

Sports

Katz Communications prepares for kickoff

By Laurie Moses

The countdown continues toward tonight's Kick-off Classic football game. Not only is it a countdown for the Penn State and Nebraska football teams, but for Katz Communications — the company broadcasting the game.

What is Katz Communications? Terri Reed, director of press and publications, said it is a go-between for advertisers and television or radio. Instead of a national advertiser selling ads directly to a station, they sell it to Katz, which then sells to the individual stations.

"Our sports division is totally unrelated. We are an independent sports syndicate, and we bid on the television rights to games," Reed said.

After getting rights to a game, Katz sells the broadcast to individual stations. Tonight's broadcast, featuring announcers Curt Gowdy, Lee Corso and Dave Diles, will be the largest syndicated sports broadcast in history according to Reed. Locally, it will be carried on KMTV (Channel 3).

"We have had a very strong response (from stations)," Reed said. "One hundred forty stations are network affiliates. . . there are 165 stations overall."

Ninety-nine of the top 100 markets in the country

are carrying the game, Reed said. Providence, R.I., is the only exception.

"A lot of little towns have picked up the game. We're pretty proud of that," Reed said. "It shows the stations want this kind of programming. At one time stations were dependent on networks, but not anymore. The networks will change what they do."

One station that has bought the rights to the game is Omaha's KMTV.

"We have not accepted any of their sports in the past. We are planning on picking up more in the future," Jay Maxey, national sales manager at KMTV, said.

To get the broadcasting rights, Katz had to outbid the ABC and CBS networks and other syndicates.

"We are essentially a network ourselves," Reed said. "Being a syndicate can work to our advantage or disadvantage. We are only 18 months old, and it's certainly working so far," he said.

Getting ready for the game requires a lot of work, she said. Katz had to hire a producer and director and announcer.

"We have a top-notch producer and director working for us," Reed said. "Curt Gowdy will be the play-by-play announcer. He's great, just a real pro at it. He likes this sort of stuff and is excited about

it."

Media attention has been very big. The New York, Boston, and Chicago papers have all talked to Reed. Why all this attention?

"College football (in the east) is Penn State. They're defending national champions. We have the Ivy League, but they aren't as well-known," she said.

With the defending national champions meeting the pre-season number one pick, what will Katz do for an encore?

"We are going to broadcast a lot of basketball," Reed said. "We have contracts with the Pacific Coast Athletic Association and the Big Eight. We are also doing the Liberty Bowl. Curt Gowdy will do the play-by-play there too."

"We have done enough (broadcasts) to do it efficiently," she said. "The networks are probably not pleased. I'd say they're playing second fiddle to us right now."

The broadcast will begin at 7:30 with a pre-game show. Diles visits each school and interviews players on each team.

"There's a lot of fanfare and a lot of fun," Reed said. "The meadowlands Sports Complex is one of the best stadiums to broadcast from. Things should go really well."

Paterno confident of team's chances

By Jeff Browne

If the conversation preceding last year's Nebraska-Penn State matchup is any clue, Nittany Lion Coach Joe Paterno may feel more confident about his team's chances in tonight's Kickoff Classic than the "experts" who have made the Cornhuskers up to a seven-point favorite.

Last year at this time, Paterno was touting the Huskers as possibly one of the greatest college football teams of all time. Penn State proceeded to whip Nebraska at University Park, Pa., 27-24.

Now, Paterno seems to be just as confident about his own team's potential, but he is saving the superlatives when he talks about the Huskers.

"They've had some changes on defense," he said about Nebraska, "and the only real feel I have is from watching the films of their spring game."

He said Nebraska's backfield, heralded in these parts as worthy of a name similar to Notre Dame's "Four Horsemen" of the mid-1920s, reminds him of the unit that brought Penn State a national championship last year.

"Nebraska's backs are as good a group as we've played against," Paterno said, but he steered clear of any comparisons to all-time great teams.

"I think we're pretty good," Paterno said about his team. "We're starting to get into the groove, now, of being a group."

Junior Doug Strang will be the starting quarterback. He beat out Dan Lonergan for the job.

Paterno thought the two had been nearly even in practices.

"Both kids have had steady improvement," he said. "Both have had good practices. The squad is very comfortable with either one."

Paterno said he is not willing to use both quarterbacks equally or alternately in the game.

"One is going to have to do it," he said, calling himself a "one-quarterback coach."

The only area of his team about which Paterno is worried is his offensive line. It has two returning starters, and no sophomores or freshmen among its starters. He said he is fretting about its depth, especially in the August heat.

"I'm not sure our backup people are ready," he said, "but we'll play as many people as we have to play to sustain good performance."

"Last year, we had the same (depth) problem with the offensive line," Paterno said, "but we had everybody healthy."

Injuries have allowed some of Penn State's offensive line starters in practice, but all are expected to start tonight.

The rest of the Penn State offense, according to Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne, is quick and talented.

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Photo courtesy of Big Eight Information



Photo courtesy of Penn State Sports Information

Two of the major forces in tonight's Kickoff Classic: On the left, Nebraska quarterback Turner Gill. On the right, Penn State hero (monster in the Nebraska system), junior Harry Hamilton. Game coverage begins at 7:30 p.m. on KMTV.

Huskers to test tough Lion defense

By Scott Ahlstrand and Greg Loder

Today's Kickoff Classic, featuring the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the Penn State Nittany Lions, pits an irresistible force against an immovable object.

The Nittany Lions, ranked No. 4 in the Associated Press and United Press International polls, return four All-American candidates on defense. Linebacker Scott Radecki, safety Mark Robinson, tackle Greg Gattuso, and hero back Harry Hamilton have all been mentioned as possible All-Americans.

The Cornhuskers, on the other hand, are ranked No. 1 by both polls on the basis of their offense. Nebraska has three legitimate Heisman trophy candidates in a backfield that has generated its share of national publicity. The three are quarterback Turner Gill, running back Mike Rozier, and wingback Irving Fryar.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne is quick and talented, his high-powered offense should be able to match up with the Nittany Lion defense if they play with some consistency.

"We definitely have big play capabilities, but we've got to be more consistent," Osborne said. "We've been making one or two big plays in practice, but we haven't been able to string together 15 or 16 good plays in a row. If we're going to be successful against

Penn State, we're going to have to be able to put together some long drives."

The Huskers' hopes rely heavily on seniors Gill, Rozier, and Fryar. The trio, along with senior fullback Mark Schellen, make up Nebraska's explosive backfield.

For Fryar and Rozier, the game will be a coming home of sorts, as they played their high school football in New Jersey.

"This game means a lot to both of us," Fryar said. "Mike and I really want to play good in front of our friends and family."

Gill was asked about his stardom at a press conference at Giants Stadium Sunday.

"We're a team-oriented team," Gill told some of the more than 300 writers expected for the game. "If you have a good team, the individual goals will come."

Gill spent much of the conference discussing his decision to play football rather than sign with the New York Yankees, who drafted him this spring. He was optimistic about the Penn State rematch.

"I have confidence in our offensive line," Gill said. "It's a little inexperienced, but we have the talent and size there."

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