

## SPORTS JOURNALISM SEMINAR

### INTERNET SPORTS JOURNALISM

Jeff Horrigan, *Boston Herald*

David LeFort, Boston.com

*Jeff, would you say that the internet is the number one provider of sports news now?*

Jeff: Absolutely. I always say as a beat reporter we were told for resources that we use to call our newspaper archives our librarian. Covering the majority of my games are at night and you never have the librarian there. So it's nice to have all this stuff right there but you have to think to yourself what's genuine, what's bogus.

*I took an informal poll before you guys came in here of the students and the majority of them said that they get the majority of their sports news from the internet. Does that surprise you?*

Jeff: I don't blame them. I'm old fashioned. I like to have the newspaper in front of me and at this age I even enjoy now looking at the Filene's ads. I never really took notice of them before. But hey if Stop and Shop gave away groceries for free and I never had to go to the store I'd do the same thing. It's just the market era. If it's given away free and it's there for you. It's the best way to take it.

: It's also a much younger crowd getting their news from the internet. There's still a good base of people subscribing to the print column. It is fading but there is a strong base of a people and it is also the older crowd we've found. We run general demographics all the time and the 18-35 demographic is by far the largest on the internet.

Jeff: I saw a poll right before the New Hampshire primary and that poll showed that it was around that 18-35 demographic and they said where did you get your information and they said the internet.

*David does the newspaper industry feeling like it's on death's doorstep?*

David: You sort of get that feeling sometimes but I think it's important to remember that there are more ....speaking from the Boston Globe, boston.com perspective...even though circulation is down for the paper there are more people reading Boston Globe stories and getting their information from the Boston Globe, boston.com than ever before. That's combined with the newspaper product with the web product. So if you look at it that way we are actually still growing. It's just people are getting their information in different ways. So I think as we go on in twenty years from now who can say they'll even still be in the internet. It'll be something else maybe. Maybe we'll all get our information from tabloids or something like that. But I think the bottom line is this business is still growing even though the print media sort of has the death knell ringing.

*Explain to me how you can say the industry's growing....Readership is down of the hard product but there are still more people reading the paper that are looking at bosotn.com?*

David: I would say combined. If you combined the newspaper readership with the print product and the readership of the online product it's this whole audience reading that product is bigger than before.

*Did you ever imagine that at some point in time you'd be able to do your job without actually having to go to the game?*

Jeff: Well I still have to go to the games. I guess it'd be pretty bad if I didn't. It's funny cause back when I went to journalism school, that was in the 80s, they were telling us what was going to happen with the internet and they were pretty accurate with that. So yeah, I was expecting it. It took a little longer actually to get here than I thought but once I got here the floodgates opened for me and it changed within a year or so.

*When you were first starting out or even when you were working in those markets and people would say to you "What do you do?" and you'd say "I'm a reporter with such and such a paper." I'm making an assumption that when you said that people knew exactly what you did. When you say now what do you do, what do you tell them?*

Jeff: I tell them the same thing. I'm a sports reporter for the Herald. I cover the Red Sox. If they want to delve deeper that's fine you can but the title really hasn't changed.

*And from your point of view the description hasn't changed either?*

Jeff: Well, just the blogging, the aims to the stories for the website that has changed. But you still have to meet four or five editions every night for the print editions.

*David, your resume, like Jeff's, is a travelogue but it's a travelogue of dot coms. Was that a case where you recognized what the industry was going to be like now or was it a case of where the job was?*

David: I think it was a case of, more than anything, I was in school in the mid to late 90s was really during the dot com boom when websites were just starting up and really developing. That was sort of all the rage so that's what we studied, that's what I looked at and became really interested in. I was always interested in journalism way back in the day but there was always a web component. I was a reporter/web editor. Then I said you know what, I don't want to do this reporter thing this web thing is really what I want to do. So that's where it picked up and the jumping around is sort of I went to one website called cbssports.com and that was during the real boom and was really successful for awhile and then it started the other way. So I had to look at it and say where are we going from here? I sort of had to jump again. I wanted to get ahead and remain with a successful organization and with the internet the ups and downs with the internet are a lot greater than with print in the last ten years or so at least. It might be the case where it sort of levels off for a bit but at least initially it was kind of a rollercoaster.

Jeff: We just had downs.

*What was it you said you were working for the newspaper and you said this dot com thing kind of interests me. What was it about it that you identified?*

David: I think it was a different way to tell a story because in a newspaper you're really restricted. It's sort of a one dimensional media. With the internet you can display a photo gallery with stories, there's multimedia, there's video. There's flash technology to design graphic and interact with graphics. You let people respond to your story and it's just a back and forth it's just...the multidimensional aspect and the different ways of story telling is what really drew me to it.

*Is the newsgathering process any different?*

David: The only way it's different is that it's more media. Back in the days before the internet it was you know...say a story broke at noon. You had all day to gather your facts, to thoroughly write your story, to research your story. But now with the internet you learn information at noon okay "When am I comfortable reporting this?" Because it has to go on the internet first. So it becomes a struggle. At what point are you comfortable enough to report something and you don't want to delay it too much. It's the struggle between when do I report something and when am I unsure. Whereas in the past it was always I have all day to do this kind of thing. So the news gathering has stayed the same but the reporting is different in that you might have to report the same story six or seven times because it might change over the course of the day.

*At what point did you start working for the Herald website?*

Jeff/Ed: We did it all along when I got there in 2000. It was a very new kind of thing and it's getting better at a gradual pace. Seven years down the road they're still kind of feeling their way. They haven't really committed one way or another their resources, their time. What we need is with the Boston Herald is what the Globe has with boston.com and we don't have that. They're torn between responsibilities and online responsibilities. They want me to blog constantly but they also want me to make editions and when you ask them what's more important you a different response every time. But I've found if you make the online and miss the print deadline that's where you really cause problems.

*The paper you worked for before had a website...*

Jeff/Ed: They just folded. The paper just folded three weeks ago.

*So do you think that was something that was perhaps attractive to the Herald on your resume?*

J/E: I think it was a minor component.

*As the person in charge of the sports department on boston.com have you found that you needed to retrain some of your journalists?*

David: Yeah that's really the thing. As an organization we're asking our reporters to do a lot more than they use to. We're asking them to obviously write for the paper to write for the internet, here's a blog as an outlet for that to make it easy for you. Now we're asking them to more multimedia. We're asking them to take audio recorders with them. Some of them are trained to take video recorders. We're asking them to do stand ups. For example down at the Super Bowl this week we're going to have stand up video with reporters and columnists on links. This is just adding to their obligations. It made us...a reporter's job now is a lot different than it was five-ten years ago so we're asking them to go do a lot more and have a lot more skills. It use to be "You're a great reporter. You're great at gathering information. You're a great writer." Now its—"Oh, okay. What else can you do? Do you have experience recording audio and sending it off with your computer? Do you have experience on camera? Do you have experience even taking pictures?" We're asking a lot more with the same resources.

*Is the writing style the same—writing for a daily and the internet?*

David: Well, the blogging and all that is far more conversational. You can be light hearted you can push the envelope a little bit. Stuff that wouldn't fly in the daily paper.

*Wouldn't fly because it maybe wouldn't be as interesting or because you could maybe use one source instead of two?*

David: I'm saying the writing style. No, in terms of reporting and your sources and making sure the source is right that is exactly the same.

Jeff/Ed: That's the one thing about the internet you have to be very concerned about. It's happened to both the Herald and the Globe in passing comparison of stories going on too early that haven't been correct. If we had held off for the print edition we wouldn't have had that problem.

*When you say the style is more conversational is it more like a notes column than a hard feature?*

David: It's more like an email to your friend. You can be silly. You can make satiric messages.

*Are you told to be that way?*

David: They never told us anything but be yourself.

Jeff/Ed: That's really the thing. They say here's your blog and it's a whole 'nother medium for reporters and say Ok this is the internet. It's new. It's fun. So it just kind of evolves that way. Our blogs are the same way. They're very conversational.

*If you wrote them like you wrote a traditional story do you think people would just look at them and say I could have read that in the paper or I'm not really interested in that stuff?*

The most part people are trying to get an update on facts, starting line up. Those things are very important in knowing what's going on. People when I'm not working I like to do that too to see if there's anything major going on. I don't like to see pages and pages of someone's ramblings.

But the most important point is that the information is still conveyed. The writing style is different but it's the same information that you want to get out of a news story you still get out of the blog.

*How many times a day do you file?*

It depends. All the games we get a minimum of four people every game. So we try to assign does the blog. The beat guy usually does the pre-game blog. The print editions start kicking in and there's no way you can do both. You're constantly rewriting the story. On the web it's tougher. The beat guy has to do all the blogging and there's a lot less time to do them if you want to meet the print deadlines. You kind of have to make a commitment one way or another. You have the second person on the road with me and that person should be doing strictly blogs and not concerning him or herself with the early columns, early sidebars. I love that stuff which isn't very pertinent.

*When satellite technology came about in the local television business...when 9/11 happened Channel 7 sent a reporter to New York City with a satellite truck and she stood there and did reports for Channel 7. But in edition she then would get a little voice in her ear saying "Miami wants you to do a hit at 6:15, she's not on in Boston." Then Buffalo wants you at 6:25, then Cincinnati wants you at 6:35. Is blogging the same kind of thing, you went to a game and you knew you were going to write your pre-game story and your game story and that was it. Now all of a sudden you have 68 more pounds of work to do?*

Jeff/Ed: It certainly is a heck of a lot more work. Rather than doing a specified report for Buffalo, Cincinnati, what have you ...but you do have to be aware of where these blogs are being read. You'd be shocked where these emails come from—California, overseas, Japanese and Korean emails. I can't believe that these people are reading. I got clips from the Jerusalem post—why would the Jerusalem Post be printing my stories? They always put a lot of links up.

*David, when your reporters are out in the field now do they file, if they blog, directly to the web or does it get sent back to newsroom and somebody edits like it always did and then somebody else posts it up?*

David: Right now we're still refining the process. Basically what we have now is people that we trust to file cleanly and we have people that we don't trust to file cleanly. The people that we trust to file cleanly will file direct to the blog. We have a system that as soon as they file it goes live and we get an email that this blog has gone live and somebody goes to look at it. It's almost like editing after it's published. We do that for certain people. Other people whether they aren't technically employed or they have a reputation to not write so cleanly will then either email it to us or email it to the Globe sports desk who also have instruction on how to post to the blog and it'll go up that way. We're really doing it on a case by case basis. Sometimes every once and a while someone will file to the blog and it will be messed up, there won't be any capital letters in

it, won't have paragraph marks. So it's like, wow, this is logged everyone can see this. So from time to time it is a problem. So it's something that we're dealing with.

Jeff: We're a hundred percent self-editing, a hundred percent self-posted. The only time an editor ever touches a story going online is if it's on the Herald website. If it's breaking news—Tom Brady breaks his ankle—that has to go on the Herald website rather than the blog. A lot of these editors, I believe, the copy editors don't have access to edit our blogs.

*Until it goes up?*

Jeff: Even then I think they have to call us and ask us to correct.

*They have to call you and ask you to correct it because they can't technically do it or because they can't editorially do it?*

Jeff: Technically they can't do it. An editor could do that during the day but at night they'd say "I think there's a typo here. Can you go change it?"

*Does boston.com use the same kind of standards for accuracy that the globe does?*

David: Yes. It's the same.

*Two sources...*

David: Yeah. From time to time when you get into the situation of baseball trade rumors sometimes those rules are abandoned if someone... a lot of times there's pressure if someone else is reporting something or we've got to get the story first but generally speaking it's the same exact standards as the paper.

*Have you been asked to start multimedia training?*

Jeff: No, I think in this market all of us are exposed to the radio and television experiences. Everyone's self trained and everyone spends an enormous amount of time turning on channel 4 or NESN and getting "mediarized". So no, for the most part I think it's unnecessary.

*What about video, running a camera?*

Jeff: I would probably need some training on that but I haven't been asked yet.

*It was my understanding, Tony was here last year that he was asked and was embracing it.*

Jeff: What Tony did was sound bytes from the manager's office and he would have to tell Terry Francona watch your language because I'm putting this directly online. He would tell Terry in advance.

*The Washington Post has outfitted some of its reporters with video cameras and there are some others trying to do that. I suspect it would change the landscape significantly if Steve Buckley, Bob Ryan and Dan Shaughnessy walked into the Red Sox locker room with a camera on their shoulders. They probably wouldn't get the access that they wanted. Have you fought that fight yet?*

Jeff: We have on some levels. One is we're beginning to train photographers to do that to since they already have the camera experience. What we're finding out though is we can shoot video but we also have to edit the video. We have a small multimedia staff and they're just being overwhelmed because these photographers are going out and experimenting with video and coming back to the office saying "Show me how to edit this." Stand in line! There's a ten other people, ten other projects.

*There you go. They all know how to do it.*

Jeff: The problem though is like you said they go into the Red Sox clubhouse and all of a sudden it's not gonna fly because as a beat reporter you're worth far more when you're notebook's in your back pocket than in your left hand. When you're relaxed you're going to learn a lot more. You start filming that everyone's going to get rigid, very proper, watch what they say. It's going to hurt.

*Maybe I'm being a little unfair here classifying you as management and you as rank and file but neither of you have fought that fight yet. You haven't been asked to do that. You haven't had that conversation with our boss yet, "Hey Hank this ain't gonna work."*

Jeff: Hey if we did come across a situation where we wanted to do an interview with so and so, maybe we should send a cameraman along and turn this into a multimedia feature. But then we have to sit back and say how will this affect the story? Will this player open up to us the same way? It's a much better story if we get more information from the person we're interviewing and you're just not going to get more information if there's a camera.

David: If it's just print reporters sitting around the guy, the guy's salty; he's going in different directions, as soon as the light goes on—dead. It's a totally different interview.

*Do you suspect that the athletes have started to notice not only new faces but have assigned that that person works for a website or an internet organization as opposed to a newspaper?*

David: I doubt it because I wonder if these guys even know who I am after all these years.

*Are you familiar with the Wire? It's a show set in Baltimore and one of the subplots this season is about the newspaper industry and right now they are currently going through a series of buyouts and layoffs. The catch slogan in the newsroom is "We need to do more with less." As much as the internet is being counted on to save the industry are the people being left behind stretched to the limit to have to do this much more with less?*

Jeff: Absolutely. We're using fewer reporters and editors to do more work and on the flip side some of the editors see the writing on the wall and they want to get on the internet. Sometimes there's only so much we can do. If ten people come to us and say I have such and such an idea for website how can I help you out and they don't have the skills to produce something we're left in the situation where we have great ideas and great people to execute those ideas but those people don't have the skills and we don't have the time to teach them those skills. So what we have to pick and choose sometimes. We're bottlenecking them. There's boston.com here and the Globe here. The Globe's rushing to boston.com and there's a skinny little bottleneck for skills and information and for stuff to get online. We are training more people and the bottleneck is growing but there is this situation where we have to say slow down. We need to decide what's the right thing to do. Not every idea is a good idea. That's at least what we've found in the last couple of years. So we have to hash things out and pick what we want to do. SO there's definitely in the internet that we're asking fewer people to do more work.

*What is the goal? Is the goal to have the internet move along hand in hand or side by side the newspaper? Or is it to take the place of the newspaper?*

Jeff: I think the goal now is complete and full integration of the two products. To produce content for newspaper and transform that content for the internet as well as additional content. It's having enhancements for almost everything that's in the paper on the website. It's not just the print product. Most times right now it is. The story you read on the internet is usually the same story you get in the paper but there might be a photo attached to it. There's really nothing else to it. We are getting to the point where more and more stories are getting enhancements. There's, for example with playoff coverage, with Jackie McMullen there's a column. We interview her after the game and she talks about the game and takes the angle of that column and we'll embed that video on top of the stories so that a web user can read that story and hear her talk about the game at the same time. So we're doing more of that. It's still slow motion.

*So you put her on camera to talk about the story or that play at second base that she seemed to be focusing on?*

Jeff: What we're doing is having several people talk about, and we're asking several people to do it, and we don't want them to all talk about the same thing so we ask them to take the angle of their column because we know they're writing about different things so we want them to talk about different things. We're trying to get them to expound more or to take a different angle on the same topic.

*Again in the television industry, local news, when as reporter or producer when your cell phone goes off and it's the assignment desk you get this pained look are you that person at boston.com?*

David: Sometimes yes. Most times. There is a work flow where I'll either work directly with a reporter or I'll go to the Globe and they might do it. It all depends on who's available but many times it's me.

*You mentioned that within the last month, Nick Cafardo had to apologize for a story he wrote. WNBC in New York posted the Mitchell List or what they thought was the Mitchell List. Recently*

*a radio station in Florida posted the Randy Moss story, took it down and then put it back up again. Is the race to getting things up on the net is it causing sloppiness?*

Jeff: We talked about it before. We use to have hours to go over this and check and double check sources. I know now when you talk to your editors in the morning and they ask what you're working on they say put that online. Most times you say no, no, no I need to wait on it. But that's the first thing they do they want to put it online. It's weird that the reporters sometimes show more restraint than the editors. They're anxious to make a big splash. We had some repercussions yesterday, two days ago when different radio stations picked up on it including a TV station in St. Louis. Those were all rumors and they were pretty obvious names. You heard rumors about them being involved with steroids but Albert Pujols name was on that list and the station mentioned this and he had a press conference and he said "I won't go on until you get them out of here." Eventually they just had them turn off the cameras. There are repercussions.

*Is there a minimum expectation that your boss expects you to blog when you're out on a story?*

David: For a beat guy at a night game they have just one or two per minimum.

*Two before the game?*

David: Yeah. If it's a day game they want you updating throughout the day. For me for a night game I would do the lineups and then get one in early on what's happening. From there when the game starts, someone else takes over the blog.

*What's happening during the game that the person with the eyeballs can't either here on the radio, go to ESPN.com click on play-by-play...so what do you expect them to do?*

David: We're expecting them to not to provide play-by-play but to provide more analysis. More like when Manny Ramirez hits a milestone homer they should mention that or if someone has a particularly strong inning they should have that he threw twelve pitches this inning and stuck out three batters. We've had this conversation. My time is valuable, what are we doing? The answer is people click on it. Particularly, Jeff said during day games, our bread and butter is the nine to five people at work. So particularly if there is a day game it becomes much more important but even at night we'll see our traffic usually spikes at noon and travels downward. Eventually you get down to five, six, seven o'clock and it just goes down. On nights where there's a camera and we have some volume it will go down but it won't go all the way down. It'll just stay level for awhile and then after the game it might even spike a little bit because people who were watching the game want to get the blog form of the play-by-play of what the important things were that happened.

Jeff: We've had some big games and we've had this argument before. (\_\_\_\_) first start with Kansas City that was a big game. It was a day game and from beginning to end I updated and I thought it was just a wasted effort because people have the radios, they have TV; they can follow at mlb.com and...

*When I worked at the color station we would go to a baseball game that would start at nine o'clock and would run until 12:30 and they'd want us live in the A section at 11 o'clock and our argument always was if those people who are watching the news A) they aren't interested in the Red Sox or B) we're reminding the others that there's a game and they're going to click the channel anyway.*

Jeff: Well you could have that policy like with Fox 25. They won't even mention that a Red Sox game is going on if it's going on then.

*Have you heard that argument from your reporters?*

David: We have and what we've told them is when you write assume that the person you're writing to is watching or has watched the game. So give them something that they don't know and they haven't heard. So that makes it a little bit harder too because they not only have to prepare their stories for the paper on a deadline but they have to provide interesting updates in the blog as well. So to be honest we're asking them to do a lot and sometimes too much. We've experimented in having them not file an early story and focus on doing the blog. The Globe users in Maine might suffer from this but do we serve the greater good by focusing more on our internet users of which there are more. These are decisions that have to be made.

*During whatever period of time that people started to know about blogging I think the first time I ever heard of it was during an NBA game and they would say Bill Walton is blogging during the game. In that time he was actually talking to fans who would write questions and then he would answer. Do you do any of that?*

David: Yeah we do chats. We have a weekly Patriots chat.

*Do you do that during a game?*

David: We've experimented with that but we haven't done the version where the person on the blog is an expert or another Globe reporter. We've done a chat with other fans during the World Series or other big games. It's not much work for us because we let the chat monitor do all the work. It has its own curse word filters and what not.

*Have you been asked to do that?*

Jeff: I've done a couple of them. Boston.com does far more with Mike Reiss, they do the chats, afternoon chats right?

*Mike told me once that when he first started doing it he was blogging with fans during the game and after the first game he went to his boss and said "I could do one or the other but I can't do both. There's no way I can talk to Joe from Revere about what happened on that third down goal and watch the next play."*

Jeff: That's the worst part about being the beat reporter. You don't get to watch any of the game. You listen to the crowd. You're always writing for the next edition and you listen to the crowd cheering and you have to watch a replay even though your posts have to tell the plays.

*Should websites be allowed to just make corrections as if nothing ever happened and just take it down?*

David: No. One of great things about the internet is if you're not accountable for what you do someone's going to call you on it. When we correct something if it's a minor typo we'll fix it and won't put a correction up for something like that. If we get information wrong we have a policy of putting up a correction. When we don't or it falls through the cracks, we get called on it.

Jeff: It doesn't happen all the time but there are just some notorious stories out there that just disappear. A Knicks story disappeared right?

David: It did but I remember that night because I got a call and we brought it back. The person that made it disappear wasn't supposed to do that. We brought it back but it wasn't the same URL so people who were linking to the story from another blog if you clicked on the story it was blank. So you're like wow what are they trying to pull over on us? But meanwhile on our site the story was corrected but because it wasn't the same URL, because of the viral nature of the internet if you included that link somewhere and that one showed up blank, to them you're trying to pull something over.

*So there's no Federal Communications Commission that oversees the internet. How are we supposed to know what's accurate and what's just opinion or not?*

David: It's still the same reporters reporting information. So that's where I guess the reputation of the newspaper is still the same.

Jeff: But there's several things with breaking news on blogs and you have no idea who's writing that blog, what kind of sources he has. It happens a lot now. People pick up on these things and you just wonder where is it coming from? With Wikipedia we all know the flaws with that. I remember a couple years ago at spring training there was an outfielder from Canada named Adam Stern. We were reading his Wikipedia file and they had this story that he was in a Wendy's in Massachusetts, he accidentally backed into a grandfather clock, knocked it over but came back later and wrote a check to pay for it. So I asked Adam about it and he goes "I have never been to Stoneham, Mass. I have never been to a Wendy's." It was just a really weird thing.

*Are you still having conversations with your bosses about saving stories for the paper?*

Jeff: Yeah it's ongoing. I'm always very reluctant to put something up there unless I know it's absolutely true. If it's not I don't want to put it up there.

*Is there still part of you that says "Gee, it's nicer to see my name in print than on the internet"?*

Jeff: They leave off my byline it's one less line to print.

*What's the policy at the Globe about saving it for the paper? For example early in this football season Mike had a story about Cory Dillon or it might have been right before training camp. It was a big story. Front page on the Boston Globe hard copy. It wasn't on the website and I called him and I said can you run the history by me about the discussion you had with your editors about running this in the paper rather than putting it on the web? This was obviously a story that he had gotten at 9 o'clock in the morning that he had saved until the next day. How does that process...?*

David: There will come a time when breaking a story on the internet and breaking a story in print are one and the same. It won't matter which medium you choose but we're not there yet. If we have a story I want to break it as soon as we can. I want it on bosotn.com. I don't want to wait and take a risk of someone else getting it and having a filer on our case. But I do see the print perspective because when you break a story in the newspaper in the morning then the other guy is playing catch up and it's a new news cycle. They have the print version of the paper without that information in it. So that still has more of an impact than if we say break the story on boston.com at noon and someone catches up four hours later and they have a story but if it's the next day it might be more hours for the guy to catch up. It might be one day that it doesn't matter where you break the story it will have the same impact. There are still stories where someone will say we're 100% confident we have this on our own but the compromise they make is let's break it at 10pm on boston.com instead of at 2pm when they get it.

Jeff: I know with us single copy sales are still very important for our viability. The news editors love to see exclusives for the print copy.

*If we accept or at least hear what you're saying David about wanting to get it right on there, why should I pay for the newspaper when I'm getting it for free?*

David: It's the same company. The way the company makes money through the print copy is through advertising obviously and also through people paying for the paper. On the web you make money through strictly through advertising. It's a different kind of advertising. It's targeted advertising. It's video advertising. That's the sole source of income when you're running a website. When you look at it that way, which way is going to make more money? If you're thinking like a publisher.

*And yet the Herald tried charging for their feature stories. That was a disaster. Why did they change their mind? They found out that the cliques weren't there anymore? And it was simply a case of dollars and cents.*

Jeff: I think if you want to read so and so's column it's more hits for an advertiser. It still the Herald, like many other newspapers, hasn't figured out a way to maximize profits through the internet. I know when I get a pop up ad I make a silent vow to myself never to patronize the company. It ticks me off so much. It's a little different with print; you have a choice. I hate being forced in my face. ESPN.com keeps finding clever ways around these pop-up blockers.

The Herald had that for awhile with FBI and I just got fed up with that FBI ad popping up in my face for two years.

*We now have a lot more journalists covering the teams, games, events—a percentage of them are strictly internet journalists. How are these teams and organizations dealing with this huge number?*

It's actually not as large as you think. Talk about the Red Sox clubhouse and boston.com will be there and they'll have microphone, camera what have you, maybe a reporter sometimes. ESPN.com and sometimes yahoo, different websites. They're national guys. They don't have someone in every city. What that does it's usually big games. We've had so much cutting on the print side and it just doesn't add up to the crowding of ten years ago in the clubhouse.

*If Jeff horrigan.com calls and says he wants to come to the game he's gonna say if he doesn't know who Jeff Horrigan is...?*

Jeff: It's funny. The Baseball Writer's Association of America it's been a big topic with us—who should be accredited and accepted into the organization in membership. They've gone on a case by case basis and some worked.

*Who should and should not be accepted because they applied or because you're trying to limit their access or they should be part of your organization?*

Jeff: I think they want to see if it's legitimate. If it's a legitimate website. I don't know how they think of boston.com. Obviously it's with the Globe and major sports websites. I don't think they have any problem with that.

*What jurisdiction do the baseball writers have over jeffhorrigan.com?*

Jeff: They don't. They can decide if you get a baseball association card or not.

*Why do they need a baseball writer's card if they get a grant from John Blake?*

Jeff: You don't have to go through the team. That's a blanket credential for every team, every stadium.

*Does having boston.com open doors for you?*

David: It does now. We've fought the credential battle for a number of years. Back four years ago we had to beg and plead. This was when boston.com was separate from the Boston Globe too so we didn't have the reputation of the Boston Globe to help us along so we were fighting our own way. We made a lot of inroads but it took a lot of work because of the culture change that had to happen with the teams. Now we're in with the local teams because we have the Boston Globe behind us. There's been no problems now. We even actually apply for credentials through the Globe. When we did have problems the teams were deciding on a case by case basis by who you were with. Is this some rinky dink website that you're trying to just weasel your

way into a game? They have to set those standards otherwise Joe Schmo from any website, you could start a blog and say “Hey I’m with baseballguy.com. I cover the Red Sox can you credential me?” They do look and see and do research on the blog, website or if there’s a newspaper with them. They go with what they know. We know these guys kind of thing.

*Does boston.com do any podcasts?*

David: We do yeah.

*Is this something you’re going to increase?*

David: We’re probably not. Podcasting was in vogue a year or two ago but our numbers justify continuing it on a broad basis but other things we tried just don’t justify. We do have a Red Sox podcast we’ll probably continue that one. The amount of resources that goes into a podcast many times isn’t worth what you get from it. You need someone to edit the audio and get someone to be the moderator or host. You need a reporter or columnist or a special guest. It’s almost like a radio show. If you’re doing it from scratch it’s probably not worth your time but if you’re with a radio station and you’re already producing a broadcast this is one extra step. I can see value in that.

*The fact that boston.com has all this new stuff is that good news for these students who are all multimedia trained?*

David: The more skills you have as a journalist the better off you’ll be. It use to be if you were a good editor or a good headline writer you got a job. Now we’re asking people to do everything. We need design and lay out experience. We need headline writing, caption writing, photo cropping, multimedia editing. Multimedia you need to be good behind the camera and in front of the camera. You have to be good at taking pictures and doing video. You have to record audio, know what’s best. You have to know what works too. It’s not just let’s record so and so going on for twenty minutes. You have to know what’s going to work from that interview. You have to be a good editor of multimedia as well as good gatherer. When we see a candidate with additional skills...

*What do these kids need to know about the sports journalism industry that nobody’s told them yet?*

Jeff: You have to be versatile and willing to try other things that may not expect that you want to be Bob Ryan right out of the gate. There’s going to be some grunt work before you have the chance.

*David? What do they need to know?*

David: You need to start at the beginning. Even if you do have the skills I’ve described you still have to deal with a content management system on the way. It’s one thing to study and say what happens if we have a story and so and so sources behind it but we’re just not sure yet. If there’s a sensitive story you have to write a headline that can go either way. On the web, much more

than the paper, there aren't five or six editors. You might get one person to read it. It's a matter of being very careful and not making many types. Or even worse getting a story wrong. There's not as many safeguards on the web as there are in print.

Jeff: General experience is something you need to have. How many college students have gotten in touch with me and said "I'm a great writer. He's my final paper I've written. I would love to work here." I'm sure there's lots of good writers out there but you have to go out and somehow get your name in a newspaper, transcripts...these days the smaller are willing to take you on paid internships and you will get a track record and marketable clips. You have your writing experience and filming and editing. You have to have that and not just come with the BU paper as your only experience.

*What would you say we should do to get that experience?*

Jeff: I think internships, with pretty much any newspaper, the state that newspapers are in right now if you offer something for free they're going to listen to you at a smaller newspaper, more so than the Herald or Globe. Start local. Get something with your name on it.

*What makes a website that I start up that I blog every game and give detailed analysis on and I have a journalism degree, what makes that different?*

Jeff: You're not on site so you're not reporting. I have very strong feelings about and write a blog about the president but that doesn't make me part of the White House Press Corps. There has to be more to it than just dropping the pages.

*So Bill Simmons is not a journalist?*

Jeff: That's a question.

*Where's that line, the journalist/blogger line? Is it strictly attending events?*

Jeff: I've seen Bill Simmons attend events but it's always in the stands with his Red Sox stuff, a big foam finger and a beer in his hand. I'll be sitting there in the press box. He's very opinionated but how does he do the job when as far as we know he's never been in the clubhouse been in the press box?

*Where do you see the competition between the internet and television going?*

David: I think if you look down the road five or six years from now you might not have a computer and a TV it might just be one. You might be watching TV and it might be integrated. Watching the news there might be something in the background you can click for more. Right now it's two different mediums and what the internet offers that television can't is the depth of information. In a newscast they might dedicate two minutes to a story but if you go to their website you'll see much more. You'll see more clips, a whole transcript; you might be able to interact with other viewers about the topic. It adds a whole nother dimension that a newspaper or television can't have.

*If you had to choose right now whether to go into television or internet as a graduating senior what would choose and why?*

David: I would choose internet if you're talking about local. Obviously if you're talking about national that's...local television newscasts have declining ratings. We still have our issues with maintaining profitability and keeping profitability but at least our audience is still. Even though internet usership has plateaued we still find our users are all on there.

*At boston.com if you see someone with a broadcast degree, is that someone that would be applicable?*

David: Absolutely. More and more we're looking for multimedia skill behind the camera, skill in front of the camera, skill cutting video behind the scenes.

*Can you put more opinion in your blogs or is it the language you use that makes it more fun?*

David: A lot of it is the language; you're still getting the information across. We do characterize some blogs that are opinion blogs; for example Bob Ryan has a blog. That's still straightforward opinion stuff. The internet does allow for more leeway to let more of yourself out. Newspaper is hard, fast; we've done it this way all along. This is the style we use. You're not going to stray from this. The internet is more new and there are no hard rules as far as style.

Jeff: As a beat reporter I enjoy giving my opinion every once and awhile. I can do that in a blog where I can't really do that in the newspaper.

*Boston.com went toward the Globe for content. DO you see a real convergence of the media or are companies going to stand alone in the future and try to do everything?*

David: I think convergence works out the best for everyone. For example with NESN, we'll pay them a licensing fee and we'll get all their Red Sox post-game video. In other words all the cameras at NESN are also working for us. The money it would cost us to do the same thing is incredible so it's in our best interest. It's not as important to say it's our camera person doing it as it is getting the most information we possibly can as long as it's on boston.com. Sometimes we'll even do media report round ups if something important is going on like here's what the Herald's reporting, here's what ESPN has, here's what SI has because we know that people don't want information from one source. They want information from many sources. We're not just the Boston Globe we're advocating information from all over and that's video, audio, texts, anything.

*DO you think that could be a problem with less sources of media?*

David: It's actually more sources unless you mean fewer hubs. Say NESN still have a website that's separate but NESN video does get a lot more clicks on boston.com than on NESN.com so more and more companies are saying "Is it in my best interest financially to keep licensing my product to boston.com if it means fewer clicks on my own website." So in their eyes it might be

more financially viable for them to maintain their own website to not license video anymore and potentially get more clicks on my own website. The risk there is maybe no one will watch the video because boston.com had more of an audience.

*Do they limit the number of seconds or minutes you put up?*

David: They don't limit it but we have certain rules of major league baseball and other leagues are enforcing now.

*So they can say you only get 78 seconds but on NESN.com they can put up two and half minutes.*

David: They could.

*What is a website to do when the very paper that got them their accreditation is being driven down by that website?*

David: The teams don't really care if the newspaper's losing business from so and so. It might be the BBWAA that cares but if you go to a team separately and they're not concerned with are you in fact in newspapers. They're concerned with who are you, what are you all about? They want to find out who you are affiliated with not with the competition.

Jeff: It should also be noted, correct me if I'm wrong, that a lot of the no's thrown in boston.com's face were done prior to John Henry's arrival. The Harrington-Duquette regime was...they said no to everything. They were the Kremlin. The owners are modern and accommodating and pretty savvy about getting their message out.

*With stuff like the Mitchell report and trade rumors how tough is it to get the story out right away? How tough is it to lay off?*

Jeff: The editors would love to get it out right away. If not, you have to explain according to this source and you have to be specific, and he has knowledge of the situation, you can hedge it that way.

David: You have to consider the source reporting and consider if you're safe. I'll take the Mitchell Report. Half of the names listed by the NBC affiliate in New York were emailed around hours before. We received an email but who is it from? We don't know who it's from. All of a sudden a television station in New York picks it up and CNBC sees that a television stations picked it up and reports it. Now we've established a news organization reporting information. If we didn't know that this information had originated from an email instead of going down maybe we would have considered reporting it.

Jeff: I think that most people got that email here too. I know I got it like ten times.

*Would you have been comfortable reporting that story saying WNBC in New York and CNBC are reporting that Jason Varitek is on the list?*

David: Maybe, if I didn't know where it was coming from. It's one thing to say CNBC and MSNBC are in trade talks with Johan Santana. It's another thing to say that CNBC and MSNBC are reporting that Jason Varitek is taking steroids.

*What's the difference?*

David: I only brought that up because trade rumors are almost news that someone's reporting. The news isn't that it's happening. The news is that these guys say it's happening. But with something with the gravity of someone taking steroids, you don't mess with that. You take more steps and you wait longer and it is not as important to be the first one with the story as it is to be right.

Jeff: That morning I got a call from my boss asking if we should blog this. The very last name on that list was someone I had never heard of like Josh Weinstein or something. I started looking for this name. I believe there were two names there. I went through minor league databases websites—nowhere! As it turned out the person who circulated it put his own name there or his friend. They weren't even players. That to me confirmed it.

David: The point of the blog is to give information and the user comes to the blog with different expectations than they come to a newspaper with. With a newspaper they know it is a finished product they're reading. A blog is much more conversational. There's not as much expectation of perfection on the internet. It's a new medium. It's a medium you can go on and edit any time you want. It's an ever changing medium.

Jeff: As a writer you often don't want to see what the editors did with your story. With a blog it's right there you know it's not going to be destroyed by a copywriter who doesn't know what he's doing.

*As long as the accuracy of the reporting is questioned. As far as I'm concerned I don't care.*

David: You should see the comments when you do have a typo. The real nasty comments when you misspell a word. The case is now we don't have as many editors as many eyeballs to look at it. Not everyone at the newspaper is trained to use the better edit tools of the computer or the policies aren't in place to get it cycled before it goes on. They think it's more valuable that's on the website for now rather than all polished and fine-tuned. Some day I envision an entire staff of writers and editors solely to produce the content for boston.com. This medium is still in its infancy even though it's ten, fifteen years old now. Think about how old newspapers are, more than a hundred years old. Compare that to what the internet is now and our resources are a lot less than what is dedicated to a newspaper.

*David would you say that you are looking for people who are trained enough to report, edit, do everything from start to finish on a story or is boston.com settling right now because you either don't have those people to do that or you can't hire those people?*

David: The most important skills to have is good news judgment, good reporting skills, good writing skills. Those are much harder to teach than how to run a camera or how to properly crop

photos. That base is still, without that we won't even look at you. That to start off with and everything else is a plus. Everything we don't have to teach you is a benefit. The more skills the better. If you keep piling up the skills, the more attractive you are. The base is definitely the strong background.

*If people have websites or blogs on their applications, what are you looking for in those websites and what can we do to make them more attractive to you?*

David: That's a great question to ask. What I'm looking for is...because people do write to me with "here's my blog" and that's the first thing I check out before I even look at their resume. I look for editorial organization because a lot of times on the internet it's a lot harder to organize material because you get so much. If you have that organizational skill it's a huge benefit. If you make your page look clean, if the links are attractive...it's different to write a headline than for print. You have to be more obvious about it. You have to say the news because people are scrolling. I'm looking for if you've done any experimentation with multimedia. Not so much bells and whistles but a video you shot and a video you cut in Final Cut Pro and an audio clip you took out and about. The more skills you can demonstrate on a personal website, the better.

*Do you ever worry about what you say in blogs and being too harsh in you conversationalist writing?*

Jeff: I grew up in a different era. You can say those things in the press box to the other guys but not on the website. I think some of those websites are the people who have never been there, don't have the sources and aren't necessarily the most informative. I don't know what specific website...

*Heard in the press box.....*

Jeff: There I go! I could ostracize myself!

*Can you categorize blogging as genuine experience?*

David: In my eyes it does because it demonstrates that you're dedicated to doing this and two that even though you're not reporting it to anywhere, it is published. I'm looking more for the effort and the experience in using the tools and the quality of what is posted. I count that as not so much the experience news judgment wise but for the technical skills involved and the dedication to the craft and to the field. To start a blog from scratch, it's easy to do it but the depth of it is what I see.