Reads Can Make or Break An Event…
Including the P.A. Announcer
By Jeff Kurtz, CPAA
Kent State University P.A. Announcer

In addition to the requisite game announcements that must be made as the action on the field or court unfolds without the use of scripts, the Public Address Announcer is also likely to be required to make a variety of public service, information, and or entertainment announcements that are scripted and typically happen during timeouts or breaks in game action.

The number of scripted P.A. announcements will vary greatly depending on the event, the level (high school, college or professional) and the needs of the school or sponsoring/hosting organization.

At the high school level, public address announcements are generally written and provided by the home school's athletic administrator or other school official. In some cases the Public Address Announcer may be asked to generate his/her own scripts based on the needs of the school.

The timing and frequency of non-game-action announcements at the high school level is typically determined by the athletic director, dictated by game action, and may or may not be done in conjunction with other promotional activities, such as cheer/dance routines, message/video board information, band performance, on-field/court contest, etc. The announcing schedule at the high school level is usually more flexible than at the college or professional levels, and quite possibly could be left to the discretion of a veteran announcer with only suggested times for insertion if there are no specific time slots required by those activities noted above. For example, the athletic director may instruct the P.A. Announcer to “work in” a list of announcements at various times during the game with specific instructions for those needing to be made at a particular time (i.e., pre-game, quarter break, halftime, etc.).

While there are many similarities in the timing and expectations of game action announcing that takes place at all levels, the ancillary announcing at the college and professional levels is much more tightly scheduled with less flexibility in terms of when specific announcements are made.

Many announcements at the college and professional sports levels are actually “paid commercials” that have been sold by the marketing/promotions sales staff and have specific requirements for when they are made. In addition to contractual agreements as to when specific announcements are made, such as pre-game, kick-off/tip-off, quarter breaks, halftime, postgame, etc., some announcements may be tied to specific game-related activities, such as first downs, touchdowns, field goals, sacks (football), goals, saves (hockey, soccer, lacrosse, etc.).

In addition to sponsorship/promotional announcements that are required based on the contracts that exist with particular vendors/sponsors, the host school (university/college) or team may have its own promotional announcements that must be made at specific times, and they may or may not have on-field/court or message/video board coordination required.

For the most part, the Public Address Announcer will have little or no input into the generation or placement of the announcements they will be required to make. It is also likely that the announcer will
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not see the announcements prior to the event, therefore it is very important to read over all announcements before the event to help ensure accuracy, verify pronunciations and determine if any editing may be needed.

Timing is also more critical at the college and professional levels, as timeouts and quarter breaks are specifically outlined by the league, conference or broadcast entities and must fit into the radio/television schedule of the game. This is another reason for allowing yourself time to read your announcements prior to the game to ensure that they are compliant with the break schedule (i.e., no 60-second reads for a 30 second timeout!).

Often the individual who is in charge of preparing the reads does not understand that there are certain times when a read can be made and that the length of the read has to fit the amount of time for the time out or the dead ball. Those of you who have been announcing for awhile know that the timing of announcements as to when they are to be read is critical, especially when a game is being televised. Imagine being told that no matter what that the introduction of the starting lineups had to be made two minutes before the start of the game—even after explaining that doing so would be contrary to proper protocol, because the teams would have to stand around until tip off, which would look amateurish and foolish.

Unfortunately, P.A. Announcers have little if any input into reads. Often, P.A. Announcers don’t see the reads until game-time. This is disturbing, because no one knows more about how reads should be written, announced and the timing for announcing them, then P.A. announcers. Sadly, many of those individuals whose job it is to oversee reads let their egos get in the way. Of course, when a read isn’t very good or is too long for the time the time allotted for the read, everyone thinks it’s the P.A. announcer’s fault. P.A. announcers who have to deal with situations like this should discuss the matter with the individuals who are in charge…or who think they are, and get the matter resolved.

Kurtz’s announcing credentials include 35 years of NCAA Division I men’s and women’s basketball, gymnastics, wrestling, volleyball and football. At the high school level, he has announced football, gymnastics, baseball, wrestling, and volleyball, including Ohio High School State Championships. He has announced more than 35 Mid-American Conference Tournament events in baseball, men’s and women’s basketball, cross country, field hockey, gymnastics, soccer, softball, track and field and wrestling. His resume also includes NCAA and NIT basketball tournaments. In 2001 he announced the NCAA Field Hockey Final Four. He was the 2009-10 NASPAA NCAA P.A. Announcer of the Year, and is member of the NASPAA Board of Directors.
What Is Your Bomb Threat Protocol?

For decades, fire was a primary threat many athletic administrators feared. Today, fire is only one threat that ADs have to prepare for when hosting or overseeing an athletic event. Moving up the ladder of threats is that of a bomb threat. This is the case, because schools, churches, shopping malls, theatres and athletic events are considered by many counterterrorism experts to be soft targets.

The NASPAA advocates that schools have a protocol for dealing with all threats and that P.A. Announcers know their role and be able to execute it, if the protocol calls for their involvement. Even if they did, the likelihood that they would follow the same protocol would be unrealistic.

To get the ball rolling, the NASPAA invited a few member administrators to comment about their protocol. The first member to reply by the copy deadline was Jeff Cerqueira, Assistant Principal of Student Activities, Floyd Central High School, Floyds Knobs, IN. Below is what he had to say.

Depending on how the bomb threat is made, the person who received the threat should note the following:

1. Time received
2. Time hung-up
3. Exact words spoken
4. Where hidden
5. When it will go off
6. Kind of bomb
7. What it looks like
8. Why bomb has been placed
9. Whether caller has any relatives in the building
10. Identification of caller

Where law enforcement is present at our events, the venue would be evacuated, scanned and observed irregularities would be reported to law enforcement. The venue would remain vacated until authorities deem that it is safe to return. We provide law enforcement for varsity football and boy’s basketball. At least two school administrators attend each event. If a threat is brought to their attention, law enforcement will be notified and, if necessary, the venue will be evacuated.

As for the role of the announcer, he or she would make announcements to let everyone know what to do to facilitate a calm, orderly and safe evacuation.

The NASPAA would like to run other plans and protocols in an upcoming newsletter. If you would like to participate by April 1, please e-mail the information about your plan and protocol to Brad Rumble, NASPAA Executive Director, at brumble@naspaa.net.

It’s Official!

The Voice Above the Crowd is the Official P.A. Announcing Manual of Amateur Sports. This 376-page publication is the most comprehensive P.A. announcing manual ever written.

About The Voice Above the Crowd

» Covers 22 sports with scripts for each sport
» Includes officials’ signals charts for several sports
» Is endorsed by the NIAAA, NFHS, NJCAA and NAIA
» Comes with 34-minute CD
» Price is $64.95, plus shipping

To order, go to www.naspaa.net.
Greatest Fear Announcing an Event

Most P.A. Announcers would say that they are not fearless when it comes to announcing an event. There’s something that they would like to avoid. The NASPAA invited a few members to reveal what their greatest announcing fear is and to explain if they are prepared for it or how they would handle it. Below are the comments from those who responded.

Glen Waddle, CPAA

Jackson, MS

My greatest fear in working as a public address announcer is the threat of dangerous weather at an outdoor event, which can cause a panic among fans. This fear actually happened in my earlier days as a Public Address Announcer when I was serving as a substitute for an Ole Miss/Mississippi State football game played in severe conditions in Jackson, Mississippi, at Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium, Butch Lambert Field. A tornado was bearing down on the stadium in the middle of the game and the warning sirens could be heard clearly inside the press box. Hall of Fame Sports Information Director Langston Rogers of Ole Miss approached me in the booth and said that I had to clear the stadium, get people underneath the concrete stands, and do it in a calm manner. Thanks to Langston’s advice, I was able to clearly and quietly get everyone underneath as tornadoes danced around the stands with heavy rain lashing the field.

This incident happened to me with no emergency announcements prepared and no plan of evacuation to use. Keeping my head and not panicking a large crowd of fans at an intense rivalry game is one of my prouder moments as a P.A. Announcer. Now, of course, every stadium I work has a posted plan of evacuation and I keep a folder of emergency announcements. Lighting at baseball games is another example of these scary situations that demonstrate a thin line between panic and calm.

Waddle has been announcing since 1982. He serves as the Public Address Announcer for the Ole Miss Rebel football, basketball, volleyball, and baseball teams, the Mississippi College Choctaw basketball team, the Mississippi Association of Coaches All-Star games, the Mississippi High School Activities Association basketball and baseball championships, and the GoDaddy Bowl in Mobile, AL. On the professional level, he has been the announcer for the Jackson Mets, Jackson Generals, and Jackson Senators baseball teams and the Jackson BanditsECHL hockey team. He received the All American Football Foundation Lindsey Nelson Award in 2001, the All American Football Foundation Outstanding Public Address Announcer Award in 2010, the All American Football Foundation Outstanding Sportscaster Award in 2014, and AP Mississippi Sportscaster Awards in 1988, 1989, and 1991. He was also the recipient of the 2011 NASPAA NCAA Public Address Announcer of the Year.

Doug Carnival

St. Paul, MN

I can tell you that the thing that concerns me most is when all the ears in the arena are focused on me. That is when I announce the starting lineups. A mistake here in the pronunciation of players’ or coaches’ names, positions or other important information can be embarrassing and unprofessional. To allay my fears, I spend an inordinate amount of time in preparing this announcement. I don’t merely use a program or roster and read from it. I transfer the names of the starters and coaches onto my own preprinted script, double check the information, then verify the pronunciation of all the names with the coaches. Then I ask my colleagues at the scorer’s table to double check the information against my script to ensure I have everything correct. This may seem like overkill, but it gives me the confidence that the information that I will be presenting is correct when everybody in the arena is listening carefully to what I say.

Carnival is in his 19th season behind the microphone. He is the announcer for Visitation High School, St. Thomas Academy and Saint Catherine University in St. Paul Minnesota. He announces basketball, ice hockey, volleyball, soccer and softball. He has also announced men’s college hockey games and numerous playoff and section championship games over his career. He will be making his first appearance at a State Championship Tournament this spring. He has also spent time as a youth and adult ice hockey referee. Doug has also been a contributor to NASPAA by submitting articles and writing the hockey section the voice above the crowd announcers’ manual.

When not behind the microphone, Doug is an attorney and a professional lobbyist in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

James Riebandt

Deer Park, IL

My biggest fear is announcing a play incorrectly. Early in my career I miscalled a play where Walter Payton was the ball carrier, but I said it was Chuck Foreman, who played for the Vikings. I made that mistake early in my career, and I have never forgotten it.

My next fear is not having all of my copy beforehand to practice. If I am forced to read copy on the fly, I am nervous that I will come across a word of phrase that I stumble on because I was not able to prepare. Being not prepared in the worst thing that can happen to anyone in the broadcast business.

Riebandt has been the DePaul Blue Demons men’s basketball P.A. announce since 1977, except from 1998-2003, having worked 400 games. In 1979, he was the backup stadium announcer for the Chicago Bears. Three years later, the position of Stadium Announcer for the Chicago Bears, was his. Currently he has announced over 340 Bears’ games. Additionally, he has announced high school and college basketball All-American games, track and field, equestrian and charity volleyball and baseball games round out his P.A. announcing resume. He also had the privilege of announcing for the Chicago White Sox. Jim is has also served as the clinician for NASPAA Football P.A. Announcers’ Clinics.
My biggest fear is not the mispronouncing of names, especially at the intercollegiate level, but rather announcing an incorrect team name or mascot. When you are faced with the responsibility of announcing for different schools at the same time of year, I always worry that the wrong team name will slip out at any given time. Unfortunately, this has happened to me on one occasion. What I learned on that day was to not develop habits with my speech cadence and intonation. I combat this fear with over preparation, keeping a laser focus on the present sporting event and to be mindful of the reads in front of me. I attempt to change my intonations with almost every event to make sure I don’t slip into a past habitual rhythm. I have been successful ever since.

Vacchio has been announcing since 2013. Currently he is the P.A. Announcer for football, boy’s and girl’s basketball and baseball at River Bluff High School in Lexington, SC. He also fills in for the University of South Carolina in men’s soccer, track & field, cross country and women’s tennis. His resume also includes the 2014 South Carolina High School State Football Championships, 2015 SEC Women’s Tennis Tournament and a first round 2015 NCAA women’s soccer tournament game. Recently, USC contacted me to spot announce Gamecock baseball!
Active Shooter Scenarios Present Challenges

By Charles Crabb
Assistant Athletics Director for Facilities and P.A. Announcer
Indiana University

Trying to formulate some thoughts about the role a public address announcer serves with an active shooter scenario takes me back to a move which debuted in Fall 1976, “Two Minute Warning,” my first year at Indiana University in a FTE staff position. The movie centered on the issues of a shooter in the L.A. Coliseum and the conflicts between responding agencies. It’s not the type scenario I enjoy during tabletop discussions and planning as there are way too many variables, which come into play.

For our football and men’s basketball games, Indiana features a Joint Command Center led by the Campus Emergency Services manager or her assistant. Around the conference table, various agencies are featured, like our campus police, city police, hospital ambulance service, Events Services and other local and state law enforcement agencies. In men’s basketball games, all are in radio communications with two top management staff members near me. Sitting three seats from me at the scorer’s bench is the athletics assistant AD/Game Day Management and over my right shoulder is the IU Auditorium executive director who oversees the management of our ushers and other Event Services support staff who are responsible for crowd control. We aren’t that completely staffed with our Olympic sports events, where there is a Game Management associate and an assistant Events Services manager working with the significantly smaller number of ushers and ticket takers working the event.

In either case, my first major thought is who is in command of the event and decision-making. Knowing who’s in charge and who’ll be giving the orders and instructions is crucial. It is through that individual the information will be forthcoming that hopefully will provide a safe movement of patrons away from a dangerous situation. It’s hard to have a script that universally may fit your situation and be available in your game announcement notebook. There should only be one voice in the house, that of the public address announcer. I’ve had 39 years’ experience as public address announcer. I’ve had 39 years experience as public address announcer for the Assembly Hall, so my fervent hope is that those years of training and measured composure will come through when required. The thought is to evacuate and move people out of harm’s way, and the announcer’s instructions and tone of voice must work in tandem with the ushers and Event Services staff also putting themselves in harm’s way. This may be a moment you might be thinking of yourself and your own well-being, but the calm assurance and information you provide is most critical to the several hundreds or several thousands of spectators who’ll be dependent upon what it is you say and how you say it.

If you’re comfortable sharing your active shooter plan and protocol with the NASPAA to possibly run in an upcoming newsletter by April 1, please e-mail them to Brad Rumble, NASPAA Executive Director, at brumble@naspaa.net.

Crabb is finishing his 39th year as Indiana University’s public address announcer in the Assembly Hall. He also has done Hoosier Football and Men’s Soccer and continues to announce the Hoosiers’ nationally recognized Track & Field/Cross Country program. Crabb has had the opportunity to announce several Big Ten and NCAA championships in various sports, the Chicago site for Men’s World Cup Soccer in 1994 and Women’s World Cup Soccer in 1999 and was the competition producer for Track & Field during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics Games. The 65-year-olds full-time job is assistant athletics director for facilities at his alma mater, Indiana University.
Allow Me to Introduce Myself: New Member Feature

By Earl Wise, CPAA
Walnut Grove High School (Loganville, GA), Oxford College of Emory University (Oxford, GA)
Monroe, GA

When you think of a stereotypical Public Address Announcer, the first thing that comes to mind is a booming voice and a clarity or lucidness with words. Born with a speech impediment with a propensity to stutter at the drop of hat, I was told by my mom to use words with one syllable, slow down, and for God's sake, “Do not use words you cannot pronounce.” She also said, “Remember, God gave you two ears and one mouth, so do twice as much listening as talking.”

Over the years, my stuttering, for the most part, went away as I learned it was a result of self-confidence and anxiety caused from a lack of preparation. As a commercial banker for a regional bank and a volunteer youth sports coach, I was constantly in front of people and slowly overcame my fear of public speaking. However, in no way would I ever consider the notion of using a microphone in front of large sports crowds. It did not interest or appeal to me at all. I consider myself amateurish with a lot to learn. I’ve made all of the typical amateur mistakes, which include forgetting to turn my mic off. During a three-day, 24-game basketball tournament, I completely lost my voice during game 21. Thankfully, Rick came to my rescue, but said, “I told you so!” We tag-teamed the final three games and I completely lost my voice during game 21. Thankfully, Rick came to my rescue, but said, “I told you so!” We tag-teamed the final three games as I cued the music and he announced the action. It was my greatest moment thus far as I worked directly with my mentor, and we had a blast together in front of a capacity crowd. Rick is encouraging me to give football a go, and I plan to do so when the opportunity arises. I’ve learned with practice, preparation, scripting and confidence, I can have fun and alleviate the fear that stuttering will never rear its ugly head.

Midway through the 2013-14 basketball season, Rick asked if I would be willing to announce at another high school, the AD asked me to take Rick’s spot as the basketball announcer which included cueing up all of the music. Admittedly, I enjoy the music just as much as the announcing. My philosophy has always been fair and balanced with the announcing with a little more emphasis towards the home team. I am not a homer as I am respectful towards the visiting team; NBA announcers absolutely drive me crazy.

The University of Georgia is a short drive from home, so I pay close attention to Brook Whitmire (football) and especially Sam Franco (basketball) when I attend games. Both have iconic voices and are really good at what they do. Former high school classmate Casey Motter is the Public Address Announcer for the Atlanta Braves, so I pay close attention to his booming and professional voice. I think he is one of the greatest. My dream would be to sit next to all of these gentlemen for just one game to watch, listen and observe the best.

Earl Wise is the basketball P.A. Announcer for Walnut Grove High School.
During his 36-year P.A. announcing career, Bill Gaedke has announced over 4,039 athletic events.

The NASPAA is proud to recognize active members who have announced 1,000, 2,000, 2,500, 3,000 or 4,000 athletic events. Such an accomplishment requires unparalleled commitment and perseverance. A page on the NASPAA website is being dedicated to these individuals. New milestones of 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000 and 4000 athletic events are going to be added. If you have reached any of these milestones and would like to be recognized on the website, please provide a high-resolution photo of yourself, along with the information at the right by e-mail to Brad Rumble, NASPAA Executive Director, at brumble@naspaa.net.
NASPAA Members Are Eligible for the Bob Sheppard P.A. Announcer of the Year Award

A membership benefit of the NASPAA is being eligible for the Bob Sheppard P.A. Announcer of the Year Award. For information about the award, go to www.naspaa.net/?p=Awards.

The award is sponsored by Clell Wade Coaches Directory and Balfour.

Bob Sheppard P.A.
ANNOUNCER OF THE YEAR

WANTED

The NASPAA is seeking nominations for the Bob Sheppard P.A. Announcer of the Year. Only NASPAA members are eligible.

>>>>>> NOMINATION DEADLINE: August 1, 2016
For youth sports: August 1, 2016

“P.A. announcers who follow the NASPAA Code of Conduct will definitely enhance their chances for consideration,” commented Glen Waddle, NASPAA NCAA P.A. Announcer of the Year. “Yelling and being over the top won’t cut it.”

“The NASPAA Awards Program is a tremendous membership benefit,” remarked Brian McKiernen, NASPAA High School P.A. Announcer of the Year. Information about the Bob Sheppard P.A. Announcer of the Year Award may be obtained at www.naspaa.net.
“Whether you are a rookie announcer or a seasoned veteran, the NASPAA can help you to become a better announcer, connect with other announcing professionals and provide tools for self-evaluation and continued professional growth in the field.”

Jeff Kurtz, CPAA
Kent State University P.A. Announcer and NASPAA Board Member

If you are a P.A. announcer or have the responsibility of hiring or assigning P.A. announcers, the NASPAA would like to invite you to become a member. The annual individual membership fee for adults is $30 and $20 for students. Schools may join for $69, which entitles them to six memberships.

Not a Member?

The following associations and organizations are NASPAA Affiliate Members. NASPAA Affiliate Members share the same core values and similar P.A. announcing philosophy as the NASPAA. The NASPAA serves as the P.A. announcing resource for NASPAA Affiliate Members.