

## Joe McConnell

*Interview conducted by Mark Liptak in January 2009.  
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*Recently the American Sportscasters Association put together their list of the top 50 sportscasters of all time. Vin Scully was selected to the top spot. Chicago was well represented on the list as Hall of Fame White Sox announcers like Jack Brickhouse, Harry Caray, Milo Hamilton and Bob Elson made the cut. One former Sox announcer who isn't on that list, but should be, is Joe McConnell.*

*Now before you say, "Wait a minute...what did Joe ever do?" Perhaps the better question would be, "What didn't Joe do?"*

*Consider that Joe has been calling games for five decades both pro and college... he has been a play by play announcer for five professional sports leagues (the AFL, NFL, MLB, ABA and NBA), has worked for, or with, Hall of Famers like Bill Veeck, Calvin Griffith, Harry Caray, Early Wynn, Don Drysdale, Ray Meyer, Wes Unseld and Bob Lanier. He's covered Hall of Famers on a regular basis like Connie Hawkins, Alan Page, Jim Marshall, Mike Ditka, Walter Payton, Mike Singletary, Dan Hampton, Larry Bird, Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippin.*

*He called the Vikings dominating stretch of football in the 1970's, then got to see the Bears during the late 70's / early 80's when one of the most memorable Super Bowl champions was being formed. When the Indiana Pacers were being regarded as the "Boston Celtics of the ABA", winning back to back crowns, Joe was courtside. He called Walter Payton's 275-yard rushing game in 1977 then called Payton breaking Jim Brown's career rushing mark against New Orleans in 1984. He called for NBA Radio, Michael Jordan's first three championships....and let's not forget his time with the White Sox.*

*Joe was one of the main announcers from 1980 through 1984. He worked alongside two of the best loved Sox announcers in history, Harry Caray and Jimmy Piersall. In that time, he saw a young manager and future Hall of Famer, Tony LaRussa get his first taste of success. He saw new Sox ownership in Jerry Reinsdorf and Eddie Einhorn take over for Bill Veeck. He saw the formation of a team that had three straight winning seasons, capped off by the 1983 Western Division champion "Winnin' Ugly" White Sox.*

*In his career at the professional level, Joe has called games for the Denver Broncos, Phoenix Suns, Minnesota Vikings, Indiana Pacers, Chicago Bears, Minnesota Twins, Chicago White Sox, Indianapolis Colts and Tennessee Titans.*

*At the pro level he has called three Super Bowls, the NBA and ABA Championships, the NBA All-Star Game and the American League Championship Series.*

*His college resume spans stops at Indiana State, DePaul, Illinois, Notre Dame, Northwestern and since 1995, Purdue. He's 70 years young, still going strong.*

*Now why wasn't Joe on that list again?*

*I had the chance to speak with Joe from his home in mid-January. Over the phone you could tell he still had a lot of enthusiasm for his job along with still having a "great set of pipes." He also gave you the impression that to this day, he's still thankful and amazed at how his life and career turned out.*

**ML:** Joe we literally could spend all day talking about your career, but I'd like to concentrate on your time with the White Sox and then maybe if we have a chance to touch on your years with the Bears and the Bulls. I guess the obvious starting point is how did you get the Sox job?

**JMC:** Well remember I was born and raised within about a hundred miles of Chicago and was already doing the Bears. (*Author's Note: Joe grew up in Goodland, Indiana.*) When I heard about the Sox job opening up it was an easy decision for me to at least try for it. At the time WBBM was doing both the Sox and the Bears and I know they wanted to try to consolidate the job, so I felt I had a good chance of getting it.

During the spring and summer, I was also doing the Twins and even though I loved Chicago, I also loved Minneapolis... I'm a small-town guy at heart and found that in Minnesota. Because of that I would have stayed at WCCO and kept doing the Twins games. I would have stayed for less money than the Sox offered me because I was comfortable there, but all that station would do was offer me a five thousand dollar raise. I couldn't turn down the White Sox offer and again it enabled me to stay in town the entire year.

*(Author's Note: Joe also made note of that fact that another future Sox announcer, Jim Durham grew up about 10 miles away from where Joe grew up.)*

In my entire time in Chicago I lived at the Astor House. I was paying 950 dollars a month in rent and all that time I kept telling myself that now I could actually afford to do this! (laughing) Today you'd probably have to pay three thousand a month.

**ML:** You worked for Bill Veeck that first year and a lot has been written and said about him over time, much of it rather uncomplimentary. It goes along the lines that despite his love for baseball and the fan, he was a con-man who sold Sox fans a bill of goods because he never had the finances to really establish the club as a real contender. What was your opinion of Bill?

**JMC:** I can't dispute those comments, but I loved the guy. I really enjoyed working with him. I loved his wife Mary Francis and got along well with Mike. Bill was the type of guy that when my two sons would come to visit in the summer from Phoenix, he would allow them the run of Comiskey Park. My boys were 12 and eight years old at the time and he'd let them go

everywhere; they were even allowed into the Bards Room. Basically, they were spoiled rotten and part of that was because of Bill (laughing). Now when Jerry and Eddie took over (Reinsdorf and Einhorn) that changed, but Bill was always good to me and my family and he told me more than once how much he enjoyed the way I called a game. Bill grew up with radio and appreciated it and so did I.

**ML:** Well speaking of Jerry and Eddie what was your opinion of them, especially when they started making the move towards SportsVision and taking a lot of Sox games off free TV?

**JMC:** I thought in the early years they did a marvelous job. I had no problem with them as owners although to this day I remember watching the Sox take batting practice behind home plate with Jerry and looking over and telling him if he understood what the cost of winning would be. The Sox were going to win the division in 1983 and the players were expecting to be rewarded financially in 1984.

I was paid by WBBM when they had the rights... the Sox had a say in the announcers, but they didn't pay me. In fact, I didn't get on the Sox payroll until WMAQ got the rights starting in 1982, so them going to SportsVision didn't really impact me. I think from the first day, Eddie had the idea of getting the Sox and making a marriage between them and cable TV. My only issues with the new owners were from a broadcasting standpoint. I don't think they ever really knew what they wanted to do with me. Jerry and Eddie always had a fascination with former players and I never played in the big leagues.

**ML:** In your five seasons you worked with quite a collection of people...solid pros, former players and some guys with very big egos. How about a thumbnail sketch of the folks you shared a booth with?

**JMC:** I remember sitting down with Bill (Veeck) and he told me, "I know what you're going to go through working with Harry (Caray), don't let it bother you." Harry was going to do things his way, I understood that and just did my job. I admired Don Drysdale. He was just a hell of a guy. He was an excellent broadcaster. I always enjoyed working with Jimmy (Piersall). I remember when the Sox owners asked me if I'd have a problem working with him and I said no, and I didn't. You'll remember that in the half season we worked a lot together on-air, Jimmy never got into trouble because of things he said. That's because I never set him up, I never put him into that box where he'd have to respond with something that could be taken the wrong way.

Lorn Brown was a professional. Rich (King) at that time was the youngest and the least experienced but he did a fine job and remains a personal friend to this day. "Gus" (Early Wynn) was a great guy but he was brutal as a broadcaster. I think when we worked together I basically called the entire game although I do remember at one point he tried to call, I think, an inning of the broadcast. I never worked a lot with "Hawk" (Ken Harrelson). I remember the few times we worked on the radio he was disinterested. "Hawk" never wanted to work on radio; he didn't want to be there...he wanted to be on TV where he could be seen.

**ML:** Earlier you said that you never had an issue with Jerry Reinsorf and Eddie Einhorn as owners, but I get the sense that there may be something else left unsaid with that statement as far as the actual broadcasting end is concerned.

**JMC:** There was a period where I never knew if I was going to work on radio or TV that evening. They were using a lot of announcers and moving them back and forth and at first that really surprised me. SportsVision may have had something to do with that. I also think they were auditioning guys to maybe hire in the future, perhaps even for my job.

One summer it seemed that I'd work a few games with a different person every home stand. I remember I did some games with Ken Wilson who at that time was doing the Blackhawks.

**ML:** Was that hard not knowing what medium you were going to be working on? I mean broadcasting for radio and broadcasting for TV are two completely different entities.

**JCM:** Like I said I was surprised at first, but it was never an issue because I prepared the same way for both areas. I basically did a radio play by play even if I was on TV. I called the game... I took a lot of pride in that regardless of the circumstances.

**ML:** Tell me about the preparation work for a broadcast.

**JMC:** I'd keep my own stats and after the game I'd go back to the hotel and update everything for the next day. I learned a lot of baseball doing that and with Tony (LaRussa) as manager it got to be a little game that we'd play. I'd go over the stats and put together what I thought would be the starting lineup for the next game. I'd get to the clubhouse and Tony would say, "OK meat, who've you got?" and I'd rattle off my starters and batting order. Tony would sometimes ask me why I'd put someone in a certain spot but usually he'd just shake his head and start laughing! But I also knew that Tony respected the hard work that I'd put in. (laughing)

**ML:** Getting back to SportsVision, it was controversial for its time and caused Harry to say in Bob Logan's book, "Miracle On 35<sup>th</sup> Street" that had the Sox stayed on free TV (WGN) in 1983 they'd have owned the city and been a national byword.

**JMC:** Well, Harry was right, although he had his own reasons for saying it. Harry wanted to be on where a lot of fans could see him and not just 50 thousand or so. It was a fact that in 1983 the Sox were by far the best team in Chicago, one of the best teams in baseball, but nobody saw them. SportsVision was probably the first time someone had tried to put a lot of games on cable and that might have hurt it.

**ML:** You never seemed to get involved in any of the controversial aspects of broadcasting by that I mean making outrageous statements on the air, or looking to stir up things, yet you were also honest about what you were seeing. Did that ever cause you any issues with players? For example, I've heard many, many stories about players being upset with things being said by Harry or Jimmy from the booth.

**JCM:** It only happened to me one time with the White Sox and it was with Billy Almon.

In 1981, especially the last month of that season, many times on air, I'd say that Billy was the M.V.P. of the team. He did everything that season and played very well and as it turned out the Sox thought the same thing and gave him the team M.V.P. award. Then something happened in 1982. He wasn't hitting, and he let that carry over to his fielding and his base running. He was a mess and I had to report how badly he was performing. He didn't like that and came up to me on the field one time and started calling me out over it. I asked him if he specifically heard what I was saying about him, or if he heard it from someone else.

Naturally he heard it from a third party and I told him exactly what I said and also let him know how often the previous season I talked up the good things that he was doing.

*(Author's Note: In 1981, Almon, leading off, hit .301 with 16 stolen bases and 41 RBI's. In 1982, playing in more games, he hit .256 with 10 stolen bases and only 26 RBI's. The team let him go the free agent route after the season.)*

**ML:** Let's talk some baseball. The Sox revitalization started in 1981, the first of three straight winning seasons and the big news that spring was when the Sox signed Carlton Fisk and made the deal for Greg Luzinski. How did you react?

**JMC:** We were all thrilled. Carlton brought instant credibility to the franchise and to the new owners. I'm not saying Greg's acquisition wasn't important but at the time we looked on the Fisk signing as the most important move. Greg had already spent 10 years or so in the big leagues and there were questions about if he could still play in the outfield or if he'd be able to handle the fulltime DH duties. We knew that if Carlton stayed off the DL, he'd make a major impact on the team.

**ML:** The strike wiped out two months of the season, but the Sox still finished at 54-52 then went to 87 wins in 1982. The new owners were getting good players like Fisk, Luzinski, Tom Paciorek, Steve Kemp and had just signed Floyd Bannister. Going into 1983 how did you feel the club would do?

**JMC:** Well first off you mentioned the strike in 1981; I still remember it because I didn't get paid for that time. Everyone wound up getting paid, including the players for sitting out, but I didn't! (laughing)

I still have my scorebooks from the 1983 season and I spent the past five days going over them getting ready for your interview. I took notes during the games and I found this one that I wrote... 'Pennant talk in unlikely places... San Diego, San Francisco, Minnesota, Atlanta, the White Sox.' This was a very good team... they started slow, but what carried them was their pitching. Not only the starters but guys like Jerry Koosman and Dennis Lamp.

They also had one of the greatest streaks that I've ever heard of in baseball...remember they won 22 out of their last 25 games! And the starters, when they got it going, were unbeatable. LaMarr Hoyt won 13 straight and his last loss that season was on July 23. Rich Dotson won 10 in a row and Floyd Bannister won 13 of 14. That's very hard to beat.

*(Author's Note: In fact, the Sox went 46-15 after August 1. The big three of Hoyt, Dotson and Bannister went an unbelievable 40-5 after the All-Star Game.)*

**ML:** Well the team started off poorly and there were media reports that Tony LaRussa was about to get fired in May. The Sox brass also brought in Bobby Winkles to evaluate the situation and according to Eddie Einhorn, if Bobby said they needed to make a change, Tony would have been gone. "Hawk" Harrelson said that what saved the season was that Tony never became paranoid about things. You were around him every day, how did he react to the slow start and the building pressure?

**JMC:** The only time I ever heard a complaint about the media coverage and the comments about him getting fired was once in a while Tony would get upset over something "Hawk" would say during the telecast. He was always after things Jimmy said but other than that just a time or two with "Hawk."

**ML:** One of the other things that folks say was key for that year was the trade to get Julio Cruz. I remember at the time that it wasn't a popular deal with the fans although since then I've found out that Tony Bernazard wasn't the most popular guy with his teammates or with Tony.

**JMC:** It's true that it was unpopular at the time. I don't know about Tony not being liked by his teammates...all I know was that he was a solid second baseman who had some pop. Julio was a good player with speed and he gave the Sox basically a second leadoff man in the lineup when he would hit ninth. He didn't hit for as high an average as Rudy Law, but like Rudy he could bunt and run.

**ML:** So as good as this team was, what happened in the 1983 American League Championship Series? I know I've interviewed some guys off that team, Jerry Koosman, Vance Law, Ron Kittle, Scott Fletcher for example and they all give credit to the Orioles but they also all say the Sox were the better team.

**JMC:** They just didn't play well...it was parallel to what happened to the Cubs last year when they played the Dodgers. The Sox didn't drop kick the series away but Baltimore simply played better. They just stopped hitting. Even in the game that Hoyt won the Sox didn't hit.

*(Author's Note: The Sox won Game #1, 2-1 at Memorial Stadium.)*

I'll tell you what really may have hurt them and that was when Mike Boddicker beat them so badly in Game #2.

*(Author's Note: Boddicker shut out the Sox 4-0, striking out a record 14 hitters.)*

He threw all that off-speed stuff and I think that just screwed up the Sox hitters timing. They never recovered the rest of the series.

**ML:** I've also heard over the years that Tony LaRussa made a tactical mistake when he asked guys like Greg Luzinski to speak at the pep rally the city had for the Sox right before they went to Baltimore. The thinking was that additional pressure was put on some of the team to produce and that compounded things as the LCS. went along.

**JMC:** Come on Mark, "Bull" Luzinski, who played for 10 years and had been in previous playoff series with the Phillies is going to be intimidated because he spoke at a rally? I can't imagine that happening.

**ML:** So, when all was said and done, how did you feel when the 1983 season ended?

**JMC:** I felt empty like everyone. I thought it was a missed opportunity.

**ML:** 1984 was a bitter disappointment for the Sox. They were the consensus pick to win, they added Tom Seaver, yet they fell apart in the second half and had a losing year. What happened there?

**JMC:** I think that the way the Sox ended the 1983 season, that amazing run, was a little like finding fool's gold. Maybe the team wasn't as good as some thought. All I know is that things slipped away in the second half. Who knows what else was going on? Maybe LaMarr (Hoyt) started to get into his off the field issues. There's lot of things that may have been taking place that as an announcer you just don't know about.

**ML:** So, after the 1984 season ended, why did you leave the Sox? You had been there for five years and were well liked by the fans.

**JMC:** I was let go the week after the season ended. I wanted to stay but I guess the Sox wanted to go in a different direction. Like I said I know ownership wanted to get ex-players involved in the broadcasting end and they wound up hiring Del Crandall.

I had worked it so that all of my deals with everyone would expire after the 1984 seasons. I was hoping to work it out where I could stay in Chicago and do a few teams at the same time. I even talked to WGN about doing the Cubs and the Bears since both teams were being broadcast by them, but I heard that Harry didn't want me anywhere near the Cubs situation. Nothing worked out in Chicago and I went back to Minnesota.

**ML:** Did the way your Chicago tenure ended put a sour taste on your years with the Sox?

**JMC:** Oh no. I had a good time, I was very busy which was the way I wanted it. I enjoyed my years with the Sox and being in Chicago. I was doing what I wanted to do, and I was making good money for the time.

**ML:** Before we touch a little bit on your days covering the Bears and the Bulls I've got to ask you, is it true that you broadcast two games in a single day involving two different teams you were working for?

**JMC:** Not only is it true I did it twice! (laughing)

The first time it happened it was in Dallas. I broadcast a Sunday afternoon game that had the Vikings playing at Texas Stadium against the Cowboys. When it was over I hopped in a cab and got to Arlington about a half hour before the White Sox played the Rangers. In those days Texas was allowed to play Sunday night home games because of the heat, that's the only way I was able to pull that off.

The second time was in Chicago. I was able to do a Bears game in the afternoon then get over to Comiskey Park in time to go on the air for the White Sox.

**ML:** How about a few moments talking about your time with the Bears. They went to three post seasons while you were doing their games (*Author's Note: 1977, 1979 and 1984*) and that was the formative years for one of the greatest teams in NFL history.

**JMC:** I knew that I was replacing a legend in Jack Brickhouse, that's for sure.

I knew that Jim Finks (*Author's Note: Then Bears G.M.*) was a big fan of mine from back when we were both with the Vikings. When the opportunity presented itself, I applied for the job and discussed it with Bill O'Donnell. (*Author's Note: The father of actor Chris O'Donnell.*) I wound up being hired.

The first year I was doing the games was Jack Pardee's last season as head coach. I knew his days were numbered even though he got them into the playoffs because of what happened in a game at Houston. (*Author's Note: The Oilers destroyed the Bears 47-0.*) I never saw Jim Finks madder than that afternoon. He'd replace Pardee with Neill Armstrong.

**ML:** Did you work much with Mike Ditka?

**JMC:** I really didn't outside of just the normal game preparation. Brad Palmer did the "Mike Ditka Show" so he actually spent more time with him than I did.

**ML:** How about being around the great Walter Payton?

**JMC:** Nobody ever worked harder than Walter. He was a happy go lucky fellow who loved to play the jokester. He'd come up behind you and just pinch you and because he had such strong hands that really hurt! Then he'd let out that high pitched laugh of his. I don't know if I can say

he was the greatest runner or greatest player of all time but overall, he was certainly as good as anybody who ever played.

**ML:** How about working in the booth with Brad Palmer?

**JMC:** I can't say enough good things about Brad. I'm sure he was disappointed that he didn't get the play by play job, he was certainly qualified for it but rather than get upset he dedicated himself into becoming the best game analyst he could be. He threw himself into learning the game and that showed on the air. We had a great relationship and it was rare that you had two play by play guys in the booth, yet that's what we had, and it worked very well.

**ML:** You left the Bears after 1984 and missed out on that magical 1985 season...what happened?

**JMC:** I was disappointed I couldn't have been in Chicago for that amazing year. My contract was up, and WGN got the broadcast rights, so we started discussing the possibility of me remaining with the Bears but also doing the Cubs. From what I was told that stalled, in part, because Harry Caray didn't want me involved with things at his end. I never could get an answer out of WGN and by then the Vikings actually got involved.

I had to have a job and I told WGN that I needed an answer in two weeks or I was going to have to begin discussions with Minnesota. I actually tossed out a salary figure to Minnesota not expecting them to say yes to it. They did however, which surprised me. After two weeks I still hadn't heard anything from WGN, so I talked with the Vikings and was rehired to do their games.

The funny thing was that soon after it was announced I was going back to Minnesota, WGN offered me the opportunity to do a lot of college basketball involving schools like Notre Dame, Illinois and DePaul.

**ML:** And how about working for the NBA calling the Bulls' first three titles?

**JMC:** The best boss I ever had, a guy named Brad Soll, put together a network and asked me to do a sports talk show, which I did. Soll continued to aggressively pursue getting rights to an NBA Game of the Week on radio and the league gave him the chance. When he got the rights, he asked me and Frank Layden to do the games and we did a little over 50 including the playoffs. Soll lost the rights after one year, but the league liked what I did and asked me to stay on. I worked the rest of the time with Bob Lanier and then in my last year with Wes Unseld.

Michael (Jordan) was the greatest player I ever saw, and he usually did something every game that I had never seen done. I think that layup where he switched hands against the Lakers in the Finals may have been the greatest move I ever saw. I interviewed him a few times and one of the things that I gave to both of my sons was a picture of me interviewing him as a keepsake.

Phil Jackson was an interesting guy too. He had Indian artifacts hanging on the walls of his office, he believed in that Zen philosophy and he ran the triangle offense although a lot of that came about because of his assistant coach "Tex" Winter.

**ML:** Finally, Joe you are still doing Purdue University football and for a few years before that you also did their basketball games and handled the coach's show. Obviously, you still love what you're doing...even after 40 years!

**JMC:** If it wasn't for some health issues that are creeping up, my eyesight is giving me trouble, I'd do this forever (laughing). I've been very fortunate to do what I've wanted to do in life for so many years.

## CHANGING ROLES

### McCconnell eyes joining Sox crew

**JOE MCCONNELL**, the exciting voice of the Bears, is ready to add baseball to his Chicago radio sports announcing chores. Jim Palmer, the disident Baltimore Oriole pitcher, is jumping into a television career. And Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier again are being tabbed by CBS as the principal announcers for the Super Bowl.

From Chicago to Los Angeles, the men who play and describe America's favorite sports are making big news.

Although the star athletes themselves are the real heroes, the people behind the microphones almost invariably outlast them. An outstanding player in baseball, football, basketball, or hockey might stay at the top of his profession for 5, 10, or 15 years. On the other hand, the announcers who describe the heroics go on forever—or at least anywhere from 35 to 50 years, as in the cases of Harry Caray, Jack Brickhouse, and Bob Eason.

**SO LET'S TAKE** a rundown of some sports announcers, including a few athletes who are popping up increasingly on TV and radio:

**JOE MCCONNELL**—McCconnell is almost certain to become a member of the White Sox broadcast crew when WBBM Radio begins carrying the games next spring. As the excellent Bear play-by-play radio voice for the last four seasons on WBBM, Joe has carved an impressive niche for himself with Chicago fans.

But McCconnell continually has told his close friends that in addition to the football duties, he dearly wants to broadcast Chicago baseball on a regular basis. For the last few summers, he has done play-by-play of the Minnesota Twins' games over WCCO Radio in Minneapolis.

Now that WBBM has won that long-term contract to carry the Sox, look for McCconnell to leave the Twin Cities, move to Chicago fulltime, and become a regular Sox



**Gary Deeb**  
TV-radio critic

announcer on both radio and TV.

**HARRY CARAY**—Forget the reports that Harry is considering quitting Chicago to take over the California Angels' announcing job. Caray will use the California fever as a wedge to increase his salary from his present \$150,000 a season. But he'll definitely remain with the Sox on WBBM and WGN-TV (Channel 43).

**LORN BROWN**—At least two other major league ballclubs are talking to Brown about becoming their No. 1 broadcaster. But if Lorn doesn't accept an out-of-town offer, he'll almost certainly retain his job as a Sox broadcaster.

**JIM PIERBALL**—His status is uncertain. Pierball has gained quite a bit of popularity among Sox fans for his inside baseball knowledge, his brash irreverence, and his willingness to nail stupid or lazy ballplayers for specific misdeeds. But the word around the Sox front office is that Jim might be eased out of the broadcast booth and perhaps into a coaching role with the Sox.

**PAT SUMMERALL** and **TOM BROOKSHIER**—The most comfortable network broadcast team in pro football is being ticketed once again as the primary Super Bowl announcers. In addition, of course, we'll get the usual glut of Brent, Jayne, Irv, and Jimmy the Celebrity on the unending programs and pageants shows.

**JIM PALMER**—He may be baseball's finest

east pitcher of the 1970s, but he's still in dutch with his Baltimore bosses, including Manager Earl Weaver. So Palmer's taking a toe-dip into TV. Starting in January, he'll join the semi-intellectual John Davidson in hosting "Incredible Sundays," a weekly ABC hour about wacky people and bizarre events. The program is a ripoff of NBC's hit "Real People," but with far fewer laughs.

**THE HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS**—The basketball magicians may have become the saviours of "The White Shadow," the nifty CBS Monday night drama series. The program had been foundering in the audience ratings, but drew its greatest viewership several weeks ago when the Trotters injected some of their patented whimsy into the show. Since then, "The White Shadow" has scored respectably in the Nielsen.

**SPORTSBRIEFS**—It now develops that the three-year package of White Sox broadcasts will cost WBBM Radio more than \$400,000 a year in rights fees. Sox sources say the financially troubled ballclub will get most of the cash at the very start of the contract. The quick money infusion is expected to help team president Bill Veack considerably in his efforts to stabilize the Sox's fiscal situation.

A golden Richards will add his commentary to the telecast of the Chicagoland Prep Bowl at 1 p.m. Saturday over WMAQ-TV (Channel 5). The Bears' wide receiver joins Mike Leiderman, Greg Gumbel, and Harry Hoffelder on the air. WLS disc jockey Bob Strutt will conduct halftime interviews with students.

Vince Lloyd and Johnny "Red" Kerr are the voices on those occasional Chicago Hustle telecasts on WGN-TV (Channel 9)... NBC repeats that 1977 "Saturday Night Live" program hosted by ex-quarterback Fran Tarkenton Wednesday night.



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