Making and Breaking the News: The Media in Sports Personnel Decisions

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Making and Breaking the News: The Media in Sports Personnel Decisions

The role of the media has evolved from a reporter of what has happened to an instigator of what is happening. This transition has come at the public’s request for information that will occur tomorrow, not today. America is tired of hearing things at news conferences and the thrill of “seeing it live” has become mundane. This has been replaced with gossip shows, such as “Inside Edition” and “Hard Copy.”

The change is evident in the six o’clock news and on the front pages of newspapers. But the place it might be most evident is in the world of sports, where the media has become a catalyst in personnel decisions. Through reporting speculation and providing constant insider information, the media influences where coaches and players end up. This thesis studies the relationship between media framing—"selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman)—and how Jon Gruden made it from the NFL’s Oakland Raiders to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
Introduction
Sports are a key component of today's society. The sports industry is a multi-trillion dollar business. It is allotted up to five minutes of every 30-minute news broadcast and has taken over large portions of cable television and the Internet. Sports are a source of pride for millions of people, whether it be cheering for their alma mater or the professional team in their city. More than 100,000 people pack into college football stadiums in Ann Arbor, Knoxville, Columbus and Los Angeles six or seven times each fall. Fans in droves of more than 40,000 per arena attend games of professional football, baseball, basketball and hockey each night. Americans, not known for their love of soccer, woke up as early as 5 a.m. during the World Cup and joined others in establishments such as Hooters and Jillian's to watch the U.S. attempt to make history.

Sports create staggering statistics, not just in terms of hitting streaks or career rushing yards, but in cultural and economic popularity. Super Bowl XXXVII, held in January 2003, drew a 44 percent rating and 63 percent share. That means 44 percent of households and 63 percent of households with televisions on were watching the contest between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Oakland Raiders. That dwarfs any nightly news or episode of "Friends." The hottest topics of conversation in Cincinnati and Charlotte involve sports stadiums. The men and women of Cincinnati are rebelling against the NFL's Bengals after anteing up $300 million for Paul Brown Stadium and the competitive team it was to host. Charlotte refused to use public funds to build a new arena and keep the NBA's Hornets in town after leading the NBA in attendance less than a decade ago. Once the Hornets bolted for New Orleans, the city of Charlotte applied to the NBA for an expansion team and just finalized plans for the
building of a new arena. At the beginning of the 2002-03 season, the NBA predicted gross licensed merchandise revenues to rise more than $300 million, from $1.8 billion to $2.1 billion, but league executives are now expecting sales to surpass those projections. That doesn’t even include ticket sales or television contracts.

The Coaching Carousel

The aforementioned Super Bowl presents an interesting scenario. Former Raiders coach Jon Gruden now patrols the sidelines for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. But the story of how Gruden traded coasts is quite interesting. During January and February of 2002, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL) were involved in a much-publicized search for their next head coach. Media speculation on the next head man of the Buccaneers originated even before the Buccaneers had begun the playoffs. Media outlets, especially ESPN, were reporting prior to the conclusion of Tampa Bay's season that then-head coach Tony Dungy would be fired unless the Buccaneers advanced to, at the least, the National Football Conference championship game. In addition to those reports, sources leaked information that former NFL head coach Bill Parcells had already been approached about the job and had accepted the position. Speculation and rumors framed in this manner began two months of coverage surrounding the Tampa Bay position.

This created a domino effect that influenced other personnel matters. Dungy was listed as a possible successor to Jim Mora in Indianapolis even though he was still employed in Tampa Bay at the time. That information was attributed to a “source close to the situation.” As the coaching carousel began to turn, coaches were either
thrown off or welcomed aboard. This included Mora being fired as the Indianapolis Colts head coach, Dungy becoming head coach of the Colts, Marvin Lewis leaving the Baltimore Ravens for the Washington Redskins, and Steve Mariucci being offered both the head coach and general manager position with the Buccaneers, even as Rich McKay was the current general manager.

Gruden ended up in Tampa Bay, after the Buccaneers and Oakland agreed to a compensation package of two future first-round draft picks, two more future second-round selections and $8 million. He guided Tampa Bay to its first Super Bowl victory in his first season in Tampa, knocking off his old team.

The Power of the Media

For all intents and purposes, the media directly affects the lives of people in this country. We turn to the morning paper, the six o'clock news and CNN to stay in touch with the world. Whatever occurs on page one of our newspapers is thought to be more important to us than what appears on page two. The talking head on Headline News is considered an expert on subjects from nuclear weapons to fashion at the Grammys, even though they are reading off a teleprompter. But these mass media outlets continue to grow both in number, but also in the amount of time devoted to news. It's a necessary evil so that people can be aware of the world they live in.

We live in a world being brought together through technology. Information is available on any topic at a moment's notice. However, years of Hollywood and scandal have also left our society with the idea we must know something before it is official, whether or not it has a direct bearing on our lives. The popularity of shows
such as "Inside Edition" and "Extra" are evidence to this. In sports, this opportunity to speculate is also widely available. ESPN's BottomLine, which scrolls underneath the station's programming, is constantly reporting trades and signings before they have been announced. These reports are also found in newspapers and/or television, Web sites and radio.

What follows is a comprehensive look at how and why Gruden made it from the Bay area to Tampa Bay. Gruden's job change had more to do with the new role of the media in today's society than one employer looking for the services of someone else's employee. This thesis chronicles the media coverage of this story and how that coverage acted as a catalyst for this particular personnel move. The media's audience is not only John Q. Public; it also includes constituents such as Jon Gruden and decision-makers for Tampa Bay and Oakland. All of these constituents received information they did not previously know from these reports, based mainly on anonymous sources. Because of this, the media serves a variety of roles: the reporter, the channel through which constituents can communicate (because NFL tampering rules prohibit teams and personnel under contract to other teams to discuss personnel openings) and finally, as an instigator, reporting and printing stories that ultimately affected what eventually occurred. The media's role is changing, yet many people are not conscious of how it already has. This thesis helps to define this new role and show its power.
Methodology
The mass media have a great power over the public; it is believed. The public has a thirst for information, especially information that can be obtained in advance of the event occurring. Because of this, the media has transformed itself from a reporter of what happened to an investigator and instigator of what is happening or what will happen. The information collected from this process of investigating, whether factual or not, is then passed on to the public through the media's channels and framed as truth, by attributing the information to sources, documents, etc. (Gamson and Modigliani, 2)

It is the hypothesis of this study that this practice of broadcasting unattributed information prior to the actual announcement not only casts the report as true to the mass audience, but it also greatly affects any potential result, such as a signing or a trade in the business of sports. The mass audience comes to believe the report or speculation as true because of the theory of media framing. According to Entman, the media build frames by selection and salience:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. (Entman, 52)

This means the mass media selects what the public is to believe. Many in the public believed Walter Mondale was going to be appointed to fill the Democratic ticket in the 2002 Minnesota Senate race because CNN reported this prior to the announcement. They cited sources, but they also ran the story right after other stories
that had already happened. Therefore, the Mondale story was framed as if it had already happened even though no official announcement had been made.

The theory of media framing has been used in a large number of examples outside the political field. Media framing has been used in sports to study how newspapers influenced the vote on a referendum in Cincinnati to approve public funding for new stadiums for both the Bengals and Reds in 1996. (Trumpbour, 2001) A study of The Cincinnati Enquirer showed the newspaper’s editorial content was substantially skewed in favor of a referendum for taxpayer subsidies for the city’s two professional sports teams. This framing of the importance of passing this referendum by the newspaper was partly responsible for the city’s enthusiasm for the project even though there were cost overruns and construction problems. The theory also has been used to access how newspapers handled the Nike sweatshop scandal. (Wang, 2002) He said:

The results revealed a clear trace of framing as: the workers in distant Asian countries were almost unheard of, this issue has not much government involvement, there were not many ordinary people concerned, the whole issue is primarily the charge and counter-charge between Nike and non-governmental organizations, and Nike’s promise to change was welcomed and credited.

There is even a study on the framing of American Indians by the Boston Globe. (Miller and Ross, 2002)

Gitlin, in The Whole World is Watching, explains media framing as the media’s ability to shape the thoughts and opinions of the public. From “what is cool” to “what is true,” the media “directly or indirectly, by statement and omission, in pictures and words, in entertainment and news and advertisement, produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes
manifest and concrete.” (Gitlin, 2) McQuail gets more to the heart of the argument by talking about the practice of printing speculation with actual events:

> By framing images of reality...in a predictable and patterned way, mass media actively influence audience’s interpretation and discussion of public events. (McQuail, 331)

Media framing actually involves other, more discrete, examples of manipulation. The media is an agenda-setter. According to McCombs’ theory, the media tells the public what is important and what deserves their time. If a story on hairnets runs on the front page of any newspaper, while the conflict with Iraq is “buried” on page 17, the media frames hairnets as more important than happenings with Iraq. For this example, perhaps the greatest influence of framing was that the story was printed at all. This simple act frames the story as true, almost in the past tense, no matter how many times it is tagged with the label “Report” or states the word “unconfirmed” in the text.

The theory of media framing has been proven time and again. If a newspaper consistently only gives one side of any story, as in the Nike example, some in the audience will believe that side of the story and consider it the complete truth. This theory of media framing is as prolific within sports as any other facets of society covered by both print and television journalists. The focus of this research will be the hiring of Jon Gruden as coach of the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers in February 2002. This thesis goes beyond the traditional use of media framing in that it considers Jon Gruden and others involved in this hiring (i.e. decision-makers within the Tampa Bay and Oakland, where Gruden previously coached, and organizations in addition to the current coaching staff of the Buccaneers when Gruden was hired) to be part of the
audience as well. Not only are they a part of the news, but they are also watching the story take place in the mass media and it is conceivable they were obtaining new information from these outlets.

This study uses textual analysis of the coverage during this time period. Quite simply, textual analysis is the process of looking for patterns, trends, or discrepancies in a number of texts. For this research, the number of times an anonymous source was cited while the story did not include quotes from any of the key figures in the coaching search (i.e. Gruden, team presidents or general managers, then-current Tampa Bay coach Tony Dungy) is an example of what would be analyzed. It is the hypothesis of this study that a large majority of the stories will quote only a source without being able to attribute any information to a particular person. This case is unique in that the information these sources first provided was false. Even while Dungy was still coaching the Buccaneers in the NFL playoffs, sources were reporting that he would be fired and replaced by Bill Parcells. This did not play out. Therefore, erroneous material created the movement of coaches from one team to another. Because of this, the media went outside their traditional role of “reporter” and became “instigators.”

This study expands on Gitlin’s research and ideas to incorporate the sports media into the argument. By publishing reports in advance of becoming official, the media is telling prospective candidates which jobs are available and/or already filled. This speculation is framed to be factual by the simple fact that it is reported. “The news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality.” (Tuchman, 193)
Media framing has seldom been used to study sports. This concept has mostly been applied to political news coverage. This study illustrates the thesis that the media frames many of the sports industry’s personnel matters and by so doing, actually is a catalyst in what ultimately transpires.

Dating from January 14 to February 25, 2002, articles on the Tampa Bay coaching situation were analyzed. Ten of these articles were from ESPN.com, while the remainder came from print newspapers and magazines. It is significant to note that all ten of the ESPN.com pieces had been updated from their original posting. This means while there are only ten separate ESPN.com stories, each has been modified numerous times, making the number of versions of these stories impossible to count. This analysis, in terms of online publications, will deal only with the final posting of each story since the earlier postings of each article were not available after being updated.
Analysis
The focus of this study is based on the ten ESPN.com stories. They were found to be indicative of the entire coverage of this personnel situation in terms of procedures used and the timeline of reports. The analysis of ESPN.com’s coverage showed media framing was rampant as the news organization communicated aspects of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers coaching search to the public.

ESPN.com senior NFL writer Len Pasquarelli wrote, or at the least, was given credit for contributing information to six of the stories. One came from The Associated Press and was posted on ESPN.com, while the nine remaining stories were credited to ESPN.com news services or Pasquarelli. In the ten ESPN.com stories, a generic “source” or “report” is cited a total of 37 times. In every instance the reference was followed by information that had not been publicly confirmed by an official. Because of this, the information is believed not by the validity of the claim, but rather by the credibility of ESPN.com or the weight of the argument the writer makes.

In the original story on the coaching situation (“Bucs fire Dungy after another playoff failure,” 1/14/02), ESPN.com referenced a report in The Tampa Tribune that Bill Parcells had reached agreement on a contract with the Buccaneers prior to Dungy’s dismissal. In the article, Parcells denied this fact, but the caption read, “Can Bill Parcells turn around the Bucs’ anemic offense? We’ll likely find out.” This is important because the caption contradicts the text of this story. The journalist in this story is directly quoting sources (one of the few times this was done in coverage of the Buccaneers’ coaching position), but telling the reader not to believe him by
wording the caption as such. The media's opinion of what will happen has crept into this piece of journalism, which is framed as objective and fact-based.

In Pasquarelli's story, "Parcells on Bucs: 'Absolutely not'" (1/30/02), he cites "rampant rumors over the past several days that Parcells, who signed a non-binding agreement with Tampa Bay officials nearly eight weeks ago and then opted not to accept a four-year deal worth about $4.3 million annually..." without naming a source by name or even attributing the source as someone close to one of the constituents. Once again, ESPN.com reported something someone close to the situation adamantly denied. At the end of the story, Parcells' agent said, "I don't know where this latest thing started, but there isn't a shred of truth to it." This now gives the impression that ESPN.com is picking and choosing who is to be believed instead of reporting all sides of the "argument" objectively. By framing quotations within the text as false, ESPN.com has effectively become a filter of information. This also creates an interesting dilemma for the reader: "Do I trust ESPN.com and their unnamed sources? Or do I choose to believe this person in the middle of this situation who actually stands by their quote?"

In Pasquarelli's "GM wants Lewis, but bosses like Gruden" (2/3/02), Pasquarelli cites reports in The St. Petersburg Times, from The Associated Press and sources used by ESPN's Chris Mortensen to first hint Buccaneers' owners would like to talk with Gruden, who at the time was still under contract with the Oakland Raiders. This is our first example of the sources not only being unnamed, but now it is constructed that the writer does not even have direct contact with them. Information one media outlet framed as true is now being framed a second time by a totally
separate media outlet. Under the NFL’s tampering rules, Tampa Bay officials are not allowed to mention anyone under contract with another team as even a possibility for a position in their organization without permission from that particular team. At this time, Tampa Bay had not received the proper permission from Oakland. Mortensen’s source did state the Buccaneers were offering Oakland multiple draft picks for the rights to Gruden. In this same piece, Pasquarelli states Baltimore Ravens’ defensive coordinator Marvin Lewis’s “hire by the Bucs...could come as early as Monday or Tuesday.” The story ran on Sunday. This is a good example of constituents using the media as a communication channel. Representatives of players use the media in the same way, publicizing one team’s contract offer to raise another’s offer, for example. Tampa Bay officials cannot publicly share their interest in Groden as a coaching candidate, but they know if they mention it to a member of the media and ask that it not be attributed to a particular individual, the information will be printed and their intended audience (Oakland officials and Gruden himself) will receive their intended message. This is a prime example of how organizations manipulate the media (a willing victim) and is another way the media influences these decisions.

On Wednesday of that week, Pasquarelli cited “several prominent league sources” in “Lewis ‘a lock’ – unless Davis reconsider” (2/6/02) as saying “Buccaneers ownership has abandoned its pursuit of (Gruden)” and could have an agreement in principle finalized with Lewis as early as Thursday, the day following the published story. For the first time in ESPN.com’s coverage, an agent was quoted referencing a source. Once again, this sets up sets up a second filter or frame:

(Lewis’ agent Ray) Anderson emphasized that neither he nor his client have been officially apprised that the job will go to
Lewis. But he has strong sources within the Tampa Bay hierarchy, Anderson pointed out, and feels certain that Lewis will be the new coach. ("Lewis 'a lock' — unless Davis reconsiders" 2/6/02)

Another team source referred to Lewis as "a lock." Further into this story, ESPN.com lists candidates, one apparently already signed, for offensive coaching positions on Lewis' staff.

Later that week in "Bucs, Glazers break off talks with Lewis" (2/8/02), a source commented on the use of other sources in ESPN.com's coverage:

In an interview with ESPN.com, a high-ranking Tampa Bay official who spoke on the condition of anonymity, suggested the imminence of an agreement with Lewis... was mischaracterized by the media. The official claimed it was fueled by Lewis' agent, Ray Anderson, whom he said 'tried to back (the Bucs) into a deal,' and that the two sides were never really close to an agreement. ("Bucs, Glazers break off talks with Lewis" 2/8/02)

Pasquarelli then tried to quash the notion the media (namely ESPN.com and he in this example) had been used. Instead of reporting facts even pertaining to this ongoing story, ESPN.com has now become a defender of its practices and the media as a whole. This is another way ESPN.com not only frames its sources and their information as fact, but also frames itself as a credible news organization:

The notion that Anderson used the media as his pawns, though, doesn’t hold much water. Unless, of course, the ownership had granted (Tampa Bay general manager Rich) McKay a degree of autonomy it did not intend to honor. If there was miscommunication, much of it existed within the walls of the Bucs complex, and clearly McKay saw the Thursday meeting with the (Tampa Bay owners) Glazers as a prelude to a hiring and not just an initial get-acquainted session. Several team officials had told ESPN and ESPN.com in recent days that Lewis would be the choice, that a contract would be completed by Friday, with the coaching staff assembled by the weekend,
and an official introduction of the new head coach on Monday.  
("Bucs, Glazers break off talks with Lewis” 2/8/02)

He then goes on to list three scenarios that sources have said Tampa Bay ownership has all but ruled out. Once again, the second scenario offered to readers as “ruled out” was almost precisely what eventually occurred. This shows how little credible, firsthand knowledge these sources and ESPN.com, in general, had during this whole situation:

The Bucs will not reinitiate talks with (Oakland owner Al) Davis about prying Gruden free from Oakland. The club official reiterated the asking price was exorbitant and insisted the Bucs never made a final offer to Oakland ownership... The decision not to hire Lewis wasn’t tied to any sinister plot between the Bucs and the Raiders. Officials from both teams confirmed that. ("Bucs, Glazers break off talks with Lewis” 2/8/02)

All of these reports never played out. The mere mentioning of them in print possibly affected the ultimate decision in that other candidates saw them and believed they were out of the running. This caused the candidates to accept other coaching positions before they actually had been eliminated from contention for the Tampa Bay job.

In ESPN.com’s final story on the five-week coaching search, “Gruden agrees to five-year deal with Bucs” (2/18/02), the news service reported the actual contract (five years for $17.5 million) and compensation package (Oakland received four draft picks and $8 million to release Gruden from the final year of his contract) it had erroneously posted time and time again over the past month.
Conclusions
In analyzing ESPN.com's coverage of this case, it is apparent that a good portion of their coverage was erroneous. Even more of their coverage was based on unnamed sources, many without being directly quoted. The fact that ESPN.com continued to publish these reports had a dramatic effect on Jon Gruden leaving the Oakland Raiders to become the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Since NFL teams, much like other professional teams and NCAA colleges, cannot discuss employment opportunities with anyone under contract with another team directly, these teams use the media as a sounding board, a way to gauge interest and indirectly contact personnel the team is interested in. As long as this comes in the form of an unnamed source, the team is not subject to a fine from the league's headquarters. While the teams are using the media as a communication channel to their intended audience, the media also relish the opportunity to claim this information as in-depth reporting or an exclusive in an effort to attract readers to its Web site, draw an increase in television ratings or simply to sell newspapers.

And so this mutually-beneficial relationship orchestrates alternatives within coaching carousels each year in each sport. And the practice is not limited to coaches; players and executives fall under the same tampering restrictions and often must resort to the Sunday paper to see where they could possibly end up. The fact of the matter is this procedure is a necessary evil if the NFL, for example, is going to stand firm on its tampering stance. Without the use of the media, teams would have to offer compensation packages to other teams just to be able to ask coaches and executives if they would talk to them about a coaching vacancy. These prices would be high and therefore the practice would not be done. A stalemate would ensue.
Some would argue then the media does not really influence where players, coaches and executives within the sports industry move. It is, in fact, the teams who dictate this movement through the dealings they initiate. This is not completely true. Not all coverage comes directly from teams—in fact, very little does. As seen in ESPN.com’s coverage, many times the media runs with a statement. Sometimes these turn out to be true; other times, the notion is vehemently denied in later reports. The media frames these statements as fact by placing quotation marks around them and attributing them to sources involved in the procedures. This produces a false credibility that is believed by readers. ESPN.com went so far as to frame quotes from constituents as false and counter them with information from unnamed sources and unsubstantiated claims from its writers.

Where the media becomes an instigator is when they do a poor job of verifying reports and publish stories based on erroneous sources. This practice creates a separate carousel, one based on inaccuracies the public (and those key figures themselves) believe. The media frames these reports (whether factual or erroneous) in the same way. Stories without direct attribution are placed on newspaper pages opposite entirely factual stories, such as the Washington Wizards defeated the Toronto Raptors 104-97 last night. There is no denying that game happened and that was the score. Therefore, when reports about Marvin Lewis becoming the Buccaneers next head coach are in print right beside that game recap, the reader (whether John Q. Public, Marvin Lewis or a potential Lewis assistant currently under contract with another team) takes the story as fact. Opinion appears next to fact other sections of a newspaper, for example, but “reports” tend to be more customary in sports because
the severity of sports personnel decisions is not as grave as matters of government or crime. For example, media outlets very rarely cite anonymous sources when discussing motives for a murder before an arrest has been made.

The power of the media is that it cannot contain its messages to a team’s desired audience. This means that not only did Gruden read the Bucs had interest in him, but every other NFL participant and fan did as well. It is safe to say that many constituents in examples, such as the Tampa Bay coaching search, learn things from the media originally. Not everything is known to them before they open up the Sunday paper. Every time the media publish a report, it alters the way constituents perceive their role in a personnel decision. To many the role of the media is to inform and explain. In sports, these practices actually influence and instigate situations. The media attempts to frame itself as a reporter, just as Len Pasquarelli did in his coverage for ESPN.com by explaining how the Buccaneers’ comments about his coverage were erroneous, instead of an actual “constituent” itself, one that has a lasting impression. Constituents now learn what others “are being told” or “what has been happening” from a third party—one that cannot be automatically believed. But oftentimes, the media is believed just because it is the media. Especially in America, the public (including these key figures in the reports) think that everything put into print has been verified through several sources and confirmed with decision-makers that it is OK to print. Taking results from a December, 2000 Gallup poll, the organization writes “Americans are more likely now than at any point in the previous 15 years to say that news organizations’ stories and reports are inaccurate.”
The fact is that every news outlet has a different policy as to the number of sources it requires. And furthermore, these checks and balances exist more to alleviate the potential for slander and libel lawsuits and to prevent the news organization from "ending up with egg on their face." The question "Are we instigating or affecting something by publishing this?" is not a hot topic of discussion in the newsroom. Also, it is conceivable to believe editors are not nearly as concerned with falsely giving someone a coaching position as compared to falsely accusing the wrong person of murder in the Sunday paper.

These reports tend also to speed up the process. Once other teams find out who another team is after, some will quickly jump into negotiations. When fans see reports their favorite team should have a new coach by Thursday, and Friday rolls around without any developments, the public starts to openly criticize the management of the team for not finalizing the deal, which was supposed to be already done. On top of this, the media will then jump back into the fray. Now, columns appear in newspapers and rants on television or radio about how the process has slowed. Talk radio and television shows, such as ESPN's "Pardon the Interruption" and Fox's "Best Damn Sports Show Period" are built around the opinionated analysis of sports. While not framed as straight journalism, these shows only add fuel to the fire. The media has now taken the same story and sent it through two frames: the original frame the report was true and the second frame that reiterates the fact the report was true by saying why hasn't it been acted upon. As with the ESPN.com examples, these two frames are in addition to the frame of information being directly communicated to the media outlet, even though ESPN.com was using information
from The Associated Press's sources. Because of the public's trust in the media, they will jump through the hoops of these two frames and join the media in criticizing the team. Instead, they should look at the situation objectively and think, "Perhaps nothing has happened because the original report might not have been true."

However, a majority of the time the decision-maker is criticized instead of the reporter scrutinized. This is because the media frames itself as a truth-teller and an objective reporter not actively involved in the situation it reports. As discussed earlier, sports coverage is not put under the same microscope as other genres of media because sports' content matter is not as "serious."

Would Jon Gruden be coaching the Tampa Bay Buccaneers today if the media did not cover the story until the actual press conference announcing the new coach? Possibly not. Other candidates, such as Marvin Lewis, Bill Parcells, and Pittsburgh offensive coordinator Mike Mularkey would have felt they were legitimate candidates and continued through the process. If Lewis hadn't been named the new head coach by the media, assistant coaches would not have quit their jobs with the intention of joining Lewis' staff. The fact the media played a large role in getting Gruden to Tampa Bay is evident, but there is also even more compelling evidence that the ripple effect created by the media influenced many more constituents, including assistant coaches and players who felt they were heading to Tampa Bay at one time or another during the process. ESPN.com reported the hiring of assistant coaches during the coaching search, another framed development that did not come to pass.

The power of the media is unbelievable. In these times, where almost every facet of society is being put under the microscope to see who is sending the message,
the media functions almost without scrutiny. In the world of sports, the media has just
as big an impact on personnel movement, salary negotiations and communication as
any checkbook or decision-maker. While the media is the accepted channel of
communication between these constituents, the fact the media frames the message as
it passes from sender to receiver is lost on the public and lost on the constituents it so
greatly influences.

The newspaper lands on the porch every morning; the news appears on
television at least at noon, five, six, ten and eleven each day. The media must not only
be an informant, but it competes against various forms of entertainment daily.
Somewhere along the line, the reporter emerged into something much more. In an
attempt to sell newspapers or win the ratings war, the media’s role has changed. And
this change has left a lasting impression, especially on the sports world. In many
ways, media framing has proven what most of us already know: things are not quite
what we think they are and most times they’re not what we are told either. This study
focuses on Jon Gruden, but the framing and techniques are almost universal,
particularly in sports coverage. The next time a player signs a contract or a coach is
hired, take a look at the story reported prior to the actual announcement and what
actually occurs. What you’ll most likely find is a discrepancy, one that many in the
public cannot differentiate between.
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