

SPORTS JOURNALISM SEMINARS

THE ATHLETE AND THE MEDIA

MIKE REISS – BOSTON GLOBE

TED JOHNSON – FORMER NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS LINEBACKER

MARK STUART – BOSTON BRUINS

Ted do the Patriots players think that Mike is a good reporter, fair?

Ted: He's very well respected. I find there's a balance of being critical but not making it personal. There are certain columnists or reporters who have an agenda. As a player I feel it's more personal. His reporting is very diplomatic and has a like he said very professional attitude when he come into the locker room so guys are more open to talk to him. They know what they're getting. If they tell Mike something off the record, it's off the record. He won't burn you. There are reporters and columnists in this town especially because it's so competitive you feel like they are writing as if they are the story. He's never been a guy where he wants to say something salacious. Everybody in our locker room has his respect.

If you're talking to somebody if you're talking off the record usually the pen and paper are visible or a camera so the athlete trusts you. Do you make a lists of these things so that later you can ask that person at a later time?

Mike: Yeah, but a lot of it's up here.. A great example is of a story I got from Bob Kraft, the owner, when Randy Moss came to New England. There's a great story that hasn't been told about how did Moss get to New England in time to get the physical? I want to be able to tell you that story but I have it off the record in confidence but when I talked to Kraft at the Super Bowl I went up to him and said "remember that story you told me, I'd love to revisit it now." He said not now before the Super Bowl. To answer your question, most of it's up here but I do jog notes down. But I would never write it without going back to the source or getting it confirmed by someone else.

Is all an athlete can hope for a reporter to be fair?

Mark: I think so but its nice when he approaches you in a good manner.

Mike, did you pattern yourself after anyone?

Mike: Will McDonough probably. When you picked up the Globe you read what he had to say because he was telling you something that you didn't already know. The job of a newspaper reporter is to break news and be as much of a must read as possible.

Ted, you came into the league in 1995, during your first training camp did you have players come up to you and say that's guy's okay you can talk to him?

Ted: Not really. I learned that on my own but I will say this. The current coach, Belichick addresses the team about the media everyday. We have team meetings at 8:30 and he'll address what the issues are that week. It's day to day if you're injured. It's just hammered into you. If you notice the patriots don't have a Chad Johnson, guys that are kind of go outside the team and part of that is drinking the Kool-aid because we are hammered everyday about the media. Our answers are canned and its hard as Bill Purcells and Keith (Carroll) weren't as strict about that stuff so you could express yourself a little bit more whereas with Bill if that wasn't the party line you almost got called into the office. Its hard as a player to find a sense of self. I will tell you this, listen to me especially. There's always more to what I'm saying than what's on the surface and I always say the best reporters ask the best questions. You have to pry it out of them. Mike's that way, Tom Curran, Jackie McMullen and so there's was ways even in Bill's strict system to still to find sense of self if you wanted to.

Mike: David Gitmans's left the patriots after the 2005 season went to Tennessee and decided not to talk to us and one time he did and came out in a way that wasn't looked upon favorably by Bill and the team and he was read the riot ac. He says to himself, what's the benefit to me if this is what happens? Another one is Wes Welker. He's this sweet, Oklahoma kid who came from Miami this year and comes up and gets hooked up with this marketing guy who has him doing this charity stuff and there are pictures showing up with the Herald and he gets pulled in and is told "Who do you think you are?" The only reason I know this is the reporter who covered him comes up to do this great training week story on him and Wes is giving him the "I'm just happy to be part of a team. I just want to fit in" The reporter says what's going on here? Wes said this is the way they do it here and I'm just trying to do the right thing.

If you talk to anybody in the media for the last 50 years and they'll tell you hockey players are the best. Why do you think that is? Why are hockey players so different?

Mark: We're on a little different stage as far as success and the interest level. I think it's just the culture. Its pretty laid back and don't really see the media as a threat or really bid deal. The Bruins are in a little bigger market in the NHL but with the Red Sox and Patriots we are in a different stage so I think guys aren't threatened at all by the media. In the locker room after a game the guys will hang out. Nobody's really trying to get away. But then again we're playing 82 games a year so after a loss...it's a lot different. These guys are playing fewer games and it's huge. They have to have the lead up all week and Sunday comes around and it's a big thing so it's a little different.

I think as reporters they have to remember that so you don't want to hit too high or hit too low. A lot of fans are like "Why don't they care?" But it's one of 80 and they can't afford to do that.

Do they come pre-game? Cause during the week they get 30 minutes three times a week.

It's always post-game.

Given all these restrictions that you have, how do you get information? I didn't read any of those stories any place so are you just over blowing what information you can't use?

Mike: To me I don't think that's really a newspaper story. I wouldn't see that as having news value. To me it's harder and harder to get information. Teams are channeling it now and want to announce it themselves. Some teams want to break news on their own website. You might not break as much news but as a reporter try to report more analysis. Help the reader understand more. Especially the two sports we have here today. I think with football especially there is a thirst for understanding how things happen. Hockey, I bet there's probably a lot of people who would like to know how that goal got set up. I love to break news but I also am realistic that it's not like the Will McDonough days where everyday you opened the paper and there's something new. You richened your focus a little.

With the limited access you have with time or how much the players can say, is it harder for you now to form relationships that you know you can count on and call on later?

Mike: Much harder. That's why I think the off-season is so important in football. Try to go to charity events. These guys are out there. Wes Welker and Rodney Harrison had autograph signings. You want them to see that you're there outside of the locker room. Benjamin Watson was starting a charity and I went. At the end I asked if I could ask him one football question but you get shot down a lot doing that.

Ted: He got my phone number because he got my respect. During my playing days we would talk about just football schematics. He wanted to understand the game better. He didn't call me to find out did so and so go to practice? He went beyond just the game. There was a human interest that sets Mike apart. It's so competitive in this market that everyone wants to break the story and be the story and it's probably harder for him because there are guys out there who will maybe say the things that aren't true and get the you know...

Mike: Sometimes I'd say do you have a second to talk and he would say let me give you a buzz on my ride home. I felt like you were sometimes more comfortable talking in your car outside of the locker room.

Ted: You had guys outside that locker room that say more at a golf tournament.

Do the players like Bill having that control? It's one less thing to worry about.

Ted: They probably like it because it is like they don't have to...talking to the media if you ever see his post-game it's like stick a needle in my eye. I think players like that they're kind of protected. Reporters know that they're probably going to get that from the players, the corporate line every time. If you step outside that you get in trouble. But, when there were probably moments in a players career where their real story wasn't being told and you wanted people to know. I have an example of that with me where we

use to be told because the one thing, I shit you not, one thing you want to hurt a team is to go to the media because it is all about perception and especially the Kraft family do not want bad press. That's why you don't see too many players saying anything.

Mike: From the reporter's side of things you want to put yourself in the position where if they need to go to someone that they feel comfortable going to you. That might not come in one, two or three years but you hope to be that guy.

The Bruins are always having to fight for attention. Does that make for a more relaxed atmosphere between the players and media because it is a smaller group?

Mark: I think so a little bit. After games there's reporters from the Bruins and Boston and the other team but it's not to the point where you're uncomfortable or rushing out because too many people in the locker room. But it also pushes out to do better. We want that attention and you can only do that by winning and being successful. All the sports in this town have done that and we need to win. It's kind of nice to have that relaxing atmosphere and not have people all over you all the time.

Mike, how hard was it for you to write either article the day after the Super Bowl? How hard was it to do that and to do that given his penchant for remembering things?

Mike: Professionally, it's not hard for me to remove myself and write that article. But personally I'm not afraid to sit here and tell you I wanted the Patriots to win the game for two reasons. I have relationships with the players and the coach and I wanted to see them make history. Two, I wanted to be the guy when I'm 50 sipping Mai Tails down on the Cape that ESPN would call me and say we're doing our 25 anniversary of the 19-0 Patriots I'd say come on down! I wanted them to win but I was removed enough to be professional and say they didn't...why? The only hard part about those articles was the night of the game we were under intense pressure to meet deadline so I was worried about doing an accurate, fair, credible article under the time crunch. I felt bad but I removed myself. The second part was being critical of Belichick. I did think twice about it because he is the type of guy who says "Mike Reiss is dead to me now." If that's the case based on what I wrote that's okay. I need to be able to live in my own skin and if I can't write that I thought it was a very questionable decision that they did not kick a 48 yard field goal on 4th-and 15 if he can't allow me to write about that in the give and take relationship that we have than I can't be a part of the give and take that he wants. It was hard that I had to weigh all these factors but at the end of the day I didn't want to be known as the softie pushover which to be honest a lot of people probably think I am. You have to live in your own skin. Do you want to be Dan Shaughnessy who might be a little more liberal in sticking the knife in you and twisting it or do you want to be someone who's going to avoid controversy at all costs—"I'm not going to write about any critical decisions. I'm just going to tell you what happens. I'm not going to inject any of my own thoughts." I try to find somewhere in the middle probably a little bit over to the softer side.

It's kind of a Catch 22. If you're too critical toward an athlete or organization than they're not going to talk to you.

Mike: When I started covering the team back in 1992 it was right after a pretty polarizing event that split a lot of media on the Patriots. The Bledsoe Brady quarterback thing. A lot of media people said he's lying to Bledsoe. He told him he'd have the chance to win his job back. He's a duplicitous liar. Some people went on that side because they had relationship with Drew. Others said that Brady had been wowing him in practice. It's his job to do what's best for the team. It seemed like it was one or the other out there. I went in with Belichick and I said give me 15 minutes. I'm starting to cover this team. I said to him I don't know what's going to happen. We might have a great relationship, we might not but one thing you can always expect from me is a fair shake. I'm always going to try to give both sides. If he can't take it then that's...I said the reasons why he didn't kick the field goal. I presented the reasons for that and if he can't deal with it I'm okay with that.

Mark, these are students who want to be reporters and TV people. If they come into your locker room are there questions they should not ask?

Mark: I don't think I've really been asked a question I thought was out of bounds. Maybe some questions about family if someone's going through family issues with their kids. I'm not married and I don't have kids so I haven't been asked. That would probably be one of them. I think listening to him talk if talking to different hockey players and understand what they think. I think at the end of the day all the players know that that is their job to write and if it's critical it's critical. It's our job to go out there and play and I think there's an understanding.

Ted: In our world it's different. It's us against them mentality. There is actually an ex-player who never talked to the media, Ben Coates, I don't know if it is because he got burned. If you play well then people who write the things they don't care. That's a rarity. There are certain guys who never would talk. It's almost like nothing was ever written bad about them but at the same time I always told rookies any time you're on TV or getting interviewed you're branding yourself. You might not live here after you're done playing but people are forming an opinion of you anytime they see you on TV or hear your remarks. It is in your best interest to friend these guys because they can hurt you or help you. The power of the pen I learned quick. Learned all their names and refereed to them by name, how you doing? That's the thing there are guys stories of Boston media guys who have run players out of town. That's the key to me. You are branding yourself, essentially showing people who you are every single time you do an interview. You have to be very careful. That's a lot of times if I was rushed I didn't want to give you...I really wanted to think about what I was saying when I was talking to you.

Did you find it difficult to transition from player to analyst?

Ted: That was tough because I was covering my friends. Channel 4 when they hired me I don't think they believed me when I told them I wasn't there to give them a scoop. They okayed me and week two they asked me what I heard about Teddy's injury. I never once called a player the whole year to ask them questions. I always say in my contract that it says sports analyst not reporter. They tried the whole year and that's the way it was. I was able to get sit down interviews when other guys couldn't in the media. That was the difference for me but it was still tough. Say a certain player had a bad game I would be critical of that evening instead of calling out one guy.

So after the Super Bowl game you wouldn't have said hey Bill why did you leave the game early?

Ted: That's the obvious question. I've sat in on Bill's conferences and after a loss it's dead silence. The local media knows. There is always that question that has to be asked and no one wants to ask you. It's always the AP person from out of town that asks it and Bill looks at the person and goes next.

Mike, have we gotten to the point with the Patriots where reporters just won't ask questions because they know they won't answer? Does Bill rely on that?

Mike: I'll use the Super Bowl as an example. Spygate blew up at the end of the Super Bowl when the Spitzer thing came up. Stunning that the Patriots got there on Sunday January 26th that up until that came out on Thursday he was not asked one question about Spygate which was stunning to me give that there was media from around the country. I would have thought it would be on of the first questions. I think a big part of that was an intimidation factor and we know what he's going to say. We won't even bother.

He relies on that..

Mike: It's part of his strategy per say. He is going to give us nothing and it is our job as reporters we still need to ask it. From my personal perspective the whole landscape has changed now. Patroit.com, the team's official site, broadcasts Belichick's press conferences live from the website. If I'm going to ask him that question I'm not wasting it on a press conference. I'm going to get him aside because I've developed a relationship with him that I'm going to ask him a question that will help everyone else. He knows I have to do it but at least I can live with myself knowing that I did it. You run the risk that if you do it 5 times in a row next time you ask he might say see you later.

When you know you've missed an assignment and you get asked about it how do you handle it?

Ted: When all the reporters are at my locker. Here's how I handle it. Own up to it. The guy beat me that's what happened. Don't make excuses. Just say I got beat and let my team down and I'm going to try and be better. They'll ask the question ten different ways to try and get you to break but when you just be honest they have nowhere else to go. A

lot of guys make the mistake to try and worm out of it not to look bad but to me the smarter athletes just own up.

Mike: What if it was a teammates mistake? If your fellow player didn't cycle the puck?

If someone says to him what happened on that play is he going to say I got beat or hey I got the safety?

Mike: You're going to protect your teammate.

90% of the people who watch hockey have no idea what's going on besides the goal? Why would you bring guys in deep? Do you get a lot of questions after the game along the lines of what happened on that play?

Mark: yeah, I think we get asked that question a lot and throw those terms in there and reporters look at them like what? You find yourself trying to explain it in your terms and don't really think about it and then afterwards you realize. That's kind of tough probably for reporters how to they put that into the paper so people can understand. Most players seem to speak that way. They don't really break it down and talk like they usually would.

Mike, please tell me you've never asked an athlete talk about that touchdown...

Mike: I probably have. I think it's a soft way to ask if a player got beat. Ellis Hobbs for example what did you see on that last play when Burress beat you. What you really want to say is why did you cut inside the guy but you say it in a softer way to maybe get them going a little bit but not do it so aggressively that you put them on their heels.

Can you promise me that you've never said what were you thinking on that play?

Mike: I have for the same reason. Some times you're sitting there at the locker and the interview is at a dead end. It comes out. I notice that a lot at the Super Bowl...Can you talk about Wes Welker and the impact he's had on your team? Belichick knows what you're looking for and he's going to give it to you.

Ted: If I'm Ellis Hobbs and Mike came up to me and said on that last play it looked tough, he did a double move, there was a lot of real estate, it looked like a tough play what happened? To me it's like you disarmed him by saying what a lot of corners would have said on that. It's how you ask the question.

When you go up to an athlete and say that it's lazy. It shows no though on a reporter's role.

Mike: I had to tell you the truth.

Mark, what's the stupidest question anyone's ever asked you?

Mark: You have to come back to me.

Ted: That's a tough one.

Mike: I was joking about it with Teddy Bruschi because we don't have the best relationship because he might retire this year but I won't get the story because he has better relationships with other people but we have a good enough relationship where he let me down easy. It was last season. They were going to play in Minnesota. It was a Monday night game. This is going to be tough for the Patriots in that dome. How are they going to prepare for this? So I go up to Teddy and I say How are you guys going to handle this noise? This could be the loudest environment you ever play in this seasons. He looks at me like what are you talking about? He goes usually when we're on defense and the home team is on offense usually the crowd is pretty quite so I don't think...So he was nice enough to let me down softly because we all make mistakes. In the locker room this year I said Teddy thank you probably the worst question I ever asked and then we had a laugh about it. My hope being that I took the goof and tried to turn it around for future use.

Mark: I consider stupid questions like being talked about the dirtiest player in the league. I consider those...Nothing like that (laughter).

Ted: Like somebody coming up to me and saying you all are playing the Bill's the week and you are going to annihilate them aren't ya? The last thing I'm going to do is give them bulletin board material so don't try and goad me into telling you how bad the team we're about to play sucks. That's a dumb question.

Mike, when you first started covering the Patriots were you star struck?

Mike: I graduated from UMASS in '97 and I worked for the team for two years with their team newspaper and website and I was definitely star struck at that time. I'd go down in the locker room and these guys are three times the size of me so yes. I think that plus the idea of trying to find my voice. Do I want these guys to like me? Respect me? Hate me? I think going through that process it started with being in awe.

How much do you guys read the newspapers and listen to what's said about you?

Mark: Some guys won't read anything. Some guys read everything from internet to the paper and watch the news. They want to know everything being said. Some guys want to know if they are doing bad. For me it's kind of if I happen to have a paper and reading an article on the team. I'm kind of in between.

Is it different for football?

Ted: I think most guys read the paper all the time.

Is EEI always on in the locker room?

Ted: No. My last year I was having a pretty good year and there was a guy hosting on EEI named Steve Buckley who covers the Red Sox mostly. Someone called in and said how about that Ted Johnson he's having a good year what do you think? He used the word serviceable to describe me. I was a starter most of my career and that didn't sit well with me. Here's a guy that covers baseball that I've never seen in the locker room calling me serviceable. So he happened to be in the locker room the next day and I went up to Steve—and I have always told players they are always within their rights to ask reporters why they said what they said—and said let me tell you this is the history of my career and you say serviceable. I don't agree with that and I think you're wrong in saying that. The next day he came back and apologized and felt horrible. He didn't say I stand by it he said I'm really sorry and because it was coming from a guy I had never seen before in the locker room. When I get in the car I usually have 850 on and I want to hear what they're saying. Usually for the most part it's good but we are professionals. Once you get out of the armature race now you can be critical of the athletes. Once you're getting paid and money's involved it is a whole different story.

Mike: I'm sure it's a Catch-22 too—do you go up to someone and let them know that you read them and are aware of what they said? My example would be the Krafts with Dan Shaugnessy. The Krafts, they battle all the time. How should we handle this because Dan whacks them a lot subtly through a reference to the pocket rocket, Jonathan Kraft, the son. Do we confront him because then he knows he's under our skin and he'll do more with it. You hope you get a response that you got from Steve which is I've rethought my remarks and I was wrong. I'm sure from your guys perspective there is a questions if you want to address this or if that person even knows your game.

Have you ever been physically confronted?

Mike: My story goes back to when I worked for the team and I was finding my voice as a sports journalist reporter and we picked games in the paper it was Patriots Football Weekly team newspaper. We took pride in being objective even though every time I got my check from Robert Kraft's signature...the Patriots were playing the Jets and it was a second time around. I always felt that Bill Parcell had this mind trance over the patriots when he went to the Jets. I wanted to pick the Jets the first time they played but I'm gonna pick them the second time. I picked the Jets and we took the plane with the team because we were employees. All the non-team employees sat in the front all the players sat in the back. I was in an isle seat. The players had taken notice of my prediction giving me some grief early in the week and my head was a nice little boxing thing as the players came by with their bags. It was taken in fun but I did have whiplash.

What can you tell these kids about forming relationships in places where they are going to be the outsiders?

Mike: it is different for everyone. I think being fair. To me I try to listen to the athletes and coaches that I talk to and to me all they are asking for is a fair shake. If you're going

out to report and you don't know something it's okay to say to an athlete I'm trying to understand this a little better. Can you explain to me why you weren't on the ice when there was a penalty kill but you were pulled? Instead of going out and writing or saying he was benched and I just think to develop relationships if they see that you're going the extra mile to be fair you have to be critical at times but if you do it fairly that is how you do it.

Ted: When you're interviewing an athlete don't be looking somewhere else to see if the guy you really want is coming in. Make sure you're listening to what they are saying and preferably writing down. Nothing turns me off more than someone who appears to be wanting be somewhere else interviewing someone else other than you. There are certain guys that you sit down with and never look at their notes and look at you the whole time. What that tells me is they've prepared for this interview and it's a conversation but if I get someone looking down and over here you aren't going to get the same answers you want. Quick story about Michael Smith now with ESPN—When he first started working for the Patriots at training camp he went around and introduced himself. He said hi. That's an important thing. Instead of just waiting until he had to go to you. You've gotta gain the players' trust.

Mark, you're originally from Minnesota.

Mark: Try to gain people's trust. In most small towns high school sports, those kind of stories are to them the Patriots. Those stories are big so you have to approach it the same way as a big deal and as if you were reporting for the pats or Bruins or a pro team.

Mike, are you glad you aren't Bob Holder today?

Mike: Very glad, he's down in the hearings. Just happy to put up a blog with Ted talking about whether Zack Thomas would be a good fit in New England any week.

What is your take on Clemens?

Mike: Haven't followed it closely enough.

The steroid thing hasn't really hit the NHL. Why is that?

Mark: I don't really know. We do have good testing. I have followed the Clemens thing a little and it is a little weird that it hasn't hit hockey but there haven't been too many big stories about guys getting caught. I think with hockey players it has always been the feeling that steroids aren't really going to help us anyway. To be big and bulky on the ice it is just going to slow us down.

Ted do you think a lot of football players are looking at Roger and saying there but for the grace of God go I?

Ted: I'll tell you the NFL has a stringent steroid testing and but HGH which is the new found used kind of thing they can't test for. Amphetamines big in baseball because they haven't really hit on yet is become more and more used in football too. I don't know. Football is on top right now, the sport. I think it's...I feel really bad for Roger Clemens because he's not the only one. My guess is that he's taking HGH being his age and the level that he has. Last thing you want is football players in the NFL is out of all the leagues is the most image conscious and every rule and guideline they have is unified. They don't want anybody getting out of line. They hit you hard if you do. The last thing they want is finding a bunch of guys on capital hill doing that.

Mike how big is your cell phone address book?

Mike: It's growing. I think that's another key in terms of starting. Get that rolodex growing. I learned that from Will McDonough. I think that was one of the first questions he was asked tonight was who did you model yourself after. I read Will McDonough and was amazed his contacts. He had an unbelievable list. The more people you have in your book the more information you have. There's an old saying in sales. If you're trying to sell something the more darts you throw at the board the better chance you have at hitting the bulls eye. It's growing, still not the size you want it and you hope the players don't change their cell phones!

Mark, do you give out your cell phone?

Mark: I think it is a certain level of trust but I don't have many asking right now. If I was one of the more high profile guys I don't know if I would give it out.

You said the stupidest question was someone asking for billboard material. If an athlete gives you billboard material should you use it?

Ted: For him it is a good question. I guess it is stupid to ask a patriot player that question.

Mike you said it is tough to ask Belichick the tough question and took someone four days to bring up spy gate the question at the super bowl. Wasn't it beaten to death? He was asked to answer many times and NFL films did a montage.

Mike: I think it needed to be asked because there are still unanswered questions. Now the local media is done and the new media comes in and hasn't had the chance to ask and this is their chance. If that's what my editor asked for it is my professional responsibility to take a crack at it.

At what point what is the point of showing up to the field and getting the same corporate responses?

Mike: I think he gets a bad rap. He does about the same questions. You ask about an injury he's gonna say the same thing—"The injury report comes out at 4." You want to

ask about a strategy question that might compromise their ability to win next week you're not going to get an answer. But if you want to ask a well thought out question about something in regards to X's and O's, tactic, decisions making, history of the game...there are certain areas he will go and certain areas he won't. As a media what is your tolerance on getting the same question on the questions he won't go on and are you willing to let that slide. I tend to be more tolerant. I know that if a guy gets injured you go to ask him. I think you're not doing your job as a journalist if you just say I know what he's going to say I'm not going to ask. I actually think he gets a bad rap.

Ted: My impression is there are a lot of guys who are lazy and ask the mundane questions and don't go further. If you ask the right questions and put some thought into it you get more.

Would you ever just flat out say Hobbs how do you feel about that play?

Mike: Maybe I didn't see it the right way but I have to ask you about this play maybe the footwork was off. Did I see that right? I have to ask it. It was a key part of the game. What happened on that play? A lot of it is delivery. What happened on that play? That's not going to get you what you need but if you do come in softer that was a key play in the game, what happened on the coverage.

Ted: It is like relationships you don't want your wife to scream at you but it is how you deliver the message. Mike is very good at asking a question so that you are disarmed. I think more guys are out there to give you answers.

How much should you use something like in 2005 with them saying the patriots were ripe for the picking.

Ted: I've walked out of the office or stadium and he has a guy who tapes every single TV interview because he wants to know what the media are saying and finds out about what other teams are saying and absolutely comes in and will present it in a meeting on Thursday. That's a huge weapon for him. He believes in that book the Art of War. Pour perfume on the other team and that's how it works. I've got three rings to prove it.

You mentioned earlier that football is us against them meaning the media and Mark you say it is more laid back. What do you attribute that too?

Ted: I wish baseball was here too because they are open to media for three hours before games. I think hockey players are the nicest guys in sports. They are more approachable and no egos so maybe the reporters are picked on that same kind of... I don't know but for us we have out of the four major sports what is the major difference in football? We don't have guaranteed contracts so we can get cut at any time without getting paid and there is so much pressure to perform. Every week, every practice is evaluated and the film work is relentless. If we lose all we're thinking about for 7 days and we can't prove ourselves until the next. A lot of times that time gives these guys time to come up with stories that if we were playing the next day they would be forgotten about.

Mark: I think that's a huge thing if you watch ESPN they are breaking down their games and every play. We play and we're playing the next night. You might get a few questions about the game but they aren't going to break down every play.

Mark, you said a lot of times reporters go into the locker room and don't necessarily know the ins and outs. Would you have more respect for a reporter if they asked for an explanation or is that them saying I'm ignorant?

Mark: I think guys would be welcomed to that. Know the game to a certain extent because you're reporting on it. I would respect that.

I was wondering why you went to Jackie with that story?

Ted: I had a lot of respect for Jackie McMullen and thought she would have the tone and would be what I would want. I trust her with that because the story I was telling was a really big story and was going to indict Belichick and the Krafts but I knew that's how it would be construed but since that when people were educated on it I knew she had the sensibility and the understanding of what the article needed to be. Same thing what I did was also told to the New York Time's to Allen Schwartz and what I did was, Jackie wasn't happy about this, but I went to him because the Time's is much bigger and the commissioner had to answer questions about my situation specifically but I trusted him. He's up for the Pulitzer for that article. It's all about trust and respect. That would be Mikey, only a few guys who have the sensibility and thoughtfulness. When they write they don't dehumanize the player. That's key. Don't make it personal. Be critical but don't make it personal.

Given the amount of coverage baseball, football and now the Celtics get in this city I feel the Bruins are put on the back burner. Is that something that affects you at all?

Mark: It is something we notice but I think we use it for motivation. All the guys understand that we don't have the same coverage in this city. There are a lot of reasons for that. We haven't won championships but when you win that is when you get noticed and fans come. Boston's a little more extreme than a lot of city's but it is the same thing. A winning team gets support and excitement. We are aware but it is something that motivates us.

Mike, when you worked for the Patriots did you feel like you had more access with the players than now?

Mike: I was still so young in my career at that point that it was definitely different because I traveled on the plane and saw them in the offices. My little cubicle was outside of Mr. Kraft's office in the old Foxborough Stadium so you couldn't help but bump into the guys. Part of that was where I was in my career. I wanted them to like me. Now I want them to respect me. I know that some of them won't like me and that is because I'm doing my job. I went to the Globe sports editor and said I want to work for the

Globe someday what do I have to do and he said if your check is being signed by Robert Kraft I will never hire you. You need to go write at a newspaper to show me you can write and report news because I look at yours as a public relations job.

How much of your motivation is the X's and O's and the getting pumped up?

Ted: College is much more emotional driven because you chose that college. I got drafted to go to New England. Once you are paid it is different. I use to have an assistant coach who was this ra ra guy who would just come in and pound us and I would say settle down Bo we have fifteen more games here. My rookie year my first practice I went out with hip pads and I put eye black on. In college that's what I did. I got ripped because they don't wear hips pads and don't wear eye black until game day. It's totally different. You gotta pace yourself and don't get too high and don't get too low and that's the mantra one game day at a time there is a lot of truth to that because it is a long season.

Mar: I think it depends on the point in the season for us. Like you said it is a long season. Even now cause at this point it is so tight and every game is big if you are one of the team in the bubble for the playoffs. Because we do play so many games it is usually two games in between some back to back so there isn't really a lot of time to do the X's and O's sometimes it is just getting up for the game.

Ted: Playoffs in the NFL you go home so a lot of pressure. The series in the other sports but in the NFL it is one and done.