

# Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper the nature of disagreement in sports talk radio is examined. It is a widely held notion that talk radio in general is an argumentative and disputatious, if not hostile, forum in which people exchange ideas. Using the research methods of conversation analysis, an initial study of disagreement in sports talk radio appears to support that idea—meaning that disagreements are made without the mollifying techniques ordinarily used in face-to-face talk. However, looking at those disagreements more closely reveals that they tend *not* to devolve into confrontation on sports talk radio programs. This paper focuses on the methods employed by both callers and hosts to achieve this feat and thus demonstrates that the stereotype of talk radio being confrontational and hostile does not apply to the specific genre of sports talk radio.

## INTRODUCTION

Call-in talk radio programs are renowned for the confrontational tone of the interaction between hosts and callers. This belief is so pervasive in our society that it has reached the level of becoming a punch line, as is seen in a recent Doonesbury comic strip which featured one radio host telling another, "Whoa..., don't agree, it's talk radio" (Trudeau, 2002). Conversation analysts have also noted the propensity for confrontation on talk radio, most notably Hutchby (1996), who found that talk radio programs are "structured to promote a certain type of argument and confrontation" (p. 6). I myself shared this view prior to undertaking this research – in fact, the possibility of analyzing confrontational dialogue is what initially drew me to this area of study. However, the reputation for 'confrontation' does not stand up under scrutiny when one is considering the specific genre of sports talk radio. An analysis of talk from this newer<sup>2</sup> but rapidly growing genre of talk radio shows that it does not deserve the *confrontational* and *aggressive* labels that are commonly applied to its political and general topic counterparts.

Simple disagreements, though, are commonplace, and the first step of analysis of data from sports talk radio showed that straightforward disagreement was not dispreferred. This

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<sup>2</sup> The first 24 hour sports talk radio station (the one from which the data for this study was collected) went on the air in 1987 in New York; since then dozens of stations around the nation have copied the format, and in the New York area a second 24-hour sports talk radio station began broadcasting in the fall of 2001 ("About sports radio 66 WFAN", 2001).

would seem to jibe with the belief that talk radio (including sports talk radio) is indeed more confrontational than everyday talk, i.e., disagreement is so common it is organized according to different rules that do not call for the prefacing and weakening strategies that are used in everyday talk. In other words, the stereotype is true. However, further analysis of the data showed that this lack of dispreference for disagreement did not lead to expanding antagonistic talk. And therein lies the paradox of sports talk radio: disagreements are bluntly stated, but at the same time, through a variety of strategies, conversations are managed by the participants to avoid the eruption of antagonistic or aggravated confrontation.

## METHODS

Using the methods of conversation analysis, roughly 75 minutes of phone calls made to three different sports talk programs, denoted here as programs A, B, and C, were randomly recorded and then transcribed in detail. All three programs air on the 24-hour sports radio station, 66 WFAN (660 AM). About 20 minutes of calls were collected in June and July 2001 and an additional 55 minutes of calls were collected in January 2002. Altogether 26 phone calls were transcribed and analyzed. The transcription notation methods used were those originally developed by Jefferson, as abridged by Ten Have (1999) (included here in Appendix A).

All of the callers and all but one of the hosts were male. Of the three programs that were recorded, two used a team of two hosts and one had a solo host. The one female host was paired with a male host (H2 in Program A) and some of the calls were recorded on days when Program C was hosted by just one member of the pair.

In accordance with the tenets of conversation analysis, and as articulated by Psathas's (1995) phrase "unmotivated looking" (p. 45), I approached this data without any goals in mind. Despite vague prejudices mentioned above concerning the confrontational nature of talk radio, no preconceived hypotheses about the exact nature of confrontation (or lack thereof) existed prior to analysis of the data. An initial study of the data revealed the lack of dispreference for disagreement, and further investigation revealed the lack of confrontation.

Before turning to my data, a clarification of the terms *argument* and *confrontation* should be made. Hutchby (1996) makes a useful distinction between argument/discussion and confrontation. He classifies the former as *mitigated opposition* and the latter as *aggravated opposition*, and states that the difference between the two can be "traced in the ways that oppositional moves are constructed to highlight rather than downplay, their oppositional character" (p. 25). Adapting Hutchby's definition, for the purposes of this analysis, I consider confrontation to be talk where opposition is highlighted, and argument to be talk where opposition is downplayed. In my conception of confrontation I would also include Dersley and Wootton's (2000) description of antagonistic talk as that which is comprised of some elements of the following: explicit rejection, denial, escalation of complained of action, ridicule and sarcasm. Simple disagreement does not equate with confrontation, though it is often a precursor to it. I will now turn to a sample of some of the disputatious calls that I collected that will demonstrate various ways that disagreement was managed so as to not evolve into confrontation.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

Upon examining my data I noticed that the preference for agreement in the calls was operating according to rules different from those discussed by Sacks (1987), Kotthoff (1993) and Pomerantz (1984). Sacks (1987) demonstrated that there was a preference for agreement in conversation. This preference was displayed through the tendency of participants in conversation to: respond affirmatively to either/or questions, restructure questions for an affirmative response when a forthcoming negative response was sensed, agree with some components of a question even if they cannot (for factual reasons) respond affirmatively to the overall inquiry, and finally, modify disagreements.

Kotthoff (1993) and Pomerantz (1984) expanded upon Sacks' findings on agreement. Kotthoff (1993) focused on disputes, and found that within disputes there often is a preference for disagreement. She wrote that "opponents are expected to defend their positions" (p. 193) rather than agree. This accords with Pomerantz's assertion that "agreement is not invariably – across all initial assessments – next preferred action" (p. 64), such as with self-deprecating remarks, etc. Thus according to Kotthoff, in antagonistic conversation each participant is expected to continue to assert their position until, through the use of other indicators, they can show that they accept that their position is the weaker one and then concede. Early concession is also not satisfactory to most disputants and when it occurs, their turns are often marked by repetition of their argument rather than a sign that the dispute has ended.

Moving away from disputes and looking back at *normal* conversation, in Pomerantz's (1984) study of the preferred/dispreferred aspect of turns, she found that when disagreements are made in situations where agreement is preferred, turns are marked by prefacing, delaying and the offering of weak agreement before the disagreeing component is made apparent. So it is rare to find participants in a conversation offering their disagreements in an up-front and open manner in non-antagonistic speech.

It is my opinion that in the data I compiled the turns where disagreement occurs, there is something different happening that has not been covered by Sacks', Pomerantz's or Kotthoff's treatments of disagreement. In this data we will see that disagreeing turns are proffered with virtually no delay, a minimum of prefacing and with little weakening or softening of the participants' manner of indicating that they disagree.

In segment 1 of the following call<sup>3</sup> this phenomena is very clear:

[1] June 2001, Program A

1           C:        =But they are the same ↑team, they're the same ↑team  
 2                    with the exception of Hampton, who went oh and six last  
 3                    year, everybody didn't- [nobody's talking about that.]  
 4        → H1:        [No Hampton did not go °oh ]  
 5                    and six°. You're wrong.=  
 6           C:        =He lost his first six decisions.=  
 7        → H1:        =No you're wrong.  
 8           C:        The Mets lost their first six games he  
 9                    [pitched.  
 10          H1:        [ ((whining)) No:: ]

<sup>3</sup> Full transcripts of all calls that are excerpted are included in Appendix B.

11                   He was like two and ↑four out of his first six. He  
 12           →        didn't start off well >but he wasn't oh and six. You're  
 13           →        just wrong.<  
 14           C:        Okay I might be wrong about that. You're right, but he  
 15                   did not start off well.

In this segment Host 1 (H1) does not allow the caller (C) to finish his turn before he interrupts him in line 4 to show that he believes that C has made a misstatement. He initially shows his disagreement in a very obvious way, by starting his turn in line 4 with a “no.” He then proceeds to negate C's statement before again telling C that he is “wrong.” He repeats the “you're wrong” statement in lines 7 and 12-13 when C does not recant his position. In this sequence of talk H1 has offered his disagreement in the bluntest and most terse terms possible: by saying “no” and “you're wrong.” And notably, he did not feel the need to delay, preface or weaken his disagreement.

C's reaction is also of interest here. When his statement of fact is contradicted by H1, he initially defends his point before capitulating with his turn in lines 13 and 14 where he admits he “might” be wrong and that H1 is “right,” though he does stick by a weakened version of his original statement – the baseball player in question “did not start out well” as opposed to his losing his first six games. This weakening is acceptable to H1 – he terms it “fair” as he expands upon C's turn in lines 5 and 6 below:

[2] June 2001, Program A

1                   C:        Okay I might be wrong about that. You're right, but he  
 2                   did not start off well.  
 3                   [Appier, I think Appier is start- ]  
 4           H1:        [No. He he struggled ] He  
 5           →        struggled during April, that's fai:r. But he turned it  
 6                   around a:nd a:nd  
 7           →        C:        [He absolutely did.]  
 8           H1:        [he was coming off ] a twenty-three win season with a  
 9                   phenomenal e.r.a. Appier was coming off a fifteen-win  
 10                   season with a better team than the Astros were that  
 11                   >↑Hampton was coming off< and with a ↓fatter e.r.a.  
 12                   coming over from the ↓American league...((hosts  
 13                   continue discussing the subject))

To this turn, C is again extremely agreeable (in what will be his last turn) as he “absolutely” confirms H1's prior comment. Another interesting aspect of this call was that it began with a very disputatious response by H1 to C's first turn:

[3] June 2001, Program A

1                   C:        ...I'm uh getting rea:lly disgusted about all these (.)  
 2                   supposedly Met- uh Met fans calling up an- and saying  
 3                   that they're big Met fans and (hh)(.) How can they be  
 4                   giving up on these guys so early? I understand that  
 5                   they're 12 games back, 13, whatever it ↓is, but this a  
 6                   team that, they ↑can win they can put together a  
 7                   winning streak they can put together six games at a

Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

8 time, ten, ↑Phillies are not gonna stand up in that  
9 division.  
10 H1: owhh:::  
11 C: don't [care what anybody says]  
12 → H1: [WRITE THIS DOWN!]  
13 C1: [they're a good young team but- ]  
14 → H1: [WRITE THIS DOWN! ] June 1st you counted  
15 the Phillies out (.) but you give the Mets a sho:t (.)  
16 and the Phillies are only 13 games ahead  
17 [of the Mets >at] this point<  
18 C: [They're a good,] they're a good young team, they are,  
19 but it takes more than just [a good young] team to win.  
20 H2: [↑Hey Billy,] Billy↓,  
21 lemme let me ask you this, what have you see:n this  
22 season, for↑get about last season, what have you ↑seen  
23 this season that leads you to believe that this team  
24 can go on a ten-game winning >streak or they can do<  
25 that forty and fifteen that they [did] a couple of=  
26 C1: [Abs-]  
27 H2: =>years ago.< [(hh)what-]  
28 C1: [Absolutely,] absolutely nothing.  
29 Absolutely not [hing.]  
30 H1: [Well] then where's the rub.=

C's first turn, which began as an expression of the depth of his "disgust" at his fellow fans and his disparagement of another team, was met by a turn from H1 in line 12 (and repeated in line 14) that borders on derision – the statement by C is seen to be so outlandish that a record of it ought to be made so that it can be revisited later. Derision would seem to fit the definition of confrontation described above, but C does not interpret these derisive comments as an invitation to confrontation. He simply continues to state his opinion in lines 13 and 18-19. But it is not an opinion that he can support, which gives us a clue as to perhaps why he does not get drawn into confrontation: he knows he does not have enough factual information to back it up, as is clear from his response to H2's query in lines 20-25. He has "absolutely nothing" factual to support his assertion.

So despite the somewhat acrimonious tone of H1 during this call, confrontation does not occur. Reasons for this are C's deference to the hosts' opinions – in fact many callers concede quickly, which is contrary to the description of antagonistic talk provided by Kotthoff (1993). Another possibility that needs to be considered is what Hutchby (1996) describes as the ability of hosts to terminate calls unilaterally. In other words, the hosts can choose to end a call at any time, and in so doing, avoid a possible confrontation. However, the context in which Hutchby (1996) describes this aspect of talk radio was to demonstrate how hosts use this method to "highlight and even preserve the argumentative, even confrontational nature of interaction within calls" (p. 15). The use of unilateral termination that I became interested in was its employment as a tool to *avoid* confrontation. I do not believe that this was the case in the call above, as C did little to support his first assertion, rescinded his second assertion and was speaking in an acquiescent manner during his last turn before his call was terminated. But the use of unilateral termination to avoid a confrontation was displayed in other calls, as is seen in the call excerpted in segments 4 and 5 below:

[4] June 2001, Program B

1 C: ...But if you got Vladimir Guerrero- the great(hh)est  
 2 player I think I've ever seen, and stuck him at number  
 3 three in the lineup >and put him in the outfield< .hhh  
 4 I bet everything on the Mets would just go ↑nice and  
 5 smoothly >it would look like we had good pitchers that  
 6 gave up four runs a game because we'd score five and  
 7 ↑six.< What do ↑you think about Vladimir.  
 8 H: Other than smoothing over a potential problem with  
 9 Vladimir and Turk Wendell, obviously I'd love to see  
 10 that guy in the Mets lineup. [I  
 11 → C: Wouldn't it be amazing?  
 12 He would make every single person there look better=  
 13 → H: =They do not ha:ve (.) the things necessary to get  
 14 Vladimir Guerrero.  
 15 C: [How so] ?  
 16 H: [What ] Montreal would want is young talent that wi:ll  
 17 guaranteed develop over time, and that will not cost  
 18 them money. [The Mets don't have those players]  
 19 → C: [But (you) just think about Mon]tre↑al,  
 20 once they get people they get rid of them ↑anyway.  
 21 → H: Well they do but that's their cycle.

In this segment, C opens with an extended turn in which he puts forth an opinion, and then offers it up for scrutiny by H with a closing question in line 7. H responds by making a preliminary statement which C misinterprets as agreement, becoming so enthused by H's apparent acceptance of his suggestion that he makes an unmarked next turn overlap in line 11 which temporarily delays H's full opinion of C's suggestion. So here H did begin to preface his disagreement to a certain degree, by finding something in what C said to be agreeable (i.e., the idea of Vladimir as a Met). But when C misinterprets this prefacing move, the disagreement is then enacted in a very direct manner in a latched response by H in line 13, as he flatly states that C's proposal is not possible. C again overlaps H's speech as he demands an explanation just as H was embarking on one (lines 15-16).

In line 19 C again asserts his argument with overlapping speech by making a statement that H can partially agree to as fact. But as we see in segment 5 below, despite finding the common ground of agreeing on Montreal's *cycle* of not having the money to re-sign quality players, C does not retreat from supporting the validity of his original proposal, doing so in an increasingly confrontational manner:

[5] June 2001, Program B

1 H: ...So the Mets: I think would probably be out of the  
 2 mix there. There's so many other teams that have young  
 3 talent that (.) cannot crack at the major league level  
 4 right now becaus:e the incumbents are too good to get  
 5 rid o:f:  
 6 H: [The Mets ↑aren't one of those ↑teams.]  
 7 → C: [What if we gave them money? ]What if we gave  
 8 → them m-, I mean I'm telling you that the Mets need to  
 9 do anything they can to get a player like Guerrero.

Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

10           ↑They ↑should, they cou- they could give up literally  
 11       →       anybody and MONEy and money if if if Montreal wants  
 12       →       money give em ↑money!  
 13       H:       I don't think they'll trade him in the division that's  
 14       just my personal viewpoint no:w (.) ya know if Montreal  
 15       (.) is desperate enough to make something happen (.) I  
 16       don't think they can get rid of ↑Guerrero. ((Caller  
 17       does not have another turn; host continues with  
 18       extended turn further discussing the issue))

In line 7 above C not only interrupts and overlaps H, but "talks past" him (the phenomena of two speakers continuing to talk at the same time for more than four or five syllables), which is one of the signs of antagonistic argument discussed by Dersley and Wootton (2000). But H allows him to do so, and allows him to make an extended turn in which he speaks animatedly about how his proposal can be carried out by simply giving Montreal money (repeating "money" four times in lines 11 and 12). C uses the confrontational semantic formula "I'm telling you" in line 8 to emphasize his point. But this is his last turn, and he is not allowed to continue an argument that he has shown that he is not willing to give up. The call is terminated shortly after line 12 (as is indicated by pauses in H's turn in lines 14 and 15 which are not acted upon by the argumentative caller), and H proceeds to make a leisurely closing statement on the issue. H could have continued to engage C in argument, but for some reason, possibly sensing the intractability of C, decided not to, and used his power as host to end the call and to not continue an argument that could escalate into confrontation.

The call excerpted in segments 4 and 5 was one of the more antagonistic in my data set, and yet it still did not *degenerate* into confrontation. The following segment is more typical of the evolution that calls that involved disagreement took:

[6] January 2002, Program C

1           C:       Umm I have two quick points to get to the first- uh  
 2           first I don't like the Jets this weekend because I have  
 3           a hard time seeing them get two basically garbage  
 4           touchdowns. .hh uh  
 5           I mean one I- ya know I mean one was a forty yard  
 6           screen and then the other aw- [and (ya know)] and then  
 7       → H2:       [Don't-  
 8           C:       the other off the punt.  
 9       → H2:       Jesse can [I just (point out) one mistake] you're  
 10       H1:       [Don't read too much into it.]  
 11       H2:       making?  
 12       → C:       Sure.  
 13       H2:       You're analyzing the entire game off y- last week's  
 14       game. Do not do that.  
 15       → C:       Okay.  
 16       H2:       Because the game will not unfold the same way way  
 17       either way and if you just use the EXACT game to  
 18       analyze off you gotta analyze them more on what their  
 19       tendencies a:re and what their strengths and weaknesses  
 20       are then more than just the o:ne ga:me.  
 21       → C:       Okay I just I just really hate the fact that they  
 22       haven't been able to go downfield all year.





actions on the part of C in his interaction with hosts who are supposed to have greater knowledge of the topics being discussed, and the result is a conversation that follows the pattern of status unequals, where disagreements are downplayed by the lower status person, rather than highlighted.

Not all of the callers were as deferential as the caller in segments 6 and 7. But time and time again, the callers demonstrated that they did not wish to pursue controversy with the hosts. The call excerpted below in segment 8 demonstrates this:

[8] January 2002, Program C

1 C: ... my point is I think that uh the major difference  
 2 this week >I'm a Raider fan< and I think Janikowski is  
 3 gonna be the major difference as long as he's healthy  
 4 enough to kick the ball and not ↑even the field goals  
 5 cuz you know ↑anybody can miss a field goal but-  
 6 → H1: [Kickoffs kickoffs  
 7 → H2: [Remember this is a guy] this is a guy who missed three  
 8 field goals in the Tennessee game on [national TV.]  
 9 C: [I I uh ( )]  
 10 H1: [Uh good point]  
 11 he's gonna make though, you're gonna talk about the  
 12 kickoffs?  
 13 C: [( )]  
 14 H2: [Kickoffs] are a big key [because ] last week was  
 15 C: [But he ( )]  
 16 H2: screwed up, the kickoffs.  
 17 C: He leads the league in uh touchbacks. And they had  
 18 great field position the Jets. I like my chances with  
 19 Testaverde=  
 20 H2: =But ya know the Jets lead the league in kick off (.)  
 21 uh f-f- for-against they lead the league in uh kickoff  
 22 differential the [Jets ] they lead the league.  
 23 C: [yeah uh I]  
 24 → C: I'd like them at least uh have to go from the goal line  
 25 instead of from the [thirty.]  
 26 H2: [I agree.] Last week Daluiso killed  
 27 them I agree with you. ((caller does not have another  
 28 turn; hosts continue to discuss topic))

In this call both hosts interrupt C's turn in line 5; H1 interjects to show his agreement with what he projects is C's point and H2 interrupts to disagree strongly (and with a touch of sarcasm) with C's belief that "Janikowski is going to be the difference." The hosts then proceed to debate the meaning of what C said in his first turn, as C vainly tries for four turns (lines 9, 13, 15, and 23) to complete a turn. When C does finally achieve a full turn in lines 24-25, he does not counter what H2 said to his original statement. It is unclear if that is what he was trying to do with his failed attempts to achieve a turn. But when he does finally get a chance to speak he adheres to the rules of adjacency pairs as outlined by Heritage (1984), in that if you can not respond to a statement within the next turn, then the opportunity to respond has been lost. But if C were to choose to pursue controversy, he would not relinquish his *right* to defend his original statement – he would return to H2's response to his initial turn. However, C does not do so, and in his final turn he pursues a different tack in not addressing Janikowski's field goal kicking skills (which

were disparaged by H2 in lines 7-8), but Janikowski's kick-off ability, which is a statement that H2 finds he can agree with.

It is also not always the case that callers alone are doing the work to prevent conversations from becoming confrontations. The call excerpted below started with a couple of points made by C that the hosts agreed to readily in lines 3, 5, and 6:

[9] January 2002, Program C

1           C:     Real quick we all know why they lost, it's cuz the  
2                    defense gave up a zillion yards.  
3         → H1:     Oh terrible right.  
4           C:     And they never put pressure on ↑Gannon.  
5         → H2:     And no pass rush [no pass rush.]  
6         → H1:                 [No pass rush.]

C here is very assertive, making his claims without any hedging or circumlocutions, a pattern which he continues in segment 10 below, where he basically overrides H2's mild attempt (lines 3-5) at disagreement, with another assertion that H2 then readily agrees to:

[10] January 2002, Program C

1           C:     And they blitzed on the last ridiculous play and they  
2                    should've blitzed earlier=  
3         → H2:     =Well you gotta give them a little bit of a mulligan  
4                    because you lose your best pass rusher its gonna hurt  
5                    you.  
6           C:     (I know Mike) but they gotta make some type of  
7                    adjustment.  
8           C:     [Do something. ]  
9         → H2:     [ I agree. ahhh ]

In segment 11 below, C continues his forceful tone in his next turn, which includes the confrontational semantic formula "you're telling me" in lines 4-5:

[11] January 2002, Program C

1           C:     The week before that the guy's blitzing my question is  
2                    >not my question<, I mean Mike, >how many guys in the  
3                    NFL don't throw to-< ((slowly)) I like Vinnie.  
4         →                 ((normal)) You know I'm not bashing him but you're  
5         →                 telling me Pennington can't come in next year and take  
6                    his lumps and throw fifteen touchdown passes and  
7                    fourteen interceptions=  
8         → H2:     =I don't know.=  
9           C:     =And and what twenty-four hundred yards?  
10         → H2:     I don't know.

However, his assertions are not clearly in opposition to anything yet, as the hosts have not clearly countered any of his statements. To the contrary, H2, in his turns in lines 7 and 9 deflates C's 'attack' by offering a noncommittal "I don't know." He is not stating his

position, and this makes it very difficult for C to continue in an antagonistic manner, which is seen as his aggressiveness seems to taper off in his turn in segment 12 below:

[12] January 2002, Program C

1 H1: You know for sure you now right know Chris that you  
 2 start Pennington at quarterback you're gonna win ten  
 3 games?  
 4 H2: [It's not about-]  
 5 C: [What are we gon]na do. Are we gonna give up every  
 6 single game the Carolina game the Buffalo game where  
 7 Vinnie didn't step up and three other games where he  
 8 threw for a hundred and fifty yards. You know what I'm  
 9 saying?  
 10 H1: I know what you're saying but you know he also won the  
 11 Cincinnati game and the uh the Indianapolis game you  
 12 can't forget that neither.

C's last turn begins in line 5, during which he spoke over H2's attempt to pick up the talk from the transition-relevance place after "games" On one hand C has spoken somewhat aggressively throughout, but he has also tried to soften some of his statements (e.g., "I'm not bashing him" in line 4 of segment 11) and he ends with an appeal to *non-partisan* empathy with the phrase "you know what I'm saying." H1 does give him halfway agreement, with a "yes, but" turn in line 10, but does not give him another turn to speak as the call is terminated. With this call it is apparent that H2 used a non-committal manner of speaking to avoid confrontation, but it also can be asserted that C's antagonistic tone was not really directed at the hosts themselves (evidenced by his appeal to their support with "you know what I'm saying", and his use of the phrase of noncommittal exasperation "what are we gonna do..." in line 5). Additionally, the call started with a "Good afternoon" and expression of gratitude for his call being taken. So here a call made by an *angry* caller does not turn into a confrontation because of the way the hosts handled him, and because the caller was not necessarily angry at the hosts – he was simply venting about the poor play of his team, and the hosts did not say anything to antagonize him further.

Another element of talk radio that has to be taken into account is the continuous discussion across a number of calls that address the same topic. In this way, the talk begins (to a small degree) to take on some characteristics of a debate, or a structured discussion, in that callers know what the hosts' positions are, and what their arguments are, and they have to devise strategies to say something that has not already been said that will bring the hosts around to their way of thinking. This aspect of the medium came across in some of the data I collected in a string of calls that all focused on whether the quarterback for the New York Jets (Vinny Testaverde) should remain on the team in the wake of a playoff loss to the Oakland Raiders. The call excerpted above was from this series of "Vinny" calls, as is the one below, which immediately followed it:

[13] January 2002, Program C

1 → C: He:y goo:d afternoon gentlemen. I I disagree with both  
 2 of youse I (1.0) Testaverde is absolutely not a clutch

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

3                   quarterback he's had one good season (.) in sixteen  
4                   years and that was because of Parcells, he's done  
5                   ↑nothing else.  
6           → H2: Now wait what's his record as the Jet coach uhm Jet  
7                   quarterback.

C expresses his disagreement with the hosts immediately after his greeting, which H2 responds to with a mitigating "now wait," before asking C to consider the facts regarding the situation he is addressing. He is basically seeking clarification of C's position before making a decision about how to challenge his point (if he decides to do so). H2 uses this tactic again in line 3 in the following segment:

[14] January 2002, Program C

1           C: Whatever it is (.) he's not a clutch quarterback. He's  
2           not won anything Mike.  
3           → H2: Wait you're just gonna go on quarterbacks who win Super  
4           Bowls?  
5           C: No but you gotta go with quarterbacks who are athl- who  
6           are are- who ↑wanna win. He hasn't got that thing  
7           →           anymore so I'm sorry I totally disagree.

As a result of the exchange above, H2 has learned that despite the factual evidence of Vinny's winning record (which they had established in a prior turn), C sticks by his original statement that Vinny is not a good player. H2's strategy is to ask for more clarification (after another mitigating "wait"). C continues to stand by his assertion, even apologizing for his disagreement (line 7). The tone of the call to this point is that of a reasoned discussion, and is not at all confrontational. A discussion behavior continues, (meaning that the hosts appear to be testing C's ability to be objective, rather than attacking his seemingly lack of objectivity) albeit with many overlapping turns, as H1 poses a question in line 1 below that he intends to use as way of assessing the validity of C's judgements:

[15] January 2002, Program C

1           → H1: Did he play well on Sa:turday against the Raiders?=  
2           → C: =I don't think so. I think when when he almost got uh  
3           Wayne [Chrebet killed]  
4           H1: [He played well] in that game. Come on.  
5           C: When Wayne Chrebet almost got killed going up three  
6           feet (.) in the air to catch [one of (his passes)]  
7           H2: [He was twenty seven] of  
8           forty one with no picks [and]  
9           H1: [Two] seventy seven and three  
10           touchdowns.  
11           H2: That's [not a good, that's not a good playoff]  
12           H1: [I mean ( ) he had a good ballgame.]  
13           H2: performance?  
14           → C: Well he had one game.  
15           H1: Well ( ).  
16           H2: It's not it's not one game though.

17 H1: He's had his good moments. You gotta be fair Al. He's  
18 had his good moments. Come on.

By initially stating that he “didn't think” that Vinny had a good game, and only relenting halfheartedly in line 14 with his comment "he had one good game," C has shown himself to lack objectivity and is thus incapable of a reasonable argument. After the hosts have established this they do not continue the discussion with him. His last turn is in line 14, so apparently the hosts are not interested in pursuing an argument with an *irrational* caller, one whose *irrationality* could possibly lead to confrontation.

Another in the series of "Vinny" calls is excerpted below. This caller opens with a compliment for H2 in line 1, which H2 deflects in his ensuing turn in line 6:

[16] January 2002, Program C

1 → C: Hey listen Mike I just want to commend you, you were  
2 like the only guy I heard Sunday to (.) pick up on  
3 what- the horrible clock management that Herman Edwards  
4 did that game. I didn't hear anything from anybody else.  
5 → H2: Well I'm sure there were millions of fans who were with  
6 me  
7 C: [Oooof.]  
8 H2: [because] all of them keep telling me they were  
9 watching and pounding things in their houses  
10 H2: [so they were] all  
11 → C: [Oh, I was-]  
12 H2: aware of it too.  
13 → C: Yeah I was going crazy. But uh=  
14 H2: =I'm sure everybody was.

C expresses his agreement with H2's statements throughout this part of the exchange (lines 12 and 14), and in the process of complimenting, and then agreeing with the compliment's refusal, has established a degree of rapport – there is an element of camaraderie here, of *men talking about sports* (which unsurprisingly came across in a number of calls), despite the fact that the hosts and the callers do not know each other. And when C gets around to stating the reason for his call in excerpt 6 below, we see that the friendliness functions not only for its own sake, but also to soften the impending disagreement (something which would not be done by a caller seeking confrontation):

[17] January 2002, Program C

1 C: Yeah yeah and ↑another thing I just want to say I just  
2 think they should get rid of Vinny, I just think he's  
3 ↓terrible uh  
4 → H2: Well lemme let me get you, get into the argument here=  
5 → C: =Okay.

C wants to get “rid of Vinny,” and saying this, he knows he is in disagreement with the hosts (if he has been listening). In response H2 does something interesting, as he lays out a preliminary statement about the "argument." C readily responds 'okay.' The tone here is reminiscent of a debate, or a structured discussion, and H2 seems to be using a strategy similar to what H1 did with the call excerpted in segments 12 and 13; in his turns in lines

1 and 3 he is looking for the reasoning behind C's statement, and is not looking to get into a confrontation:

[18] January 2002, Program C

1 → H2: What do you what do you want to do at quarterback.  
 2 C: ↑Well you ↑know I would try ↑Pennington ↑out. Why not?  
 3 → H2: Now what if he's no good what's [your fall-back. ]  
 4 → H1: [You can't just ] TRY  
 5 HIM OUT and hope!  
 6 C: [( )]  
 7 → H1: [How about if] the guy stinks?  
 8 C: Do you guys think he could do any worse than Vinny  
 9 though? I mean-  
 10 H1: YES. Vinny went to the playoffs this ↑year.  
 11 H2: He could do Jerry he could do much worse.  
 12 C: [( )]  
 13 → H1: [He could be he could] be a bust. Come on!  
 14 C: I think the team made it in spite of Vinny. I mean you  
 15 uh did you see him even going back to the Miami game  
 16 when they won twenty-four nothing? I seen him (.)  
 17 fumble a snap and back off the snap. .hhh  
 18 H1: Yeah part of that you know you can't go by one play.

After C gives his alternative to keeping Vinny, H2 begins a turn that will include a question that will question the viability of this alternative. However, in line 4, H1 begins a turn that is somewhat confrontational, in that he comes close to shouting at C, and then in line 7 talks past C's attempt at a turn. However, C does not appear to interpret H1's behavior as confrontational, which is shown by his continued attempt to further his argument in a reasoned manner: his argument is that Vinny is terrible, so terrible that that another player could not be worse (lines 8-9). H1 talks past C's attempt to speak in line 12 again, but again C does not interpret this as an invitation to confrontation; he is struggling to get his point across, but he does not resort to antagonistic speech to do so. And the hosts, despite H1's aggressiveness in this call are also not seeking confrontation, this call actually ends on somewhat of a conciliatory note as the two hosts and C find two points to agree upon before C's call is terminated after his turn in line 12 below:

[19] January 2002, Program C

1 C: He blamed [( ) everybody but himself]  
 2 → H1: [We agree. Bad job.]  
 3 H2: Jerry Vinny blames everybody but himself I agree with  
 4 you.=  
 5 → H1: =We agree with that.  
 6 H2: But Jerry you gotta also look at the fact that the Jets  
 7 were number one in takeaways, [give ]always takeaways  
 8 → C: [Yeah.]  
 9 H2: that means your quarterback's not throwing a lot of  
 10 interceptions if if if you're number one in takeaways-  
 11 C: He's throwing five yard dinks too [I mean-]  
 12 H2: [Hey ] listen  
 13 that's what they're telling him to throw...

This call progressed from an expression of a compliment into an expression of camaraderie before moving onto the point to be discussed. Despite the fact that the hosts were in disagreement with C, and though H1 did become loud, the talk was maintained as an argument and not as a confrontation, through both the caller's and hosts choosing not to turn it into one.

## CONCLUSION

This data and analysis show that despite the fact that disagreement is not dispreferred in sports talk radio, confrontation does not typically result. We have seen that hosts repeatedly proffer disagreement in a direct and non-diluted manner, but there is an apparent understanding by callers that this method of disagreeing is not meant to be interpreted as an invitation to confrontation – it is a challenge, but not an antagonistic one. So while Hutchby (1996) says that talk radio is "a social setting in which argument routinely takes place" (p. 109), I would have to say that that needs to be amended if one is discussing sports talk radio, which seems to be a place where arguments do routinely occur, but where confrontation and antagonistic argument do not.

What was most notable about these calls was the flexibility of the hosts in how they handled different callers, using a variety of strategies including unilateral termination, mitigation with assertive callers, and attempts to *structure* discussion to maintain arguments in a non-confrontational manner. Callers also behaved in various ways to avert confrontation, including establishing rapport and acquiescing to the unequal status of the host/expert-caller/novice relationship. And though in conversation analysis one tends to shy away from making generalizations based on quantitative analysis, what I did find through an analysis of 26 calls recorded randomly is that despite its argumentative aspects, sports talk radio does not appear to deserve the stereotype of being a communicative medium where confrontations routinely erupt.

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## APPENDIX A

### Key to Transcript Notations

The listing below has been adapted from Ten Have (1999).

- [            A right bracket shows the onset of speech overlap.
- ]            A left bracket shows where overlapping speech has ended.
- =            The equal sign indicates 'latched' speech between two speakers, meaning that there is no perceptible pause between speaker A finishing a turn and speaking B starting his or her turn.
- (0.0)       Numbers in parentheses indicate the length of a pause in seconds.
- (.)         A period in parentheses indicates a very brief, but perceptible pause (less than a second).
- word       Underlining a word or part of a word serves to show that that word or part of the word has received extra stress or emphasis.
- ::          Colons indicate the lengthening or drawing out of a sound.
- A dash indicates where speech has been cut off.
- .          A period shows a drop in intonation.
- ,          A comma indicates a slight rise in intonation.
- ?          A question mark indicates a sharp rise in intonation.
- ↑↓         Upwards and downwards arrows indicate a sharp increase or decrease in the pitch used while uttering a word.



WORD	A word that is capitalized indicates that it has been delivered with extraordinary force (typically shouting).
◦	Words or phrases that are bracketed by degree signs are perceptibly quieter than the surrounding talk.
×	Greater-than and less-than symbols bracketing an utterance indicate that it was uttered at a faster speed than the surrounding talk.
.hh	A period following by <i>hs</i> indicates an audible intake of breath.
hh	A number of <i>hs</i> without a period indicate an audible expulsion of breath.
( )	Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber noticed that some talk was being made, but was unable to decipher what was being said.
(word)	A word or words in parentheses indicates that the transcriber is unsure of whether those were the words that were actually uttered by the speakers.
(( ))	Words or sentences placed in double brackets are notes from the transcriber that relate to some aspect of the transcription, and are not transcriptions of anything that was actually said.

## APPENDIX B

### Transcripts of Calls

#### 1. Call excerpted in segments 1, 2, and 3 (from Program A).

1 C1: ...I'm uh getting rea:lly disgusted about all these (.)  
2 supposedly Met- uh Met fans calling up an- and saying  
3 that they're big Met fans and (hh)(.) How can they be  
4 giving up on these guys so early? I understand that  
5 they're 12 games back, 13, whatever it ↓is, but this a  
6 team that, they ↑can win they can put together a  
7 winning streak they can put together six games at a  
8 time, ten, ↑Phillies are not gonna stand up in that  
9 division.  
10 H1: owhh:::  
11 C1: I don't [care what anybody says they're a good]  
12 H1: [WRITE THIS DOWN!  
13 C1: young team but-  
14 H1: [WRITE THIS DOWN!] June 1st you counted the Phillies out  
15 (.) but you give the Mets a sho:t (.) and the Phillies  
16 are only 13 games ahead [of the Mets >at] this point<  
17 C1: [They're a good,

Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

18 they're a good young team, they are, but it takes more  
19 than just [a good young] team to win.  
20 H2: [Hey Billy,] Billy, lemme let me ask you  
21 this, what have you see:n this season, for↑get about  
22 last season, what have you ↑seen this season that leads  
23 you to believe that this team can go on a ten-game  
24 winning >streak or they can do< that forty and fifteen  
25 that they [did] a couple of=  
26 C1: [abs-]  
27 H2: =>years ago.< [(hh)what-]  
28 C1: [Absolutely,] absolutely nothing.  
29 C1: Absolutely not [hing.]  
30 H1: [Well] then where's the rub.=  
31 H2: [( )]  
32 C1: =But they are the same ↑team, they're the same ↑team  
33 with the exception of Hampton, who went oh and six last  
34 year, everybody didn't- [nobody's talking about that.]  
35 H1: [No Hampton did not go °oh ]  
36 and six°.  
37 You're wrong.=  
38 C1: =He lost his first six decisions.=  
39 H1: =No you're wrong.  
40 C1: The Mets lost their first six games he  
41 [pitched.  
42 H1: [(whining)) No:::]  
43 He was like two and ↑four out of his first six. He  
44 didn't start off well >but he wasn't oh and six. You're  
45 just wrong.<  
46 C1: Okay I might be wrong about that. You're right, but he  
47 did not start off well.  
48 C1: [Appier, I think Appier is start- ]  
49 H1: [No. He he struggled ] He  
50 struggled during April, that's fai:r. But he turned it  
51 around a:nd a:nd  
52 C1: [he absolutely did.]  
53 H1: [he was coming off] a twenty-three win season with a  
54 phenomenal e.r.a. Appier was coming off a fifteen-win  
55 season with a better team than the Astros were that  
56 >↑Hampton was coming off< and with a ↓fatter e.r.a.  
57 coming [over from the ↓American league]  
58 H2: [(see the) and the the ] problem is and  
59 you lose Leiter and of course that's a big thing but  
60 ↑poor ↑Rick ↑Reed if ↑he doesn't pitch a shutout or  
61 ↑close to it he ↑doesn't ↑win.(.)I mean he has to go  
62 out there and pitch 8 innings and give up one or two  
63 ↑runs, >that's it<.=  
64 H1: =(hh) we-  
65 H2: that's a- that's terrible way to have to perform the  
66 whole year.  
67 H1: The one bullet that Steve Phillips has gotta take that  
68 I gotta take with him i:s, (.) I think everybody banked  
69 on Glendon Rusch being significantly ↑better. (.) and I  
70 thought he could ↑win ↑fifteen ↑sixteen games this year  
71 after winning eleven last year and getting no run  
72 support. I thought it was a logical leap to be able to  
73 make. He di:dn't pitch terribly last year but he  
74 couldn't slam the door in the seventh inning ↓an: if

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

75 they got one more inning out of him who knows, (.hhh)  
76 Rusch has has been more bad than good and I did not  
77 think that was going to be the case this year and I'm  
78 sure Steve Phillips felt the same...((continues; C does  
79 not have another turn))

### 2. Call excerpted in segments 4 and 5 (from Program B).

1 H: Jay in West Orange. Jay, you're on the fan.  
2 C: Thanks Ian umm listen I uh listen to you guys everyday  
3 and I'm really happy to hear everybody giving their  
4 ideas about the Mets and stuff and I guess I'm just one  
5 more life-long fan. .hhh But it seems to me and ↑I  
6 don't know what type of contract he signed, I know it  
7 was a uh big one. But if you got Vladimir Guerrero the  
8 great(hh)est player I think I've ever seen and stuck  
9 him at number three in the lineup >and put him in the  
10 outfield< .hhh I bet everything on the Mets would just  
11 go ↑nice and smoothly it would look like we had good  
12 pitchers that gave up four runs a game because we'd  
13 score five and ↑six. What do ↑you think about  
14 Vladimir?  
15 H: Other than smoothing over a potential problem with  
16 Vladimir and Turk Wendell, obviously I'd love to see  
17 that guy in the Mets lineup. [I  
18 C: He would make every single person there look better=  
19 =They do not ha:ve (.) the things necessary to get  
20 Vladimir Guerrero.  
21 C: [How so]?  
22 H: [What ] Montreal would want is young talent that wi:ll  
23 guaranteed develop over time, and that will not cost  
24 them money. [The Mets don't have those players]  
25 C: [But (you) just think about Mon]tre↑al,  
26 once they get people they get rid of them ↑anyway.  
27 H: Well they do but that's their cycle. They continue to  
28 go through that cycle they're not gonna take on  
29 anything that will cost them money. So that's first and  
30 foremost so the Mets: I think would probably be out of  
31 the mix there. There's so many other teams that have  
32 young talent that (.) cannot crack at the major league  
33 level right now becaus:e the incumbents are too good to  
34 get rid o:f:  
35 C: [The Mets ↑aren't one of those ↑teams.]  
36 [What if we gave them money?] What if we gave  
37 them m-, I mean I'm telling you that the Mets need to  
38 do anything they can to get a player like  
39 Guerrero.↑They ↑should, they cou- they could give up  
40 literally anybody and MONEy and money if if if Montreal  
41 wants money give em ↑money!  
42 H: I don't think they'll trade him in the division that's  
43 just my personal viewpoint no:w (.) ya know if Montreal  
44 (.) is desperate enough to make something happen (.) I  
45 don't think they can get rid of ↑Guerrero. I mean they  
46 barely have a major-league quality team right now. (.)  
47

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

48 If they're gonna get rid of their one star player the  
49 one player that they did go out and re-sign because  
50 they knew they had to keep him around. (2.0) I think  
51 it's a pipe dream right now. (2.0) Especially if you're  
52 a Met fan it's a pipe dream it might be a pipe dream  
53 for the rest of the major leagues as well. We're on the  
54 FAN, (.) take a break come back with much more.

### 3. Call excerpted in segments 6 and 7 (from Program C).

1 H1: Jesse, Cranfield New Jersey, uh Cranford. Jesse how are  
2 you?  
3 C: Hey guys how are ya?  
4 H1: [( )]  
5 H2: [Jesse what's up.]  
6 C: Umm I have two quick points to get to the first- uh  
7 first I don't like the Jets this weekend because I have  
8 a hard time seeing them get two basically garbage  
9 touchdowns. .hh uh  
10 I mean one I- ya know I mean one was a forty yard  
11 screen and then the other aw- [and (ya know)] and then  
12 H2: [Don't  
13 C: the other off the punt.  
14 H2: Jesse can [I just (point out) one mistake]  
15 H1: [Don't read too much into it.]  
16 H2: you're making?  
17 C: Sure.  
18 H2: You're analyzing the entire game off y- last week's  
19 game. Do not do that.  
20 C: Okay.  
21 H2: Because the game will not unfold the same way way  
22 either way and if you just use the EXACT game to  
23 analyze off you gotta analyze them more on what their  
24 tendencies a:re and what their strengths and weaknesses  
25 are then more than just the o:ne ga:me.  
26 C: Okay I just I just really hate the fact that they  
27 haven't been able to go downfield all year.  
28 [(Their longest pass like(.)comes off) a screen pass.]  
29 H2: [That's been a pro- that that's been a problem for ]  
30 them. There's no question, they they that's it the only  
31 forty-yard touchdown they've had is off a wide receiver  
32 screen. And you're gonna go in and say they're not  
33 gonna block a punt=  
34 C: =Right.  
35 H2: You're also gonna go in and say Janikowski's kicking.  
36 But you know ↑what the jets did alot of things in their  
37 in in in that were atypical to their season=  
38 H1: =Curtis Martin's not gonna fumble at the thirty ↑yard  
39 line=  
40 C: =Right [( )]  
41 H2: [Ya know] Curtis Martin had two fumbles in three  
42 hundred and ninety carries over the last two yea:rs. Ya  
43 know one fumble this yea:r. They they ha:d uh you know  
44 they had a buncha penalties they're [Right.] not a  
45 C:

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

46 H2: penalized team, they had a buncha turnovers they're not  
47 a turnover team, they had a buncha ↑sacks they're not a  
48 ↑sack team, so I mean they did a lot of things [ that ]  
49 C: [Right.]  
50 H2: weren't their regular ↑things last week.  
51 C: >Right.< Uh the other thing I want to get to i:s I'm  
52 not sure if you guys saw ↑it but i saw it on Monday's  
53 sports center that the second round playoff schedule  
54 (.) .hhh was put out by the NFL [( )]  
55 H2: [Yeah ah we know] it.  
56 H2: [We know it.]  
57 H1: [What'd they say.]  
58 C: Uh if I'm not mistaken the Patriots are playing (.) the  
59 Saturday night ↑game.  
60 H2: No they're playing on my understanding is that they're  
61 playing the Su:nday night.  
62 C: [Well I saw it differently. Okay.]  
63 H1: [Uh we'll call [we'll call the NFL] and find out.]  
64 H2: [Oh okay.]  
65 H2: I saw I saw that St. Louis was playing the eight  
66 o'clock game and [New England ] was playing the  
67 C: [Oh okay I thought]  
68 H2: four o'clock game on Sunday.  
69 C: I thought that St. Louis had the four o'clock Sunday oh  
70 [okay.]  
71 H2: [Dog ] let me check then I saw it the other way maybe  
72 it was incorrect I saw the: the co- I was I uh they  
73 told me the two cold weather sites the two nights where  
74 they called the late games were in New England and St.  
75 Louis but I thought it was St. Louis eight and New  
76 England four.  
77 H1: Well I tell ya it's not right if they make it New  
78 England and eight o'clock (.) when St. Louis can but  
79 Fox might want St. Louis to play that last game on  
80 Sunday night.  
81 H1: [( )]  
82 H2: [(Try to)] call em up and check with the NFL on the f-  
83 on the late on the schedule for next weekend it is out.  
84 check and see if it's St. Louis Saturday New England  
85 late Sunday or vice-  
86 H1: They're gonna make people freeze in New England eight  
87 o'clock [at night.]  
88 H2: [I thought] they were four o'clock Sunday Dog I  
89 thought- I know that they're the two late games but I  
90 thought they were St Louis Saturday St Louis Saturday  
91 New England Sunday not the other way around.

### 4. Call excerpted in segment 8 (from Program C).

1 H1: Jeff, car phone. Jeff what's going on.  
2 C: Hey guys how ya doing.  
3 H1: How are you.  
4 C: Good uhh (.) my point is I think that uh the major  
5 difference this week >I'm a Raider fan< and I think  
6 Janikowski is gonna be the major difference as long as

Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

7 he's healthy enough to kick the ball and not even the  
8 field goals cuz you know anybody can miss a field goal  
9 but-  
10 H1: [Kickoffs kickoffs]  
11 H2: [Remember this is a guy] this is a guy who missed three  
12 field goals in the Tennessee game on [national TV.]  
13 C: [I I uh ( )]  
14 H1: [Uh good point]  
15 he's gonna make though, you're gonna talk about the  
16 kickoffs?  
17 C: [( )]  
18 H2: [Kickoffs] are a big key [because] last week was  
19 C: [But he ( )]  
20 H2: screwed up, the kickoffs.  
21 C: He leads the league in uh touchbacks. And they had  
22 great field position the Jets I like my chances with  
23 Testaverde=  
24 H2: =But ya know the Jets lead the league in kick off (.)  
25 uh f-f- for-against they lead the league in uh kickoff  
26 differential the [Jets] they lead the league.  
27 C: [yeah uh I]  
28 C: I'd like them at least uh have to go from the goal line  
29 instead of from the [thirty.]  
30 H2: [I agree.] Last week Daluiso killed  
31 them I agree with you  
32 H1: I do think that the kickoff will be a factor. If  
33 Janikowski's healthy the Jets will not start at the  
34 thirty-five yard line every single time.  
35 H2: Hey, if, Dog, if Janikowski were there last weekend  
36 everything else in the game unfolded the Raiders woulda  
37 won.  
38 H1: Probably yeah gotta give them the four extra points  
39 right?

5. Call excerpted in segments 9, 10, 11, and 12 (from Program C).

1 H1: Chris is in the car phone is on the fan. (.)  
2 [Christopher?]  
3 C: [Good aft-] Good afternoon guys how are you.=  
4 H1: =How are you.  
5 C: Thanks for taking my call.  
6 H1: You got it.  
7 C: Real quick we all know why they lost, it's cuz the  
8 defense gave up a zillion yards.  
9 H1: Oh terrible right.  
10 C: And they never put pressure on Gannon.  
11 H2: And no pass rush [no pass rush.]  
12 H1: [No pass rush.]  
13 C: And they blitzed on the last ridiculous play and they  
14 should've blitzed earlier=  
15 H2: =Well you gotta give them a little bit of a mulligan  
16 because you lose your best pass rusher its gonna hurt  
17 you.

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

18 C: (I know Mike) but they gotta make some type of  
19 adjustment. [Do something.]  
20 H2: [I agree. ahhh]  
21 C: The week before that the guy's blitzing my question is  
22 >not my question<, I mean Mike, >how many guys in the  
23 NFL don't throw to-< ((slowly)) I like Vinny.  
24 ((normal)) You know I'm not bashing him but you're  
25 telling me Pennington can't come in next year and take  
26 his lumps and throw fifteen touchdown passes and  
27 fourteen interceptions=  
28 H2: =I don't know.=  
29 C: =And and what twenty-four hundred yards?  
30 H2: I don't know.  
31 H1: You know for sure you now right know Chris that you  
32 start Pennington at quarterback you're gonna win ten  
33 games?  
34 H2: [It's not about-]  
35 C: [What are we gon]na do. Are we gonna give up every  
36 single game the Carolina game the Buffalo game where  
37 Vinny didn't step up and three other games where he  
38 threw for a hundred and fifty yards. You know what I'm  
39 saying?  
40 H1: I know what you're saying but you know he also won the  
41 Cincinnati game and the uh the Indianapolis game you  
42 can't forget that ↑either.  
43 H2: Do I that Pennington is gonna walk in and be as good as  
44 Vinny? I don't know that.  
45 H1: Vinny won ten games I mean he you know you can't just  
46 assume Pennington's that kind of player. You have to  
47 take Vinny back for another year. I would dis- I would  
48 say otherwise if he didn't make the playoffs: (.) cuz  
49 that would be the second year in a row he would of f-  
50 you know, been the quarterback of a team that collapsed.  
51 [So I wouldn't-]  
52 H2: [See I don't mind] I don't mind I don't think it's a bad  
53 idea to have (1.0) the j- the job opened up and let  
54 Pennington (have a) compete for the job. The problem is  
55 he won't win it...((Hosts continue on subject; caller  
56 does not have another turn.))

### 6. Call excerpted in segments 13, 14, and 15 (from Program C).

1 H1: Al in on the car phone.  
2 H2: The best thing that could happen to the Jets is have  
3 Pennington beat him out in camp (.) [Then he could be]  
4 C: [( )]  
5 H2: the backup but I don't think it's gonna happen.  
6 H1: Right. Al.  
7 C: He:y goo:d afternoon gentlemen. I I disagree with both  
8 of youse I (1.0) Testaverde is absolutely not a clutch  
9 quarterback he's had one good season (.) in sixteen  
10 years and that was because of Parcels, he's done  
11 ↑nothing else.  
12 H2: Now wait what's his record as the Jet coach  
13 [uhm Jet quarterback]

## Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

14 C: L( ) you yes- yest- yesterday you said it something  
15 like (.)  
16 H2: [Thirty-two and six I think thirty two and six]  
17 C: [Thirty ( ) and eleven ( )]  
18 H2: I think no thirty-two and sixteen I think.  
19 C: Whatever it is (.) he's not a clutch quarterback. He's  
20 not won anything Mike.  
21 H2: Wait you're just gonna go on quarterbacks who win Super  
22 Bowls?  
23 C: No but you gotta go with quarterbacks who are athl- who  
24 are are- who ↑wanna win. He hasn't got that thing  
25 anymore so I'm sorry I totally disagree.  
26 H2: [Well how do you know what Pennington]  
27 H1: [ (So you want ) ] You want  
28 Pennington to be the quarterback now?  
29 H2: [So you're gonna-]  
30 C: [I I I wanna see ] someone new and if we  
31 [struggle we struggle.]  
32 H2: [Wait wait wait so so ] next year if you struggle  
33 you're okay with that?  
34 H1: You're [five and eleven-]  
35 C: [Yeah I'm ↑okay ] with that I'm certainly not  
36 okay with the wa:y Testaverde's been ↑playing.  
37 H1: Did he play well on Sa:turday against the Raiders?=  
38 C: =I don't think so. I think when when he almost got uh  
39 Wayne [Chrebet killed]  
40 H1: [He played well] in that game. Come on.  
41 C: When Wayne Chrebet almost got killed going up three  
42 feet (.) in the air to catch [one of (his passes)]  
43 H2: [He was twenty-seven] of  
44 forty one with no picks [and]  
45 H1: [Two] seventy-seven and three  
46 touchdowns.  
47 H2: That's [not a good, that's not a good playoff]  
48 H1: [I mean ( ) he had a good ballgame.]  
49 H2: performance?  
50 C: Well he had one game.  
51 H1: Well ( )  
52 H2: It's not it's not one game though.  
53 H1: He's had his good moments. You gotta be fair Al. He's  
54 had his good moments. Come on.  
55 H2: He had a big game against Jacksonville in the playoffs  
56 they scored thirty-four points in that [game.]  
57 H1: [Right.] He had  
58 a good game against Cincinnati I'm sure you loved him  
59 down the stretch before Christmas in Indianapolis.  
60 H2: Great drive against the Colts.  
61 H1: Right.  
62 H2: He also played well in the AFC championship game on a  
63 brutal windy day he played ↑well.

### 7. Call excerpted in segments 16, 17, 18, 19 (from Program C).

1 H1: Jerry in Rockaway is on the fan. Jerry.  
2 C: Hey guys hows it going.



Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

3 H2: [What's up Jerry.]  
4 H1: [How are you.]  
5 C: Hey listen Mike I just want to commend you, you were  
6 like the only guy I heard Sunday to (.) pick up on  
7 what- the horrible clock management that Herman Edwards  
8 did that game. I didn't hear anything from anybody else.  
9 H2: Well I'm sure there were millions of fans who were with  
10 me  
11 C: [Oooof.]  
12 H2: [because] all of them keep telling me they were  
13 watching and pounding things in their houses.  
14 H2: [So they were] all  
15 C: [Oh, I was-]  
16 H2: aware of it too.  
17 C: Yeah I was going crazy. But uh=  
18 H2: =I'm sure everybody was.  
19 C: Yeah yeah and ↑another thing I just want to say I just  
20 think they should get rid of Vinny, I just think he's  
21 ↓terrible uh  
22 H2: Well lemme let me get you, get into the argument here=  
23 C: =Okay.  
24 H2: What do you what do you want to do at quarterback.  
25 C: ↑Well you ↑know I would try ↑Pennington ↑out. Why not?  
26 H2: Now what if he's no good what's [your fall-back. ]  
27 H1: [You can't just ] TRY  
28 HIM OUT and hope!  
29 C: [( )]  
30 H1: [How about if] the guy stinks?  
31 C: Do you guys think he could do any worse than Vinny  
32 though? I mean-  
33 H1: YES. Vinny went to the playoffs this ↑year.  
34 H2: He could do Jerry he could do much worse.  
35 C: [( )]  
36 H1: [He could be he could] be a bust. Come on!  
37 C: I think the team made it in spite of Vinny. I mean you  
38 uh did you see him even going back to the Miami game  
39 when they won twenty-four nothing? I seen him (.)  
40 fumble a snap and back off the snap. .hhh  
41 H1: Yeah part of that you know you can't go [by one play ]  
42 C: [You know he-]  
43 H1: Jerry, you can't pick out one play in sixteen-  
44 C: Oh NO NO no [I could go on and on]  
45 H1: [and say that play- ] Well how about the  
46 Indianapolis play, you think- I've never seen  
47 Pennington do that.  
48 C: Well no, Chris he had a good drive that game but let's  
49 get real. I mean [look at the interception ] against  
50 H1: [How about the Cincinnati ( )]  
51 C: ↑Buffalo.  
52 H1: How about the Cincinnati ( ).  
53 H2: [Jerry-]  
54 C: [And he] blamed-  
55 H1: [We agr] ee.  
56 C: He blamed [( ) everybody but himself.]  
57 H1: [We agree. Bad job.]  
58 H2: Jerry Vinny blames everybody but himself I agree with  
59 you.=

Managing Disagreement to Avoid Confrontation in Sports Talk Radio

60 C: =We agree with that.  
61 H2: But Jerry you gotta also look at the fact that the Jets  
62 were number one in takeaways, [give ] always takeaways  
63 C: [Yeah.]  
64 H2: that means your quarterback's not throwing a lot of  
65 interceptions if if if you're number one in takeaways-  
66 C: He's throwing five yard dinks too [I mean-]  
67 H2: [Hey ] listen  
68 that's what they're telling him to throw. You know  
69 Vinny doesn't want to throw five yard dinks and he's  
70 shown you in the past he can throw more than that. I'm  
71 not I'm not asking him to throw twenty-nine touchdown  
72 passes like he did in ninety-eight. But you know what?  
73 He can throw the ball down the field I blame the  
74 offensive coordinator for not throwing the ball down  
75 the field.  
76 H1: I do too. [Part of-]  
77 H2: [Vinny ] wasn't happy with that offense this  
78 year you know that.  
79 H1: I mean Vinny is very up and down but you have to bring  
80 him back. Boy it's amazing how I would probably have a  
81 totally different feeling here if Hall didn't make that  
82 fifty-three yard kick. .hh Because-  
83 H2: What what would you be saying?  
84 (1.0)  
85 H1: Hu- Penning [ton I would]  
86 H2: [(Just) play] Pennington?  
87 H1: Uh I would say you know what, I've seen it twice in a  
88 row now and=  
89 H2: =and get a regular backup?  
90 H1: That's what I would of said, yeah. ((Hosts continue on  
91 topic, caller does not have another turn.))