

Dynamic Duos:

Franzke and Anderson bring us back to the days of "Harry and Whitey"

For many, baseball season means summer, childhood, family memories, and championships. Philadelphia is not only home to the Phillies, the Liberty Bell, cheesesteaks, and die-hard fanatics, but arguably two of the best broadcasting duos in the city's history. Almost any Phillies fan growing up in the 70s to late 90s tuned in to hear the voices of Harry Kalas and Richie Ashburn, who most love to call "Whitey." Whether you were at the Jersey shore, a family gathering, or sitting together in the living room, there was a chance their voices could be heard spilling from a television screen nearby. No one could deny their chemistry and friendship both on and off the air. Harry and Whitey were one of a kind. They were undeniably funny, engaging, and genuine. From their antics in the booth with Celebre's Pizza, where Richie would give birthday shout-outs to the "Celebre twins," "Plain and Pepperoni," and have pies delivered hastily, to memorable calls like "Swing and a long drive! There it is! Number 500! The career 500th homerun for Michael Jack Schmidt," to singing "High Hopes" after wins. While no one can replace the beloved duo, Scott Franzke and Larry Anderson certainly come close to capturing and recreating that atmosphere and comradery, reminding fans of why they love the game.

Although Phillies' baseball has since entered a new generation, the broadcasting continues to excel with radio play-by-play by Scott Franzke and Larry Anderson, or "LA" as he is usually called. Franzke joined Anderson and Phillies' broadcasting staff in 2006. After ten years of partnering together, it is evident Franzke, a Texas-native, and Anderson, a former Major League Baseball pitcher, have the same chemistry and friendship just as that of Harry and Whitey's.

At Temple University's 2016 Sports Journalism Summit, Franzke tells students he and Anderson clicked off-air right away, and it did not take long to build upon their natural chemistry. When Franzke first arrived in Philly, he was quiet, and it took him a while to feel confident in the City of Brotherly Love. But now, it is easy for him to rely on LA, and their friendship and partnership is as strong as ever.

"Sometimes I refer to him as my 'second spouse'. He's a great guy. He'll give you the shirt off his back – even the ugly ones, Franzke laughs. My kids adore him; my three-year-old twin daughters yell, 'Larry' when they see him. Sometimes I'll lose him for half inning. He will have the headset off, and will be playing with the kids. He's a big kid at heart."

Their playful, silly personalities shine through their broadcasts. Producers encourage them to go on tangents about music, apparel, family events – anything that will make people listen, and gain a sense of their personality. "The one thing we have over your phone or ESPN.com is us and our personality," Franzke chimes. While they do not stray completely from the game, both broadcasters try to have as much fun with the broadcast as they can. One aspect both duos have in common are their mastery of overcoming broadcasting challenges.

Jokingly, Franzke quips that "Larry is my biggest challenge." (He goes on to state that he is very fortunate to have him as a partner.) All jokes aside, Franzke's biggest challenge is one he and LA conquer effortlessly with their humor and ingenuity.

“The biggest challenge is when the team is having a bad game or going through a bad stretch, and you need to keep people listening and entertained. You can’t pound away at the negative, because this is an escape for people.”

There is no question that the two of them keep listeners engaged and smiling when driving, or sitting outside on a deck on a humid summer evening. Even with the Phillies’ woes and inevitable losing streaks, Franzke and LA have found moments to let the audience take it all in. Without a doubt, they have mastered the “unspoken challenge”/art of baseball: silence. As Franzke puts it:

“Baseball has all these moments when the pitcher is just standing there with the ball in his hand. It’s a very different pace. You learn how to deal with the silence. It can be really intimidating to shut up as a broadcaster. You have to be comfortable with the silence. I don’t think people want you to talk nonstop.”

It is something Harry and Richie demonstrated time after time. Both had a respect for the game. Whitey only spoke when the play demanded so, and when Harry would engage him in a conversation. Their insight and analysis held value to the broadcast.

Kalas constantly told Franzke he cannot be any other broadcaster but himself. This is just one piece of advice from Kalas that Franzke holds close to him. Kalas was the grandfather Franzke never had, full of wisdom and very giving. When asked if Harry gave Franzke lasting advice, Franzke replies:

“Harry was very adamant that you had to be yourself. In a sport like baseball, and on the radio you get exposed. You are who are, and I think the personality we [Franzke and Anderson] put forth on the air is as close to us as we can be.”

Fans and listeners certainly appreciate that sentiment. Their personalities not only complement one other, but they also allow for the audience to take in and vividly visualize the game. The best broadcasters in the sport often have their voices accompanied with some of the most memorable, cherished games in franchise history. Whitey’s “OOOOOHHH” during homeruns are unforgettable. HK’s “Philadelphia Phillies are 2008 World Champions of Baseball,” “Chase Utley, you are the man,” and “We feel your passion through and through. Philadelphia fans, I love you” forever ring in my ears. For Franzke, he recalls Eric Bruntlett’s unassisted triple play against the New York Mets, and being happy that he “called the play right.” He also remembers his first few seasons with the Phillies, and loving the heated rivalry with Mets.

“One of the reasons I loved it was because the Mets were good, and the Phillies were getting good, and it was so exciting. Fights were breaking out in stands, and passions were really running high. They were some of my most fun times outside of the playoffs. That rivalry was really, really good.”

Like Franzke, many hope that rivalry will be reborn again in the future. I remember being nine, ten years old, sitting on the carpet in my parents’ bedroom watching late night, 9th inning comeback rallies on the 27-inch screen, and listening to Harry Kalas and Chris Wheeler get excited. Or if it was a nationally-televised game, we would mute the television, and listen to Franzke and Anderson on the radio. Ultimately, the best broadcasters in business place fans in moments of time, and let them connect and reminisce about the good times and struggles. With the exception of a few, not many can compete with the ease, talent, and passion of the partnerships of Kalas and Ashburn, and Franzke and Anderson. It is rare to find these treasures, and Philadelphia has been blessed to have several. These guys are the

voices of the Phillies, and will be known as that in Philly sports history. At the Sports Journalism Summit press conference, Franzke recalls one final thing that reflects of the legacy of Harry and broadcasters in this sports town:

“The thing I took from Harry was how giving he was with his time with Phillies fans. When I first got here in 2006, the only rock star during those years was Harry Kalas. To see the way a town reacted to a broadcaster was a little surprising...He never, never said no to any fan. He really was humbled by the position he was in, and the regard he was held by these fans. He didn’t take it lightly. He didn’t take it for granted. I hopefully can live my life with the same class and respect today. For my money, it’s the best job in the world.”