls softball season. This may account for why three of the four stations which broadcast girls softball are Lumberjack Conference stations; there is no high school boys baseball season to compete with for airtime. High school girls softball also has some of the same problems as baseball; road games at distant sites with poor facilities and competition for airtime with lucrative daytime non-sports programming.

Some stations report that they also broadcast other local sports events. WJJQ in Tomahawk broadcasts high school track and cross country meets, possibly because Tomahawk High School has had strong teams in these sports in recent years. WJMT in Merrill has attempted to build a reputation as a racing station, broadcasting races which are available on a national network. To supplement these broadcasts, WJMT also broadcasts races from local tracks. Only two radio
stations list talk or interview programs as part of their sports programming, although it is possible that other stations host programs featuring their local coaches.

Over 90 percent of the radio stations in this survey list a primary broadcast team, which is often the high school representing the station's city of license. For example, the primary broadcast team of WIGM-AM in Medford is Medford High School. The primary broadcast teams of WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids are Wisconsin Rapids-Lincoln and Wisconsin Rapids-Assumption High Schools.

There are, however, some exceptions to this policy. For instance, in Eau Claire, where there is a university and three high schools, the college teams usually take priority. WBIZ and WECL both list UW-Eau Claire as their primary broadcast team. WEAQ, which broadcasts only women's basketball involving all of those schools, lists no primary team.

WIGM in Medford lists Abbotsford High School as the primary team for its FM station. Abbotsford is 14 miles south of Medford and, because of its location at

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121- Wayne Smith personal interview, May 10, 1994
   *- Jerry Hackman of WATW/WJJH in Ashland referred to such a program during a personal interview, but did not list the program on his survey. Other station executives may have done the same.
the intersection of two major highways, has more business than most communities of its size (population 1901). Broadcasting Abbotsford High School is, therefore, financially rewarding, according to General Manager Brad Dahlvig, and continues a link between the station and the Abbotsford community.

WHSM in Hayward lists Spooner High School as its primary team. Hayward High School is covered by the other Hayward station, WRLS. The two stations both covered Hayward for a number of years, until WHSM decided that covering Spooner, about 20 miles from Hayward, would be more lucrative without the competition of another station.

WCFW in Chippewa Falls broadcasts Chippewa Falls High School, but does not broadcast the city’s parochial school, McDonell High School, feeling that there is not enough advertiser and listener interest in McDonell. Another area station, WOGO, used this opening to move in on Chippewa Falls sports, by first broadcasting McDonell, and then competing with WCFW by broadcasting Chippewa Falls High.

Phillips is the only community in the Lumberjack Conference which does not have its own radio station.

122- Brad Dahlvig personal interview, June 15, 1994
124- Pat Bushland telephone interview, April 7, 1995.
Phillips High School sports are, however, carried on WCQM-FM in nearby Park Falls, which broadcasts Park Falls High School sports on its AM station, WNBI.

WOSX in Spencer does not list a primary team, and WEGZ in Washburn listed the Indianhead Conference as its primary team on its returned survey. Each of these stations is located in small communities, and may not find broadcasting their specific local high school exclusively to be very lucrative. They instead use a game of the week concept, covering a number of small schools in their area. Most communities large enough to support radio stations, however, also have large high schools, and these stations build their sports schedules around these schools.

Ten of the stations which broadcast local sports also list a secondary broadcast team, which include numerous schools within their coverage area. There are some interesting listings in this section. For instance, WJMT in Merrill lists Athens High School wrestling as a secondary team, taking advantage of one of the premier wrestling programs in the state, but does not list Athens basketball or football. WBIZ and WEAQ in Eau Claire both list all three Eau Claire high schools as secondary teams (WBIZ has a primary commitment to UW-Eau Claire). WIGM in Medford lists
Gilman High School as a secondary team. Gilman is 27 miles from Medford and the two communities would appear to have little connection with one another, but WIGM feels a responsibility to cover some of their games because Gilman and Medford are in the same county.

It is possible that some stations do not list secondary sports teams because their AM signals cannot be heard in other communities at night. For example, WATK in Antigo has 250 watts of power at night, WNBI in Park Falls has 105 watts, WHSM in Hayward has 75 watts, and WSPO in Stevens Point has eleven watts. These AM signals will not travel far at night, and these limited signals may not cover a secondary community, making broadcasting another school impractical. By the number of stations which broadcast secondary teams, however, it would appear that many stations feel that their sports commitment goes beyond their city limits.

Although the survey found some stations which broadcast only one school, it also found that many stations are involved with more sports than just football and boys basketball. As mentioned in the methodology section, the minimum number local events for a station broadcasting only football and boys basketball would be 30, based on nine football games.

125- Dahlvig.
and 21 basketball games. Due to the increased number of sports broadcast, however, that minimum number is pushed above 30 at most stations. For instance, WSAU in Wausau only broadcasts Wausau-East High School, but since the station broadcasts not only football and boys basketball, but also hockey and girls volleyball, that minimum number is increased. In fact, all of the stations in the 31-50 category broadcast just one primary team. Most stations are above that figure, however, as 73% of the stations which broadcast local sports air 51 events per year or more.

In reviewing the technological aspects of sports broadcasting, it appears that this segment of the industry has changed since the early years of radio. As mentioned in the local history section, many radio stations once used broadcast loops for their broadcasts. The survey shows that now, virtually every radio station originates play-by-play events by telephone lines. Experience shows that this is the conventional method for broadcasting road games in which the local team plays at a distant site. This broadcast method can be expensive, with installation of a telephone line costing over $100.00. Radio stations in the Wisconsin Valley Conference and the

127- Sharon Dupee personal interview, April 7, 1995.
Lumberjack Conference get around this cost by using cooperative phone line networks. By this arrangement, radio stations install telephone lines for the season into their local football stadia and gymnasium. These lines are used by visiting stations which initiate the broadcast by calling from their studios. The visiting station, therefore, only pays for the cost of the telephone call and does not pay the expensive charges of installation.

Only one station does not use telephone lines. That is WOSX, which broadcasts a number of small high schools in the Marshfield area. Most of these schools are in the range of the station's remote transmitter units, and broadcasts are originated by this method.

Most stations use these units, commonly referred to as "Marti units" after the company which makes most of them. These units are important pieces of station equipment, not only for sports coverage, but also for news coverage, broadcasts from community events, and other remote broadcasts. These units consist of a transmitter and antenna at the broadcast site, and a receiver and antenna at the studio. Distance and quality of the broadcast can be enhanced with more

* The author is aware of this arrangement since he is the coordinator of the Wisconsin Valley Conference telephone cooperative.
powerful transmitters and by improving antenna height and strength. Under optimum circumstances, these units provide studio-quality sound at no cost besides the initial investment in the equipment.

The survey found three stations which report they do not use remote transmitters for sports broadcasts. One of those stations is WRLS in Hayward. The other Hayward station, WHSM also does not use a Marti unit for its sports broadcasts since the school it covers, Spooner High School, is out of Marti range. The third station which does not use a remote transmitter is WECL in Eau Claire.

Seven stations use cellular telephones for play-by-play broadcasts. These telephones can be very useful when a broadcast has to be arranged on short notice out of remote transmitter range, and when there is not enough time to give the telephone company advance notice to install a telephone line. Although cellular phone usage may be more expensive than using normal phone lines, many stations have deals with cellular phone companies which reduce the cost of calls.

* While visiting WRLS, the author saw a Marti unit at the studios. It is possible that the person answering the survey simply neglected to check that option on the survey, or, since WRLS studios are located in a remote area, it is also possible that the Marti unit is not usable from the community’s sports facilities.
in the station's specific area, in return for advertising. These deals, however, generally are not in effect on calls outside the local area, so costs on games which are a substantial distance from the station can be much greater than games broadcast over conventional phone lines. Also, the audio quality of the cellular phone call is generally below that of a conventional phone line, which reduces the sound quality of the broadcast. Service can also be a problem, as a station which is counting on cellular service at a particular site may arrive to find that cellular service is not available in that area, service is only available to service subscribers, or service may be interrupted during the broadcast.

Only one area station uses hard lines, or loops. These are direct, studio-quality telephone lines which connect the remote site to the studio, and are arranged through the telephone company on a per-usage basis. Some years ago, WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids made an arrangement with its local telephone company to make a lump-sum payment and "purchase" a hard line between its studios and the gymnasium at Wisconsin Rapids-Assumption High School. This gives the station studio quality sound at a site where setting up a remote transmitter and antenna would be difficult. This is,
however, the only instance of the use of this once-popular technology in the surveyed area.

Only one area station uses satellite technology to air local sports events. This is WDLB in Marshfield, which broadcasts Milwaukee Brewers exhibition baseball games from Arizona each spring and uses satellite to send the signal back to Wisconsin and distribute the signal to Marshfield and several other stations in its corporation. It is possible that the advent of KU-Band satellite technology will make use of satellites for even local broadcasts possible in the near future, but that technology has not yet reached the surveyed region.

The survey indicates that radio stations which broadcast a lot of local play-by-play events also have a strong commitment to sports reporting. Most, but not all stations, which broadcast play-by-play events air sports reports in the morning. Many of the exceptions are FM stations which are music oriented but still do some play-by-play. There are also two AM stations which do not broadcast morning drive sports; WATW in Ashland, which airs a sports report during the noon hour, and WJMT in Merrill, which does no separate local sports reports. These two stations both use part-time

128- Jay Latsch personal interview, April 7, 1995.
personnel as their play-by-play announcers, and do not have a knowledgable sports broadcaster on hand who can compile daily sports reports. Station Managers at both of these stations admit that this is one of the drawbacks of using part-timers as play-by-play announcers.

It is unclear why the number of stations which provide local sports reports declines as the day progresses. A possible explanation is that the station’s sportscaster works during the morning hours and compiling an afternoon sports report is not part of the sportscaster’s responsibilities. It is also possible that some of these stations could be airing syndicated or satellite programming in this daypart, and may not have a large enough local window to provide a local sports report.

The survey shows that some stations air sports reports outside of the normal drive time periods. These may be used to re-cap local and national scores of that day. WJJQ in Tomahawk broadcasts a sports report at 5:40 AM, which may be considered an extension of morning drive. WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids broadcasts sports reports in late morning and early afternoon, which are designed as quick headlines and score re-

129- Dahlvig and Wayne Smith.
130 caps. Other stations air scoreboard programs at night, which are designed to update local and national scores of that day.

The survey reveals a link between sports reporting and sports play-by-play in small market radio. The stations which have a strong commitment to play-by-play have a similar commitment to sports programming in general. This may mean that these stations look upon sports as a total concept which includes play-by-play and sports reporting as key components. Interestingly, the two stations which devote the most time per day to sports reports, WDLB and WSAU, are the only stations in this survey to employ full-time Sports Directors who have no other station responsibilities.

Aside from these two stations, all other stations in the survey employ either part-timers to handle their play-by-play duties, or have full-time sports broadcasters who have other station responsibilities. There is a great deal of diversity in the additional duties of these station employees, who are involved in news, announcing, programming, sales and even management.

Due to the other responsibilities a sports broadcaster may have at a radio station, sportscasting is still a part-time job at many stations. The results

130- Terry Stake telephone interview, April 6, 1995.
of the survey show that, in order to obtain a job in small market radio, a young sportscaster must be able to perform other functions as well. On one hand, this makes the sportscaster one of the most versatile members of the station’s staff. Experience also shows, however, that this may detract from a station’s overall sports sound, since the sportscaster can be so busy with other station duties that proper sports preparation is neglected.

The number of stations which broadcast play-by-play events has perhaps declined over the years, but there may be some reasons for this. For one, many AM/FM combos in single ownership markets have followed the lead of major market stations by devoting their FM stations to music-oriented programming. Second, the number of stations in medium markets which broadcast sports has been reduced as these markets also follow the lead of major markets, and stations which may have previously broadcast sports, especially AM stations, devote themselves to other types of programming.

* The author has heard this complaint from many sports broadcasters who also fill other station positions. Brian Norton of WOBT, Rhinelander, has mentioned to the author how difficult it is to perform his sports duties while hosting a daily six-hour airshift. Another local sportscaster told the author that, while performing sales duties for his station, his management became upset if he stopped for a short period during the day to record interviews with local coaches.
leaving sports to one or two stations per market. Sports is, however, an important part of an operation’s overall programming, with many owners devoting much of their AM airtime to sports. In one-owner markets, in fact, although some operators may not program sports on their FM stations, there are no operators in the survey region, which do not program on at least one of their stations.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

QUALITATIVE DATA

Following the compilation of quantitative data, personal interviews were conducted with radio station executives and sports broadcasters to determine the role and impact of sports programming in small market radio. The aim of the interview process was to determine why stations broadcast local sports, and what those broadcasts mean to the stations and their communities. The interviews were not structured the same way in each instance, since information gathered from the mail survey determined the structure of each personal interview. There were several concepts which were discussed in each interview, however, such as the station's sports philosophy, the impact of sports programming on the station and the community, and where sports programming fit within the overall station structure. Several consistent ideas emerged from these interviews, and these will be discussed independently in this section.

The interviews conducted with radio executives and sports broadcasters from throughout the survey region suggest that sports programming serves a very important
role at small market radio stations, but it is not an independent role. Small market stations, at least those which label themselves as "full service-information" stations, consider sports as a key component within the station’s overall structure. This is a concept which will be called "localism", and is one of the most important aspects of small market radio.

LOCALISM

The term "localism" was first used during the interview process by the General Manager of WIGM-AM/FM in Medford, Brad Dahlvig. Dahlvig used it to describe his station’s relationship with its community. Other aspects of a station’s programming, such as local news or broadcasting community events, may come to mind more readily when the term localism is used. The radio station executives interviewed during this project agree with Dahlvig that sports plays a vital role within that concept, and is perhaps more important than some of those other components.

Jim Schuh was the General Manager of what is now WSPO/WSPT in Stevens Point for almost 25 years. Schuh describes localism as the "monopoly" which small market stations have on local programming. He feels that this
type of programming creates a bond between the station and its community. Any type of local programming enhances this bond, and sports is a key element, just as is news and other local information programming.

Jack Hackman of WDLB/WLJY in Marshfield is aware of the competition provided by larger market stations, which have better voices or talent. Stations such as WGN in Chicago or WCCO in Minneapolis-St. Paul can be heard in central Wisconsin, and provide competition for his station. Smaller stations cannot compete with these more powerful stations unless they give their local listeners something they cannot get anywhere else; local information.

Dahlvig says news is the most important aspect of localism. Hackman agrees with that, but also points out that there are many people in the community more interested in high school sports than in city government. Bob Hague of WRLS in Hayward concurs, and adds that many in his community consider high school sports more important than city government, although not as entertaining. Hague adds that in small communities, high school sports events are very important because of the identity which they gives the community. There may be other distractions in larger towns which overshadow school activities, but in towns
of this size, much of the community's life centers around its youth and schools. Mike Sullivan of WBIZ-AM/FM in Eau Claire says that by providing coverage of high school sports teams, stations become involved with that local identity and create a niche for themselves which cannot be duplicated by stations from outside the area.

Stations which emphasize the local community in their programming are referred to as "full-service" stations. As the longtime General Manager of WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids, Jack Gennaro, says, "full-service radio is a mix of news, sports and other local programming." Music is incidental at this type of station, as it is often used to take up time between information segments.

Although AM radio is struggling in many major markets, some AM stations in small markets do quite well financially and in listenership. Gennaro points out that WFHR is the number one station in the Wisconsin Rapids area, and other AM stations can make similar claims in their communities. These AM stations are full-service stations which provide the local information product which cannot be obtained elsewhere, especially since few FM stations provide this service. This is not a new concept for AM stations, as broadcast
veterans such as Gennaro, Hackman and Zelich point out that many small market stations have provided this programming in their communities since the early days of the industry.

Small market, full-service stations are always looking for ways to enhance their local programming, and Hackman points out that sports programming does that very well, by providing solid hours of good, local events, in which local broadcasters discuss local players and the community. Sullivan calls this a positive service to local youth, their parents, and the community. Beyond that, sports programming becomes part of a station image of community service to its listening area. The longtime News Director of WSAW-TV in Wausau, and a former sports broadcaster, Mark Zelich, feels that leading stations obtain their reputation through imagery, and sports coverage is an important part of that image of full-service radio. Hackman adds that sports is an important part of virtually all stations which label themselves as full-service.

Small market radio stations have a special relationship with their communities, which Zelich feels is very important to the structure of the town. These stations provide their listeners with local programming
which cannot be duplicated anywhere else. This helps the station build an image as an important part of its community. Sports programming not only provides the station with solid local programs, it also helps the station maintain that local image. Sports may, therefore, be cited as an important part of a station's overall performance because of its actual coverage and because of the image it allows the station to present to its community.

REVENUE

One of the most concrete ways in which to measure sports impact on small market radio stations is by comparing revenue generated by sports broadcasts to that generated by other stations and by other programs on each station. This is not possible in this paper for two reasons. First, many radio stations are unwilling to disclose revenue figures so that comparisons of actual figures are not worthwhile. Secondly, many radio stations consider sports revenue to include not only revenue generated from broadcasting local events, but also that which comes from network sports, such as Milwaukee Brewers or Green Bay Packers broadcasts. Many radio station executives, however, do have general comments to make about the effect which
local sports broadcasts have on their station's overall revenues.

Full-service radio stations have always considered sports an important part of their programming mix for several reasons, including the community service which is provided by these broadcasts. According to Gennaro, Hackman and Strope, sports broadcasts in the early days of small market radio were considered community service broadcasts, and they were sold with that in mind. Gennaro says that sports played a large part in that image which local stations attempted to project, and sponsors saw these broadcasts the same way. At the outset, businesses sponsored local sports broadcasts as a community service. These early sponsors did not consider local sports as a way to sell their products, but as a way to position the company within the community.

In those early days of small market radio sports, the number of sponsors were limited. At WFHR, Strope recalls that only one sponsorship was sold, and that to local auto dealer, Crown Auto. Later, Wood County Bank asked to be a part of the sponsorship, and it was added. Even with just one or two sponsors, however, WFHR generated good revenue from its local sports broadcasts.
At WDLB in Marshfield, Hackman recalls there were eight sponsors per game, and all commercials were read live, either by the color commentator or by a third announcer who came along to the broadcast just for that purpose. Hackman recalls that it never mattered if the local team was winning or losing; local sports broadcasts were easy to sell. That was because he found that sponsors bought what they liked, and they usually liked the local high school and community. They wanted to feel like part of the school, and sponsoring these broadcasts did that.

Over the years, selling local sports became more difficult. It was no longer a case of just walking into a business and taking an order. Instead, according to Jim Schuh, local businesses no longer felt that commitment to sponsor local sports, feeling that it was not in their best interest, or that they could show their support for the school and the community in other ways. Consolidations in financial institutions also changed the way these broadcasts were sold, since banks and savings and loans did not automatically buy every play-by-play event which came along. Schuh found that local sports programming was no longer a big money maker, and Dahlvig discovered the same thing, pointing out that WIGM received a greater return on Paul Harvey
This has forced a change in the way that small market stations sell their local sports. As mentioned, in the early years of local radio, commercials were read live, and they were usually 60-second commercials. At WFHR, a change was made in the early 1970’s, so that advertisers received two 30-second commercials per game rather than one 60-second commercial. This occurred when the 30 replaced the 60 as the industry norm.

Other changes were made later. Both WDLB and WFHR abandoned 30-second announcements and established what they called sportscasters clubs. One of these announcements lasted for about 45-seconds, and would feature three local businesses, which would receive a brief mention about their firm. Not only would these messages air during the games, but also at other times throughout the week, often fronted by an announcement concerning the upcoming game or some other community event. This method of selling local sports is now used by a variety of small market stations.

Other stations use other methods for selling their games. Since 1992, WDLB has modified its "sportscaster club". The station now uses this sales method only for community events and pre-game and post-game programs, but sells 30-second commercials for its game action.
WJMT in Merrill also runs 30-second spots during its games. Unlike most other stations, however, all of the WJMT commercials are read live at the site. Another sales method is to sell a portion of the game to one individual advertiser. Although this practice did not appear in the survey region, the author recalls that WKEI in Kewanee, Illinois used this sales system. The station would sell each quarter of a football or basketball broadcast to individual sponsors. That business would receive all commercial announcements and "drop-ins" (10-second commercials which were read live at the site) during their quarter.

Even if sales are down at some stations, the financial impact of sports on small market stations is still great. Bob Hague of WRLS in Hayward points out most sports events take place after 6:00 PM, when the amount of sold airtime at these stations drops dramatically. Airing sports during this time period provides stations with commercial inventory which boosts revenue during a daypart which is otherwise not very marketable.

HOMOGENEITY

Homogeneity is a term which was used during the interview process, primarily by Jim Schuh of WIZD.
Schuh's definition of this term was "doing something, sticking to it, and doing it well." In radio terms, this would mean deciding upon a format for a station, be it music or something else, and staying with that format. This would create a niche for the station, developing a dependability among listeners who will know that this format will always be there for them.

In larger markets, homogeneity becomes very important, as many stations strive to find their niche. Generally, there are one or two stations attempting to reach a wide audience with full-service and information oriented formats, while other stations attempt to reach smaller, but loyal audiences with a specific musical format. Jack Hackman calls this "narrowcasting", in which radio stations, primarily FM's, have refined their formats to a very narrow degree. For instance, rather than have contemporary music stations, there are now stations that specialize in different types of this style of music: light rock, classic rock, top 40, oldies, etc. Country music formats have developed in the same way. Hackman believes this has all happened since the 1970's, when FM became the dominant radio medium and these stations tried to use their superior audio quality to appeal to a specific audience.

Radio was not always like this, especially on the
FM dial. One of the questions posed to station officials during the interview process, many of whom operate AM/FM combo operations, was "If this was the 1970's or before, would it be taken for granted that your station would broadcast local sports, even on your FM station, despite the format of that station?" Most executives said yes, and cited several examples. As mentioned above, WFHR-FM, broadcast Stevens Point sports events well into the 1960's. WDLB-FM in Marshfield broadcast Marawood Conference basketball and football. And WJMT-FM in Merrill broadcast Merrill High School sports before WJMT-AM received a full-time license.

This was when radio attempted to be all things to all people. Arnie Strope recalls an era when radio stations would program a different type of format every quarter-hour. Today, this situation may make a modern programer cringe. As Mark Zelich pointed out, however,

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*--To cite an example from the author's own experience, my first full-time position in radio was at WCBY-AM/FM in Cheboygan, Michigan. The AM station was used to broadcast the sports events of two Cheboygan high schools at night, while the FM station broadcast smaller schools in the area, including several in the eastern upper peninsula. While talking to the General Manager one day, he told me that the FM frequency was acquired and put on the air in 1967, primarily for use as a carrier for regional high school sports. Today, the FM station uses a classic rock format, and has not broadcast a sporting event in many years.
although the type of music played on a station might change from time to time during the broadcast day, it was all tied together by local announcers who knew how to relate to the local audience. Those announcers maintained unity on the station no matter what type of music was being played.

Strope believes this period of radio began to change when television arrived. He feels radio panicked because radio people felt they would lose everything. So, they took all of their block programs off the air in an attempt to streamline programming. Jim Schuh recalls this era of what he calls "magazine" programming, and believes it began to end with the advent of top-40 radio. Stations had used their FM frequencies as throw-aways, or to simulcast their AM signals. Most stations held onto their FM stations simply to keep them out of the hands of competitors. In the 1970's, however, as FM became the dominant medium in major markets, a similar transformation occurred in small markets such as central Wisconsin. Station management now realized that these FM stations could attract listeners and advertisers, but felt that they would have to stick to a specific format to do it. As an example, in 1967, WFHR purchased brand new equipment for its FM station, developed a
contemporary music format, changed the call letters to \*WWRW, and took all sports off the air. WDLB-FM constructed an 800 foot tower for its 100,000 watt transmitter, changed its call letters to WLJY, and stuck to its beautiful music format, dropping all sports. Other stations, such as WSPT in Stevens Point and WJMT in Merrill, made similar decisions, although not all at once. In the competitive Eau Claire market, top-40 WBIZ-FM still broadcast sports up until 1990. By and large, however, most stations decided to drop sports from their FM stations so that these stations could be "homogeneous"; they could concentrate on whatever musical format they had chosen.

This decision was not limited to FM stations. Mike Sullivan of WBIZ recalls many battles over the number of local games aired on the AM station, because management wanted to concentrate on a country or easy listening music format. Quite often, however, stations which became homogeneous on the FM band concentrated more on local programming on AM. This meant that the station operation may broadcast the same amount of sports as it always did, except now, all sports programs were on the AM station.

\*- sports did reappear briefly on WWRW in the mid-1970's when the station purchased exclusive rights to broadcast University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point football and basketball for two seasons.
Today, most local sports events are confined to the AM dial, but there are exceptions. In Ashland, where Jerry Hackman manages three stations, powerhouse Ashland High School football is simulcast on WATW and WJJH-FM. WJJH, with 50,000 watts, also broadcasts Indianhead Conference basketball, while 100,000 watt WBSZ broadcasts Green Bay Packers football and University of Wisconsin sports. WRLS in Hayward, which has assumed a full-service philosophy in the absence of an AM station of that type in the market, also broadcasts a lot of local sports. Bob Hague, in fact, admits that in the early, lean years of the station’s operation, the money generated by sports programming kept WRLS on the air. Today, many transients vacation in the Hayward area during the summer months, and WRLS broadcasts a contemporary music format to attract them, but also broadcasts Milwaukee Brewers baseball for the same reason. During the winter, there are few vacationers in the area, and WRLS programs for local residents, hence the reliance upon local sports programming.

Jim Schuh still wrestles with this problem, now that he manages WIZD-FM in Plover. He and his partners have decided to establish their oldies format and not stray from that, but there are other reasons for Schuh
to stay away from sports. The city of Plover is a suburb of Stevens Point, but just 15 miles from Wisconsin Rapids, and WIZD has attempted to gain listeners from both communities, not only with its music, but also with a strong commitment to local news. Schuh has tried to avoid an identity with either city, and broadcasting the high schools of one town might alienate the other city. Schuh admits he tried and failed to get Green Bay Packer broadcasts for his station, and might consider broadcasting UW-Stevens Point events in the future, because of the broader interest in the university's athletic program. For now, however, WIZD remains committed to its homogeneous format.

This concept of homogeneity, as Jim Schuh calls it, is part of radio's evolution. Radio has evolved from an AM dominated, local-service industry, to a medium dominated by FM stations, which program music to a wide region. The part which sports plays in local radio has also evolved during this period. At one time, sports programming was considered a necessity for a local radio station, no matter what the station band, in order to provide local service and acquire additional revenue. As stations changed their programming philosophies, especially how they viewed
their FM stations, they changed their attitude towards local sports. Stations now had to have more of a reason to broadcast local sports, especially on a music-oriented FM, if they felt that sports might be a detriment to the overall format. In efforts to recapture a local audience, however, stations have re-emphasized local programming on their AM frequencies, and local sports plays a big role in that decision.

TALENT

In larger markets, talented broadcasters are able to make names for themselves as sportscasters, but what effect does the individual broadcaster have on sports programming in small markets? There are some communities within the survey region which can help answer this question.

Dick Bender has been the Sports Director of WRLS in Hayward for 25 years, and has broadcast over 1000 games in this period. Bob Hague calls Bender "better than a station promotion" because he has a good reputation, an interest in student-athletes, and is positive on the air. Bender is joined on the WRLS broadcasts by Doug Beck, who is the assistant principal at Hayward Middle School. Beck is familiar with the students as students, and they make a team which is so
strong that the other Hayward station, WHSM, could not
cOMPete and had to drop its Hayward broadcasts and
broadcast Spooner High School sports. Bender is also
the station's morning announcer and is well-known in
outlying communities, although WRLS rarely broadcasts
schools besides Hayward High School.

WFHR in Wisconsin Rapids has a history of long­
term sports broadcasters. For many years, local
attorney Bill Nobles broadcast Lincoln High School
sports. Jack Gennaro called Nobles an accomplished
announcer who had a strong following in Wisconsin
Rapids. Meanwhile, WFHR hired Terry Stake as an
announcer in the early 1970's, and he got involved in
sports, taking over the broadcasts of Wisconsin Rapids­
Assumption High School. Stake has stayed with WFHR
since his hiring, taking over all sports broadcasts
when Nobles died of a brain tumor in 1987. According
to Gennaro, Stake has established quite a following,
not only with his football and basketball broadcasts,
but also with his wrestling play-by-play.

Broadcasters like Stake and Bender are rarities in
small markets, however. The turnover rate at stations
of this size is quite high, and many stations change
play-by-play announcers every few years. Some stations
do not even use full-time station employees to
broadcast their games.

A number of stations use part-time employees from the community to handle their local play-by-play work. For instance, WJMT in Merrill hires alumni and coaches to do its play-by-play. General Manager Wayne Smith reports there are few problems, since these people are known in the community, and listeners are apt to be forgiving if these announcers do not exhibit polished play-by-play skills. In addition, these people have the advantage of knowing the athletes whose games they are broadcasting.

WATW/WJJH in Ashland also uses part-timers from the community to handle play-by-play responsibilities. The station's primary sports broadcaster is Clarence Campbell, a former news and sports reporter in Madison, who is now in private business in Ashland. General Manager Jerry Hackman says the arrangement with Campbell works out well. Medford station WIGM-AM/FM also uses community people for its broadcasts, although the station's primary sportscaster is former station announcer Denny Gebert, who is now an executive with Hurd Millwork. None of these stations report problems with their play-by-play announcers. They admit, however, that not having a full-time employee on staff to handle sports, even one who has other station
duties, does hurt their daily sports reports, since there is no one in the studios to gather local sports information.

Some of the stations in the survey region also handle their play-by-play in a different way. Since the Lumberjack Conference is so far flung (Ashland to Eagle River is 123 miles, Ashland to Medford is 118 miles), some stations prefer not to send their local play-by-play crew to away games, especially during the basketball season. Instead, these stations will take a feed of the game from the home team station. WIGM will do this on about one-third of its games, especially when Medford High School plays at Ashland or Eagle River. Brad Dahlvig says the system works well, and gives his listeners a different perspective of Medford teams. He also feels that the announcers at the other stations feel pressure to perform well when broadcasting for two stations. Dahlvig reports that on-air rooting is limited, and most broadcasts are very professional.

Some stations use this system more than others. Jerry Hackman says WNBI in Park Falls, which is the most centrally located of the Lumberjack Conference stations, uses feeds on about 75% of its away broadcasts. Hackman, however, has another view of
feeds. His station only uses about one feed per year. He wants Ashland people doing Ashland games and sends his local crew on the road whenever possible.

OTHER SPORTS

As the initial survey indicates, most small market radio stations build their local sports coverage around the area high school football and boys basketball programs. What does this mean for other high school athletic programs, such as girls basketball, wrestling, volleyball, baseball and others?

The survey shows that stations do broadcast many of these other sports, but personal interviews reveal that the stations may do so somewhat reluctantly. Broadcasting specialized sports, such as wrestling and volleyball, has already been discussed. A specialized market must be cultivated through a successful program and a broadcaster knowledgeable in that sport. There are sports however, such as girls basketball, which are common to all communities and require no more expertise than that which the station sports broadcaster already has. How do stations feel about airing these games?

At Ashland, Jerry Hackman’s stations broadcast some girls sports, although without much response. He feels there would be more negative feelings if he did not carry any girls sports than there are positive
feelings for actually carrying the games. Other station executives reported that they felt there was not as much listener or advertiser support for girls sports as there is for boys athletics.

An exception to this policy is WJMT in Merrill. Merrill High School is a member of the Wisconsin Valley Conference, and although the school has been a member of this league since 1920, the Merrill High School boys basketball team has never won a conference championship, and the boys basketball all-time won-loss record is the worst in the conference. Boys basketball, therefore, has not been very successful at Merrill High School.

The girls basketball program, however, has had much more success. Since girls basketball was established as a sport by the Wisconsin Valley Conference in 1975, Merrill has won or shared five league championships, and has the third best all-time won-loss record. Merrill is, therefore, the one community in the Wisconsin Valley Conference in which girls basketball is as popular as boys basketball because of the difference in the success of the two programs.

Consequently, WJMT follows a programming philosophy which differs from that of other Wisconsin
Valley Conference stations. Rather than broadcast all of the boys games, and air the girls games when they can, WJMT broadcasts whichever team is on the road. The Wisconsin Valley Conference plays a basketball schedule in which boys and girls play at the same time at opposite gyms. In other words, if Merrill plays Marshfield, the boys game will be in one city and the girls game will be played at the same time in the other city. Most stations in the conference, in this situation, would air the boys game. WJMT, however, broadcasts whichever team is away from Merrill.

One may assume that this decision is made because of the popularity of the two programs, but General Manager Wayne Smith insists this is not the case. Smith points out that, like the boys basketball players, the members of the high school girls team are also the friends and neighbors of his listeners and his sponsors. Smith feels, therefore, that these people enjoy supporting the girls basketball program as much as they want to support the boys. This programming philosophy works well in Merrill, but executives at other stations in the region feel that their local boys programs are much more popular, and that they would not be able to make that decision.
SPECIAL PROGRAMS

In addition to broadcasting local sports, especially on the high school level, are there other services which local radio stations provide to acknowledge high school students outside of the athletic arena? Station executives report that they would like to recognize students for non-athletic accomplishments, but many are at a loss as to how to provide this service, except for simply listing these achievements during local news reports.

There are some stations which do attempt to recognize such accomplishments. WBIZ in Eau Claire sponsored a scholarship banquet for high school students of outstanding academic quality, which included athletes and non-athletes. Mike Sullivan said this was a very popular event for many years, but the station dropped it because of its cost.

WDLB in Marshfield did provide an extra service to athletes for many years, but it was outside of the football/basketball venue. When WDLB-FM increased its power and antenna height to 100,000 watts at 800 feet, thereby becoming a more regional station, local play-by-play was dropped. The station looked for ways to maintain its ties with the smaller schools in the Marshfield area which were once served by WDLB-FM, and
decided to produce a weekly interview program on Saturday mornings which was devoted not to Marshfield teams, but exclusively to coaches of these smaller schools. The station also became more directly involved with these schools by sponsoring an annual indoor track meet. The Marshfield Senior High Fieldhouse, with a seating capacity of 3000 and an indoor track, opened during this period. Since these small schools had no access to an indoor track during the spring season, WDLB decided to sponsor such a meet, which included all of the small schools whose basketball and football games were broadcast on WDLB-FM. This gave the schools a chance to adequately prepare their track teams for the upcoming outdoor seasons. The WDLB Relays were successful for several seasons, until a local coach who organized the meet left the area, and many schools decided they would like to have a break between the end of the winter sports season and the beginning of spring sports.

Most radio stations are aware of the fact that the high school athlete may receive a disproportionate amount of publicity compared to the non-athlete, who may excel scholastically or in a non-athletic program. Today at WDLB, the station uses its "Sportscaster Club" announcements to salute these students. Although the
"Sportscaster Club" announcements usually promote upcoming high school athletic events; they are also used to recognize students in the Marshfield area for non-athletic achievements.

Brad Dahlvig of WIGM in Medford is also aware of this predicament, but points out that many non-athletic events cannot be broadcast. A radio station would have a hard time broadcasting a spelling bee, a high school play or an academic competition. The local radio station can, however, promote these events and interview the participants, and this WIGM does on a regular basis.

UNIVERSITIES

The quantitative data found during the initial survey revealed that sports broadcasters in small market stations perform a variety of other roles at their stations. This would indicate that the sports broadcaster should be one of the most versatile members of the station's staff. The question arises, therefore, where these people come from and how do stations find sports broadcasters?

The survey does not ask about the backgrounds of these sports announcers, but the interview process indicates that most come from broadcast schools. These
are vocational education type institutions which give their students a basic introduction to the media. Students are able to specialize in a specific area, such as radio, television production, sales, etc. Upon graduation, students are assisted in their efforts to find a permanent position in the media by a placement office which has extensive contacts throughout the region. WFHR's Terry Stake is a graduate of such a school, having gone to Career Academy in Milwaukee. The value of the education obtained through these schools may be questioned, but the placement service can be of great value to young men and women entering the business.

Broadcast schools spend a great deal of time cultivating contacts with small and medium market radio stations in their region. For instance, many radio stations within the survey area have established contacts with Brown Institute in Minneapolis. When a station has an opening, Brown will be contacted and the position will be explained. Brown will then send tapes of possible candidates to the station. The station will review these tapes, and ask that several of the top candidates come to the station for a personal

* Jack Gennaro said during the personal interview process that Stake believes his time at Career Academy was a waste of money.
interview. Out of these interviews, one of the Brown graduates will usually be hired.

As years progress, many of these Brown graduates advance in the broadcast industry. Many enter management positions, where they are able to hire more Brown graduates. In addition, Brown graduates are encouraged to retain contact with the home office, and let them know when they feel ready to move onto their second or third job. Those graduates who have advanced to larger markets will also contact Brown in efforts to find an experienced graduate who may be looking to advance. This placement service, therefore, has become a very extensive network between the home office, small market stations and the graduates themselves.

Young women and men may also enter the broadcasting industry through universities. Many colleges offer programs in the electronic media, under various names, such as Mass Communication, Communication, Telecommunications, Radio-TV, etc. In addition to coursework designed to teach students about the industry, universities also offer extensive training facilities, such as radio stations, television facilities and production studios. A student who takes

*--much of the information for this section comes from the author's personal experience with radio stations in the survey region.
advantage of these programs can obtain several years of media experience before beginning his or her career. This should make these broadcasters very marketable for small market stations.

It seems, however, that small market radio stations are not taking advantage of this valuable resource. During the interview process, each station executive was asked how he would fill a full-time staff position in which play-by-play was part of the employee's responsibilities. Some executives said they would contact other stations in their corporation, while others would speak to other contacts which they have in the industry. Others said they would even run ads on their stations in hopes of finding a competent employee. Most station executives, however, responded that they would call Brown Institute and attempt to fill the position through the broadcast school, and few indicated that they would look to a university to fill the position.

Jack Gennaro of WFHR did say that he would attempt to find a university graduate in order to fill a sportscasting position. Gennaro said that Brown would be a good way of locating a disc jockey, but he would go to the college ranks to find a news or sports reporter. He also mentioned that Dr. Robert Snyder of
the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh is responsible for his belief in college graduates.

Dr. Snyder is now retired, but for many years he served on the faculty at UW-Oshkosh. During his career at Oshkosh, not only did Dr. Snyder teach, but he also made a great effort to place his students in the broadcast industry. Most of his placement efforts came through personal contacts within the broadcast industry, and many of those came through his work with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association. Dr. Snyder attended WBA meetings, and conducted WBA job fairs, which included student seminars attended by radio station representatives.

He also made certain that all of his graduates were prepared to enter the job market. Dr. Snyder and his staff met with all graduating students each semester. Each student filled out a placement card, indicating what type of work the student wanted. These cards were kept on file, and referred to when calls came in from stations, or when Dr. Snyder made a contact at a WBA meeting or at some other time. UW-Oshkosh also made use of internships, which were directed by a fulltime faculty member, and an experienced faculty, which could share their experience with students and give guidance on obtaining jobs.
Graduates were also encouraged to stay in contact with the school, and Dr. Snyder reports that many of his placements were graduates looking for their second or third jobs, being hired by medium and even large market stations.

Other universities have other ways of placing their graduates. Dr. Snyder said that, at one time, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls published a book of its graduates, listing their goals and qualifications. Western Illinois University published a similar booklet in the mid-1980’s. This publication included one-page resumes of all recent graduates, grouped according to career goals, and it was sent to all radio stations in Illinois.

It seems, however, that few universities have such services for their graduates interested in pursuing a career in the media. The school’s regular placement offices are, for some reason, inadequate when dealing with the media. That means that the university’s department which teaches media courses must handle this responsibility, and few appear to do so. This means that students who go through a university program and obtain a college degree are on their own when they attempt to find their first jobs in the industry.

131- Dr. Robert Snyder telephone interview, October 17, 1994.
When questioned about the use of college graduates at their stations, most executives answered that they had not had contact with colleges and would not know how to pursue recent graduates. Jerry Hackman in Ashland said he had contacted some college placement offices about filling sales jobs, but that these offices were not equipped to fill air positions. Hackman went on to say that he felt his area universities, such as the University of Wisconsin-Superior or the University of Minnesota-Duluth, should send him something to make their graduates known.

Bob Hague of WRLS in Hayward was sympathetic to the college's problem, however, and made some suggestions. Hague felt schools in the University of Wisconsin system should pool their list of graduates in a central office and make that list available to broadcasters. It would still take some effort to compile the list and let broadcasters know that these students are available, but without some effort by the universities, it appears that college graduates will be squeezed out of the industry, despite their expertise, by the highly organized placement services of the broadcast schools.
EXCEPTIONS

The survey and the interviews conducted for this project paint a picture of a small market, sports-oriented radio station which is on the AM band and, in many instances, has a strong commitment to information programming. Some FM stations also broadcast local sports events, but these are usually stand-alone FM's which are providing their communities with a good deal of information programming. There are some stations which do not fit either of these descriptions, yet still successfully broadcast local sports events. One of these is WECL-FM in Eau Claire.

WECL is a class "A" FM station, licensed to Elk Mound, which is a small community just west of Eau Claire. The station signed on in 1991, with a satellite contemporary music format, and no plans to broadcast local sports.

According to the station's Sales Manager, Reed Macnick, WECL is one of 15 radio stations in the Eau Claire area, and the station had a tough time breaking into the market. Most sports events in Eau Claire are broadcast by WBIZ-AM, a class IV station on 1400, which has a difficult time covering the Eau Claire area with its signal, especially at night. WECL listeners began requesting that the station broadcast sports, since the
FM signal easily covered the market. WECL made the decision to begin local play-by-play with the 1992-93 basketball season, and has continued local sports play-by-play since.

The following season, WECL hired longtime area sports broadcaster Woody Wall to handle its broadcasts, and settled on a pattern of sports broadcasting which they have maintained since. Each season, WECL broadcasts about 14 high school football games, depending upon how far area teams advance in the post-season tournament series. The station also broadcasts 24 high school basketball games, featuring four boys games and four girls games with each of the three high schools in Eau Claire. In addition, WECL broadcasts 16 games involving the women's basketball team at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, which was third in the nation at the NCAA Division III tournament in 1994.

At first, corporate management was not enthusiastic about WECL's entrance into sports programming. Management feared that the station was sacrificing the integrity of its musical format, and did not see much financial return; in fact, Macnick admits the station only made a profit of $50 to $100 per game. Revenue, however, significantly increased in the following two years, making the broadcasts easier.
to justify.

Macnick feels the station has an obligation to the community to continue its practice of equal coverage of all area teams, and reports little positive or negative feedback from listeners on this policy. He feels that womens sports are becoming more popular, and this outlook has been aided by the strong performances of the UW-Eau Claire womens team. Covering this team is a positive experience for the station, as fans appreciate the coverage, the university talks up the station, and many alumni, who are now business leaders in the community, become aware of the station. This often leads to advertising business for the station, although Macnick admits that it is impossible to measure how much non-sports business comes from this type of contact. He feels, however, that it is significant.

Sports on WECL has been a positive experience for the station and its advertisers, according to Macnick. These broadcasts provide the station with a large amount of revenue for a two-hour time period, and introduces the station to advertisers who buy nothing but sports. Macnick has also found what people like Arnie Strope and Jack Hackman found 40 years ago; that businesses like to sponsor sports for more reasons than
just the return they receive on their dollars. He calls sports buys "feel good" ads which are not designed to move a product, but to provide name recognition which will work in the future.

Of equal importance to Macnick is the effect that sports broadcasts have on his listeners and his station's place in the market. Certainly this station, which receives its programming exclusively from a satellite service and has no local announcers or local news, breaks all of the rules of homogeneity by being involved in local sports broadcasting. Macnick points out, however, that there are market factors which allow his station to venture into this territory.

Macnick admits that it is dangerous to jeopardize his station's format integrity. WECL, however, being a satellite-driven, contemporary station, is a perfect "background music" station. Macnick says his station is number one in local clinics, doctors offices, dental offices and stores. He calls it the perfect station to clean the garage by on Saturday morning. At night, many of these offices which feature WECL by day, are closed, and although the station risks losing listeners in businesses which are open at night and tune away during a sports broadcast, Macnick feels those places will return to his station. Macnick admits that if his
station had stronger listenership in the evenings, such as with a top-40 or classic rock format, there would be different considerations. His station's current place in the market, however, makes it advantageous for WECL to air local sports.

These broadcasts also draw individual listeners to WECL. These are people who find the station because of its sports programming, and may also stay with it because they enjoy the music which follows. Sports, therefore, provides WECL with recognition which the station may not otherwise receive. Macnick says sports programming has accelerated his station's recognition process, and is one of the best methods of increasing WECL's visibility.

Sports cannot do it alone, however, and Macnick admits that his station needs more than sports to carve a niche into the local market. Sports allows WECL to provide some local programming, but not enough. Macnick says no station which runs WECL's satellite format is successful without some local programming, especially in morning drive, and most stations air local programming in the afternoon. Macnick has learned what other radio executives have learned before him: local programming is an important part of a radio station's overall plan, and sports is just one
component in that plan.

Along the way, WECL has learned a few things about sports programming. For instance, the station’s sports image was enhanced greatly when Woody Wall was hired to do the play-by-play. Wall has been in the Eau Claire market for at least 25 years, and his addition to the staff gave the station a credible sports image, making sports broadcasts easier to sell. WECL also recognizes its sports advertisers each year by sending a letter, signed by the Athletic Directors at the area high schools and the university, thanking these businesses for supporting their athletic programs.

Macnick also learned the technical aspects of sports broadcasts and has decided his station will primarily use cellular phone technology for its broadcasts. Many broadcasters object to the sound quality of a cellular broadcast, but Macnick said he learned that this poor audio resulted from using regular cellular phone units, which were not designed for broadcasting, as on-air units. Upon investigation, Macnick discovered that there are several companies which now market a cellular phone remote unit, with technical specifications adapted to broadcast use. This greatly improves the audio quality of the broadcast. Cellular phone calls may also be expensive,
but Macnick found that in many instances he can reduce or eliminate the charges for a cellular call by pre-arranging an advertising trade with the cellular company. He is willing to use land phone lines when cellular service is not available, but for now, Macnick has no plans for a Marti unit and will stay with his cellular phone.

Macnick is very positive about sports broadcasts on his station and would like to broadcast sports twelve months out of the year. Eau Claire has a strong amateur baseball club, the Eau Claire Cavaliers, and Macnick is considering adding some of their games to the summer schedule. So, at least at WECL, sports has found a niche on a music-oriented station.
This study has shown the importance of sports broadcasting in small market radio in the target area. Radio stations broadcast local sports for a variety of reasons. Stations use local sports for revenue, to fill programming, and perhaps most importantly, to provide a local programming link to the community.

In discussions with radio station executives, the concept which was earlier referred to as "localism" was an important factor in many of their programming decisions. It should not be inferred that this is an industry-wide label or catch-all phrase. It is simply a term used here, originally by Brad Dahlvig of WIGM in Medford, to describe a station’s bond with the local community. Sports programming plays a very important role within the concept of localism, but one of the findings of this study is that few radio professionals believe it is independent of other factors.

Local news, community service, talk programs, remote broadcasts from local events and businesses, classified advertising shows, promoting community
events, even listing lost dogs are all part of the concept of localism. Localism is perhaps best defined as the way in which a radio station affirms its relationship with the local community. This has become especially important in this era, when many stations receive programming from satellite distribution services.

These services provide stations with a complete package of music and announcers, designed to fit the exact format a station desires. Through the latest technology, these services can provide their announcers giving station call letters, and other local, un-dated items, which can be stored in a computer and accessed via a tone generated by the satellite service. The satellite announcer, however, cannot provide dated talk about anything local, such as weather, events or just conversation about the community. These services provide the same program to hundreds of stations at one time, eroding the local programing time of affiliates.

* The satellite services make every effort to give "protection" to their affiliates, by not signing more than one station in an area to a particular service. This is not always a guarantee of protection, however. WATK in Antigo and WMEQ in Menomonie, Wisconsin air the same country-music service. Since WMEQ has 10,000 watts of power during the day, its signal can be heard within WATK's coverage area, and the two stations are very close on the AM dial (WMEQ at 880 and WATK at 900).
Sports broadcasts, therefore, play an important role at these stations, as it gives them hours of solid, local programming. Sports programming, therefore, plays a vital role in the concept of localism, but this study has shown that radio stations look at sports as just one entity within that concept.

In the last twenty years, radio has changed significantly, as FM has become the dominant medium. This change has been felt in small markets, as many small market FM’s which used to simulcast their AM sister-stations, or broadcast play-by-play events involving out-of-town schools, now are devoted exclusively to a music format. Station executives now fear that programming sports, or any other non-music programming on these stations, would destroy the station’s homogeneity, or format integrity. While this has seriously reduced the number of stations which broadcast local sports events, it has not reduced the amount of time devoted to sports programming by each radio station operation. Stations have instead shifted much of this programming onto their AM stations, and this should not be a surprise. AM stations, which suffer in comparison to FM signals in terms of signal strength and fidelity, have had to find new ways to compete. The best way for many of these AM stations
to remain competitive is to provide their listeners with programming which cannot be obtained from any other source. Their best alternative is local programming, which appeals primarily to that community. This is where that idea of localism becomes important, as stations provide their communities with that local programming which they alone can provide.

This type of programming may be the savior of AM radio in these small markets. Many of these stations are under-powered, with serious signal deterioration in some directions, especially at night. Local and regional sports broadcasts provide these stations with programming which assists the station. It provides revenue and quality, local programming which usually cannot be duplicated by another station.

Many of the broadcasting veterans interviewed for this study recall that this was the norm in the earlier years of radio. According to men like Arnie Strope, Mark Zelich and Jack Hackman, the radio station was such an integral part of the community during that era that its relationship with the community was a given. Over the years, it seems that many radio stations got away from that relationship, concentrating more on music and format. Now, despite the influx of satellite programming which may detract from a station's local
identity, stations realize that there must be a local bond between it and the community. This is where localism becomes important, and sports programming plays a large role in that concept.

The importance of local sports at each station will vary, depending upon the station itself and its market. This study has show quite a variance in the amount and type of sports being broadcast from station to station. Some stations broadcast nothing but football and boys basketball. Others have major commitments to sports such as girls basketball, hockey, wrestling and baseball. These sports often attract much smaller interest on the high school level than football and boys basketball. This is also at odds with much of today’s broadcast philosophy, which provides satellite programming designed to appeal to a mass audience, for hundreds of stations at one time. Stations willingness, however, to make major commitments to sports which may not be very popular on a national level shows that each market is a unique entity, and it takes trained broadcast professionals to determine what is important in each market. This indicates that even in the age of satellite-generated programming, there is no master plan which fits all markets. Each market is different, and this is why
localism is so important. Localism means not only providing local programming, but also means knowing the market so that a station knows what type of programming to provide. Local broadcasters, in touch with their communities, are imperative if small market radio is going to work properly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations, involving a number of areas, come to mind after a research project such as this. These recommendations involve both the academic and broadcast ends of this study.

This study has shown a link between sports programming at small market radio stations, and overall information programming. Stations which emphasize local sports programming may also heavily program other types of local information, such as news, talk shows and public affairs. This project did not study this connection, but this would seem to be the next step. Researchers should study small market radio’s commitment to local, information programming, to see what effect that has upon the community, and to see where sports fits into that overall plan.

There should also be further study on small market radio in general. Much past research has completely overlooked the radio industry outside of the large
metropolitan markets. Small market radio can provide researchers a great deal of knowledge on the influence of broadcasting upon a community and the relationship between the station and its listeners. Many small-town stations apply at least some aspect of the "localism" concept to their programming philosophy. Tracing the role of a small-market station in its community would be much easier than looking for a similar influence in a larger market. In small markets, there is more one-to-one direct involvement between station and listener, and this should be a great source of information for the researcher.

This study has touched upon the sports aspect of small market radio stations, but other studies should be undertaken which describe the overall aspects of these stations. Researchers should learn what these stations are doing in news, public affairs, music and syndicated programs to determine how these stations can achieve greater success in attracting listeners and revenue, and influencing their community. This is especially important today when so many small town radio operations are at a crossroads in determining their future. Many are pulling all information off of their FM stations to concentrate solely on music. Others feel that the future of AM radio centers around
information programming and talk, but are using syndicated programming from outside sources to fill that void rather than producing local programs. A study on small market radio in general may help these stations better serve their communities in the future.

Such studies would help open a dialogue between the small market radio industry and universities. In many small college communities, the university plays a very prominent role in the community’s development. By taking an active interest in the development of the city’s local radio station, the university helps the community’s leading source of information and ideas. Such a positive relationship should be of benefit to all.

The final recommendation is for small market radio stations themselves. This study has shown the importance of local programming in radio. There are many broadcasters who have a hard time believing that. There are still many small market stations which feel that the only way to be competitive is through music programming. These stations still try to find that right combination of music, or the right syndicated programs. It is no mystery why stations go this route; satellite or automated music sounds good, and so do well-known, national talk-show hosts. The station can
even hire someone for minimum wage to plug in the local commercials during breaks, rather than hire a talented broadcaster. The stations which have achieved success in small markets, however, are the ones which emphasize local programming. These stations feature not only sports, but news, talk, public affairs and other sources of local information. From this study, it appears that many radio stations in the survey region realize that sports is a very important part of that mix. Unfortunately, many may not realize that those other elements are also needed for a local radio station to achieve optimum success.

The future of local sports on small market radio stations appears bright. For one thing, sports brings in revenue, and that is positive at any time. Radio stations also realize that sports programming helps provide a vital local link between the station and the listeners, and this is especially important during an era when radio will receive competition from a number of media. Reed Macnick of WECL said it best, "In the next ten or twenty years, the radio industry will become more and more fragmented. But there will always be room for local sports."
LIST OF RADIO STATIONS IN THE ORIGINAL MAIL SURVEY

WISCONSIN VALLEY CONFERENCE STATIONS
1. WATK-AM ANTIGO, WISCONSIN
2. WRLQ-FM ANTIGO, WISCONSIN
3. WDLB-AM MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN
4. WLJY-FM MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN
5. WOSX-FM MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN
6. WJMT-AM MERRILL, WISCONSIN
7. WMZK-FM MERRILL, WISCONSIN
8. WOBT-AM RHINELANDER, WISCONSIN
9. WRHN-FM RHINELANDER, WISCONSIN
10. WIZD-FM PLOVER, WISCONSIN
11. WRIG-AM SCHOFIELD, WISCONSIN
12. WDEZ-FM SCHOFIELD, WISCONSIN
13. WSPO-AM STEVENS POINT, WISCONSIN
14. WSPT-FM STEVENS POINT, WISCONSIN
15. WSAU-AM WAUSAU, WISCONSIN
16. WIFC-FM WAUSAU, WISCONSIN
17. WXCO-AM WAUSAU, WISCONSIN
18. WYCO-FM WAUSAU, WISCONSIN
19. WOFM-FM WAUSAU, WISCONSIN
20. WYTE-FM WHITING, WISCONSIN
21. WFHR-AM WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN
22. WWRW-FM WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN

LUMBERJACK CONFERENCE STATIONS
23. WATW-AM ASHLAND, WISCONSIN
24. WJJH-FM ASHLAND, WISCONSIN
25. WERL-AM EAGLE RIVER, WISCONSIN
26. WRJO-FM EAGLE RIVER, WISCONSIN
27. WIGM-AM MEDFORD, WISCONSIN
28. WIGM-FM MEDFORD, WISCONSIN
29. WMYM-AM MINOCQUA, WISCONSIN
30. WWWH-FM MINOCQUA, WISCONSIN
31. WNB1-AM PARK FALLS, WISCONSIN
32. WNB1-FM PARK FALLS, WISCONSIN
33. WJQJ-AM TOMAHAWK, WISCONSIN
34. WJQJ-FM TOMAHAWK, WISCONSIN

OTHER SELECTED STATIONS
35. WBIZ-AM EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN
36. WRLS-FM HAYWARD, WISCONSIN
37. WHRY-AM HURLEY, WISCONSIN
38. WEGL-FM WASHBURN, WISCONSIN
MAIL SURVEY

STATION CALL LETTERS:

LOCAL SPORTS YOUR STATION BROADCASTS:

[ ] FOOTBALL  [ ] BOYS BASKETBALL  [ ] GIRLS BASKETBALL
[ ] HOCKEY  [ ] BASEBALL  [ ] VOLLEYBALL
[ ] WRESTLING  [ ] OTHER ________________________

PRIMARY BROADCAST TEAMS: (at least 90% of games broadcast)

SECONDARY BROADCAST TEAMS: (broadcast when schedule permits)

NUMBER OF LOCAL PLAY-BY-PLAY EVENTS PER YEAR:

[ ] 0-30  [ ] 31-50  [ ] 51-70  [ ] 71-90  [ ] 91-110
[ ] over 111

BROADCAST METHODS FOR GAMES ORIGINATED BY YOUR STATION:

[ ] PHONE LINES  [ ] REMOTE TRANSMITTER (MARTI)
[ ] HARD LINES  [ ] CELLULAR PHONE
[ ] SATELLITE  [ ] OTHER ________________________

LOCAL SPORTS REPORTS (times and lengths):

______________  ______________  ______________  ______________

______________  ______________  ______________  ______________

PLAY-BY-PLAY PERSONNEL AND THEIR OTHER STATION DUTIES:

RETURN TO: Gene DeLisio, 1506 South Adams Avenue, #111, Marshfield, Wisconsin 54449
FAX: (715)-384-5912
GRAPH NUMBER ONE: NUMBER OF STATIONS WHICH BROADCAST EACH SPORT.

KEY:
- FB—FOOTBALL
- BBKB—BOYS BASKETBALL
- GBKB—GIRLS BASKETBALL
- HKY—HOCKEY
- BB—BASEBALL
- VB—VOLLEYBALL
- WRS—WRESTLING
- SB—SOFTBALL

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<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRAPH NUMBER TWO: NUMBER OF ANNUAL LOCAL PLAY-BY-PLAY EVENTS BROADCAST BY EACH STATION.

KEY:
EACH STATION IS IDENTIFIED BY THE LAST THREE LETTERS OF ITS CALL LETTERS.
GRAPH NUMBER THREE: BROADCAST METHODS BY STATIONS IN SURVEY REGION.

- PHONE
- MARTI
- CELL
- LOOP
- SAT

Series A
GRAPH NUMBER FOUR: NUMBER OF STATIONS WHICH BROADCAST LOCAL SPORTS REPORTS IN EACH DAYPART.
GRAPH NUMBER FIVE: NUMBER OF MINUTES PER DAY DEVOTED BY EACH STATION TO LOCAL SPORTS REPORTS.

KEY: EACH STATION IS IDENTIFIED BY THE LAST THREE LETTERS OF ITS CALL LETTERS.
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