



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 22, 2022

2021- 2022 Board Members

President Carol Hardison
Pres Elect William Bradley
Past Pres Jerry Coughter
Secretary Colleen Brannan
Treasurer Edwin Peacock
Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

Directors 2021-2022

Patrick Baker
Bill Bartee
Suzanne Bledsoe
Kim McMillan
Rex Reynolds
Ranjay Sarda
John zumBrunnen

Directors 2021-2023

Ann Clark
Ellison Clary
Jesse Hite
Warren Kean
Vanessa Stolen

Membership Laura Little

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Elly Clary



Abe Madkour “All About Sports”

By Rick Handford

Laura Little introduced national sports news leader Abraham (Abe) Madkour, executive editor of the *Sports Business Journal*, which is based in Charlotte. In his 20-plus years covering sports business, Madkour has earned many accolades. He shapes editorial direction and manages the entire editorial staff. Abe started as a sportswriter at the *Sports Business Daily* in 1994, and he writes weekly editorials as well as features related to management and the leadership strategies of leading industry executives. He also oversees the various conferences put on by the Sports Business Journal, including the *World Congress of Sports*, the *Forty under Forty Awards Dinner*, and the *Sports Business Awards Gala*.

Sports Business Journal founder and chairman Whitney Shaw calls Madkour “a highly respected voice in the sports business community and a trusted and valued colleague.” And he said it knowing that Madkour is a Red Sox fan!

Abe started with a brief description of his business, one of the American City Business Group units. It was started in 1998, and employs some 120 people, 75 of them here in Charlotte. In addition to the above, they publish a weekly magazine, as well as daily digital editions. They are read by the highest level in sports—commissioners of leagues, owners of teams, agents for athletes, and anyone working in sports media, sports finance, and sports investment. His products are premium and priced accordingly, \$900/year for the publications, \$895 to \$1,500 for attendance at a conference, and \$5,000 for access to their data analytics product.

He has been in Charlotte since 1998, and loves the city, describing it as “fantastic”. The city has a thriving sports business community. A group comprised of team presidents and the like, meets as the *Charlotte Sports Business Network* about once each month, Charlotte also has all its teams, ESPN, and the race teams that make it a vibrant sports town.

He then stated that he would welcome questions at any time about any sports topic, but that he would begin by talking about NASCAR. He noted that NASCAR had struggled with audience erosion for about ten years before it really got hurt by the COVID virus, but right now he would describe it as “hot”, because it has new leadership, new ideas, and new investors, notably Michael Jordan. He attracted a lot of attention when he bought the race team with Bubba Watson (finished 2nd in the latest race) as his driver. Ticket sales are up, new owners are coming on to replace the older owners, and Steve Phelps is a visionary leader now working with the France family

Moving to the NFL, he noted that the business is the best it has ever been, but the ownership situation has never been more complicated, with Dan Snyder in Washington, Stephen Ross in Miami, the team in Denver being up for sale, and with accusations of games being lost intentionally. Regardless, the game has never been more popular, ratings are beating out everything else in sports entertainment. The last TV deal was worth \$113 billion over 11 years. By way of example, David Tepper gets paid \$400 million for his share of the deal without regard to his other revenues from ticket sales, concessions, merchandise, etc., and the salary cap for the team is about \$173 million.

Abe was asked the first of many questions, this one about Roger Goodell’s salary and how it could be justified. While he agreed that the amount was ridiculous, he noted that Goodell had negotiated the TV deal discussed above, and had reached agreements with the player’s union that provided ten years of labor peace. Given that the league is a \$20-\$22 billion per year enterprise, his salary may not look all that out of line to his bosses, the owners.

Once the dam was broken, the questions flew fast and furious, and documenting them all here would be more of a task than I am willing to perform. Additionally, reading my prose does not convey Abe’s enthusiasm and depth of knowledge. So, if you want to know more about the current sports scene, topics addressed included (but were not limited to): threats to NASCAR, including electric cars and a decrease in the percentage of people driving; Charlotte’s place as a top sports city; the futures of MLB, NCAA, AAC, the PGA, and rugby; the prospects for the upcoming World Cup; the Olympics, and much more, then you need to watch the video of Abe’s presentation on the Charlotte Rotary website.

You will find that Abe is a very entertaining speaker, in the top tier of those we have seen at our club, which is high praise. Enjoy!

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/680626396>
Mr. Madkour’s introduction begins at 15:50 minutes.