

Hofstra University Radio to Become New York Islanders Flagship Station

Written by Matthew Collier

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The New York Islanders finally found a radio station with the signal strength to provide game casts to listeners, but the choice is raising eyebrows. Radio Hofstra University (WRHU) will now carry Islanders games. The fact that the team is going with a college radio station is unique on its own, but the most of the head-scratching is over the amount of participation during broadcasts by Hofstra university students.

Chris Botta, who covers the Islanders for [Islanders Point Blank](#), said the team will keep broadcaster Chris King, but allow Hofstra students to cover intermissions, sideline reporting and even possibly serve as color commentators. Students would also run all the technical and audio aspects.

The Islanders competition, the Rangers and New Jersey Devils, are on two of New York City's biggest stations ESPN Radio and CBS-owned WFAN. BusinessInsider.com columnist Adam Fufeld said of the move, "This is a pretty embarrassing situation for the Islanders...it's just one more reason the Islanders need to take the first train out of Long Island."

While Fufeld's words are harsh, he isn't the only one sounding off, Eric Mirlis, who used to work public relations for the Islanders wrote a seething blog post ripping the team's decision to use college students, in the post he said:

"Look at every analyst on every broadcast you watch. The overwhelming majority are former players or coaches, who have a knowledge of the game that is more intricate and in depth than anyone really cares to realize. I'll always be of the opinion that a former player or coach should be in that spot, especially one that has ties to the team that fans can grab onto and relate to on a personal level. You will also find the occasional media member as the analyst. This is how Chris King originally got into the Islander broadcasting biz, how Sherry Ross became the Devils radio analyst and how Suzyn Waldman earned her way onto Yankee broadcasts. None of them played the game professionally, but all had an insight into the game that came with years of being around the game and all deserved the opportunity they got to show their stuff on the air."

A quality radio or TV broadcast can be a major asset to a sports franchise (think about how much the YES Network benefits the New York Yankees), so it's difficult to say the quality of a college station's game cast will be anywhere near the level of ESPN or WFAN. Not difficult, impossible. Not to mention the move takes away potential jobs for out-of-work media

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professionals who have the ability to produce a broadcast. The Islanders' move essentially drives down salaries for those working in radio by saying, "why should we pay a pro when a college student can do it for free (or super cheap)."

This is the problem newspapers have run into over the past 10 years or so and the state of print journalism is sad to say the least. It is understood by all that the move about cutting costs, but if AHL teams who draw 4,000 a night can afford to pay professionals, many are going to ask why an NHL team can not.

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