

NFL & TELEVISION LEADERSHIP ON ART MODELL

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell:

“Art Modell’s leadership was an important part of the NFL’s success during the league’s explosive growth during the 1960s and beyond. As the longtime chairman of the league’s Broadcast Committee, Art was a visionary who understood the critical role that mass viewing of NFL games on broadcast television could play in growing the league. Art played important roles in many other league matters as a key advisor to Pete Rozelle and Paul Tagliabue, and also built championship teams in Cleveland and Baltimore. His skills as an owner and league contributor were matched only by his great sense of humor. Any conversation with Art included laughs. He always left you with a smile on your face. We extend our condolences to John, David and the rest of the Modell family.”

Former NBC-TV President Dick Ebersol:

“I believe very strongly that Art Modell is one of the most important figures in the history of the modern NFL. He and Pete Rozelle developed the magic formula that married the potential of television to the game. Those funds from this marriage propelled the game into what it is today. Art was there with Pete, and Art made it happen. Those two, along with Well Mara – who convinced other owners about the power of shared revenue – are the three men who pushed the NFL into what we know today.

“My good fortune is that I met Art when I was a 20-year-old intern for Roone Arledge, and he was creating the first Monday night game. He treated that intern the same as he treated a 60-something TV executive many years later. He always made me feel special. He was open and natural, and there was not a phony bone in his body. His humor could solve the biggest obstacles. When I first became president of NBC Sports, I went to Cleveland to visit with Art. The thoughts he shared with me about television helped me gain success. His efforts in three-plus decades of steering the NFL’s TV committee are monumental. The debt owed by his fellow owners, the current owners and everyone else who has made a living off the NFL, is incalculable. The good news is that Pat [Modell] will now be back with her Art.

“But, I am so saddened with one thing: Art did not get to experience an induction into the Hall of Fame. The leaders in Cleveland, when he moved to Baltimore, put Art in an untenable situation and left him with the hard choice of moving. That scarred some people on Art. I hope in death Art is placed where he should be – in Canton in the Hall of Fame.”

Former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue:

“Art Modell made extraordinary contributions to the National Football League during his decades as an NFL owner. When he stepped away from operating the Baltimore Ravens in 2004, his 43 seasons in the league represented more than half of the NFL’s history. Art contributed to the NFL’s growth and success through the performance of his teams, his recognition of the unique place our sport has in American life, his active participation in the league’s governance, and his support of civic and community organizations. He was a trusted advisor to both Commissioner Rozelle and me during our time in office. His wisdom, knowledge and wit kept both of us grounded in the toughest of circumstances. My deepest sympathies to David, John and the entire Modell family on their loss.”

NFL Executive Joe Browne, the Longest-Serving Employee in the League Office:

“Art Modell was a most influential member of Commissioner Rozelle’s ‘Kitchen Cabinet’ for many years, along with Dan Rooney and the late Tex Schramm. Ironically, Art is the only member of that group who is not enshrined in Canton. Hopefully, the Hall of Fame media selectors will rectify that oversight in the near future – not as an emotional reaction to Art’s death, but as a rightful reflection of his longtime contributions to the NFL.”

New York Giants President and CEO John Mara:

“Art Modell was one of the greatest owners in the history of the NFL. He contributed in so many ways to the success of this league, and he deserves a place in Canton. More importantly, he was a decent man and a great friend to my family. We will miss him dearly.”

New England Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft:

“I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Art Modell. I regret that I hadn’t talked to him since the passing of his wife, Pat, last year. We both shared that experience, and I know how hard that was for Art. When I first entered the league, Art was quick to welcome me, and I always appreciated that. He leaves a lasting legacy for the many contributions he made to the National Football League. The one thing that I always admired most about Art was his understanding of the role television would play in the growth of the game of football and the overall popularity of the NFL. He understood the value of primetime games at a time when there really wasn’t a tremendous demand. He helped negotiate and launch ABC’s Monday Night Football in 1970. I can’t remember what Monday nights were like during the fall before Monday Night Football, nor could I imagine them without football today. Football fans everywhere owe him a debt of gratitude for that alone. I speak for my entire family in extending our heartfelt sympathies to the Modells.”

Detroit Lions Owner William Clay Ford Sr.:

“On behalf of my wife Martha, our entire family and the Lions organization, I want to extend our deepest sympathies to David and John and everyone who knew and loved Art.

“Art was a great personal friend, and we shared many wonderful times together over the years. The game of football lost one of its’ all-time greats today. Art’s contributions to the NFL during his five decades in the game are immeasurable. I believe that Art did as much as any owner to help make the NFL what it is today. Art was a pioneer, a visionary and a selfless owner who always saw the big picture and did the right thing. Our game would not be what it is today if it weren’t for Art Modell.”

Philadelphia Eagles Chairman and CEO Jeffrey Lurie:

“I will always be thankful for the way Art Modell reached out to me and made me feel welcome when I first became owner of the Eagles. Art was a man with a wonderful sense of humor. He also had a visionary grasp of the importance of making professional football accessible to television audiences, helping build the sport’s popularity to this day. We extend our condolences to the Modell family on his passing.”

Denver Broncos Owner and CEO Pat Bowlen:

“Art Modell and I certainly had a history together, most notably from our teams meeting three times in a four-year period playing for the right to go to the Super Bowl. In addition to making the Broncos-Browns into a fierce rivalry, those AFC Championship Games formed a common bond between the both of us as owners. Our teams had some great battles – there was no question about that. There really wasn’t a tougher place we had to play than Cleveland during that time period under Art in the late 1980s.

“We also had the opportunity to work together on several league committees and initiatives over the years. During Art’s four decades of ownership in the NFL, he had a strong impact on the league and was a great influence to so many in the game. He was competitive, passionate and very knowledgeable as an owner.

“On behalf of the Denver Broncos, I extend our sympathies and prayers to the Modell family during their time of loss.”

Arizona Cardinals Owner Bill Bidwill:

“When you look at those most responsible for the growth and tremendous popularity of the NFL, Art Modell has to rank high on that list. The backbone of that success has been the league’s relationship with network television, something Art was instrumental in shaping. Personally, when I think of Art, I will always remember his great stories and sense of humor, his generosity and civic leadership, and his passion for the game of football.”

Houston Texans Founder, Chairman and CEO Bob McNair:

“Art Modell was a very popular owner. He was very creative in marketing the NFL and made a lot of contributions in terms of expanding the fan base.”

Former NFL QB and Ravens Director of Pro Personnel James Harris:

“First thing that comes to my mind are the contributions Art made to the NFL: his teams, to television, to naming Ozzie [Newsome] as general manager. He was a pioneer. Working with him, you got to see what a great person he was. He cared about all of us – players, coaches, scouts, everyone in the front office. Genuine is a word I would use to describe Art. He was a special, special man. And, it’s a shame he is not in the Hall of Fame. He belongs there, and a lot of us know that.”

Longtime Browns and NFL Personnel Executive Michael Lombardi:

“Vision, humor and generosity always guided Art Modell’s life. His humor made him a daily pleasure to encounter. His genuine generosity, which supplied you with the tools to learn – as well as work your craft – will always be cherished, but his futuristic vision left a lasting impact on the game he deeply loved.”

Longtime Browns and Ravens Personnel Executive Phil Savage:

“My thoughts of Art Modell have always been wonderfully positive. One of the things that he will always be remembered for is his quick wit. He was incredibly sharp-minded when it came to one-liners and stories that happened to him through the years.

"I think the thing that I admire most about Mr. Modell is that he persevered through some tough times. He was a man that experienced being on a mountain top, but also had been through some very significant low points as well. He was always able to keep a positive spirit and break the tension with that sense of humor that he had.

"Like I said, all of my experiences with him were great – 14 years, including five with the Browns and nine with the Ravens. I think he always felt a little bit more of a loyalty to those of us that made that transition from Cleveland to Baltimore. It was a difficult time for a lot of people, but through a lot of support from he and his family and the leadership of Ozzie [Newsome], we were able to reach that Super Bowl. I think that there was a real connection between he and the team and the players. I think the players loved him, and he loved his players. Over the years, I think almost every player that you could talk to would say they enjoyed playing for him and his teams because he had such a passion for pro football."

Ravens Front Office Staffer Chad Unitas, Son of the Late Johnny Unitas:

"Art Modell was a true visionary and leader in the NFL and community. In the Ravens' first year, I remember going to practices with my dad, sitting on Art's golf cart and listening to Art ask my father how he could help him and all the older players with their disabilities. He cared more about them than he did about himself. He was a true gentleman that will be missed, but never forgotten."

COACHES ON ART MODELL

Former Ravens Head Coach Brian Billick:

"Art Modell was all about family, and that's how he directed the Ravens. He treated me, my family and everyone in the organization like a member of his family. Before I think of the gratitude I owe him for giving me the opportunity to be his head coach, I think of the way he treated all of us. I don't believe there's another NFL franchise that embraces that more than Art did. That was reflected in the people he hired. He created an atmosphere that was the best. It was a joy to come to work for him. He accomplished so much as an owner: championships, playoffs, the TV contracts, the leadership in the NFL. They are all great and deserving of the Hall of Fame. Those who worked with Art will all say the same thing. He was a Hall of Fame person."

Former Browns, Chiefs and Chargers Head Coach Marty Schottenheimer:

"No, no, this is sad news. I loved Art Modell, and I was just thinking of him yesterday. He was a man's man, someone you wanted to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with. He gave me my first head coaching job, and we had the most fun working together. We didn't win the biggest prize, but we were awfully close, and we had a ball trying to get there. Art made it fun. His humor was the best, and my wife, Pat, always said what a gentleman he is – classy, and he ran his franchise that way. I have only good memories of Art."

Former Steelers Head Coach Bill Cowher (who played and coached for Modell in Cleveland):

“One thing about Art, he loved his teams and his players more than anyone I met. He embraced his team with his whole heart and everything else he had. He took great pride in those who worked for him. Art always wanted to do the right things for his team – help in any way. I have great respect for him as a person. He wanted to help people who needed it, and he did so much for so many. Even when I was the head coach in Pittsburgh, I was so happy he won the Super Bowl. He deserved that championship, and it was tremendous to see him get it.”

Former Browns Head Coach Sam Rutigliano:

"Art was my friend and supporter. He gave me the opportunity of a lifetime to become the head coach of the Cleveland Browns. Art was a hands-on owner, he never rode shotgun – whether at practice, the draft, or even at meetings. He was willing to do the real work to make us better. If Art could have given the trophy to Cleveland, I believe he would have. The people in Baltimore certainly deserved it. There are some here in Cleveland who still love him. Art Modell was a major contributor to an era of football that was the best the NFL ever had."

Former Browns Defensive Coordinator and Current Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban:

“I think Art is what I would call a legacy owner. Whether it’s the Modell family or the Rooney family or the Mara family, the old, traditional franchises had a tremendous amount of responsibility for building the league in the early stages, and Art was certainly one of those. He’s also a man who I have a tremendous amount of respect for by the way he treated me and my family when I worked there for him. When I got the head coaching job at Michigan State, he hired a secretary and had her take all the calls until I finished the season, and we had a playoff team. Lots of things like that that didn’t have to be done, just there to serve someone else who he thought he could help. I think he is one of the great all-time owners in the league. He also had a great sense of humor and was a lot of fun to be around.”