

Nathaniel Worthen
Josh Jackson
MC 2002
Feb 6, 2026
The Industry is changing

Athlete Driven Media

Ten years ago the sports media world was dominated by Scott Van Pelt, Skip Bayless and Stephen A. Smith. Now it's dominated by Jeff Teague, Shannon Sharpe, Pat McAfee and Ryan Clark. The sports world has moved from watching ESPN all day to watching athletes' podcasts talking about the sport they played or even other sports. If I want to watch UFC content I am pulling up Daniel Cormier's youtube channel, I am not pulling up Ariel Helwani anymore. Everything I watch about sports now is from the athletes POV. I rather listen to them than Mina Kimes or Stephen A. Smiths' of the world.

Is it more interesting to me? It completely is. I want to know what happens in the locker room and behind closed doors. That's what I get from the athletes', great story telling and insight on the sport, I feel like I can trust. With athletes getting into media after their career it also gives them the chance to make money after their success. This can help a lot of athletes not go bankrupt after playing which in the end is a great thing. I always hated watching athletes be broke or becoming poor after putting their body on the line for fans.

Cons to this is the debate shows of old are outdated and not watched anymore. People who go to college for sports reporting truly are having a hard time finding out how to get to the big spotlight because those are taken up by the athletes. These athletes who are on ESPN talking have not gone to school for what they are doing and recently it has shown. The biggest one, recently was the scandal with Cam Newton reporting completely false information about a coordinator in the NFL.

Is this good for me? Absolutely not, I saw how this was going in 2020 watching McAfee and changed from sports broadcaster to wanting to do Public Relations for sports. There is a lot of money in that profession and I think there will be for a long time. If athletes take the PR position too I think many people will stop going to college to cover sports.