

Brokaw, Couric take anchor seats of NBC's 'Now'

By DAN RICE

Last April, NBC announced the development of its new prime-time news magazine, "NBC Prime Story," with co-anchors Fred Francis, Faith Daniels and Mike Schneider and executive producer Steve Friedman. In the interim months, the peacock network decided brighter plumage was needed for its news magazine, so the brass refitted the program with a more happening name and called upon the news division's credible king and perky queen. "Now With Tom Brokaw and Katie Couric" premieres Wednesday, Aug. 18.

National-security reporter Francis has been retained as one of the program's six correspondents; Mike Boettcher, Noah Nelson, Chris Hansen, Dana Adams and Elizabeth Vargas round out the staff. The post of executive producer has been refilled as well, with Friedman swapping jobs with the much younger Jeff Zucker, head honcho of "The Today Show." Speaking for "Now," Zucker acknowledges the drawing power of Brokaw and Couric.

"I think the fact that Tom's doing (NBC's "Nightly News") and Katie is on "The Today Show" will benefit

all of us," Zucker says. "Certainly Tom's ability to reach an audience every night will help draw people to this program. Katie's got the same thing on "The Today Show." But Zucker adds that each would bring "incredible credibility" to "Now" without their affiliation to the other shows.

Brokaw, who will keep his anchor seat on "Nightly News" and continue with an occasional edition of "Tom Brokaw Reports," views the news magazine's reassignments with the candid realism of a veteran reporter.

"The fact is that if you're looking at launching a new program," Brokaw says, "you want to put the strongest people that you have in front of that program."

Brokaw says the format of "Now," which includes both live and filmed reports, promises to distinguish the program from other news magazines.

"I do think that we can bring to the format now something that is a little more responsive than the magazine programs that are out there at the same time," Brokaw says. "One of the things that I think has happened, not just in our business but in the print medium as

well, is that we're all kind of circling the same issues and the same topics. We'd like to be able to establish a pattern where we can bring things to the attention of people in the rest of the country that may be happening regionally."

Since his career breakthrough covering the Watergate scandal, Brokaw has seen first-hand much of the evolution of television news coverage, and he has his own ideas about its future.

"My great dream," says Brokaw, "is that some day we'll have a one-hour nightly newscast. That would be, I think, a cherished hope of everybody in all the news divisions in all the networks. That, at some point, you could have a nightly program, 10:00 to 11:00 (Eastern), 9:00 to 10:00, whatever, that would be a combination of that day's news and other feature reporting. But that is an evolutionary process."

"What is heartening about what's been going on this summer is that people are watching news-magazine programs. And if the success of these news magazines moves us in that direction, all the better."

STAR NOTES

Greenspan chronicles drama of Olympics

BY JOHN CROOK

Bud Greenspan, the acclaimed documentary sports filmmaker and historian, focuses on the human drama of athletics in "Barcelona '92: 16 Days of Glory," premiering Sunday, Aug. 15, on the Disney Channel. This special differs from Greenspan's coverage of the 1984 Olympic Summer Games in Los Angeles, and both the Winter and Summer games in 1988, in that it is on video, not film — the result of a Barcelona mandate. Greenspan admits he was not happy having to settle for a video feed, adding that he would never do that again. Viewers won't mind, though; this is a very emotional, dramatic film, and Disney subscribers won't want to miss it.

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