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Pete Dougherty



## Race show always a fast turnaround

By **PETE DOUGHERTY**, Staff writer

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For the 28th time in 31 years, Tom Wall will have a role in Saturday's television production of the annual Freihofer's Run for Women in Albany. His experience, which includes 11 years and more than 100 race telecasts at ESPN, has enabled him to assemble a production timeline that begins four to six months prior to the race and becomes increasingly more detailed as the race draws closer.

(To see the production timeline, visit <http://blog.timesunion.com/sportsmedia.>)

Such preparation, while imperative, doesn't relieve the stress Wall said he will feel between the start of the race 10:15 a.m. and the time a half-hour recap airs on WXXA (Ch. 23) at 10:30 p.m.

"I will never be used to that," said Wall, a former WNYT (Ch. 13) producer who now works as a free-lancer. "My wife is starting to make fun of me. From a week before the race, if she wakes up in the middle of the night, I'm lying there staring at the ceiling, I'm thinking of all the things.

"On race day, I'm very nerved up. I try not to be a total pain for the rest of the crew, but there's always something, things that are a little different all the time that you weren't really expecting. You're always playing it by ear."

Wall and his 12-person crew will have done as much advance work as possible before Saturday, but most of the finished product comes down to what happens in the 12-hour window after the winner crosses the finish line.

"The nightmare that always lives in the back of my head is if one of the main cameras goes down during the race," Wall said. "It's such a short race, and 90 percent of the race is shot on the motorcycles. If the main camera shooting the leaders goes down, I have no way to fix it before the event's over."

Rich Becker, the WXXA sports director, will be the show's host, working with Jim O'Brien, a longtime running analyst who writes for Wingfoot magazine. Becker is no rookie at half-hour productions, given his station's high school sports and auto racing shows as well as occasional specials, but this one presents its own challenges.

"The biggest trick of all may be learning the pronunciations of a lot of the runners' names," Becker said. "You don't want to get one wrong. There are some tricky ones, especially as George (Regan, race director) has expanded the field to include elite runners from all over the world.

"There are a lot of elements that go into it that I don't even see. The graphic artists are working on this, weeks and weeks out, to make sure that the look is right. Then you bring it all here on race day and put it all together. It's like anything else, it's a process. Everybody has their job, and it all went pretty well last year, and I'm anticipating it going well this year."

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#### Sound bytes

1Here's a plea to the plethora of announcers at the French Open (on Tennis Channel, ESPN2 and NBC) that less is more. If you have nothing informative to offer, silence is golden (are you listening, Martina?). We don't need to hear your voices all the time, especially when the ball is in play. John McEnroe seems to be among the few who has grasped the concept.

2A recent agreement between Comcast and the NFL Network may offer some hope to Capital Region cable subscribers. The NFL seems to have become proactive in getting its network into more homes, even at a reduced price. With a Thanksgiving night game involving the Giants on its schedule, the network needs to find its way onto the Time Warner grid.

3ESPN Radio's new approach of offering affiliates no alternative to its NBA package forced local station WTMM (104.5 FM) into the awkward position of airing the first half of Tuesday night's Cavaliers-Magic playoff game before joining a rain-delayed start of Yankees-Rangers. There's little question that this area would rather have the baseball, but listeners who were captivated by the basketball were forced to scramble to other stations for the rest of the NBA action. Weekend's best

Today, 9 p.m.: Pro basketball, NBA playoffs, L.A. Lakers at Denver (ESPN). The two former Albany Patroons coaches running these squads have produced a series of close games that have excited fans and TV executives.

Saturday, 4 p.m.: Major league baseball, L.A. Dodgers at Chicago Cubs (Fox-23). A rare Fox "Game of the Week" that doesn't involve the Yankees, Mets or Red Sox.

Saturday, 8 p.m.: Pro hockey, Stanley Cup Finals, Pittsburgh at Detroit (NBC-13). The opening game of the best-of-7 rematch for NHL supremacy.

Sunday, 2 p.m.: NASCAR Sprint Cup, Dover 500 (Fox-23.2, TW-3). Local Fox affiliate WXXA has a telethon, but the race is on the station's digital channel and will be aired on Time Warner.

Monday, 8 p.m.: College softball, NCAA World Series championship series (ESPN2). Eight teams that convened in Oklahoma City will be pared to two for the opener of a best-of-3.

#### FREIHOFER'S RUN FOR WOMEN

When: 10:30 p.m. Saturday (same-day tape)

TV: Fox-23