

MARVIN KALB: Hello and welcome to the National Press Club and to another edition of The Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb. My subject tonight is Play by Play with Bob Costas. You guessed it. My guest is Bob Costas whose name has become synonymous with sportscasting for several decades now. And though he's covered every major sport, he's best known probably for his coverage of the Olympics and for our national pastime of baseball.

Costas, though he doesn't look older than 21, has been with NBC Sports now since 1979. He's also been the host of HBO's sports and entertainment programs since 2001. Nineteen times, Costas has won an Emmy, which is a big deal in broadcasting, and eight times he's been named National Sportscaster of the Year. His book, *Fair Ball: A Fan's Case for Baseball*, was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Bob Costas, welcome. Welcome to The Kalb Report.

BOB COSTAS: Thank you very much.

MARVIN KALB: As an old sports fan, I'm very quick to admit I'm delighted to be able to sit here and talk to another sports fan. And before we get started into really serious things like baseball, is it true, according to baseball lore, that you left a \$3.31 cent tip--

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: --at Stan Musial's restaurant in St. Louis to go along with Musial's 331 lifetime batting average--

BOB COSTAS: That is exactly correct. I was a 22 year-old kid out of Syracuse University. I had never set foot in St. Louis before. And during my senior year at Syracuse, I applied for a job at KMOX Radio in St. Louis, legendary 50,000-watt radio station. And for those in the audience who are younger, before the days of the Internet and of cable television, and certainly before ESPN, the handful of 50,000-watt radio stations that carried sports and that could, on a clear night, be heard if they were in the middle of the country in some 35, 40 states like KMOX, they had legendary status.

And some of the greatest names in broadcasting had passed through KMOX. And so I applied for a job there. And they brought me in for an interview. And my thought was, I had no chance at all to get the job and I'd never see St. Louis again. So I made my way to Stan Musial & Biggie's Restaurant, which was something of a landmark in St. Louis.

And I want to emphasize, I am not a cheapskate. I am, by reputation, a very generous tipper. It was 1974 and I think the tab for a burger at Biggie's came to eight or nine bucks. And I left a tip of exactly \$3.31 cents--

MARVIN KALB: That was a very good tip.

BOB COSTAS: --very good tip and a very good lifetime batting average. Stan the Man hit 331 lifetime.

MARVIN KALB: Well for me, baseball is where it begins and ends. So I gather that's for you as well.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, baseball's always been my favorite sport.

MARVIN KALB: Why?

BOB COSTAS: You know, I grew up in the late '50s and early '60s around New York. I vaguely remember the Dodgers and the Giants. I was five years-old when they left. But the Yankees of Mickey Mantle were *the* team then. Then the Mets came in when I was ten years-old in 1962. And at that time, although many games in New York were on television, all of the baseball announcers, even if they worked on the television side, they were classic radio voices--

MARVIN KALB: Yes, they were.

BOB COSTAS: --Red Barber, Mel Allen, Lindsey Nelson, Bob Murphy, not so much a baseball announcer, but in other sports, Marty Glickman, the young Marv Albert. I spent some time in Los Angeles when I was eight, nine years-old in the early 1960s and remember, like a whole generation of kids, listening to a transistor radio beneath a pillow to listen to the melodic sound of Vin Scully. And I think as much as anything else, because of the announcers and the history and the romance of the game, and the storytelling aspect of the game, baseball captured me.

MARVIN KALB: Well, I don't blame you. It certainly captured me as well. The old-- I think the first baseball commissioner, with the unforgettable name of Kenesaw Mountain Landis--

BOB COSTAS: Right.

MARVIN KALB: --he said at one point that every kid has a baseball hero, and will kind of light a candle in front of the shrine of that hero.

BOB COSTAS: And that candle always burns.

MARVIN KALB: --and that candle'll always burn. Your hero is Mickey Mantle.

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: Now, how did you get to Mickey?

BOB COSTAS: Well, when I first became aware of baseball in the late 1950s, the Mets hadn't come to New York yet. The Dodgers and Giants had left. I had a cousin, still do, who was a couple of years older than me. We led parallel lives, but he was a couple years older than me. And so he loved Willie Mays because he was old enough to be conscious of Willie Mays. Mays was gone. Snider and the Dodgers were gone. Mantle and the Yankees were it. And he became my favorite player, like so many kids growing up in New York.

And I recall that, even as a kid, nine or ten years-old, I didn't confuse, as some do, a baseball hero with a real life hero, even before we knew some of the details of Mantle's life. And he led a life that was both glorious, and in some sense, tragic. But even before we knew those things, I never wanted to pattern my life after him. He wasn't my idol. He was my favorite baseball player.

And I don't know if I was peculiar in this regard. I know I'm peculiar in many other regards, but-- I remember when my friends and I would go to Yankee Stadium. And the Yankees would park their cars in kind of a caged area outside the stadium, and then they would walk in. And my friends would want to watch them walk in.

And to me, to see Mickey Mantle in a pair of blue slacks, as I once did, and a white cashmere sweater over a polo shirt totally screwed up the whole fantasy. I believed that Mickey Mantle, or wanted to believe that Mickey Mantle materialized for batting practice in his number seven pinstriped uniform. And when the game ended, he disappeared into some netherworld. And I really didn't care, as long as he was there the next day for the game. I didn't want to really see him in the flesh except in that baseball uniform.

MARVIN KALB: Well, that's a wonderful story. You said in a eulogy to Mantle that he was (and I'm quoting you now), "Our symbol of baseball at a time when the game meant something to us that perhaps it no longer does." What did it mean to us?

BOB COSTAS: Well, Mickey died in August of 1995. So when I delivered the eulogy that day in Dallas, baseball as an institution was still reeling from the

strike that had obliterated the '94 World Series and the beginning part of the '95 season. It was before Cal Ripkin's big moment in Baltimore a month later when the game began to come back. Many people who loved the game felt alienated in a very significant way. Even those of us who'd moved onto adult lives and maybe we didn't live or die with the outcome of each game, as we did as kids, we still felt the generational connection, grandmother and grandfathers, fathers and moms, onto your own kids. And we felt that that had been tethered in some way, or-- if not ripped apart.

And Mantle, Mays, whoever your player was from that generation, Ernie Banks, Al Kaylein(?), they represented your connection to a time when you followed the game as interesting and exciting, but you also felt fondness about it. And that's a word that I don't feel is applied to modern sports very often. Attendance is higher. Revenue is higher. In every measurable way, sports are more popular than they've ever been. There may be additional excitement or interest. But I don't know that the connection [simultaneous conversation]--

MARVIN KALB: What's missing now?

BOB COSTAS: --or the fondness is there--

MARVIN KALB: What's missing now, Bob?

BOB COSTAS: I've always been a supporter of the rights of players. So they deserve the right to free agency. They deserve their cut of the pie. They deserve to make a large amount of money. But there are consequences with that. It's very rare for a player to play his entire career with one team, so you follow him from the beginning to the end as I did and so many did with Mickey Mantle and other players. And even teams of that generation weren't terribly good. At least their fans knew, "This was my team."

And for six, seven, eight years, this was the lineup. You know, they got familiar with them and comfortable with them. And you felt some kind of, again, fondness for them, or affection for them.

MARVIN KALB: You don't feel that that's the case now?

BOB COSTAS: Oh, I think it can sometimes be the case. I just don't think it's the case to as great an extent.

MARVIN KALB: Baseball today is clearly not what it was when I was a kid and probably not what it was when you were a kid either. And I'm always fascinated by pitchers. They were expected to pitch nine innings.

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: These days, if you have a pitcher who goes six, seven, you know, he's a great hero and he earns \$50 million a year.

BOB COSTAS: Yup.

MARVIN KALB: How did that happen?

BOB COSTAS: Well, in fact, six innings, allowing three runs or less is defined as a quality start now. In 1968, Bob Gibson started-- I may be wrong on the number of starts. I think he started 35 or 36 games for the Cardinals. He completed 28 of those games. And 12 of them were shutouts. And his ERA for the year was 1.12. And it was not at all unusual for the top pitchers to throw 250 plus innings, in some cases, more than 300 innings.

Now, each team has such a large investment in a star pitcher that they're worried about blowing the guy's arm out. Plus, relief pitching has been refined to the point where you've got another guy you're paying multi-millions to close the game. So now you want the guy whose arm you're pampering to just pitch six or seven innings. You'll take your chances with kind of a bridge guy to get you to your closer. And you hope the closer finishes it out in the ninth.

MARVIN KALB: But hasn't it gotten to a point, which is really absurd-- For example, managers are now required to be very careful to ration out a certain number of innings for a young pitcher, not to [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: --or a ...(inaudible)--

MARVIN KALB: --as you put it, blow his arm.

[simultaneous conversation]

BOB COSTAS: --or whatever. You go over 100 pitches, that's a lot.

MARVIN KALB: Now, how did we actually get to that? How did you get to the point of rationing innings? I mean, that sounds much too clinical and mathematical for baseball.

BOB COSTAS: Well, it got to the point where they began to view these people as monetary assets, which, in a sense, they are. You went from a four-man rotation to a five-man rotation. So now it's remarkable when somebody pitches on

three days rest. But people used to pitch on three days rest as a matter of course. And the heroic thing was to take the ball on two days rest, like Gibson did in '64 in game seven, like Koufax did in '65 in game seven. And of course the reason he did in '65, pitched game seven on two days rest, was that he declined to pitch game one because it fell on Yom Kippur, which made him a huge hero among all of my Jewish friends in the neighborhood on Long Island, who, as you would know, did not have quite as many Jewish sports heroes to relate to as perhaps the gentile kids had to choose from if they were gonna relate on a strictly ethnic basis. So Koufax was a huge hero. And he pitched game two and then he pitched game five. And he came back on two days rest and pitched a shutout in game seven. So that was not that unusual in those days.

MARVIN KALB: Do you think it is good for baseball that we have reached a point where innings are rationed, which pitch counts become so crucial in determining whether you pull a good pitcher?

BOB COSTAS: You know, I think you can actually prove statistically that in the long haul you get a better performance out of it if you have a good setup man and if you have a good closer. But what it does is it deprives the game of a certain kind of drama. There was always a tremendous drama in watching a guy try to finish what he had started. He's working on a masterpiece or some kind of clutch performance. But now maybe he's thrown 120, 130 pitches. And in the mythology, he steps off the rubber. He removes his hat. He runs his forearm over his forehead and wipes the sweat away. He tugs back at the cap. He gets back on top the mound. And he tries to put the finishing touches on what he began a couple of hours or two and a half hours before. And he faces this hitter for the fourth time or maybe the fifth time. And there's a history, not only going back to previous games, but there's a history within that game. "Well, he got me out on the slider in the fourth. Will he throw it to me here?"

But now we know that nine times out of ten, in the ninth, even if the guy's pitching a shutout, he's gonna give it to the guy who's being paid eight, ten million dollars a year just to pitch the ninth.

MARVIN KALB: Did somebody like Gibson have the number of pitches that are now talked about when you listen to a baseball game?

BOB COSTAS: Naw. Naw. He pitched game seven in '64 against the Yankees, as I said, on two days rest. And he got to the ninth leading seven to three. And he gave up solo homers to Clete Boyer and Phil Linz. And that made it seven to five. And Bobby Richardson came up with Roger Maris on deck, and Mickey Mantle to follow. So if Richardson had reached-- and he had 13 hits in that series-- I remember more of what happened when I was 12 than I remember what happened

yesterday. If Richardson had reached, then Maris would have been the tying run at the plate. And Johnny Keane was the manager of the Cardinals. And he said after the game, “I wasn’t gonna take him out because I had a commitment to his heart.” And Gibson retired Richardson, ended the series, and won the game.

But Gibson was cut from a much different cloth. He was a very, very intimidating pitcher, thought nothing, no matter who you were — Hank Aaron, Willie Mays — move you off the plate, throw tight. And my favorite story about Gibson, the last pitch he ever threw in the major leagues, he was fading. He was 40 years-old. And the last pitch he ever threw was hit for a grand slam by Pete LaCock of the Chicago Cubs. The other footnote is that Pete LaCock is the son of Peter Marshall who was the host of *The Hollywood Squares*. And why would someone change their name from Marshall to LaCock, I have no idea.

But Pete LaCock, who otherwise had a somewhat nondescript career, hits this grand slam homerun in September of 1975. Now fast-forward, like, ten years and there’s an old-timers game at Wrigley Field. Gibson’s pitching, up comes LaCock. Gibson does the only thing he could do. It’s in the code. He hit him. Threw at him and hit him. There was a score to even, and he evened it, ten years later in an old-timers game.

MARVIN KALB: What is the most recent new kind of pitch that pitchers are using?

BOB COSTAS: Well, the split finger or some variation of the split finger is not brand-new. It started in the ‘80s, but guys throw variations of that. You see guys throwing a knuckle curve. And a cut fastball, which worked so well for Mariano Rivera over his whole career with the Yankees, which you could liken to a slider, but it breaks on a different plane than a slider does, breaks in--

MARVIN KALB: Are these discovered accidentally--

BOB COSTAS: Sometimes.

MARVIN KALB: --or is it really something that they think about?

BOB COSTAS: Well, they’re usually variations of pitches that already exist. I think other than a spitball, which is technically illegal, the last truly revolutionary pitch was the split finger fastball that Bruce Sutter with the Cubs and the Cardinals and the Braves mastered in the ‘80s that had that extraordinary drop action on it, where even seasoned hitters couldn’t make themselves stop. And they’d swing over a pitch that wound up in the dirt when it finally got there.

MARVIN KALB: Bob, let's for a minute talk about team budgets. And I'm going to point out some statistics here that you're my only source on. But of the thirty--

BOB COSTAS: I hope I didn't make 'em up.

MARVIN KALB: Of the 30 baseball teams, the Yankees have the biggest budget.

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: All right. And they're over \$200 billion a year. And then Boston and Texas [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: At the time that I wrote *Fair Ball*, that was true. I don't know that it's true any longer. But Boston still has the second biggest. The Mets are [simultaneous conversation]--

MARVIN KALB: ...(inaudible). Now, the other 27 teams, they're not even close to those three teams--

BOB COSTAS: That has changed some since 2000 when *Fair Ball* was published. And baseball has improved. It's still imperfect, but they've improved their economics. There's more revenue sharing than there used to be. And when they put the improved revenue sharing provisions in the 2002 basic agreement, and since renewed it, at the same time, the shareable revenues exploded from MLB.com, from overseas marketing. So there are more revenues to share and the revenue sharing is more comprehensive.

Also there have been a lot of new ballparks built which helps the economic situation of a Pittsburgh or a Milwaukee. It doesn't bring them even with the Yankees or the Red Sox, not by any means. But it closes the gap a little bit. And then by dividing into three divisions, some teams and markets are segregated from the markets that they probably couldn't compete with over a full season. But maybe they can win their own division or grab the wildcard. And then in a best of five or a best of seven, anything can happen in the playoffs. Plus, some teams have kind of studied the landscape. And like Oakland for a number of years, Minnesota more recently, Tampa Bay this past year, they've figured out how to maximize limited resources and still be competitive. So the landscape has changed for the better. It's not perfect, but it's better.

MARVIN KALB: It's better, but doesn't it -- isn't it still the case that if you have a lot of money, if you can afford to pay \$200 million in salaries, that you're gonna get better players?

BOB COSTAS: Absolutely.

MARVIN KALB: All right. And if you get better players, you're gonna end up-- you're going to increase your opportunity to get to the World Series.

BOB COSTAS: With intelligent management and a little luck, Oakland, Minnesota, Tampa Bay, someday Pittsburgh or Kansas City could content in a given year or a given handful of years. But if you gave that same intelligent management \$200 million dollars instead of \$60 million dollars, who would you bet on? You know? The Yankees, this past year, underachieved. But no one wants to bet that the Yankees won't be a contender for the most part over the next decade because their resources are so vast that they almost have to be.

And the difference between the Yankees and even the Red Sox or the Mets or the Cubs, if they choose to use the resources that they have, or the Dodgers is that franchises like that can eat some of their mistakes. They've got a smaller margin of error. You know, you make a mistake on a player, you pay Carl Pavano \$40 million dollars, he wins two games in three years, you eat the contract.

If you're St. Louis or Cincinnati or Milwaukee, and he's your top free agent, you better be right, because you can't just go out and roll the dice again, 'cause the money's gone--

MARVIN KALB: But what happens to a team like St. Louis, for example? They sort of go up and down. There was a period of time when they were very, very good, then not so good. Then they're sort of up and down. How do they retain that grip on greatness?

BOB COSTAS: Well, they're fortunate to be in the National League central where the Cubs could spend more money than they presently have. But the other franchises in that division — Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Houston, Pittsburgh — are not gonna greatly outspend St. Louis. And St. Louis is such a great baseball market, and they do have a new stadium. They draw three million fans every year. So they do have those revenue sources. And because the fans there are so loyal and so appreciative, a lot of players who come to St. Louis and then have a chance to leave as free agents opt to stay. Or, even all things being roughly equal, a player will choose St. Louis because of the supportive environment, and forego a few extra million that he might get playing someplace else.

MARVIN KALB: It's interesting what baseball players will do now for that extra few million.

BOB COSTAS: Well, the extra few million comes out of the petty cash drawer in the case of some of them, so.

MARVIN KALB: Exactly. But correct me if I'm wrong. My impression is that players convey the impression that they really love the game. They were paid reasonably well. They did not necessarily consider a salary negotiation a kind of holy war with management. Now, there are strikes, threats of strikes, free agency, which I'd like you to explain more carefully to me, steroids, congressional hearings, all of the earmarks of a really big business in which you have ethical lapses. And it seems to me, it's no longer just a game.

BOB COSTAS: Well, it isn't. It was never *just* a game. But I think there was a time--

MARVIN KALB: When I was a kid, I always thought it was a game.

BOB COSTAS: You know, and so did I. And I think that there was a time when the game aspect, the sports aspect was more significant than the business aspect. Now at best, they coexist. But I think a lot of avid fans would tell you that when a game is on the line or the pennant race is coming to its conclusion or the playoffs heat up, they put the business aside and they focus on the timeless appeal of the game. And in that sense, the game is the same essentially in 2008 as it was in 1958.

One thing in fairness that you can say in favor of baseball-- and this goes as a positive for commissioner Bud Selig-- they've had an extended period now of labor peace. They've gone through the last two negotiations without a work stoppage. And the last one, there wasn't even a threat of a work stoppage. And not only do you then not alienate fans as they continually did for decades, but it creates an environment in which the game can prosper better, business-wise.

MARVIN KALB: Yeah, it can prosper better business-wise, but what about ethics? There seems to be me to have been a definite drop in ethical standard as the amount of money that is available, players, has gone up. And I'm wondering, first of all, do you share that impression?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, I think the most extreme and sometimes aberrant behavior often gets the attention. And then it's human nature, we take that to be typical. I don't think it's typical, but it still happens often enough to be dismaying. As an example, a generation or two ago, players rightly banded together to

overturn the reserve clause which bound them to one team for their entire career. And they could never get market value and they could never choose their circumstances. They were right on every level. They had principle on their side. But I wasn't aware of any player, even if he wanted to, at the end of his contract, go to another team, who would tank it on his present team in order to make that happen.

Just this past season, Manny Ramirez, one of the great hitters in baseball history, absolutely went in the tank on the Boston teammates, with whom he had won two World Series. He couldn't even remember which knee he was faking an injury to. As Mike Lupica of the *New York Daily News* put it, he ran to first base on a slow ground ball as if he was in a sack race. And this is in the midst of a pennant race in Boston, one of the most avid baseball towns with tremendous history, where all of his eccentricities and sometimes bizarre behavior had been indulged and tolerated and rationalized. And he did it because he was trying to force his way, either out of Boston or force the Red Sox to pick up the two option years on his contract. And the Red Sox, even knowing what a great hitter Ramirez was, had had enough. They were not gonna let him poison their clubhouse any longer. And so they let him go and the Dodgers picked him up.

Now for a couple of months, Ramirez tore the National League apart. As we speak, we don't know where he'll wind up in 2009. But it's no sure bet that you get the Manny Ramirez who is trying to feather his contractual nest. Once the deal is signed, you don't necessarily get him all the way through. And it isn't just Ramirez; it's his agent, Scott Boras, who is only the most extreme example of a number of agents who have shown that they are willing to undermine the basic principle and integrity of the sport in order to, in the short-term, advance what they think is the interest of their client. And that's where I part company with them. I've always been in the players' corner and in the union's corner when it came to principled stands for players' rights. But I don't think those rights extend to putting the individual above the team.

MARVIN KALB: Talk to us for just a minute, if you will, about this instant replay idea on baseball. Now, many other sports have instant replay of course. And baseball now has it for, as I understand it, controversial homeruns.

BOB COSTAS: Homeruns, fair foul, or if, in some cases, it hit the top of the wall or cleared the wall.

MARVIN KALB: Now why not, if you're going to have it at all, why not have it for all of the plays?

BOB COSTAS: Here's the reason why I wouldn't favor it for all games. There are 162 games in baseball unlike 16 in football. So each individual game is not as large a component of the season. And bad breaks and even bad calls tend to even out over 162 games. Plus, every football is, in some sense, every NFL game, in some sense covered by a network. And so it has the facilities and the technical wherewithal of network coverage.

Whereas in baseball, there's a big difference between a Tuesday night game between the Twins and the Indians that might be on local TV and a Sunday night game between the Red Sox and Yankees on ESPN, or a Saturday afternoon game between the Cubs and the Cardinals on Fox. And yet games that might have the same importance for the playoffs or the pennant races, you might be able to correct an error in one case, and you wouldn't have the view necessary to do it in the other case.

So what I would do is, I would leave it as is in the regular season, just use it on the homeruns that you mentioned before. But in the post season, I would have it because you have all the technical wherewithal in all post season coverage. And you could have a representative of the commissioner's office at every game. And he or she would decide whether-- never on balls and strikes, because then the game would take eight hours. But on close plays on the bases or calls such as that, he or she would decide whether it should be reviewed. And in the case of a clear error, it would be reversed.

MARVIN KALB: That's a very interesting explanation. Let's take a moment at this time, simply to remind our radio and television audiences that this is The Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb. And my guest today is Bob Costas of NBC Sports and HBO. Okay, Mr. Costas--

BOB COSTAS: Okay, Mr. Kalb.

MARVIN KALB: --Olympic coverage.

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: You've done it all over the world and obviously enjoyed it and made it most enjoyable for many of us. In the recent Olympics in Beijing, China, NBC paid \$894 million dollars for exclusive rights to Olympic coverage in the U.S. That's correct, right?

BOB COSTAS: About correct. Sounds right.

MARVIN KALB: That correct?

BOB COSTAS: Yup.

MARVIN KALB: And was that a record?

BOB COSTAS: For an individual Olympics, yes. And it turned out to be a good investment, because these Olympics were a smash television success.

MARVIN KALB: But China at that point got, not just the money, but it got a tremendous burst of free publicity [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: The IOC got the money, but China got much more than that in terms of business that came to them directly because they were hosting the Olympics, and the showcase which they got to the world, which is what they wanted.

MARVIN KALB: And you think that it was a good investment for NBC?

BOB COSTAS: It was definitely a good investment for NBC--

MARVIN KALB: Did they make any money on it?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah. NBC [simultaneous conversation]--

MARVIN KALB: How much?

BOB COSTAS: I'm not sure what the actual profit was. But NBC was in the black on the coverage itself on the advertising revenue as against the rights fees and the production costs. And in hosting an Olympics, there are lots of peripheral benefits, because you dominate the ratings for a two and a half, three week period. You blow the entire-- all the competition out of the water. And it isn't just like having a half hour or an hour program that's a hit. It's four hours or even more of primetime and into late night. You're dominating across the board. And you're also using it to promote your fall programming. You're using it to schmooze your corporate clients. You're bringing all your sponsors over. All of the ancillary benefits to NBC and GE are almost incalculable. So it was definitely a good business deal.

MARVIN KALB: So did it actually work out if you were trying to build up, say, a show coming along that, you know, the Olympics is over and you're showing Joe Blow the new detective-- Do we know that in fact Joe Blow has done well in his new program? Has NBC done that well as a result of the Olympics?

BOB COSTAS: You can't guarantee that Joe Blow will sustain if his program isn't any good. But you can be pretty sure that you're gonna increase at least the, “Let's check it out,” factor and the awareness factor.

MARVIN KALB: I mean, I just went through some of this, what NBC provided. Two thousand two hundred hours live streaming video from Beijing, 3,600 hours of content [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: I hosted at least half of that.

MARVIN KALB: --downloaded to computers, mobile devices of some sort, 1,400 hours of straight broadcasting. Now, 1,400 hours of straight broadcasting, how much would that be per day?

BOB COSTAS: It's about, I don't know, 100 hours a day.

MARVIN KALB: Last I heard. How—

[simultaneous conversation]

BOB COSTAS: --yeah, just probably about 85 hours a day is what it would come to. But that's, you know, on Telemundo and Bravo and [simultaneous conversation] USA and CNBC and MSNBC plus the network itself.

MARVIN KALB: From your point of view, was all money well spent, and all that. I must confess that sometimes when I was watching you, I had the feeling that you were not so much a sportscaster as you were a kind of front man for a vast promotional enterprise. And you seemed, almost a moment ago to be saying that. Because you are the face everyone saw. And you were in a kind of promotional pitch mode.

BOB COSTAS: No, I would disagree with that. I think that there are times when, whether you're doing the World Series and you're called upon to say, “Coming up next on Fox,” or, “Next Sunday on...” there's always an element of that. But in this case (it hasn't always been true at every Olympics) but in this case, especially the events that were covered in primetime were of such legitimate interest that I didn't feel like any of this was much of a sell. Michael Phelps pursuing Olympic history wasn't just significant; it was compelling. And there was a buzz about it. People wanted to see it.

The role of a sportscaster is always a hybrid, I think, of reporting, of being a dramatist, of dispensing information, of being a companion in some sense. You're kind of enjoying it and watching it along with them. And what the proportion is of

each of those elements varies from moment to moment. But I was pretty comfortable with the approach that NBC took this year. And I would have to give them tremendous credit for how beautifully they presented the events, for the travelogue aspect of the China coverage. I think they gave people a sense of what it would be like to be a tourist there. And more so than in some Olympics (and I’m always fighting for this, and often unsuccessfully) more so than in some Olympics, there was at least a dollop of journalism.

They allowed me to go at President Bush in a live situation. Ten minutes of live television in primetime is a lot. It may not seem like it, but by the standards of television, it’s a lot. Last night of the Olympics, we did a three-part interview that was pretty straightforward and journalistic with Jacques Rogge, who is the president of the IOC. And there were times when I was able to work in comments that I hoped provided some context about the political circumstances and the social circumstances in China.

Now, if I had my druthers, it would have been more. But as I always emphasize, I host the Olympics, I don’t produce the Olympics. And while I’m always thrilled to host it, and I think that overall NBC did a great job, if I could change some things, I would, just as you would if you were sitting there.

MARVIN KALB: Well, at one point you did actually cover the story of the American family that had that tragedy being tourists at Beijing. And of course when I was watching that, I remembered Jim McKay of NBC during the Munich massacre in 1972. And that was an extraordinary moment when a sportscaster doing the Olympics suddenly found himself in the midst of a fabulous story. Was McKay in any sense on your mind when you did the family? Was a different level?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, with all due respect to the McPherson family (he was the American volleyball coach who had a family member killed) it was a different kind of thing than the Palestinian terrorists, you know, invading the Olympic village, and then the whole scene that played out with the commandos at the airport in ’72. And it was an ongoing thing. And back then, you didn’t have CNN. You didn’t have worldwide automatic television coverage. So really, McKay and Rune Arledge and his team at ABC were the whole thing. They were the whole thing.

And if you watch the tape of it now, it’s primitive compared to what you’d see today. Here’s McKay just sitting there and often just waiting for Arledge or someone to tell him in his ear what the next bit of information is. And I thought that Jim, who I’m pleased to say, I became very friendly with and was inspired by toward the end of his life when our paths intersected, I thought Jim was the

perfect person. Because he had been a newsman in Baltimore earlier in his career. And he always retained a newspaper man's sense of story, the importance of words. He wrote beautifully. And yet he had a little bit of that empathy and 'gee whiz' aspect that made him so appealing as a globetrotting sportscaster.

And he brought both elements. He was simultaneously a reporter and yet he was a human being who wasn't afraid to show that he had been moved by what happened. But he was always very proud (he's a very modest man) but he was very proud that the next day after it was all over and he finally went back to the hotel and showered. And he actually had been swimming in the hotel pool when Arledge called him (it wasn't his time to be on the air) and said this was happening. And he threw his suit and that god-awful mustard yellow ABC blazer on over his wet bathing suit. The suit dried, you know, in the many hours underneath. And he finally got back to the hotel and cleaned himself up.

And there was a telegram. And that was what the world was. A cable was waiting for him. And it was from Walter Cronkite. And it said, "You did your profession proud." And that meant a great deal to Jim.

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely. And Cronkite was the kind of gent who would send that kind of cable, too. When the Olympics were over, *The New York Times* described NBC's coverage as antiquated (you know that) primarily, *The Times* said, because it tried unsuccessfully to prevent various websites from carrying footage that you were saving for your primetime programming. So the question that I have is, can networks still effectively retain that exclusivity in an age of so many competing new media platforms?

BOB COSTAS: You know, the answer is, yes. And as you know better than I-- And I have been-- I have often been, much more so than most people in this business are, critical of my own network. But I would say in this case, when we say *The New York Times* said, a person at *The New York Times* said-- It wasn't an august meeting of a hundred people and there emerges this considered consensus of great minds. A person-- right?-- whose entire focus was-- This person was obsessed with, what can we see on the Web?

Well, NBC provided more Olympic coverage on the Internet by a factor of dozens of times over than has ever been provided before. Much of it was live. The only parts of it that weren't live were the parts that we saved for primetime. Because after all, we're the ones, unlike *The New York Times*, who spent the \$800 million plus for the rights. And those rights wouldn't matter very much if you could watch it all live in your office at 2:00 and had no incentive to do so at 8:00 in primetime.

But even there, we went out of our way to try to arrange with the IOC and the Chinese officials to have some of the premiere events in the first half of the Olympics take place late morning in Beijing which translated into live primetime the previous night in the States. So more of this was live than had previously been the case for an offshore Olympics.

I am no apologist for NBC. I have my own reservations about certain things we do. But in fairness, I think sometimes some members of the print media just say, "Well, what can we do to nitpick this?" This was a pretty well produced Olympics. Where I felt we fell short was that, while we did some, we did not do enough about the social, economic, and political circumstances in China. And those very circumstances were what made, in addition to the beauty of the opening ceremony and the compelling athletic performances, those circumstances is what made these Olympics special. It wasn't just about, "Hey, we'd like to host the Olympics." It was, this is China, emerging world power. Let us show off for you.

And it's the job of the press to say, "Yes, that's all fine. We'll give you your props for that. But let's pull the curtain back to the extent that we can." I thought *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and a few other outlets did a very good job of that. I thought NBC did a so-so job of that.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. I certainly agree with you that NBC could have done a better job on these other issues. But they did a wonderful job on the sports, which was the reason you were there--

BOB COSTAS: That's what we do, yeah.

MARVIN KALB: --in the first place. But the question that I asked you is a little different. The question I was trying to get at is, you have now a kind of competition between different kinds of media.

BOB COSTAS: Yup.

MARVIN KALB: I mean, you work for a traditional network, NBC. But you also work for HBO.

BOB COSTAS: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Now, with one foot, say your left foot at NBC and your right foot at HBO, where is your body? Where is your heart and soul here? Where are you being pulled? Where's the tug?

BOB COSTAS: Well, they're actually complementary. HBO is one of the few places which has an ongoing commitment to real sports journalism and in-depth sports reporting. Some of it is historic in nature, their documentaries. Others is more journalistic. I mean, basically *Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel* is like a *60 Minutes* of sports. My own program, *Costas Now*, is kind of a hybrid of the two. Even when HBO did *Inside The NFL*, its NFL coverage, while it was fun and it had highlights and we joked around, there was always some substance in every show. There was always a look at some issue or always some sort of in-depth interview that you usually don't find on the networks.

If I didn't have HBO, I don't think I could be as happy as I am with what I do at NBC. Because most of what I do at NBC is to present, I hope in an entertaining and reasonably thoughtful way, but to present, either in play by play or hosting, present live sports events that people tune in to enjoy for the competition.

MARVIN KALB: What is your feeling deep down, though, about the Internet, the Web platform for sports coverage? Is it on your part a grudging acceptance of this new reality? Or do you embrace it?

BOB COSTAS: Well, all the networks embrace it to some extent because they have to in order to survive. So everything we do has some sort of Internet spin-off. Each Sunday night, after we finish covering the NFL game in standard network television fashion, we do about a half dozen segments that are designed just for the Internet. So that is--

MARVIN KALB: So you continue for another hour or so?

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, another 45 minutes to an hour before we leave the studio. My feeling about the Internet in general (this is a generalization) its upside is undeniable. It gives everyone potentially a voice. And included among those millions of voices is the next great American novelist. You know, the next Murray Kempton could be out there somewhere, the next Red Smith from a sports standpoint could be out there somewhere, and maybe undiscovered for whatever reason. Bill Simmons of ESPN.com could never get hired at *The Boston Globe*. So he just started kind of writing his own stuff, you know? If somehow the Internet existed in the 1770s, Thomas Payne would have put *Common Sense* on a blog. You know?

Bill James of *Baseball Abstract* fame (you baseball fans will know who Bill James is) I started reading Bill James's stuff in the late 1970s, early '80s. He wrote *The Baseball Abstract*, which was this iconoclastic look at baseball statistics. And he would virtually mimeograph it and send it out from his home in Kansas. And about a hundred of us got the subscription. Well, he went on to

become a big deal. But if the Internet existed then, that would have been on the Internet. So this is my way of-- I'm buttering the Internet up before I deliver the haymaker. Is there a lot of good stuff there? Of course. Potentially could there be even more good stuff? Yes. Does it sometimes act as a corrective to either the shortcomings or the mistakes or the corruption of the mainstream media? It absolutely does. Does it facilitate lively exchanges? It absolutely does. But just--

MARVIN KALB: Give me an example of this corruption you just mentioned.

BOB COSTAS: Well, look, the truth is, in sports, for example, there are aspects of the business of each of these leagues that we could look at more carefully. I think [simultaneous conversation]--

MARVIN KALB: But don't?

BOB COSTAS: I think HBO does a good job of it. ESPN's outside the lines and a few other programs do a good job--

MARVIN KALB: NBC?

BOB COSTAS: NBC, by and large, doesn't do it, because what we do and we do very well is cover games, you know? We try to cover it, as I say, with some intelligence, but we cover games. There's nothing wrong with that, you know? What Al Michaels does or John Madden does, they do extraordinarily well. And that's basically the heart and soul of sports coverage. But there ought to be kind of a segment or two that's given over to the other things.

MARVIN KALB: Let me interrupt you again. You've just given one very good example of, maybe not corruption, but an area where good sports reporting, as opposed to just sportscasting, would be very welcome, would be a good thing. Give me another example [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: Well, for example, public funds, to one extent or another-- it varies from city to city and team to team-- But public funds are always involved in the building of new stadiums and arenas. Therefore, the public has a stake, not only in deciding whether to support this, but an element of this should be that a certain number of the seats are kept affordable, adjusted for inflation. The new Yankee Stadium, the new City Field that replaces Shea Stadium, we're talking in some cases about thousands of dollars for seats. Now, are there some seats set aside--

MARVIN KALB: You mean for the whole year?

BOB COSTAS: No, no. I'm talking about per game. I'm talking about per game in some cases.

MARVIN KALB: Thousand dollar seats?

BOB COSTAS: Yes. Yes. Now, the rationale will be that some high rollers, especially in a market like New York, are willing to pay it. And that will subsidize the, quote, "more affordable" seats. But those more affordable seats shrink in number, you know? And you get to a point where fewer and fewer regular people can attend games on an ongoing basis.

There are stories now all across the country of people who have been lifelong, sometimes generation to generation season ticket holders for football or for baseball, and they're simply being priced out of the market. You know? I think that ought to be mentioned. You know?

MARVIN KALB: It ought to be explored.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah. When you watch-- Phil Mushnick of *The New York Post* has been very strong on this for years and years. And he made a point, sort of tongue in cheek. But you've all seen the Miller High Life commercials where this guy who drives the Miller delivery truck and he's kind of the regular guy? And his whole thing is to puncture nonsense, and this is all just too effete. And you don't want to eat an ostrich burger at a ballgame. You want a real burger. You want a real hotdog. And I don't want this Grey Poupon; I want the-- you know? And anybody who's a little too snooty, they lose their right to have Miller High Life. He goes into the hotel. He invades the mini bar. What are you talking about, six dollars for a bottle of water? Take out the Miller High Life, and he takes--

All right? But as Mushnick says, when these commercials run on a ballgame, it might be good to point out that if you go to a ballgame, a cup of Miller High Life at the ballgame might cost six bucks.

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely. Absolutely.

BOB COSTAS: You know? And the hotdog that goes with it might cost five.

MARVIN KALB: Yes, indeed.

BOB COSTAS: And by the time you buy the seats [simultaneous conversation] and park and bring the wife and a couple of kids, you know, this makes a serious dent in a person's budget, especially in these economic times.

MARVIN KALB: You feel that something could be done about that?

BOB COSTAS: I think that certainly we could do a better job of covering that. I was among the few people in the media that tried to point out that what was happening in baseball from the mid-'90s until finally the cover got blown off in the last few years with performance enhancing drugs, was illegitimate, that these performances were not authentic and that the game was being distorted and the record books were being poisoned.

And when I first started pointing these things out-- and I did it in a general way. I wasn't accusing individuals, because they didn't have the solid proof. Plus baseball didn't have a specific policy that they were violating. But in a general way, I was pointing out that this was going on. Lots of people within the game and within broadcasting were saying to me, "That's not your place. You're supposed to say there's a groundball to shortstop. That's what you're supposed to do." But I'm happy that I did it.

MARVIN KALB: We've got about five minutes left. Your colleague, Keith Olbermann at MSNBC used to be a sports person as well and now has migrated into politics, and very outspokenly involved in politics. Do you ever think about making that kind of migration yourself?

BOB COSTAS: Well Keith, to both his supporters and detractors, is a unique personality. (Laughter.) So emulating Keith, not necessarily, although I admire his talent and his writing ability and his passion. But I have done non-sports work. I used to host a show called *Later* that followed Letterman. The lineup late night in the late '80s, early '90s at NBC was Carson, Letterman, and then I came on with *Later*. And probably only 10% of the guests were sports-oriented. And from time to time on HBO, and even at the Olympics with Bush or whatever, you know, it kind of cross-pollinates.

MARVIN KALB: Your interview, by the way, with Bush was excellent. I'm not sure that any White House correspondent, by the way, could have done any better than you did. What is your view of anchors expressing their personal opinion — O'Reilly on Fox, Sean Hannity on Fox?

BOB COSTAS: I think O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, Keith Olbermann, Chris Matthews are in a different category. They are not and should not be confused with Brian Williams or Charlie Gibson or what Katie Couric does now, what Tom Brokaw did or all your colleagues through the years did. Now, you could say that the patron saint, Edward R. Murrow, was a guy who mixed them, you know, both straight reporting and strong advocacy journalism. But maybe he was the

exception that proved the rule. Maybe Murrow, in that era at least, was ...*(inaudible)*. I don't know.

MARVIN KALB: Well, I think that he was. But then again, I have very strong feelings about Murrow. But as a sportscaster, can you be a fan of the team that you're covering?

BOB COSTAS: If you're a local sportscaster, I think you can. If you're a network sportscaster, I think it gets in the way. And it's always interesting that fans of teams are convinced that the network announcer is rooting against their team, because their definition of objectivity is that you be as irrationally wrapped up in their team as they are. So if you broadcast a World Series between the-- An example of one I did in 1997, the Florida Marlins and the Cleveland Indians, and I got letters from Cleveland and Florida. They were the identical letter, accusing me in each case of the opposite thing, that I was rooting against the Marlins or rooting against the Indians. I have never in my entire life received a letter that goes like this: "I reside in Baltimore. I am neither a fan of the Marlins, nor the Indians. However, my considered objective opinions is that you were unfair to the Cleveland Indians." Never, will not happen, cannot happen.

But every network announcer will tell you the same story. And what you really hope for as a network announcer is the most dramatic and interesting development. So if somebody has won the first two games of a playoff series, I want the team that's down oh two to win game three. If it's a basketball team and some team's up 20, I want the team that's trailing to come back. I ultimately don't care who wins. I just want every game to go down to the last play or the last pitch.

MARVIN KALB: Well, you're a marvelous sports fan, and that's quite clear. Could you imagine Bob Costas doing anything else except broadcasting, sportscasting?

BOB COSTAS: I could do, could and have done things within broadcasting that aren't sports-oriented, and might someday in the future, if the circumstances were correct. But I really believe had I been born in an era before Marconi, before Sarnoff, I would have been a ward of the state, because I have no discernable abilities of any kind, other than to yak for fun and profit.

MARVIN KALB: Do you make a lot of money?

BOB COSTAS: Yes, Marvin. I do. *(Laughter.)*

MARVIN KALB: You want to share with us how much [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: No, no. I've lost track, really. And after the last couple of weeks, we've all lost, so I have no idea how much money I have. I used to have a lot, Marvin. I'm not sure as of now.

MARVIN KALB: Oh dear. All I could say is, you've been in this position that I'm in right now, many, many, many times. But our time is up. And want to thank our terrific audience. You've been absolutely marvelous. And let's all take our hat off to young Mr. Bob Costas. (Applause.) And most important-- Most important, I want to say to all of you who are out there in radio and television land, and those of you who cherish the value of a free press in a free society, god bless ya, and keep up the faith. I'm Marvin Kalb. Good night and good luck. (Applause.)

END OF PART 1
BEGIN PART 2

MARVIN KALB: We now have an opportunity to kind of turn half the tables at this point. I'm not going to ask any questions for a little bit of time. But there are two microphones here and there. And I already see four people ready to ask a question. So why don't we start here. Please identify yourself and ask a question. Because if you make a speech, I'm going to cut you off.

ROB KIMMER: Hi. My name is Rob Kimmer. I'm a GW alumnus, lawyer, and journalist. I started my career in radio and I also, like you said, have a soft spot for radio journalists. In your early career, who did you choose to emulate? I know you alluded to some of the baseball announcers. But do you have-- How did you find your voice, which is now iconic, and I think anyone could recognize without [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: Thank you. I advise anyone who's interested in broadcasting that they don't want to copy another broadcaster, no matter how much you might admire that broadcaster. You'd just become a pale imitation. But you can be influenced by the values and the sensibilities and some aspect of the approach. And the broadcasters whom I most admired, let's confine this to sports. And I was a broadcast junkie, so my interest was not solely sports. But in this case, when we're talking about sports broadcasters, at least the generation prior to mine and my generation, it was not mutually exclusive that you could be an interesting, fairly well read person with a wide frame of reference but also be interested in sports.

It seems like, not all (there are admirable exceptions) but 90% of what's out there now on cable TV, sports talk radio, it's as if the definition of a sports fan is the biggest drunken dope on a Saturday night at a frat house, or the most resentful,

bile filled loser who's willing to hold on for two hours on sports talk radio in order to proclaim that he's much smarter than the coach of the local team. Whereas in fact, he likely hasn't held a job for more than six weeks straight at any time in his life. And it seems as if that is who the coverage is kind of directed toward.

But the people I admired, they weren't scholars. They weren't delivering a sermon on the mount. But I believed, correctly, that Vin Scully had read books, that Jim McKay and Jack Whittaker and Haywood Hale Broun had lived lives that were textured lives, and that they understood what a narrative was, and that their appreciation for a game was not just what happened in the game, but the atmospherics. What's the town like? What's the background story of the players like? What kind of lives have they led? Did this guy come out of World War II? What's this guy's-- Is there some generational story here or whatever it may be?

Jim McKay, for so many years on ABC, it wasn't so much about sports. He was conducting a travelogue on Wide World of Sports. He was taking you to the far corners of the globe. And he was your guide and your companion. And what mattered most was a keen eye for observation, a sense of story, personal empathy, a reporter's eye, all those sorts of things that haven't disappeared, but I think are less valued and less central to it now than they used to be.

MARVIN KALB: That's a beautiful answer. And it's testimony to you that there are so many people who would like to ask questions. But we have a limited period of time--

BOB COSTAS: Testimony to me that my answers are so long--

MARVIN KALB: So that if you don't mind, shorten your answer and shorten your question. Go ahead.

BOB COSTAS: "Shut the hell up, Bob," is really what this becomes--

ROB DITTORI: Hi, Bob. Really been a pleasure listening to you this evening. My name's Rob Dittori(?). I'm a junior at the George Washington University, although I'm a native of Philadelphia. And I guess my question for you today is really quickly, do you have a hall of fame vote for major league baseball?

BOB COSTAS: I do not have a hall of fame vote. It's just members of the Baseball Writers Association. Broadcasters don't have a vote. The only thing I vote for is I actually vote for who gets into the broadcasters wing of the baseball hall of fame, but not for players--

ROB DITTORI: Regardless, in your humble opinion--

MARVIN KALB: No, no. There's one question. Sorry.

BOB COSTAS: No, that was the-- What's the question?

ROB DITTORI: I was just wondering how significantly you would, like, view a player's, like, character and his overall contribution to the game as compared to strictly numbers. And the example I would give you [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: I got it.

ROB DITTORI: --Manny Ramirez versus [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: I got it. I got it. I got it. You know, I don't-- I think with what Manny Ramirez has done, if he was a borderline player, then his character flaws-- I mean that in a sports sense. I'm not interested in examining all the personal aspects of somebody's life. But sometimes character directly impacts on the public aspect of what they do as an athlete. I would mark Ramirez down. But his performance is up so high that I can't eliminate it. When it comes to stuff like steroids, performance enhancing drugs, I think many people have decided that without steroids, Mark McGuire would not have had hall of fame numbers, so they don't vote for him. I think they'll reach the same conclusion with Sammy Sosa and likely with Rafael Palmeiro.

I think you've got a different circumstance with Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds. Some people will never vote for them because they clearly used performance enhancing drugs. Others will make the following distinction. They were, even before they started using steroids, at such a high level, among the tiny handful of greatest who ever played, that they would have been in anyway. So some will withhold the vote as a protest on the first ballot, and then vote for them in the second or third year. And they'll put them in a different category. And I think if I had a vote, that's the way I would view Clemens and Bonds.

MARVIN KALB: Very interesting. Yes, please.

JORDAN TELLER: I'm a senior at GW. And this is-- I'm Jordan Teller(?). Sorry. This is a question we ask of all the guests on our radio show. It's on from 4:00 to 6:00, GWRadio.com on Wednesdays. (Laughter.) If there was one rule you could change in any sport, what would it be?

BOB COSTAS: One rule that I could-- You know what? I think the overtime rule in football in the NFL is stupid. And it's gonna come up and bite them in the playoffs or in a Superbowl game at some point. You know, sudden death sounds very dramatic. But within the course of a game, if you hold a team to a field goal, it's at least a partial victory for the defense. But in sudden death, it ends the game.

So now let's say you've got to the Superbowl. These two teams have fought all year long to get there. Now they've fought to a deadlock over sixty minutes. You're gonna flip a coin. Very often a Superbowl game is played indoors in a dome where it's easier to kick a field goal. We know that since this rule was instituted, field goal kickers are much greater in terms of the distance. It used to be a 40-yard field goal was a long field goal. Now you see guys making 'em from nearly 60 yards.

You want to flip a coin, kick the ball off. Team makes a couple of first downs, wins the Superbowl on a field goal. My view of it is, that in overtime, at least in the playoffs, you eliminate anything but a touchdown. You can only win on a touchdown or each team has to have the ball at least once before it becomes sudden death.

MARVIN KALB: Excellent. Yes, sir?

LOUIS NELSON: Hi. My name is Louis Nelson. I'm a sophomore at GW. I'm from Chicago, Illinois. I'm a diehard Cubs fan, which is the reason I can be here tonight. (Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: And even if you were from the south side, the White Sox have allowed you to be here as well.

LOUIS NELSON: Yeah. And so the Tribune company who owns Chicago Cubs recently got bought by Sam Zell, who I think is a terrible guy. And he's talking about-- So he's trying to sell the Cubs off. He wants to sell the naming rights to Wrigley Field and maybe even tear the stadium down or remodel it for a year and make the Cubs play in U.S. Cellular, oh my god, for a year. You know, what are your thoughts on kind of the increasing commercialization in baseball, naming stadium rights and kind of what I think defacing these kind of beautiful stadiums and--

BOB COSTAS: You know, if he ever did that, and if people ever found out that Obama actually hung around with him as opposed to-- I mean, you know, that's when I start to get concerned. Those are the kinds of associations in Chicago that would concern me. You can't sell a naming rights to Wrigley Field. And America ceases to exist in any meaningful way if the Cubs play at U.S. Cellular Field. So

this can't be allowed to happen. And Zell, if he wants to do that, must be stopped, even if by an act of Congress, you know?

But one of the things that's actually a saving grace for teams like the Cubs and the Red Sox is, even if you didn't believe in the good nature of their owners-- And actually the Red Sox owners are good guys who basically understand and love baseball. But any businessman would understand that part of the appeal and therefore part of the economic power of the Cubs is Wrigley Field and is their image, just as Fenway and that history is part of what you sell with the Red Sox. So that acts as a restraint on anybody who might want to trample on tradition just to pick up an extra buck.

MARVIN KALB: Even Sam Zell?

BOB COSTAS: Even Sam Zell. I mean, there would be hell for Zell to pay if he tried it.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Yes, please.

JOE ST. GEORGE: My name's Joe St. George. I'm from Youngstown, Ohio, true Tribe fan, big Tribe fan. I apologize that my grandfather is one of those people that wrote you one of those letters regarding your coverage. However my question involves preparation. How do you prepare for an Olympics broadcast, which seems to be the marathon of broadcaster (sic) for a World Series game seven?

BOB COSTAS: Well, World Series is very different. But an Olympics, one of the most important things after doing eight of them now, after I did the first couple, I began to understand what I didn't have to know. The host has to be a good generalist. He doesn't have to know who the best springboard diver from Peru is. It's unlikely to come up. If it does, it's handled by the experts at the venue. You also have researchers there who can fill in anything you may not be familiar with.

The most important thing is to know the history of the Olympics and to be extremely well informed about the host city and the host nation. I regret to say that I only got to use maybe 2% of it. But I read an awful lot about the history of China, about its present circumstances. I read from various perspectives, those who were more sympathetic toward their present regime and those who were deeply critical. I tried to get a textured understanding of what was going on.

Because one thing in a live broadcast that you can never be sure of. You can't be sure which, if you've got a hundred things, you can't be sure which two or three

of those hundred will fit and be most pertinent and fit in just that moment. And you have to be ready with all of them. Those are the things that I try to concentrate on, along with the two dozen or so top athletic stories and top athletes that are most likely to be part of the primetime focus. And then if anything outside of that comes up, I rely on the researchers. And luckily, any individual bits of information they give me is fed into an ongoing base of knowledge about the history of the Olympics and kind of, you know, what would be important to emphasize, and that kind of thing. And you have to be kind of a quick study.

In the case of something like a World Series game, if you get to game seven of the World Series, the biggest piece of advice is this: the whole season has fed into this moment. And six other games have fed into this moment. It's all about the drama. And if it's on television, this is not the time to be telling a story about how somebody's grandfather grew up in a log cabin. You know? Let the drama play it out. Less is more. And try to emphasize, if there's something that connects to history, try and emphasize that.

Game seven of the 1997 World Series went to extra innings. And the game had been in turmoil, and, you know, all the economic issues and some of the things Marvin and I have been talking about. And I felt it was appropriate and I was kind of proud of the way it came out where I said-- Charles Nagy was standing on the mound with the game on the line for Cleveland. It didn't turn out well for your father in Youngstown. But I said, you know, no matter how much the game changes, no matter how our feelings about what surrounds it change, Charles Nagy stands where Ralph Terry stood facing Willie McCovey in 1962. He stands where Don Larson stood facing Dale Mitchell in 1956. He stands where Grover Alexander stood facing Tony Lazzari and Babe Ruth in 1926. That is the beauty of baseball, unlike any other sport. There is a continuity. There is something, which if Rip Van Winkle woke up tomorrow, he would recognize right here, recognize it as the baseball that he grew up with. And these moments are what define the game. I said it more concisely than that, because four or five pitches would have happened in that-- But that was the idea.

MARVIN KALB: Please.

GENE TY: Hey, Bob. Thanks so much for coming tonight. Gene Ty(?) from National Park Service. I'm also a consultant. You spend a lot of time on TV, both at HBO and on the Olympic show with the tall football player, Chris Dickerson--

BOB COSTAS: Cris Collinsworth.

GENE TY: Cris Collinsworth, yeah. Do you play a role in picking him to come to that kind of a role? Or is that strictly NBC's contract--

BOB COSTAS: No. Cris Collingsworth was already at HBO on *Inside The NFL* when I arrived. I had known Cris from his days with the Cincinnati Bengals. I think he's one of the most thoughtful and articulate and hardest working best prepared broadcasters. So it was a natural. I would have suggested him to NBC when we got football back a few years ago, but I didn't have to. They were already on the case.

MARVIN KALB: Thank you.

PHIL O'CONNER: My name is Phil O'Conner. I'm a television producer. Here's my question. Babe Ruth supposedly hit a 600-foot homerun some 80 years ago. Why is it, in all those years since, all those homeruns, nobody's ever come close to hitting a homerun that far? And second part of my question is, when's the last time somebody pulled off the hidden ball trick?

BOB COSTAS: Oh, the hidden ball trick has happened within the last four or five years. There have been times when the hidden ball trick has worked. You can't use it too often.

MARVIN KALB: Explain it.

BOB COSTAS: The hidden ball trick is, you know, someone has-- a play has ended. Someone's hit a triple or, you know, there's been a lot of action. And people now are standing at their new bases where they've just arrived. And you fake that the ball is in the pitcher's hand. And the pitcher goes through all the motions that he would go through, kind of walking around the mound. But the shortstop or the third baseman or who's ever closest to the runner actually has it. It's a hidden ball. And then the guy takes his lead, he just walks up and tags him, and that's it.

Willie Mays told me with-- still chagrined 40 years later that Ken Boyer of the Cardinals had gotten him after he hit a triple on the hidden ball trick. And Willie in that high pitched voice said, "I looked at Ken. I said, 'I thought you were my friend.'" (Laughter.) (Applause.) What was the first part?

PHIL O'CONNER: Babe Ruth hit a [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: You know, I think the reason why there hasn't been a 600-foot homerun hit since then is that maybe the measurement of the Ruth homerun was more a matter of mythology. You know, McGuire, whether augmented or not, hit some that were in excess of 550 feet. But I've never seen one accurately measured as much as 600 feet.

ELIZABETH RICHARDSON: Hi, Elizabeth Richardson. I'm a junior at George Washington University. Some people feel that athletes are paid far too much for what they do, and that, you know, a teacher makes \$30,000 dollars a year and a pitcher makes \$15 million dollars a year. How do you feel sort of about the disparity between careers in [simultaneous conversation]--

BOB COSTAS: Well, in a free market economy, although I would certainly think it's in the best interest of the country to increase the salaries when you're talking about, you know, public education, increase the salaries of teachers, increase the salaries of social workers-- It certainly accrues to the public good. In a free market economy, there's never gonna be a direct relationship between how worthy something is and what its value is. That isn't just true of athletes. You know, hosts of reality television shows or whatever it might be (make your own list)-- god forbid that it includes sportscasters, but--

My feeling is, I have no resentment of the salary that a player makes. I do however resent it if a player has a sense of entitlement and feels that he doesn't have to be gracious to fans, that he doesn't have to put out 100% effort. And I also don't like it if the salaries of individual players distort the financial structure of the entire sport, which was not true-- is not true in football, is not true in basketball, was true for quite some time in hockey, is still true to some extent in baseball. I couldn't care less if every baseball player made \$15 million dollars a year if Kansas City could have 25 players like that as well as the Yankees or Boston.

Since that's not the case, the reason why you have to be concerned with individual salaries is not begrudging individuals great riches, but because the structure of the sport cannot sustain it.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, we've only got time for one more question, and it's yours.

ERIC DAVIS: I'm Eric Davis. I'm a freshman at the University of New Haven. And I'm a huge fan of all your work, even *BASEketball*.

BOB COSTAS: Eric, you're a great and perceptive young man. (Laughter.)

ERIC DAVIS: Thank you. I've had a lot of people-- I've heard a lot of people say that you would be their pick as the next commissioner of baseball. I was wondering if you would have any interest in that job, and if you think you'd be any good at it.

BOB COSTAS: Well, you know, I've always said I've never been coy. People have been kind enough to suggest it because I've been outspoken on baseball issues. But I've never said, "Oh, I'm not interested," or, "I don't think that is likely to happen." I've always flatly said, "I'm not qualified." And the analogy I always use is, if you think someone is a good political columnist or commentator, it doesn't necessarily follow you think he or she should be Senator or Supreme Court Justice or President.

And so I'm a sports commentator with an emphasis on baseball. And if what I've said has in any way influenced the public discussion and people think that I've put something worthwhile into the water supply there, then I'm gratified by that. But Bud Selig can keep the job and I'll continue to keep an eye on him. And that's probably the best relationship.

MARVIN KALB: Well, I think we can all agree that our guest today has performed brilliantly, has shared his thinking in a most articulate, and, I think, honest way. And we're all delighted that you've been our guest.

BOB COSTAS: Marvin, thank you very much. (Applause.)

END OF INTERVIEW