

A funny thing happened at media day for the Mavs this year. The players were excited as could be. Most of the media was fired up about the Mavs getting back on the court. But there was a segment of the media that wasn't quite as excited as the rest.

The print media guys there looked like they were worn out. Anyone who follows the business of media knows there are changes a plenty happening at Newspapers across the country. Our local paper, The Dallas Morning News offered early retirement packages across the board and the sports department had some takers. That's probably good for them, but what about the rest of the news staff and the topics they cover ?

Of course the news, sports or otherwise, knows no boundaries. There may be fewer people in the newsroom but the same number of games, events and what have you are still being played and presented. The guys who work in print who cover the Mavs didn't say so, and this may be my prejudices coming through, but the look on the faces of several from the Morning News seemed to reflect that trying to cover the Mavs along with their other responsibilities was going to make things difficult on them.

Sports teams have always had a love hate relationship with the media. We both need each other to prosper. Sometimes we are all on the same page and it's love and kisses. Sometimes we are not, and it's glares and turned backs. But somehow we have managed to carry on, knowing that there were always readers out there that we both wanted as customers that would somehow push us towards the middle.

I'm the first to admit that I pushed, prodded and made every attempt to game the media to try to present the Mavs and our players in the best possible light. I am the protector of the Mavs brand, and the person responsible for making sure our fans and customers get what they need to stay fans and customers. This year, for the first time, I'm going to have to make adjustments in how I deal with local (emphasis on local) media members. Particularly from the local newspapers.

It was no accident that Mike Monroe of the San Antonio Paper was at our media rather than following the Spurs in Europe. Dallas is a cheap trip. France is not. Dallas hotels can run under 50 bucks, French hotelrooms with bathrooms and phones do not.

I, along with owners of every other sports team, other than maybe NFL owners, are going to have to recognize that we no longer have the full attention of our beatwriters and the columnist who focuses on our sport.

They may also be covering high school lacrosse or field hockey or college football with a quick jaunt to pick up a quote from the girl who set the Texas State 100 yard dash record this week. They may be asked to go interview the ex girlfriend of Terrell Owens former barber to see if she has any good scoop on why TO changed his hair style after the big Eagles game. (Did I just regress into an old habit....oops :).

Money plays for newspapers these days. I have to recognize it and try to make the lives of the writers who follow the Mavs a little easier and the paths to information a little wider. I have to make sure that we make it as inexpensive as possible to cover the Mavs. Maybe it's time they change their rule of not flying on the team plane.

I want as much coverage of the Mavs as possible. I know all sports teams are going to have to work harder to get it.

Now about those media consultants who are trying to convince newspapers what sports they should cover and how much coverage should be given to each. Should I be nice to them as well ?

I guess I will ask my new best friends at the paper.