

Strike force. Since plans surfaced several weeks ago for the National Football League Player's Association to form six divisional "all-star" teams that would play against each other in the event of a strike, and for Ted Turner to cover those games live on WTBS(TV) Atlanta, (BROADCASTING, Aug. 9), the NFL and team owners have been threatening to seek injunctive relief in the hopes of stopping those games from ever occurring. The strike arrived on schedule last week and the players stole the owners' thunder by filing suit first, against the NFL, the NFL Management Council and the 28 member clubs to allow players to participate in the series of planned all-star games.

The suit was filed in federal district court in Washington and seeks a declaration that the players should be free to play during "a strike which has been brought on by unfair labor practices of the league, clubs and Management Council."

Meanwhile, the Management Council, representing the league and team owners, is still threatening to file injunctions against individual players—arguing that they are under contractual obligation not to play football for any organization other than the NFL—and possibly against TBS. Dennis Curran, attorney with the NFL Management Council, said that a suit against Turner, if it is filed, would charge "tortious interference" with players under contract to the NFL. In other words, the council would charge that Turner is providing an inducement to the players to break their contracts by making a rights deal with the player's association for television coverage of the planned all-star games. And if all 18 planned games (one each on Sunday and Monday for nine weeks beginning Oct. 10) are played, TBS would end up paying the player's association about \$10 million for the coverage rights.

In addition to airing the games on WTBS(TV), TBS is working furiously to put together an ad hoc network of affiliate and independent broadcast television stations across the nation known as the Turner Network Television, to carry the games as well. At last count, about 55 stations, covering 65% of all TV households had signed on including all the major markets except New York. The going was a little tougher in signing advertisers and agencies, and as negotiations continued last week, the only known advertiser committed to TNT was Chrysler.

Each game is to carry 25 minutes of spots, with the local stations receiving seven minutes of availabilities. A 30-second spot is to cost about \$100,000.

The first game is tentatively scheduled to be played in either Dallas or Philadelphia and the following Monday night game (Oct. 11) is expected to be played at RFK Stadium in Washington.

costs are likely to be substantially reduced.

H. Weller (Jake) Keever, ABC-TV's vice president, sales, called it "difficult to say right now" what the strike's impact would be. He described last week as a time of feverish negotiations with some clients insisting only on sports programming, some going along with the substitute fare and others evaluating other opportunities. Keever reported "The Cheap Detective" sold out at \$100,000 per 30-second spot, as against \$150,000 for the equivalent time on *Monday Night Football*. On the up side, Keever claimed that a prolonged strike could tighten the market and raise rates as advertisers seek other placements.

Marv Goldsmith, ABC-TV's vice president, prime time sales proposals, added that last week it looked like about 50% of the NFL advertisers were going with the network's movies and much of the rest "responding their football money" elsewhere on ABC's lineup. He said money had moved to NCAA football and baseball, among other places.

Atorino's vision of a "minor bonanza" presumed not only program cost savings but also increased pressure on network commercial inventory in any high male audience vehicle from advertisers who would be looking to replace the lost football viewers. But, Atorino conceded, if the strike drags on, it could well prove disruptive. Once high-male-draw programs get sold out, he said, advertisers who aren't in may just disappear. "The last place Budweiser wants to be is *Laverne and Shirley*," he noted.

That thought is seconded by Al Gottes-

man of L.F. Rothschild, Unterberg, Torbin, who said, "If this lasts past October, some advertiser dollars won't be spent; the shaving cream people will just pocket the change."

The impact of a prolonged NFL strike is likely to fall much harder on radio than on TV, especially for 28 local football networks that hold the rights to broadcast home games and that had been counting heavily on audiences generated by the games during the fall Arbitron ratings period, which began yesterday in many markets. The two radio networks holding the rights to NFL games, CBS and Mutual, are offering alternatives to their advertisers.

Katz Radio, which represents 11 stations holding the rights to local football games, estimated lost revenue to each could total as high as \$600,000 if no more games are played this year. David Halberstam, manager of Katz Radio's sports division, said advertisers are generally "not accepting substitute programming" being offered by some stations for the next few weeks, but are maintaining a "wait and see" attitude toward the season as a whole.

The NFL has indicated it will make up missed games late in the season if the strike lasts only two weeks, according to Halberstam and several other industry sources. However, if it becomes apparent that the strike will last longer, Halberstam said Katz will go to its advertisers with alternative packages.

For Katz, annual billings from NFL games total about \$4 million. Insiders esti-

mated lost billings could run as high as \$200,000 each week if the strike continues.

At WTAE(AM) Pittsburgh, flagship station for the Pittsburgh Steelers, lost revenues are projected at over \$300,000 if the strike lasts throughout the season. The station has lined up four past Super Bowl games and a fifth past decisive Steelers game for rebroadcast during the next few weeks. The station's vice president-general manager, Ted Atkins, said about 50% of the advertisers, both national and local, that had purchased time for the NFL games, have agreed to sponsor the substitute this week.

At the Mutual Radio Network, a six-hour national sports call-in program has been created to fill in for the lost NFL games. Vice president for sports, John Chanin, said Friday, that all but one of the advertisers scheduled to sponsor the NFL games—Budweiser—have agreed to sponsor the substitute and two new advertisers have been lined up to replace Budweiser. Advertisers switching to the substitute are doing so at the same rates they were to have paid for the NFL game according to Joe Hildebrand, Mutual vice president, sports sales. "I don't think we'll lose any money," said Chanin, who said the network expects about 90% of its affiliates to clear the substitute.

At the CBS Radio Network, which has a four-year contract with the NFL to carry Monday night games and 17 playoff games, the impact of a prolonged strike is likely to be lessened somewhat, according to industry observers, by availabilities in the network's scheduled broadcasts of baseball playoffs and the World Series. CBS is not planning to offer substitute programming for missed NFL games, and, according to network vice president, general manager, Dick Brescia, advertisers are being offered time in the baseball schedule and CBS's regular network fare. CBS reserves about 20 minutes of advertising time per game at between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per 30-second spot. Mutual reserves about the same amount of time per game and charges between \$5,000 and \$6,000 per 30-second spot. □

The old college try

Appeals court grants stay of order outlawing TV contracts with NCAA; Oklahoma seeks delay after selling rights to next game to KOCO-TV and Katz

While the networks' pro football problems were becoming more jumbled last week (see page 31), stability, if not calm, returned to college football TV—at least momentarily.

A federal appeals court in Denver granted the National Collegiate Athletic Association a stay of the district court order declaring NCAA's network and cable TV football contracts illegal (BROADCASTING, Sept. 20). The stay reinstated the NCAA contracts held by ABC-TV, CBS-