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*World of Sport* – Independent Television's networked Saturday sports programme – was born at ABC Studios, Teddington, with, as its mainstay, a regular hour of wrestling known affectionately to the production team as the 'grapplefest'.

Now, under the banner of London Weekend Television, *World of Sport* is assembling a strong professional all-round team to present an authoritative and informative coverage of weekend sport.

The basis of the Sports Unit was the joint staffs of the three sports programmes, *World of Sport*, *Sports Arena* – the in-depth investigation of the stories behind the sports headlines – and *The Big Match*, the London area's soccer special. The programme has an increasingly wide coverage, with a viewing audience estimated at between 10 and 12 million during Saturday afternoon.

As far as possible we recruited the best of the available talent at all levels and our total team – consisting of producers, directors, front men, editors, unit manager, researchers, production assistants and secretaries – is twenty-eight strong. The obvious reason for assembling the whole unit under one banner is that *World of Sport* in particular – the only live show of the three – can draw on the resources of the others. The most obvious example of this is that Brian Moore (who transferred so successfully from steam radio to be commentator of *The Big Match*) and his director Bob Gardam are always involved in the planning of *World of Sport's* regular soccer spot *On the Ball*.

Similarly, *World of Sport* can call on the film resources of *Sports Arena*, and on the front-of-house abilities of *Arena's* producer/presenter Michael Parkinson – as happened during the Mexico Olympics when *World of Sport's* regular

front-man Richard Davies was tied up as presenter of ITV's daily bulletins. Similarly, *World of Sport* also benefits from the athletics knowledge and commentary of *Arena's* editor Adrian Metcalfe, himself an Olympic silver-medallist, while cricket journalist and commentator Ian Wooldridge has already proved his value to the programme.

There is authority and strength in the *World of Sport's* team of reporters and commentators on the major sports. By courtesy of the network companies, we can call on Danny Blanchflower, Barry Davies, Hugh Johns, Maurice Edelston, Alex Cameron and Gerald Sindstadt for soccer; John Rickman, Tony Cooke, Peter Moor and Ken Butler have long since established their reputation as a racing team; Reg Gutteridge of the *Evening News* brings a cockney wit and an inside knowledge second to none to his boxing commentaries; John (Dr. Golf) Jacobs and journalist Ben Wright are an excellent golf partnership. For swimming we can draw on the knowledge of Britain's best-known coach Bert Kinnear and former international Athole Still. Our show jumping man, Raymond Brooks-Ward, is the biggest name on our side of this mushrooming television sport. For tennis we have former Wimbledon champion Fred Perry and Gerald Williams of the *Daily Mail*. For table tennis another former World champion, Johnny Leach. In motor sport we have Anthony Marsh of Brands Hatch for the Grand Prix and former British saloon car champion John Sprinzel.

We can also call on one of the most versatile commentators around – Emlyn Jones, director of the National Recreation Centre at Crystal Palace, who can turn his talents to tennis, table tennis, winter sports and occasionally athletics. Last but, in terms of rating, the most popular commentator of

all is of course, 'Mr Wrestling' himself, ex-disc-jockey Kent Walton. It's quite a line-up – and that's by no means an exhaustive list.

But, in the final analysis, however strong we are on the commentary front, our visual impact is very much in the hands of the whole network. A network committee governs the financial policy of the programme in so far as it affects the share the network companies themselves are prepared to have in the programme. On any given Saturday there are generally three or more other companies providing outside broadcasts or recorded material for the programme.

The fact that we can make use of any of eight different network soccer outside broadcasts for live interviews and reports on a Saturday and use recorded material shot by any of the fourteen independent companies gives us quite an advantage. But whereas there is strength in numbers there is the disadvantage that we have to deal with fourteen different organizations, some with no sports unit as such, and sport is by no means the sole concern of the busy network directors who cover the events.

On an average Saturday, somewhere in the region of thirty cameras are in use for *World of Sport*, with four in the studio and between four and six at each outside broadcast. This means that there are about 250 camera men and technicians on duty.

While directors are capable of covering a wide range of subjects very efficiently, my own view is that specialization in sport in general, and individual sports in particular, gives an extra edge to a production.

But from ideals to the reality. On a Tuesday morning the plans for the following Saturday are discussed in detail by the whole production team – executive producer, John Bromley; editor, Ian Marshall; his two assistants, Michael Archer and Stuart McConachie; plus of course, two vital men presenter Richard Davies and studio director David Scott and any of the outside broadcast directors involved.

The basic format is laid out by the editor in his slottings – a projected time schedule for the whole programme showing length of slots, links and commercials. Any given programme is basically built around our mainstays, racing and wrestling. There will, in addition, be one or two live or deferred O.B's. A deferred O.B – an event pre-recorded which we must show within eight days – will obviously require editing (either tape or film). Man-power and facilities have to be booked. In the case of our new slant on boxing, film and videotape must be married and a commentary post-dubbed. The details are thrashed out thoroughly at the production meeting well before Reg Gutteridge starts his dressing room, inter-round and inter-fight chat at the boxing promotion.

What will open the show? This the first question at any production meeting. It's the best visual promotion for the highlight of the show that we're after and failing that, we've always got our studio shot as a background to the opening titles. And while on the subject of the studio, it's worth blowing the trumpet here on behalf of director David Scott, designer Bryan Bagge and the behind-the-scenes



*'The Big Match' team: Bob Gardam, Brian Moore and Jimmy Hill, respectively director, commentator and Head of the Sports Unit at London Weekend.*



Presenter Richard Davies faces the camera in the World of Sport Studio.

technical boys who have produced something which at Teddington was just a dream – a tailor-made sports studio. It's a masterpiece of spaciousness, convenience and smooth visual impact – a place from which Richard Davies can present a fast-moving show, complete with our new titles, catchy signature tune – with uniformed copy boys and hand-picked highly photogenic girl typists – and including studio news and interviews working quite happily amidst cameramen, technicians, graphic-artists and sub-editors. Housed in the glass-house at the end of the studio, are the producer and editor, in direct communication with the presenter, the director and the assistant editor controlling the videotape end of the operation.

So we have a great shop window but meanwhile back at the window-dressing stage, the production meeting throws around ideas as to how the week's outside broadcasts and presentation can be given that eye-catching cherry on the top. A visual flashback to a tennis semi-final the previous day? A live or pre-recorded interview? A look back to last year's final? The danger we have always to guard against is sitting back and letting the O.B.'s take care of themselves. Once you start degenerating to the 'mixture as before' stage you are shaking hands with mediocrity. Are we really getting best value from our events? Are the pictures as good as they could be? Are the commentators adding to the pictures or talking too much? To a certain extent one has to wait and see on the day, but prevention is so much better than cure.

Apart from dressing up the O.B.'s, the main pre-occupations are the likely news angles which will dominate the show four days hence. Obviously any

sport could produce the week's big headlines. Can we get Basil D'Oliveira? Will Graham Hill be back in this country? It might be a live interview in studio. It might be a snatched interview at an airport. Could we perhaps film him at his home on the Friday night? Could we get the film of the race back in time from German television? Foresight, quick-thinking and action are at a premium.

Most of the new-angle planning concerns the soccer feature *On the Ball*, originally a small slot in the programme, but now a popular and expanding feature. Planning *On the Ball* is basically a question of personalities, visuals and lines to the network matches we choose to use.

O.K, so we've got links to the grounds at Chelsea, Southampton, Liverpool and Newcastle. What is the topical angle on the players or managers involved in these games? Can we get a manager for a live interview, or must we film him midweek? Perhaps we could get him into the studio in the morning for a recording down the line. One of our major technical problems is lines. At Teddington we had our O.B lines switched very happily – in the north at ABC, Didsbury and in the south at ATV's London studio in Foley Street, some 300 yards east of Broadcasting House. But now, with the Olympics over, Foley Street's days are numbered and the majority of our switching has to be done from ITN in Kingsway. The facility for 'throwing it about' from one O.B to another during the afternoon as events progress is not always there – at least not with safety. The reason for this is simply that we need more incoming lines, but with the cost so high and the waiting list so long, the network committee takes some convincing.



*World of Sport in action, at the Finals of The Gillette Cup between Warwickshire and Sussex.*



*Televising 'The Big Match' for Sunday screening. Queens Park Rangers v. Manchester United.*

A network of vision and sound circuits provides the links between the studio centres and the ITA's transmitters. The vision circuits total about 3100 miles, divided roughly equally between microwave radio systems and underground coaxial cables.

For the four and a quarter hours that a fully networked programme such as *World of Sport* is on air most – if not all – of this network will be in use either for feeding in contributions for switching in

the *World of Sport* studio, or carrying the programme output to the transmitters.

As far as the individual outside broadcasts contributing to the programme are concerned, the method of feeding them depends entirely on the locations and circumstances. At such locations as racecourses where meetings are regularly telecast, permanent vision and sound circuits have been installed, but for wrestling, boxing or tennis, radio

links must be employed to 'hop' the programme into the nearest studio centre and thence via the major underground coaxial cables to London and the *World of Sport* studio.

So, for example, two events coming from the north may be sharing the same line. This might mean that we could not switch to Old Trafford for a soccer report until wrestling had finished from Bolton at about five o'clock; or that, if we wanted to switch to Crystal Palace to see Ron Clarke beat the world two-mile record, our continuous recording of water-skiing from Bedford Lake would be cut off in the middle. Generally, on the soccer front, we have reverse music circuits to perhaps three or four League soccer grounds so that we can collect a report or interview both before and after a match.

With more and more communications satellites being launched, their potential for beaming major international events into a programme like *World of Sport* becomes correspondingly greater. There are two major factors acting against satellite coverage in the programme at the moment. One is the tremendous cost, which demands that the events to be covered must be of top international potential in order to attract a major audience. The other is timing. It is very unlikely that such major events would be happening live round the world during Saturday afternoon in Britain.

But *World of Sport* is making good use of Eurovision links for taking the big continental events, such as the Le Mans 24-hour race and the World Cup skiing series. And, as the name implies, *World of Sport* is always universal in its outlook.

Having decided on our theme for the soccer spot and how to dress it up with visual material – perhaps match action, in which case tapes or film may have to be borrowed or 'pumped' down a line

from a network company for recording at Wembley, or perhaps with midweek action or interviews we film ourselves – we have to work out the sheer scheduling of the slot. And this is often a precarious juggling act.

The television contract with the Football League forbids us to show more than three one-minute flashes of match action. And these must not be shown between 1.30 and 2.30 p.m. or after the start of the matches themselves. We are also forbidden to interview players at a League ground after a match, the object being to prevent anyone from knowing which match is being televised until after 4 p.m. on the day of the match. This adds up to quite a lot of explaining when you are trying to persuade a manager or player to be where you want him, not only when you want him but when the director of the company servicing the match can manage to 'shoot' him. It often feels like trying to keep four or five balls in the air with one hand tied behind your back.

But come Saturday morning, somehow Richard Davies has his outline script which he has thrashed out with an assistant editor the day before. Most of the film and videotape editing (with timings and out cues to the P.A.'s) has been done. There's just that studio interview to record at 11 a.m. We seem to have all the necessary stills and captions.

In the VTR area, the assistant editor-in-charge is watching the progress of the morning rounds from our golf event and choosing the best action to show before our first live visit.

Suddenly, at 13.00.01 as the precise 24-hour clock has it, the titles are rolling and we're in business again. If every event ran to time, every horse-race started on time, lines to O.B.'s never went down and videotape machines never failed, the



A difficult O.B. presentation. *World of Sport* at the English Team Skating Championships.

next four and a quarter hours would be a cake walk. But in the best regulated business there is often a very thin line between success and disaster.

Videotapes have to be replayed at half a minute's notice when an O.B is suddenly lost; Richard Davies gives an unscheduled two minutes of news 'padding', listening desperately for the editor to whisper through his earpiece 'O.K we've got the sound back, lead into that piece of tape now.'

The one eternal problem, often aggravated by an unforeseen accident, is how to dispose of commercial breaks which can so easily build up and eat into sports action – so often just at crucial moments too. At the flick of the editor's talkback switch a whole day's videotape editing is lost to the public. Time wins again.

But suddenly, just after four o'clock, the pressure is temporarily off. It's wrestling time and, barring breakdowns, we have an hour clear in the studio to plan the results round-up sequence at the end of the show. This is when the action really happens, as we again test our lines to the soccer grounds round the country. If we're in luck, one of them will produce a headline story, such as the day we lost everything from Nottingham Forest because the grandstand

was gutted by fire. In such a case the editor may give this particular report an extra minute and chop or prune something else. This is the period in the show when every second is precious and time has to be watched like a hawk.

In the old days when wrestling was always 'live' on Saturdays, we were in a position to tell Kent Walton to hand back to the results sequence at a minute's notice. Now, the pre-recorded tape is rolled at a predetermined time. Admittedly this saves a precious O.B line on Saturday, but it means we cannot be flexible in our out-time wrestling once the tape is rolling.

*World of Sport* is sometimes living proof of the old adage about quarts into pint pots. Still who complains about an embarrassment of riches? Sometimes, somehow, somewhere, something's got to give. As long as it is not the editor's or director's nerve, all is well. But as sure as sports television breeds the best grey hairs and ulcers in the business, come twelve minutes past five on a Saturday, Richard Davies will be signing off with that comforting cliché – 'And that just about wraps it up for another week'.