**Guidelines for football broadcasters:**

**Dr. J.M. Dempsey, Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Jm.dempsey@tamuc.edu**

**Play-by-play (PBP):**

Keep the listeners in mind. They can’t see what you see.

Repeat the score often, at least every change of possession. On a long drive, give the score with every first down. Basically, give the score at least every two or three minutes of real (not game) time. Listeners are constantly tuning in and out. Not giving the score enough is the no. 1 complaint of radio sports listeners.

Give the down and distance and the field position before every play. Re. field position say whose side of the field the play is on (the Commerce 40-yard line, or the Farmersville 40-yard line).

Know the names of players on each team, especially the backs and receivers, on sight. Do not identify players on the air by their numbers. This definitely requires preparation, and yes, memorization.

Develop a football vocabulary to describe plays, areas of the field, etc. Have words and phrases ready to go – “in the flat,” “between the hashmarks,” “over the middle,” “at the pylon,” “off right tackle,” etc.

Try to stay a second or two behind the play as you describe it. This helps avoid being surprised – “He catches the pass for a touchdown! Oh, no, he dropped it!” It becomes annoying to the listener if you’re having to constantly correct yourself.

Try to describe the offensive set before each play. If you have time, pay some attention to the defensive alignment. Focus on the offense, follow the ball.

Wait until you see the official’s call before you call the outcome of the play. Don’t assume a first down, touchdown, etc. unless it’s completely obvious. (Example: “He’ll be close to a first down.”)

Know the officials’ signals, and the penalty for each violation. If you’re uncertain, wait and see how many yards are walked off and then report what you see.

From time to time, give the direction of play (“Tigers are going from left to right.”)

Maintain a calm demeanor most of the time. If you’re excited on every play, a truly exciting play sounds just like every other play.

Study established PBP broadcasters, learn from them, and adapt your PBP to their style.

More advanced tips:

Recap scoring and key plays from earlier in the game from time to time. Therefore, keep notes.

On long yardage plays, try to give the number of yards gained on the play. This gives the listener a much better perspective on what just happened.

Color commentary:

Have fun; also …

Be well prepared. Gather as much information on teams as possible via newspapers, websites, etc.

Don’t talk too much or too little. Play-by-play (PBP) announcer will usually end each play with a new line of scrimmage, down & distance, and a downward inflection of the voice. Then start talking. Stop talking by the time the offense breaks the huddle.

PBP needs a few seconds between plays when he doesn’t have to talk to gather info, clear his throat, sip some liquid, etc.

Look for things difficult for the PBP to pick up, such as tackles and blocks, especially by Commerce players. The more Commerce names on the broadcast the better. Focus primarily on the defense. PBP is focused on the offense.

Keep stats – first downs, turnovers, penalties/yards, passes/complete, third-down conversions, punt average, etc. This is an excellent source for your commentary.

Look for developing trends in the game. For example, “Farmersville has only one first down in the second half.” Keep the “big picture,” the overview of what’s happening in the game, in focus for the listeners.

Don’t be overly critical of players, coaches and officials. It’s high-school football, not the pros, and you’re not an expert. Also, do not needlessly repeat details of mistakes and the players who made them (Example: “Well, it was Peters’ fumble that set up this threat for Farmersville.” Just say a Tigers fumble gave the Farmers this chance.)

Avoid stating the obvious and clichés. Don’t be a cheerleader. (Example: “Well, the Tigers are really playing their hearts out tonight.”)

Don’t directly correct PBP on the air, i.e., don’t follow what PBP said with, “No, that’s not right …” You can state your own view without directly correcting PBP. If you know that PBP made a major factual mistake, pass him a note, or wait until there’s break and tell him about it.

Don’t analyze offensive and defensive tactics beyond your own expertise. Don’t pretend to know more than you do.

Feel free to comment on the surroundings and the activities in the stadium, but again, don’t be overly critical.

<http://www.americansportscastersonline.com/radiosportscastingtips.html>

<http://www.ehow.com/way_5154495_sports-broadcasting-tips.html>