

## Weekly Media Column: Busy Markas has a home-grown quality

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*Note: This is the last of a four-part series on the best and worst in L.A. sports media. This week: Play-by-play people*

Thursday morning, Rory Markas ran down his Arizona weekend itinerary, just to make sure he wasn't tripping over a cactus that he hadn't accounted for.

That night, he was in Tucson, doing play-by-play on USC's basketball game against Arizona for KSPN-AM (710).

This afternoon, after about a two-hour drive north to Surprise, he'll do play-by-play for the Angels' exhibition game on KLAA-AM (830) at the Texas Rangers' spring training facility.

Saturday afternoon, while in Tempe, he'll do the first few innings of the Angels-Cubs exhibition, then shoot over to the Arizona State campus for the afternoon tipoff between the Trojans and Sun Devils.

Sunday, his GPS will guide him to the Phoenix suburb of Maryvale for the Angels' exhibition game at the Milwaukee Brewers' spring training home.

Then on Monday ...

"Don't know yet," he said. "I think I'm driving back to L.A. ..."

This is the time of year when assignment overlap presents interesting challenges for the remarkable Markas, in the home stretch of his 10th season doing Trojan hoops and about to start his seventh year with the Angels. It can be as equally confusing when someone recognizes him at a game or on the street and tends to quiz him one of three questions.

"It's either they'll start off saying, 'Hey, just another Halo victory!' and want to talk about the Angles, or they'll ask 'How far will the Trojans go this year in the tournament?' or they ask 'What's Jillian (Reynolds) really like?'" Markas said, the latter a reference to the fact he also files stories for KTTV Channel 11's "Good Day L.A." but then ends up talking sports with host Steve Edwards.

Long before the Chatsworth native even started studying broadcasting at Cal State Northridge and set out on a career in radio at age 20, his play-by-play education started when he was growing up listening to Dick Enberg, Don Drysdale and Vin Scully.

"I loved listening to Vin doing the Dodgers, but there was also something about the Angels and listening to Enberg and Drysdale have so much fun," said Markas, a shortstop at Chatsworth High at the same time Robin Yount was playing at Taft.

"I'd sit in my driveway with my dad in a folding chair and keep score, and I can remember the names like they were yesterday - Alomar, Chalk, Meoli. It makes me wonder if kids today listen to games the same as I did back in the '70s.

"So when I think of voices of sports I remember growing up here - and you have to include Chick Hearn, Bob Miller, and even Trevor Denman on horse racing - I realize we had the greatest broadcasters in the world right here in L.A. I think that makes it necessary to push myself every time I call a game, to uphold those great names. I consider it almost a requirement."

L.A. sportscasting is engrained in Markas, whose resume includes sports anchoring at KCBS Channel 2 and KNX-AM (1070) and three seasons of Clippers games in the late '90s. Ann Beebe, the director of radio broadcast operations for USC who has worked with Markas for more than a decade, says that his understanding of L.A. sportscasting history "speaks for itself" and his work ethic is reflected in every broadcast.

"He is totally prepared for every broadcast, and can follow the format from memory," Beebe said. "If we happen to have a technical glitch, he sails right through it and the listener never knows."

The trick to play-by-play, Beebe continued, is straddling the fine line of describing the action accurately - good and bad - while conveying the game atmosphere. With Markas, it seems to come naturally, with an enthusiasm that harkens back to Enberg's style.

"Fans are always coming up to him at Galen Center telling him how much they enjoy his broadcast," she said. "He brings the excitement of a rising USC basketball program to the listener. I think USC is very lucky to have him."

On Angels broadcasts this season, Markas will be featured as much on TV as on radio - about 75 games on each. The Angels experimented last year with Jose Mota on play-by-play, and this year want to give Markas a chance to show the experience he gained doing Milwaukee Brewers' TV games in the past.

Angels vice president of communications Tim Mead said the move to Markas was more about playing to the group of broadcasters' strengths, and "Rory has always proven to us that he can fall out of bed and call a great game. His call of the final out of Game 7 of the 2002 World Series is still classic. That said, a lot of people can make a great call for a highlight clip, but someone like Rory can make the time in between interesting as well. He keeps an even keel, stays focused on the game but also adds levity to a situation."

Markas understands the nuances of each medium.

"I think TV forces me to find more anecdotes and not carry the play-by-play as much as it does on radio," he said. "The key is to let the game breathe, but without being too laid back and lose your enthusiasm. I'm happy to do both."

That's TV and radio, as well as Angels and USC hoops.

"My favorite sport is always the one I'm doing that day," he said. "The transition for me is easy. I guess the only time there'd be a real problem is if USC's basketball team went to the Final Four just as the Angels were about to start the regular season at the end of March."

So which assignment would he pick?

"I'd hope and pray the Angels would understand," Markas said with a laugh.

## TOP 10

1A: VIN SCULLY , Dodgers TV (FSN, Channel 9) and radio (790-AM)

While the team trots out all kinds of stuff to mark its 50th year in L.A., the TV event we look most forward to most is nine innings of Vinny from some makeshift broadcast booth at the Coliseum next month. You want a real throwback - have him do the entire game only on radio, so those in the stadium can hear it on their transistors, then simulcast it on the tube. Last year: 1A.

1A-B: BOB MILLER , Kings TV (FSN)

The rotating roster of the royally crowned players may be harder to keep up with, but the Hall of Famer keeps it upbeat despite having to constantly say about the players from the opposing team: "He shoots, he scores. Again." Last year: 1B.

3. RORY MARKAS , Angels radio (710-AM) and TV (FSN/Channel 13) and USC basketball radio (710-AM)

Strength of schedule factors in here, and very few in this city have a better RPI (reliable performance index) in more than one venue. Last year: 4.

4: SPERO DEDES , Lakers radio (570-AM)

A TV gig awaits those who are patient. Last year: 3.

5. JIM WATSON , USC and Galaxy TV (FSN)

Another multi-tasker willing and able to perform with network-quality performance skills. Last year: 7.

6. NICK NICKSON , Kings radio (1150-AM)

Simply happy to see he's managed to get back into the grind after painful back problems sidelined him at the end of last season. Last year: 5.

7. BILL MACDONALD , college basketball and

football TV (FSN)

Could also easily roll into the Lakers' full-time TV job if it ever mysteriously came open. Last year: 6.

8. BRIAN SIEMEN , Clippers radio (710-AM)

Could have debuted even higher on this list, despite a job many might not even know he actually does. He's shown that he's got game, scoring with flair points. Last year: Unranked.

9. PAUL SUNDERLAND , college basketball (FSN)

His assignments these days take him to UC Riverside or Cal State Northridge, but he manages to make them very watchable. Last year: Honorable mention.

10. (TIE) TOM KELLY, RANDY ROSENBLOOM AND CHRIS MCGEE

Recognition where it's due. Be thankful there are broadcasters like Kelly (on [Vootage.com](#)), Rosenbloom (KLCS, LA 36) and McGee (FSN Prime Ticket) who provide a professional soundtrack to prep football and basketball for an audience that isn't easy to please.

Honorable mention: Isaac Lowenkron and Andrew Siciliano, Avengers radio; Chris Roberts, UCLA football and basketball radio; John Ahlers, Ducks TV; Charley Steiner, Dodgers radio and TV.

**BOTTOM FIVE**

1. PETE ARBOGAST , USC football radio (710-AM)

It's a "Ripley's"-like ability to call a football game with one's foot tickling his own tonsils, but he's nailed it brilliantly, showing an unfathomable inability to get out of his own way. His closing "Stick it right there baby!" capper to USC's win over UCLA last December as another classic example of his classlessness. He then followed it up on his legendary blog: "I get more positive comments from SC staffers and fans about my sign off from the UCLA game than most of the other nice words from the rest of the year so far! Bruins fans weren't too happy with it, so I must've done something right!" Keep thinking that. Last year: Ignored.

2. JOEL MEYERS , Lakers TV (FSN, Channel 9)

It's a wonder analyst Stu Lantz even shows up, considering how the Iron Lung continues to do a radio call for TV while supplying his own analysis. Like the guy down at Venice Beach who plays the guitar with one hand, the triangle with the other, bangs the drum with his foot and is blowing on the harmonica, he thinks he's making sweet music. Last year: 1, bottom 5.

3. RALPH LAWLER , Clippers TV (FSN, Channel 5) and radio (710-AM)

Trying to have the team buy out his contract so he can clear waivers and go to (fill in a D-League team needing a broadcaster). Last year: 3, bottom 5.

4. TERRY SMITH , Angels radio (710-AM)

The pleasure is all ours, like when we're in a traffic tie-up on I-5 heading to the Big A behind an aqua-green '77 Astrovan with a "Yes We Can" bumper sticker on a bumper that's about to fall off with smoke pouring out of its exhaust. Last year: 2, bottom 5.

5. RICK MONDAY , Dodgers radio (790-AM)

It's a time-tested line we've used before, but it bears repeating: Rain delays with Monday always get us down. Last year: 4, bottom 5

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