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### Catching Up With L.A. Times Staff Writer Sam Farmer



When it comes to coverage surrounding the **MICHAEL VICK** dogfighting scandal, Saints RB **REGGIE BUSH**'s legal dispute with his former agents, the prospects of pro football returning to L.A. or any major story related to the NFL, **SAM FARMER** is usually front and center. Farmer has been reporting on the NFL for the L.A. Times since '00 following a five-year stint on the Raiders' beat with the San Jose Mercury News. Staff Writer Preston Bounds caught up with him to talk football, sports in L.A., and the craft of journalism.

Farmer Feels Rose Bowl Provides Best Atmosphere Of Any L.A. Event

**City You Were Born In:** Madison, WI  
**Current Residence:** Glendale, CA  
**First Major Sporting Event Attended:** '80

Rams-Steelers Super Bowl

**Most Underrated NFL Player:** **MATT HASSELBECK**

**Favorite Uniforms:** Chargers' Powder Blues

**Favorite Announcer:** **AL MICHAELS**

**Q:** What event or venue in the L.A. area has the best atmosphere?

**Farmer:** The Rose Bowl on New Year's Day. The sun is almost always shining with the San Gabriel Mountains in the background. It's such a classic setting. It has a graceful feel to it that you just don't get with the NFL stadiums that are so vertical.

**Q:** Most popular team in L.A.?

**Farmer:** The Dodgers are probably still the favorite team of LA sports fans, although the **MCCOURTS** seem to be doing everything in their power to change that. They were probably a bigger part of the Mitchell Report than any team in baseball, then Monday went out and signed catcher **GARY BENNETT**, an admitted HGH user.

**Q:** Who's the best team owner in L.A.?

**Farmer:** The one people know the least about. It's **CASEY WASSERMAN**, who owns the AFL Avengers. He's only 33, and yet he's done as much as some team owners twice his age. I can definitely envision him owning an NFL team one day, or maybe heading up an ownership group. Plus, he's a UCLA alum who played a big role in bringing **BEN HOWLAND** to the Bruins, which buys him a lot of currency in this town.

**Q:** Finish this sentence: The NFL will be in L.A. when...

**Farmer:** My third-grade son is applying to college.

**Q:** The owner will be...

**Farmer: EDDIE DEBARTOLO.** Now, how wild is that speculation?

**Q:** More predicting the future: Is USC still playing in the L.A. Coliseum next year?

**Farmer:** Yes, despite how messy it's going to get between now and when that decision is made. I think with the governor and mayor stepping in, they're going to hammer out a solution if they have to bleed to do it. Right now, UCLA is being the good neighbor, but if it came down to decision time, UCLA would make it so uncomfortable for USC to play in the Rose Bowl, i.e. you can't put your logo on the field, it's a one-year deal, etc.

**Q:** Who is your favorite sports personality to interview and why?

**Farmer: CARMEN POLICY.** He is so well-versed on so many subjects. He knows football, he's been a minority owner and run a successful franchise, and he's very worldly. He's not 'Charmin' Carmen' for nothing.

**Q:** As far as the Vick saga goes, is there anything you would have done differently in terms of damage control from the NFL's perspective?

**Farmer:** I was pretty impressed with the way they recovered. Their initial silence could have been very damaging, but they regained their equilibrium so quickly and dealt with it with the appropriate seriousness. They even won over some of the most strident animal rights activists. And that's a tough litmus test, to get those people to say that you're doing the right thing.

**Q:** Do people in L.A. care about **DAVID BECKHAM**?

**Farmer:** They do to an extent, but not enough to justify that type of investment. If he doesn't play and produce very quickly, it's a fad that could fade as quickly as it arrived. They haven't captured the imagination of the L.A. market yet.

**Q:** What is one piece of advice you would give to someone new to journalism?

**Farmer:** Don't worry as much about getting the story first as you do about getting it right. There's such a push to get the story first and brand it. Get the story right, and the accolades will follow.

**Q:** Are you being asked to blog much?

**Farmer:** No. I think blogging can become unfocused very quickly. You're writing about yourself and whether you had a second cup of coffee that day. I just don't think the readers are that interested in you, they're interested in the people you are writing about.

**Q:** What are some Web sites you check regularly?

**Farmer:** The Onion, The Smoking Gun, TheRedZone.org, Pro Football Talk, and the SportsBusiness Daily three times a day, if only for the headlines you guys write.

**Q:** Are the Patriots going undefeated?

**Farmer:** Yes. I think if the Cowboys play them in the Super Bowl, they'll play them a lot tougher than they did earlier in the season, but I still think they'll go undefeated.

**Q:** Is the ire toward the Patriots fair?

**Farmer:** Yes. They're the most polarizing team in sports right now. They've sort of embraced this humble pie philosophy as their slogan, but I don't see them as a team that is overflowing with humility. You see them celebrate and get in players' faces as much as any team. I really like **ROBERT KRAFT**. He's done a terrific job and is a real asset to the NFL, but I can understand when people don't like them.

**Q:** How would you grade NFL Commissioner **ROGER GOODELL**'s first full year?

**Farmer:** He's done a terrific job. He's a different kind of guy from **PAUL TAGLIABUE**. Roger has put his own mark on this position much quicker than everyone expected, and part of that is the issues demanded a tough stance. He's done very well with the new-sheriff-in-town mentality, and the league is better for it.



Farmer Gives Goodell High Marks For First Full Year As NFL Commissioner

**Q:** What is a sports business story you will be watching closely?

**Farmer:** The NFL in L.A. If USC locks down a long-term deal with the Coliseum, it will help, because the Coliseum to this point has been an obstructionist. So the league would like nothing better than for the Coliseum to be taken out of play to be able to explore Dodger Stadium and downtown. But if L.A. were a turnkey market, you wouldn't have had those two teams already leave it. Plus the availability of information de-emphasizes the importance of having teams located in mega-cities. It's not vital for the league to be in L.A., and it's not vital for the people of L.A. to have a team. And does anybody want to spend \$1.5B on a stadium?