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CANADA'S TV SPORTS PERSONALITIES: WHO DO YOU LIKE?

By Bruce Penton

Choosing your favourite television sports personality is hardly a scientific matter. It's like asking someone to pick their favourite colour or their favourite brand of vehicle. It comes down to personal preference. You like green? I think blue is better. You're a GM guy? I'll take a Ford.

Same goes with TV sports personalities. There are dozens to choose from, in a number of categories: Play-by-play; colour commentators; analysts; interviewers; program hosts; anchors. Some are smooth, some aren't. Some are more professional than others. Some are truly annoying. Some are simply terrible.

I say toe-may-to, you say tom-att-o. I say left, you say right.

So take the following with a grain of salt but let's have some fun.

Play-by-play — Jim Hughson, CBC's No. 1 hockey guy. Knowledgable, knows when to shut up, keeps his cool.

Runner-up — Dan Shulman, so easy to listen to a ball game with him describing the action.

Colour commentator — Russ Howard, explains the strategic nuances of a curling game better than anyone.

Runner-up — Kelly Hrudefy, enthusiastic, former goalie knows hockey.

Analyst — Elliotte Friedmann, the most informative and believable guy on TV. Runner-up — Bob McKenzie, only Friedmann has more hockey scoops.

Interviewers — CBC's Scott Oake, no contest. Treat to watch him get his subjects to open up and divulge the most interesting nuggets; Runner-up — Sara Orlesky, who always asks the right questions of CFL players.

Program hosts: Rod Smith, who steers CFL on TSN. Well organized, lets his colleagues do most of the talking.

Runner-up — Ron MacLean, who is not the star of Coaches Corner, but so clever with the English language.

Anchors — Evanka Osmak of Sportsnet, a great presenter and one of the few in her position who doesn't go overboard with bogus enthusiasm; Runner-up — the duo of Jay Onrait-Dan O'Toole, who combine sports news with entertainment and guffaws.

Seven who just missed making the grade: James Duthie, Cassie Campbell, Rod Black, Scott Russell, Gord Miller, Farhan Lalji and Darren Dreger.

Four who cause me to change the channel: Kate Beirness of TSN tops this list, followed closely by Don Cherry. Third and fourth are Bob Cole, who is no longer at the top of his game, and Buck Martinez, whose voice is ... well, unique and grating.

One man's opinion, but probably not your's.

- CBS's **James Corden**, on "The Shop," **LeBron James'** new HBO talk show: "Apparently, (it's) going to be him and four random guests you may or may not have heard of. You know, like when he plays basketball."
- **Patti Dawn Swansson** in the River City Renegade, on Jets' utility player **Marko Dano** signing an \$800,000 contract: "Nice gig. Sit in the press box, watch 82 hockey games, eat popcorn, collect 800 large. The least Dano could do for that kind of coin is file a game story and sidebar. On deadline. Also gain about 40 pounds and wear wrinkled clothes that don't fit. Then he'd feel right at home with the rest of the boys on press row."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "Toronto dealt veteran southpaw **J.A. Happ** to the Yankees. Which makes the Jays even more Happ-less."
- Ex-QB **Jay Cutler**, in a teaser for his wife Kristin's 'Very Cavallari' TV series on E!, on the secret to raising chickens: "Feed them, water them ... it can't be that hard. It's got to be easier than raising kids."
- **Scott Ostler** of the San Francisco Chronicle: "Former NFL running back **Ricky Williams**, who once took a break from smoking weed to swear to me that he was done smoking weed, is selling his own line of weed products, 'Real Wellness by Ricky Williams.' I hope it's better than the line of baloney he used to sell."
- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: "PGA Tour player **Justin Thomas** says he is inspired by his grandparents. Which may explain why the average round on the PGA Tour now takes five and a half hours."
- Barach again: "Hackers hit the PGA's computer system, locking them out of files for ransom. It was the biggest incident of a hacker with the PGA since **Charles Barkley** was allowed to play in a pro-am."
- **RJ Currie** again: "Selfridges store in London announced early Christmas by opening a new Yule-themed shop Aug. 2. 'You call that early Christmas?' said Leafs fans. 'We got **John Tavares** July 1st.'"
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "HBO's 'Hard Knocks' featured the Cleveland Browns' training camp. They held an intra-squad scrimmage and for the first time in NFL history, the Browns lost."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "Smithfield Foods has been ordered to pay \$470 million to neighbours for the smell from a hog farm. Don't go getting any ideas there, Oriole fans!"
- **Bob Molinaro** of pilotonline.com (Hampton, Va.), trying to look on the bright side of **Johnny Manziel** throwing four interceptions in his CFL debut: "That did give him an opportunity to make two tackles."

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