

farther off the wall

with tom hoffarth

About this blog



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About this Entry

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The sports media voices of Title IX: Jeannine Edwards

By Tom Hoffarth on June 21, 2012 9:30 AM | Permalink | Comments (0) | [ShareThis](#)

Jeannie Edwards, delivering information on a college football sideline, was about the farthest place she thought she'd be growing up.

She had a horse racing career to pursue.

The fact she's been part of the ESPN/ABC coverage for major thoroughbred events is a given these days. But she's expanded her broadcasting duties because of her ability to work hard at the craft -- and sidestepping the fact she has been on the wrong end of a couple of strange incidents that you'd think wouldn't even happen these days.

One had to do with fellow ESPN broadcaster Ron Franklin in early 2011 during a production meeting. He was let go by the network for taking offense to Edwards not quite accepting of him calling her "sweetcakes," followed by another derogatory term when she objected.

Two years earlier, Kentucky basketball coach Billy Gillespie seemed to mock one of her halftime questions by calling it "bad" as he explained why his team was having troubles. Was that really an issue? Some made it to be because of his condescending attitude.

Edwards explains her connection to Title IX and her broadcasting career:



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I was not into collegiate athletics growing up, because I was horse-crazy.

From the time I was 12 years old, I wanted to ride and train racehorses. So during school I worked at Belmont Park in New York, starting out as a hotwalker and later as an exercise rider and ultimately trainer of Thoroughbreds. My experiences at the track taught me alot about being a woman in a man's world. Back then women were definitely in the minority at racetracks and when I was riding and training I would say probably less than 10 percent of the participants in the sport were female. That certainly toughened me for my next career.

Had it not been for women like Phyllis George, Lesley Visser, Jayne Kennedy and the like, who I'm sure endured leers, comments, and unequal treatment from time to time, I'm not sure my job would seem as professional and comfortable as it is. Title IX certainly played a part in enabling those talented women to have voice in sports media.

I consider myself lucky to be working in an era where female sports anchors and reporters are not only accepted, but respected. For the most part, gone are the days of the sideline reporter being considered a "pretty accessory" for the telecast. No, we're working hard, on conference calls, in meetings, gathering news and information, talking to coaches, trainers, players, making observations, doing interviews.... all in an effort to contribute timely, relevant information in order to serve the viewer.

My path to sports reporter was not a conventional one. I started in television as an analyst on ESPN's horse racing telecasts, because of my background. It was a fairly easy transition to reporter on racing telecasts, but a completely different ball of wax when I transitioned to general sports reporter.... football, basketball, baseball, you name it. Certainly I would not have been taken seriously or given the opportunity had those before me not proven their worth time and again.

Of course, every once in a while you run into an awkward moment or two -- Billy Gillispie or Ron Franklin -- but those are extremely few and far between. I love my job and am grateful for the opportunity to be plying my trade in an era of acceptance.

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