

# ANY GIVEN MONDAY

## ESPN's SUZY KOLBER: Spotlight on the Sidelines

By Carmen Elizabeth Greger



Philadelphia, PA - Friday, August 25, 2006 -- Monday Night Football -- Pre-season NFL, Pittsburgh Steelers at Philadelphia Eagles -- Sideline Reporter Suzy Kolber chats with Eagles Quarterback Donovan McNabb  
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### A Football Fantasy:

**O**nce upon a time, in a land not so far away, on the 14th day of May in 1964, a beautiful baby girl was born with football in her blood. Ballet was not an option and neither were gymnastics or cheerleading. But rather- FOOTBALL! To this day, she virtually goes down in the NFL's 'Football Hall of Fame', as she lives to tell the tale of her football fantasy come true.

When it leaked that Suzy Kolber was to be our next Celebrity Feature, I was suddenly inundated with inquiries from gossip seekers attempting to disguise their nosiness as innocent, non-judgmental, "just curious" questions about this "woman in a man's world".

Dispelling Andy Rooney's stale, shallow and sorry to say, but down-right stupid statement regarding Suzy's prominent presence in the sport, "A woman has no business being down there trying to make a comment about a football game," Suzy is a pioneer with a solid presence. She has successfully joined the ranks of women to morph society's expectations of a female's role in the sport. Yes, the door is now permanently open for women in football beyond the vocation of "cheerleader". Sure, she's definitely an attractive woman who's got a sweet element of pom-pom perkiness, but both her role and her style go way beyond sideline eye-candy. She's

rapidly gaining yardage as one of the nation's most well respected sportscasters.

Suzy is thorough, dynamic, persistent and uncompromising. She's a true professional. She respects her subjects, does her homework, and shows up beyond prepared, no corners cut. Male or female, Suzy was bound to be a success because as a person, this is simply her M.O. To Suzy, NFL sideline reporting is not a "guy thing, or a girl thing", but rather a "do-your-job-the-best-it-can-be-done-thing". I, along with her many loyal viewers, salute her for that. She's a serious, insightful sports reporter, whose head, heart and soul are truly "in the game". She's legit. Suzy is undoubtedly a natural, thriving as "just one of the guys" in her NFL environment in HER domain.

Presently, to most, Suzy Kolber has proven to be a very classy “broad” (caster). The guys (viewers, players and colleagues alike) after seeing her in action, are without doubt, taking to her quite well. She is up to the challenge of balancing a jam-packed family life with her well-earned, solid and distinguished ESPN/NFL presence. With her undying passion, disciplined drive and impressive track record, there's no doubt, Suzy can and will tackle it all, hands down.

**PF: How did your passion for sports originate?**

**SK:** Being connected to sports, just being on the field, playing the game (whatever that game was) and watching the events with my family. Since I was a little kid, it's all I can remember. We always had tickets to Philly's Big Four, the Eagles, the Sixers, the Phillies and the Flyers, and our vacations were active and as a family. We'd play tennis and water-ski. It was always so much fun; it was just what life was all about.

**PF: So, which sports did you excel in as a kid?**

**SK:** In school, tennis basketball and track, plus softball.

**PF: Why didn't you take your sport's talent further?**

**SK:** At the time, there weren't many opportunities for girls. You couldn't look ahead and say, "Wow there's the WNBA!" I loved team sports and really, what was there at the time for women? Golf wasn't even as big and it wasn't something about which I was really passionate. I play it now, but I don't love it. So I played tennis and I liked it but I didn't love it enough to dedicate myself to it. Options were very limited for women. If I had had the choice, I may have done basketball. Perhaps then I would have tried to do things a little bit differently.

**PF: Did you ever consider a field other than broadcasting/telecommunications?**

**SK:** Well, the motivation wasn't so much about “it's TV” to me; the motivation was to be around sports. It started with an internship when I was in college during the summer of my junior year at what was then the CBS affiliate in Miami. I was logging the Stanley Cup finals and there was a lot of heavy equipment to carry. I was working with the guys, at sporting events and it all started to click, like, "Wow! This could work." Really, the initial stages of my career were entirely behind the scenes. I was a producer. It was all just a matter of being around sports and being a part of it.

**PF: As a little girl in love with football, how did it feel to play on a boys' football team?**

**SK:** It was difficult because all I really knew was it was a passion and a love. Football was something I wanted to be a part of, but there was a lot of resistance. It wasn't from the little boys, it was the parents. Today it would be an acceptable thing. At the time it was unheard of, so it became, instead of something that could have just been fun for a little kid, this stressful news-making event. I didn't want publicity; I just wanted to play football.

**PF: Well, every effect has a cause, perhaps sub-consciously, you're that little girl on the field all suited up for game-day finally getting the praise**

**rather than the resistance from the little boys' parents. So, why do you think the parents had such an issue?**

**SK:** I think people are always afraid of change. They're afraid of something different.

**PF: It wasn't that they were afraid that their little boy would be responsible for possibly hurting the little girl on the field?**

**SK:** No and then the funny thing is that I'm this ten-year-old little girl and I was stronger than the boys!

**PF: Ha ha! Go figure.**

**PF: Do you regret eventually discontinuing?**

**SK:** No, because at the time the fight wore me out and I had to go to school with all those little boys and they wanted to shut the team down. I wasn't going to take everybody's fun away from them to fight the fight. By the end of the summer I was worn out from it. I was a little kid. I got to live out the football dream in another way, though, didn't I? I have a more up close and personal view than most people.

**PF: Yeah, you never gave up!**

**SK:** No, I definitely didn't. It was just in my blood and was never going to leave.

**PF: But don't you ever feel like you're on the wrong side of the sidelines?**

**SK:** It would be fun to be the super bowl winning QB!

**PF: Then, should there be a women's NFL league?**

**SK:** I don't really think so; there's not enough interest. There are women's professional football leagues, but in terms of “national”, no. It's tough enough to have success in women's professional soccer, and there's a much larger pool from which to draw. So no, I don't see that as a reality.

**PF: I enjoyed your response to an interviewer's question regarding the differences between the amount of respect men and women get in the sports broadcasting field. You said, "If you command respect, you'll get respect and if you come prepared and know what you're talking about, then no one's criticism of you has validity. There's no room for mistakes (especially being a woman)." But you, as a perfectionist and as your own toughest critic, would have that as your M.O. regardless of your gender. Can you elaborate on that?**

**SK:** I can honestly say that I've never had a negative experience or was treated any differently because I was a woman. I've never had a moment of disrespect. I think all anybody wants is someone to respect them and be knowledgeable about their sport and what they're doing; whether it's a man or a woman it doesn't matter. If that's how you approach it, then you'll receive the same respect

back. Many of the other women I work with have shared the same experience. They've never had an issue or come up against something where they felt disrespect because they were a woman.

**PF: Who is your greatest professional role model?**

**SK:** There was a time when I was watching Robin Roberts, on Sports Center, and she had an awesome presence about her. Robin had played sports in college and you could just feel it. It was so natural. I connected with that.

**PF: So, what's your feeling on the chemistry of your new MNF crew?**

**SK:** It's a work in progress.

**PF: You're on the sidelines now, is that where you want to stay?**

**SK:** Yes. Definitely.

**PF: Who is the most effective NFL coach in your opinion?**

**SK:** Everybody has people they admire and to whom they enjoy listening to. I've always felt that way about just sitting in a room listening to Mike Holmgren. There is his Super Bowl background and incredible coaching tree; you can look at all the guys who used to coach with him and have gone on to their own success, and the way he cares about his players and his knowledge of the game. It's all those ingredients that make me really enjoy sitting in the room with him. But quite frankly, you'd be hard pressed to find any of these guys that you don't really enjoy and admire. That's what's so great. When they walk into the room and they have this totally unique presence of an NFL head coach.

**PF: And Player?**

**SK:** Well, one of the best player interviews is Ray Lewis. In terms of leadership and presence, he's got it. NFL Coach Brian Billick, who wrote a book on leadership, calls Ray, "The greatest natural leader I've ever seen. He says things with such conviction that no matter what it is, you believe him. He's just got a thoughtful way of expressing himself."

**PF: The greatest city NFL broadcasting has ever taken you and why?**

**SK:** Oh, there's so many... hah!

**PF: What do you do to stay in such great shape? Give us an average week of fitness/wellness based activities that you indulge in and an idea on how you fit your fitness into your busy schedule.**

**SK:** I work out five days a week and a lot of it is done on the road. The challenge of being on the road also helps. Each trip is different and each hotel is a little bit different so it forces you to cross-train, to do different things. A lot of times we'll seek out a great gym in a given city if the hotel is lacking.

It's what keeps me sane. The season is a test of endurance and I really couldn't make it through without being fit and eating well

and working out. I typically try to do something on game day after all the information is gathered and pulled all together. For me, the best way to retain it all, is to jump on the bike or the elliptical and sort through everything in my mind.

**PF: Are you a yogi?**

**SK:** No, Pilates. Die-Hard. I lock that in each week and I've only missed my appointment twice in two years.

**PF: Impressive; just another sign of your very mature sense of discipline.**

**SK:** Thanks. I do love it, though.

**PF: Give us a day of your food intake?**

**SK:** 99% of the time, I have a protein shake in the morning with natural protein and soy milk and maybe a little peanut butter. I can't not have breakfast. There might be an egg-white omelet in there if I'm on the road. Lunch the last couple of days was the same thing: chicken and shrimp on a Caesar salad with no Caesar dressing, just a little oil and vinegar. I'll have some kind of really good fish or pasta for dinner. I don't eat red meat.

**PF: No, either do I. What about sweets, are you into them, or no?**

**SK:** Uh, yes...LOVE THEM! Pretty much, you can't be sweet enough! I don't go crazy with it, though. I love dessert and ice cream, but I don't indulge all that much. If I'm in the mood for it, I have it. Typically, when we have our "one great night" on the road, I don't even think about it. I treat myself. When I'm home, I'm usually very tame with all that.

**PF: Many individuals inexperienced with on-air and behind-the-scenes television feel that TV is glamorous. Can you dispel this myth for us?**

**SK:** Yeah, if you could see any of us on a Tuesday after a game, when we've had absolutely no sleep and we're whipped from the weekend, not a pleasant sight. We call it "Comatose Tuesday", because there's nothing left. We get up for our six o'clock flight and everybody looks like crap and you drag yourself home. You get the picture. The behind the scenes stuff is definitely endless hours of work and sacrifice, with the payoff being that you get to do something that is an adrenaline rush and fun and



exciting. There is nothing glamorous about it. It's time away, a lot of time on the road, and it's a ton of hard work.

**PF: You have said that having a family and kids are a big part of your life's goals. Are you currently involved in a relationship that could lead to this?**

**SK:** I'm definitely at an encouraging point.

**PF: When you do have kids, will you take time off to be with the kids, take them on the road with you, or do you not know yet?**

**SK:** I don't know. We'll have to figure that all out when the time comes.

**PF: If you have a daughter who expresses serious interest in following a path that would lead to her playing in the NFL, would you encourage her? Why or why not and what supportive advice would you offer her?**

**SK:** I would encourage her to do whatever she wants to do.

**PF: Describe your optimal off-season Sunday.**

**SK:** It would be exhausting ourselves doing something outdoors and really physical like a great hike or bike (road or mountain), burning a ton of calories and having fun doing it and then having an awesome dinner.

**PF: What was the highlight of your college career?**

**SK:** A combination of things: I was at the University of Miami and I had the perfect mix of having a great time and great friendships. I still consider it home, and I graduated with a 4.0 only then to wind up stepping into a great career.

**PF: What do you look forward to most in the years to come?**

**SK:** Overall balance.

**PF: What is your personal life mantra?**

**SK:** Work hard. Play hard.

**PF: Best advice you've ever been given?**

**SK:** We're meeting with Brian Dawkins and he says to us, "There's this 'new thing' I just heard, 'You can't drive looking in the rear view mirror, cuz you'll crash into something!'"

**PF: Describe your best friend.**

**SK:** My Mother.

**PF: My mother has seriously become my best friend too.**

**SK:** Yup, I'm sure. It's a tradition in my family. That's how my Mother's relationship was with my Grandmother. We're all very close.

**PF: What is your dream retirement? Where will you be living, who will you be with, and what**

**will you be doing?**

**SK:** I would live in a place with a combination of the beach and the mountains. It would include a lot of travel and enjoying my family.

**PF: If you were to write a book whose title captured the truest gist of who you are, what would it be called?**

**SK:** PASSION

**PF: Please elaborate on your take of the sports/confidence connection.**

**SK:** I definitely agree that all kids should be involved in sports; especially little girls. It's about developing strength and confidence and teamwork and it's empowering and it absolutely gives you the skills for the rest of your life.

**PF: Ok, drum-roll please... your picks for this year's Super Bowl?**

**SK:** Baltimore / Seattle



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