

THE MARKETER'S

# SPORTS PODCAST GAME PLAN

2026

Join the biggest conversations in sports  
through podcast advertising with Acast



Acast

# A NEW ERA OF SPORTS FANDOM

02



When the Big Game takes place, the biggest conversations happen on podcasts. In 2026, that conversation will be louder than ever.

Fans will flock to their favorite podcasts to build hype in the run-up to the Super Bowl, to hear the most heated debates about playoff brackets, and to hunt for the real stories beyond the headlines.

Acast is home to the best in sports podcasting. **We have more top 1,000 sports podcasts than any other US network.** If you want to reach sports fans, Acast is your MVP.

And here's the thing about sports fans: **they're loyal.** They trust their favourite hosts like they're friends, and will follow creators across platforms.

That loyalty gives brands the reach, trust, and cultural relevance that turn campaigns into results.

This playbook maps the biggest moments of 2026 to Acast's extensive sports network, with the stats and ideas to score yourself a marketing win.

LET'S GO →

# NUMBERS ON THE BOARD

Sports podcast listeners are some of the most locked-in and action-driven audiences out there. Their habits, motivations, and trust in creators make them a standout opportunity for brands planning around 2026's biggest moments.

HERE'S THE DATA TO PROVE IT ↴



# MEET THE FANBASE

3 in 5

SPORT PODCAST FANS ARE 16-44

3 in 4

LISTENING ARE MEN

## DID YOU KNOW?

49% OF UNITED STATES MEN USE AD BLOCKERS

BUT YOU CAN REACH THEM  
WITH PODCAST ADVERTISING

# MEANINGFUL REACH

**3x** more Americans listen to sports podcasts than watched last year's NBA Finals

41%

PREFER SPORTS PODCASTS OVER TRADITIONAL SPORTS JOURNALISM

44%

INCREASE LISTENING DURING MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS

# FANS WHO LEAN IN

more than

**1 in 3**

SAY SPORTS PODCASTS HELP THEM FEEL  
PART OF A COMMUNITY

**62%**

TRUST HOSTS TO GIVE GENUINE  
ENDORSEMENTS

**67%**

HAVE CONSIDERED A BRAND THEY'VE NEVER  
HEARD OF BECAUSE OF A HOST READ

# WHEN FANS TRUST, THEY ACT

**87%** have taken a brand action  
after hearing a podcast



**73%**  
ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACT ON PODCAST  
ADS THAN TYPICAL LISTENERS

**75%**  
HAVE MADE A PURCHASE FROM A PODCAST  
RECOMMENDATION IN THE LAST YEAR

**52%**  
FOLLOW OR INTERACT WITH  
CREATORS BEYOND AUDIO

THE FANS ARE HERE.  
THEY'RE LISTENING.  
AND THEY'RE READY TO ACT.



# Q1 WHERE LEGENDS BEGIN

Q1 is where the year hits the ground running, and doesn't let up. It opens with the Super Bowl, an event so massive it transcends sports entirely.

The next day, everyone's got an opinion, and podcasts are where those opinions get sharpened, debated, and dissected play-by-play.

Then comes the Winter Olympics, where national pride takes center stage and household names are made overnight. Podcasts deliver the backstories, the context,

and the deeper narratives that you won't get from a two-minute primetime segment.

And just when the energy starts to settle, March Madness explodes. Brackets bust, Cinderella stories captivate the country, and even casual fans suddenly have strong takes about a mid-major's zone defense.

Fans don't just watch. They engage, react, and seek out more. Podcasts are where they go to extend the experience and fuel their fandom.

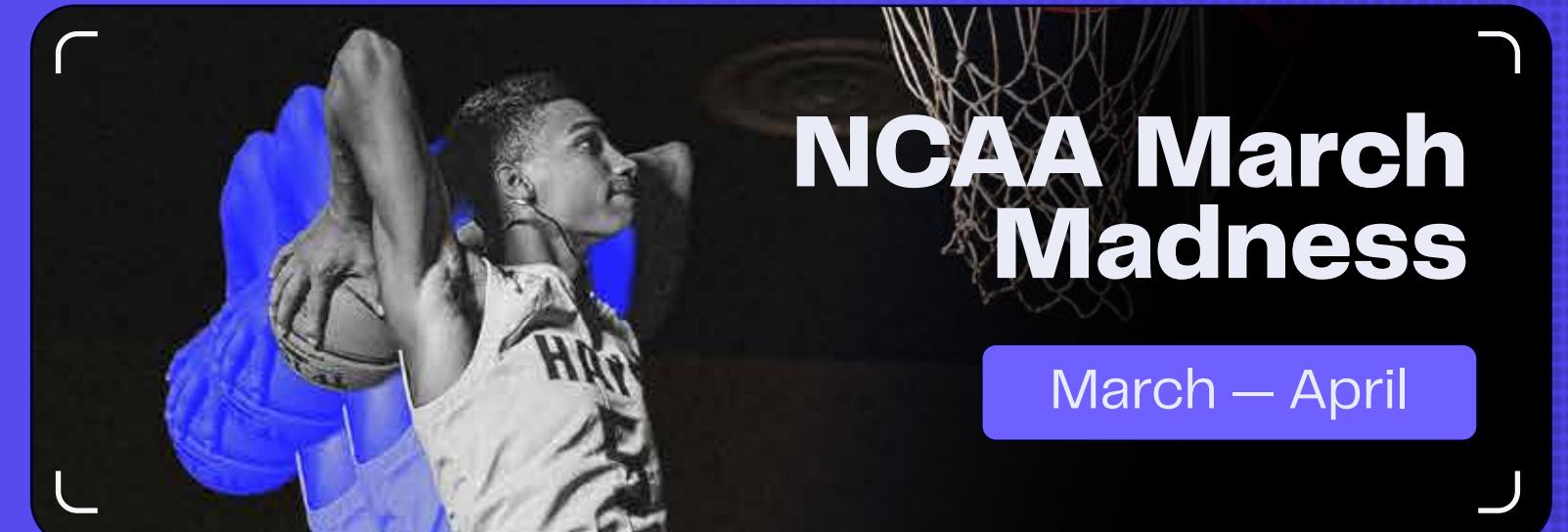
## Q1 KEY DATES



**Winter Olympics**  
February 6-22



**Super Bowl**  
February 8



**NCAA March Madness**  
March – April

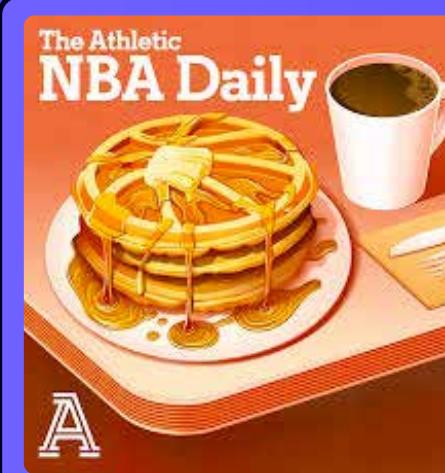
# THE ACAST SLATE

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## THE ATHLETIC FOOTBALL SHOW

This is The Athletic's flagship NFL podcast, covering the league with unparalleled depth and insight. Host Robert Mays and co-hosts Derrik Klassen and Dave Helman go beyond headlines, delivering deep dives into X's and O's and the business of roster building. This show offers advertisers access to a highly engaged audience invested in expert-level football analysis.



## THE ATHLETIC NBA DAILY

Start the conversation with NBA fans every weekday. This podcast offers a fast, entertaining recap of the most important games and stories from professional basketball. With new episodes dropping Monday through Friday, this is an excellent opportunity to align your brand with timely, essential sports commentary that keeps listeners current and connected.



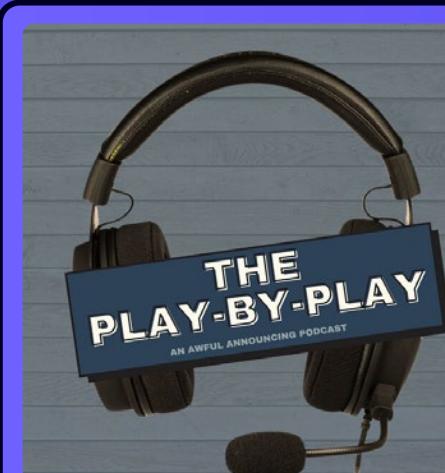
## ON THE BALL WITH RIC BUCHER

Get inside the NBA's most critical storylines with one of the game's most respected voices. Veteran insider and Fox Sports analyst Ric Bucher delivers weekly episodes packed with exclusive information and perspectives from players, coaches, and executives. With decades of league relationships, Bucher provides the context and credibility serious basketball fans demand.



## THE ATHLETIC HOCKEY SHOW

The Athletic's flagship hockey podcast delivers daily insights, prospect rankings, and betting picks, Monday through Friday, all season long. Align your brand with daily expert analysis that resonates with passionate hockey fans. This consistency provides advertisers with frequent, reliable touchpoints into a loyal and dedicated audience.



## THE PLAY-BY-PLAY

Position your brand at the center of sports media's biggest industry conversations. From Awful Announcing, hosts Brendon Kleen and Ben Axelrod deliver weekly breakdowns of the hirings, controversies, and power shifts at ESPN, Fox, NBC, CBS, and beyond. This podcast offers advertisers direct access to media professionals and plugged-in fans who follow the business behind their favorite sports.

**CREATOR SPOTLIGHT**  
**PABLO TORRE FINDS OUT**

Pablo Torre's fearless reporting and razor-sharp storytelling have made *Pablo Torre Finds Out* one of the fastest-rising shows in sports media. From exposing NFL owner collusion to breaking news on Bill Belichick's personal life, Pablo delivers the kind of exclusives that don't just make headlines—they start conversations.

His work speaks for itself: two Edward R. Murrow Awards (2022, 2024) and a

2025 Peabody Award nomination. These aren't just accolades—they're proof that Pablo's investigations and features consistently set the agenda in sports coverage.

The audience is growing fast and staying loyal, with momentum building across audio and video. When Pablo reports it, people listen. And they talk about it everywhere else.

**220K**  
WEEKLY AUDIO LISTENS

**125K**  
WEEKLY YOUTUBE EPISODE  
VIEWS PER WEEK

**750K**  
WEEKLY SOCIAL VIDEO VIEWS

# CREATIVE WAYS TO ACTIVATE IN Q1

Leverage key sporting moments in the first quarter with these integrated, creator-driven concepts.

## ROAD TO THE BIG GAME

### ACTIVATION

Branded Segment/Sponsorship Plus

### IDEA

Anchor a short series of pre-Super Bowl segments where hosts break down matchups, storylines, and fan rituals leading into kickoff.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

This is a Branded Segment that runs as part of a regular episode, ensuring deep integration. Amplify your message and reach across other relevant Acast shows using Sponsorship Plus, maximizing pre-game awareness.

## MARCH MADNESS BRACKET BREAKDOWN

### ACTIVATION

Sponsorship / Branded Segment / Omnichannel Activation

### IDEA

Creator-driven bracket predictions, upset alerts, and daily highlights, wrapped in a consistent audio identity that keeps your brand top of mind all tournament.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

Start with a host-read Sponsorship for an authentic endorsement from Acast's creators. Then, extend your campaign beyond audio—an Omnichannel Activation—by publishing key video snippets of the creator's predictions on their YouTube or social channels.

## INSIDE THE VILLAGE

### ACTIVATION

Extended Host Reads / Omnichannel Activation

### IDEA

Partner with a creator to host short daily updates that decode Olympic Village culture, athlete routines, and off-camera moments. These segments can be mirrored on Instagram Stories or TikTok for real-time fan engagement.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

Utilize Extended Host Reads for longer-form, immersive audio that allows the host to interview athletes or record outside the studio.

This format, which offers enhanced storytelling and production value, is perfect for daily, topical updates. Maximize engagement by integrating this with a social-led Omnichannel Activation that captures viral video moments.

# Q2 THE GLOBAL STAGE

Q2 blends global spectacle with homegrown tradition

This is the quarter where the world comes to watch, and where American sports fans dig deepest into the postseason battles they've been tracking since October.

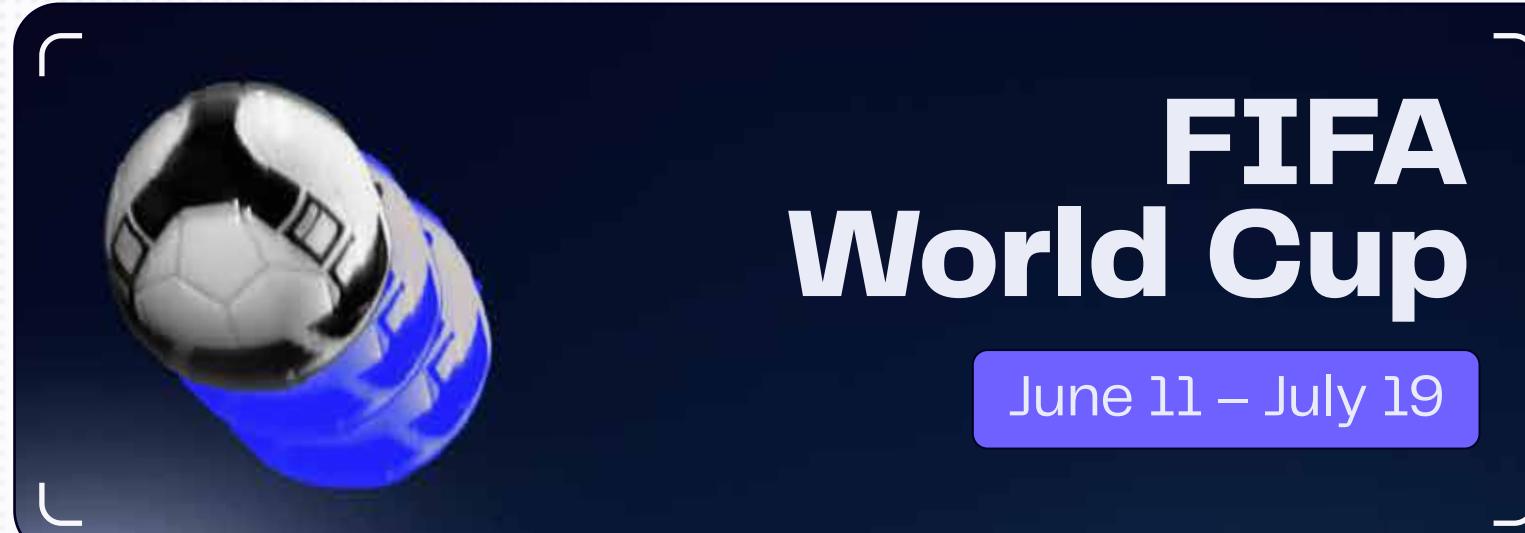
The World Cup brings soccer to every screen and every conversation. Casual fans and diehards alike will be dissecting group stage drama, knockout tension, and whether this is finally the year.

Meanwhile, the NBA and NHL Playoffs deliver the kind of high-stakes, game-by-game intensity that keeps fans glued to their screens and hungry for expert analysis between buzzer-beaters and overtime heartbreaks.

Fans show up expecting depth, not just highlights. They want to understand the tactics, the storylines beneath the headlines, and the context that makes a moment legendary. Podcasting is where they go to get it.

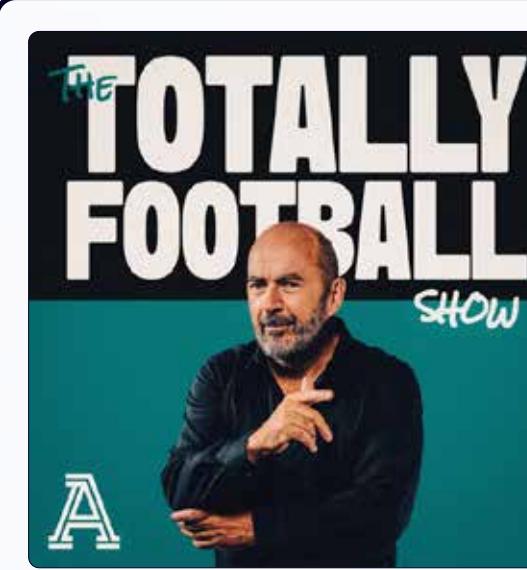
Before the game, after the final whistle, and every angle in between.

## Q2 KEY DATES



# ACAST'S LINE UP

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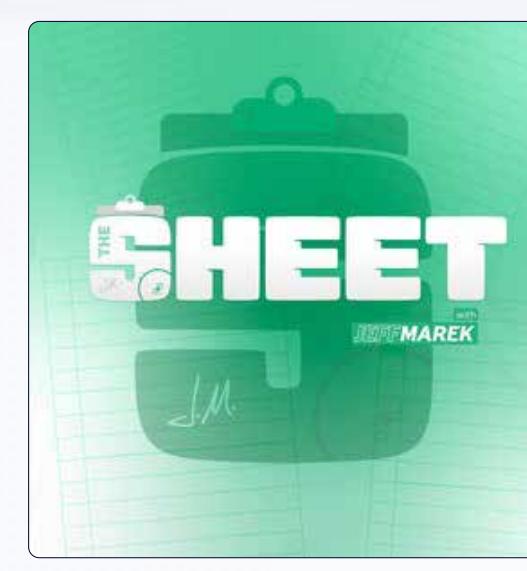
## THE TOTALLY FOOTBALL SHOW WITH JAMES RICHARDSON

Get your brand into the biggest football conversations, four times a week throughout the season. Led by the charismatic James Richardson and Team Totally, this show delivers all the essential football news, insightful chat, and plenty of witty tangents. It offers advertisers high-frequency access to a dedicated audience that appreciates informed commentary with a human touch.



## FOOTBALL RAMBLE

This is a global podcasting institution and a powerful advertising environment. Running since 2007, the Football Ramble is the original home for fans who love quality analysis and entertainment but don't take the world's biggest sport too seriously. The show covers the Premier League and beyond, providing brands with access to a massive, loyal, and established football community.



## THE SHEET WITH JEFF MAREK

Align your message with deep expertise in the hockey world. Jeff Marek has seen it all, from the amateur leagues to the pros. The Sheet delves into key topics from around the game and explores the curious, untold sides of hockey. This podcast attracts the savvy listeners who want to go beneath the surface, offering a unique opportunity for sophisticated brand storytelling.



## THE SPORTS GOSSIP SHOW

Capture the cultural crossover where sports meets entertainment. Hosted by Madeline Hill and Charlotte Wilder, this show uncovers the off-field drama, relationships, and personalities shaping the biggest storylines in athletics. Your brand reaches an engaged audience that understands sports through power dynamics and cultural impact, bridging die-hard fans with casual observers who know that what happens beyond the game often drives the conversation.

# ACAST IS THE HOME OF SOCCER PODCASTING

Over **one in three** of the top 100 soccer podcasts in the US are exclusive to Acast.

**17M**  
MONTHLY LISTENS ACROSS ACAST  
SOCCER PODCASTS

**4.6M**  
MONTHLY LISTENS ACROSS ACAST US  
SOCCER PODCASTS

**1,212**  
ACAST TOTAL SOCCER PODCASTS

**446**  
ACAST US SOCCER PODCASTS

# CREATIVE WAYS TO ACTIVATE IN Q2

Capitalize on the attention around major sporting tournaments like the NBA/NHL Playoffs and the World Cup with these high-impact creative solutions.

## BRANDED PREDICTIONS AND BRACKETOLOGY

### ACTIVATION

Sponsorship Plus / Branded Segment

### IDEA

Creators make bold predictions for Playoff series or World Cup knockout rounds, giving your brand recurring visibility across several episodes.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

Implement this as a recurring **Branded Segment**, establishing your brand as the expert analysis source. Use **Sponsorship Plus** to amplify this custom segment across a broad network of relevant Acast shows—such as The Athletic NBA Daily and The Totally Football Show—guaranteeing mass visibility throughout the tournament.

## CREATOR HOSTED “FAN HOTLINE” MOMENTS

### ACTIVATION

Branded Segment / Extended Host Reads

### IDEA

Listeners leave voice messages reacting to big games, with hosts responding in a branded segment that becomes a community moment.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

This concept works best as an **Extended Host Read**, which allows for enhanced storytelling and production, perfect for integrating user-generated content like listener voice messages. This approach creates an authentic, two-way dialogue, positioning your brand at the heart of the fan community reaction.

## “THE MORNING AFTER” REACTION MINIS

### ACTIVATION

Sponsorship / Omnichannel Activation

### IDEA

Sponsor short, high-energy episodes following every major Playoffs game or World Cup match, released when fans are hungry for instant analysis.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

These timely mini-episodes are ideal for a concise, high-impact **Sponsorships**. Since the content is immediate and viral, harness an **Omnichannel Activation** to push short video highlights of the instant analysis to social channels. This ensures your brand is present for the instant reaction both in and out of the podcast feed.

# Q3 BACK IN ACTION

Q3 is when everything falls back into place. The NFL is back, and with it comes the ritualistic return of fantasy draft prep, weekly predictions, and the kind of obsessive analysis that only football can inspire.

Meanwhile, the US Open delivers late-summer drama under the lights in New York—where every match feels like it's playing out in the sport's most electric atmosphere.

Fans reset their routines, lock back into their podcasts, and reconnect with the voices they trust to help them make sense of it all. Summer's over.

THE REAL SEASON IS HERE

## Q3 KEY DATES



### NFL Kickoff

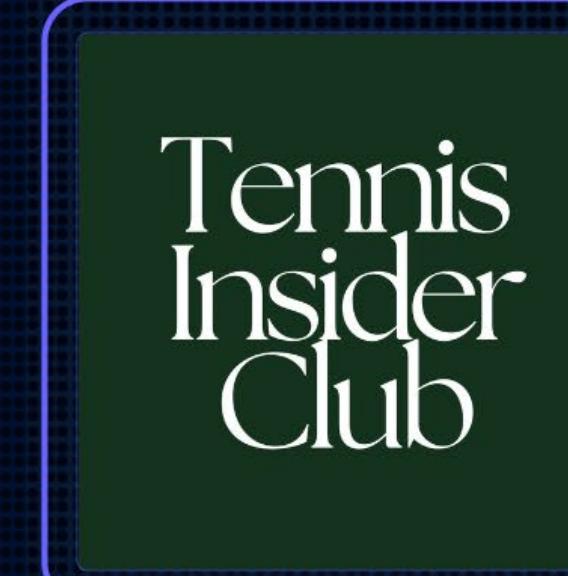
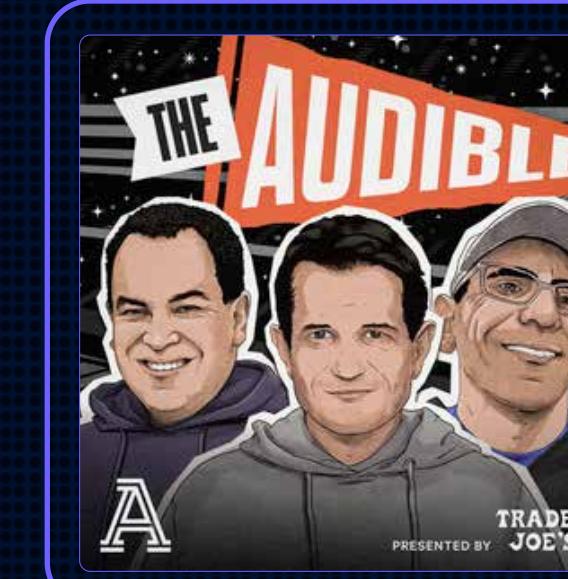
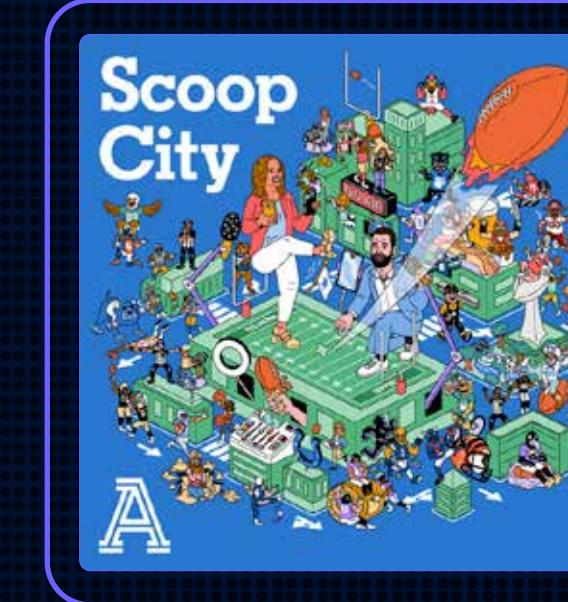
September 10



### US Open Tennis

August 24 – September 7

# THE ACAST DRAFT



## SCOOP CITY: INSIDE THE NFL

Offer your brand unmatched access to the NFL's biggest stories. Scoop City is hosted by The Athletic's Senior NFL Insider Dianna Russini, insider James Palmer, and former quarterback Chase Daniel, guaranteeing expert analysis and genuine behind-the-scenes scoops. With new episodes every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, this show captures an audience eager for exclusive, high-value intelligence on the league.

## THE AUDIBLE WITH STEW, BRUCE & RALPH

Connect with the passionate core of college football fans. Hosted by Stewart Mandel and Bruce Feldman, The Audible offers insightful discussions and interviews with the biggest names in the sport, covering relevant topics year-round. From National Signing Day to the National Championship, this podcast provides advertisers with consistent, credible access to a loyal, invested audience.

## THE TENNIS PODCAST

Place your brand within an award-winning, globally recognized tennis show. This podcast is the definitive tennis round-up, delivering daily episodes during the Grand Slams. Named in Time Magazine's Top 100 podcasts of all time, this is an opportunity to align your message with proven quality and international authority.

## TENNIS INSIDER CLUB

Go behind the baseline with the sport's elite in unfiltered conversation. Founded by Top 10 WTA player Caroline Garcia and her husband Borja Duran, this podcast explores the mental battles and personal journeys that define life at the highest level of the sport. Twice monthly, players and coaches share the side of professional tennis you never see on TV. Connect your brand with a sophisticated audience craving insider perspective from the voices shaping the game.

# INSIDE ACAST'S FOOTBALL FANBASE

## MASSIVE REACH DURING PEAK FOOTBALL MOMENTS

**5.8 million monthly listens** across Acast's American football podcasts during the NFL season.

## FANS ARE DEEPLY ENGAGED AND LEAN IN MORE THAN CASUAL LISTENERS

**63%** of sports podcast consumers listen to half of ads or more on video, and sixty four percent do the same on audio.

## PODCAST HOSTS DRIVE REAL INFLUENCE FOR FOOTBALL FANS

**64%** of sports listeners have considered a brand they had never heard of before because of a podcast host.



# The Athletic FOOTBALL SHOW

WITH  
ROBERT  
MAYS

# QUICK-FIRE Q&A

WITH ROBERT MAYS FROM THE ATHLETIC FOOTBALL SHOW

## WHAT SETS THE PODCAST APART FROM TV OR SOCIAL COVERAGE ON NFL?

The show is about the "why" around the NFL, and that's just not something you get with a lot of coverage about the league. Why did a team win on Sunday? Why did this play work? Why does acquiring this player change a team's fortunes. The NFL is the most popular sport in America, but it's also the

densest. Even die-hard fans can only see and understand a small percentage of what's happening on a Sunday, and all the moving parts that go into putting together a winning football team. Our goal is to help those fans understand the why behind what they're watching. And have fun doing it in the process.

## WHO IS THE MOST UNDERRATED TEAM RIGHT NOW, AND WHY ARE WE SLEEPING ON THEM?

Lot of candidates for that this year, considering so many of the teams headed to the playoffs kinda came out of nowhere. I'm going to say the Texans. They have the best defense in the AFC, and their offense has really found a stride over the past month or so. I'm not sure people realize how dangerous they are. Part of that is because their offense had some high-profile struggles early in the season, and I think some people haven't been able to kick that perception of them.

## WHAT STORYLINE ARE YOU WATCHING THAT FANS AREN'T TALKING ABOUT YET, BUT SHOULD BE?

Are we moving back to a place where the league is less QB-centric? For the past 20 years, the teams with the best QBs have dominated the sport. But some of that was driven by an offense-dominated era where the rules and the setup of the league was tilted toward scoring points. Defenses have roared back, and the best teams in the NFL this year are the balanced ones that are complete from top to bottom, rather than rosters that require the QBs to do most of the heavy lifting.

# Q4 A SEASON TO REMEMBER

Q4 is where champions are crowned and new chapters begin.

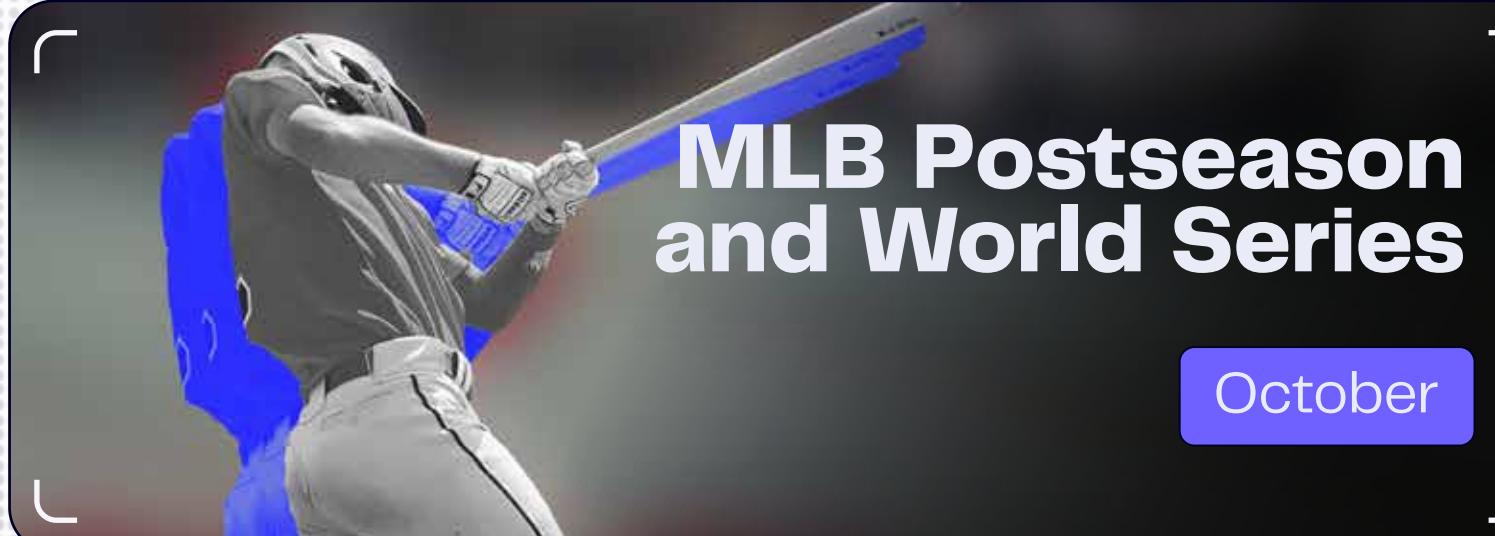
The MLB postseason builds toward the World Series and the NBA tips off a new season with opening night storylines already brewing since summer.

And Formula 1 roars into Austin for the U.S. Grand Prix, bringing global racing spectacle to American soil with speed, strategy, and the kind of high-octane energy that transcends the sport itself.

This is the quarter where championship runs collide with fresh starts, where fans are emotionally invested across multiple sports at once.

The intensity doesn't let up, and neither does the attention. Podcasts become the place to process it all. The walk-offs, the roster shakeups, the photo finishes, and the moments that keep fans locked in through the final stretch of the year.

## Q4 KEY DATES



# YOUR STARTING GRID

22



## THE RACE F1 PODCAST

This is the definitive voice for Formula 1 racing, offering unbeatable insight directly from the track. Featuring renowned F1 journalists like Edd Straw, Jon Noble, and Mark Hughes, the team delivers the inside line on breaking news, informed debate, and in-depth analysis after every Grand Prix. The feed also includes other F1 shows from The Race's stable. This is a high-octane environment for brands to connect with a deeply committed global audience of F1 fans.



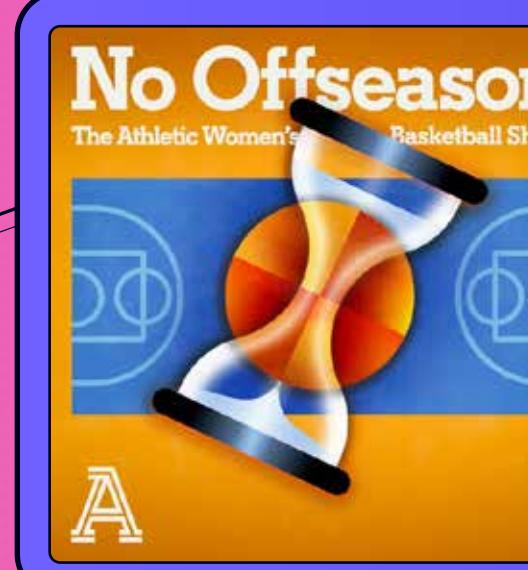
## MISSED APEX FORMULA 1 PODCAST

For the F1 fan who loves the drama and the community. Spanners and Matt Trumpets lead a crew of varying competence through the joys of Formula 1. This show is a proven hit, providing a lighter, highly conversational entry point into the F1 world. Align your brand with the fun, engaging side of the sport and reach listeners who value personality and camaraderie.



## RATES & BARRELS: A SHOW ABOUT BASEBALL

Tap into the sophisticated baseball audience. Hosted by Eno Sarris, Derek VanRiper, Britt Ghiroli, Trevor May, and Jed Lowrie, this show covers advanced stats, strategy, and prospects. From the first move of the Hot Stove season to the final pitch of the World Series, it's year-round baseball talk. This platform offers advertisers access to an informed, data-literate audience that is highly invested in the business and strategy of the game.



## NO OFFSEASON: THE ATHLETIC WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SHOW

Get ahead of the curve in women's basketball. No Offseason is The Athletic's dedicated show for all things in the sport, proving the game never stops. Hosts Zena Keita, Chantel Jennings, Sabreena Merchant, and Ben Pickman deliver the stories and insider info that matter most. This is an incredible opportunity to match your brand with the rapidly growing, passionate fan base of women's basketball.

## CREATOR SPOTLIGHT: P1 WITH MATT AND TOMMY



Matt Gallagher and Tom Bellingham have turned their diehard F1 fandom into the world's biggest Formula 1 podcast, and they've done it by delivering exactly what fans crave: unfiltered opinions, sharp race analysis, and the kind of off-track drama that keeps the paddock buzzing between Grand Prix weekends.

From dissecting Ferrari's latest strategy disaster to unpacking spicy controversies before they hit the mainstream, Matt and Tommy keep listeners up to speed on everything that matters in the sport.

Their approach is simple: talk about F1 the way real fans talk about F1. No corporate spin, no holding back—just two voices who live and breathe the sport, breaking down every lap, every decision, and every headline with the passion and insight that only true believers can bring.

The audience has responded in a massive way. P1 has built a global community of F1 obsessives who tune in religiously and engage everywhere, from race day reactions to mid-week predictions. When Matt and Tommy have something to say, the F1 world listens.

**230K**  
WEEKLY AUDIO LISTENS

**590K**  
SUBSCRIBERS

**2M**  
WEEKLY SOCIAL VIEWS

# CREATIVE WAYS TO ACTIVATE IN Q4

## LIVE “RACE WEEK” CREATOR CHECK-INS FROM AUSTIN

### ACTIVATION

Extended Host Reads / Omnichannel Activation

### IDEA

Creators react live to practice sessions, qualifying, celebrity sightings, and driver drama during the Formula One United States Grand Prix.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

Use **Extended Host Reads** for high-production, on-the-ground reporting, capturing the exclusive atmosphere of the F1 weekend. Maximize reach through an **Omnichannel Activation**, pushing dynamic video clips of the live reactions to TikTok, Reels, and YouTube. This creates a comprehensive multi-platform race weekend takeover.

## “SEASON RESET” NBA LIFESTYLE INTEGRATIONS

### ACTIVATION

Sponsorship Plus / Branded Segment

### IDEA

Position your brand within creators' conversations around new jerseys, offseason moves, breakout rookies, and team chemistry at the start of the NBA season.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

Implement this as an integrated **Branded Segment**, achieving a seamless fit for retail, CPG, athleisure, and tech products. The segment feels like a natural part of the conversation. Utilize **Sponsorship Plus** to scale this lifestyle content across multiple relevant shows, guaranteeing high visibility during this peak fan engagement period.

Get heard by high-value audiences during the Formula 1 season finale, the start of the NBA season, and the crucial holiday retail period.

## TEAM-BY-TEAM “HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE” CROSSOVERS

### ACTIVATION

Branded Content / Extended Host Reads

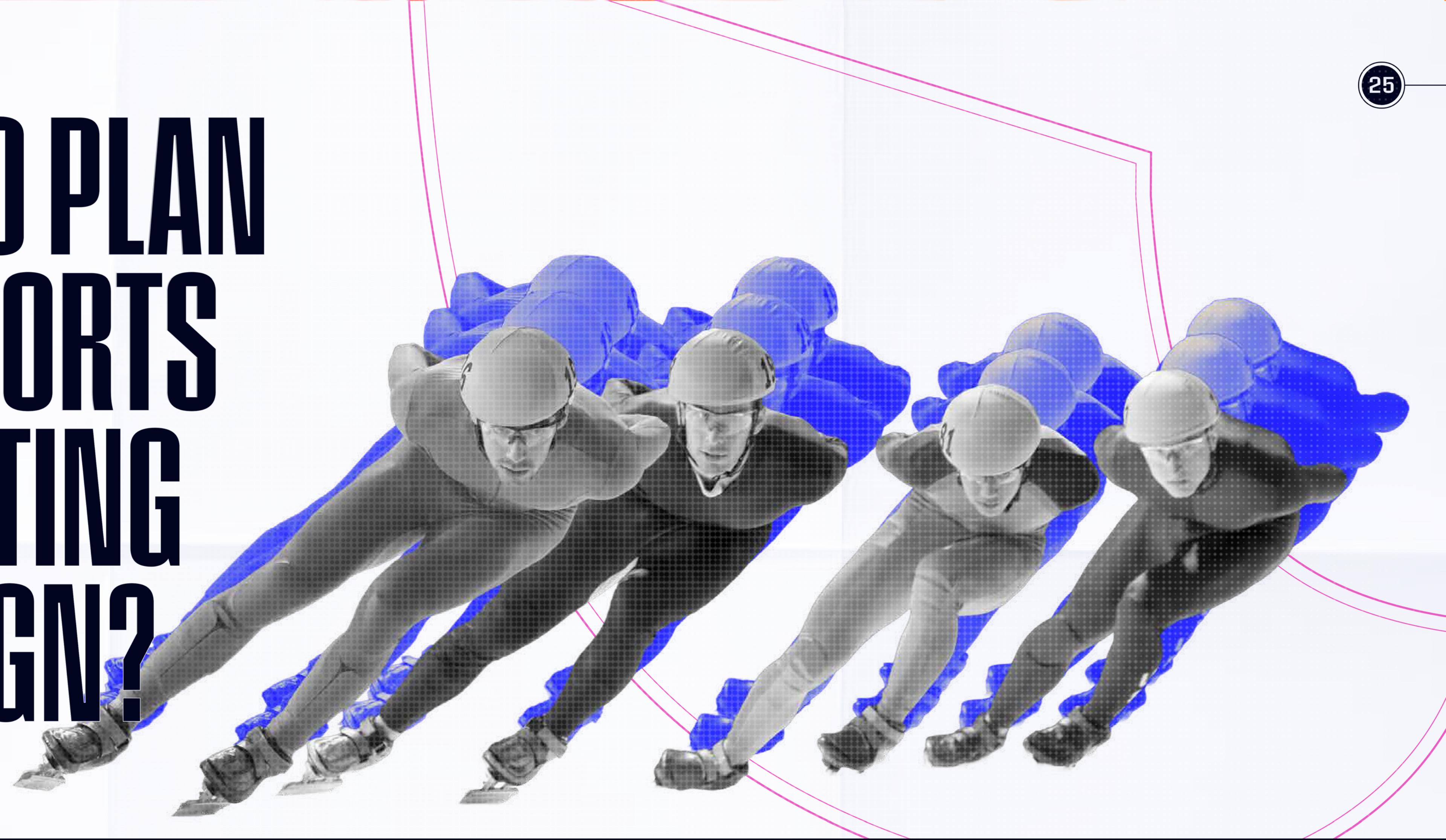
### IDEA

Creators tie their favorite team narratives or star players to curated gift ideas heading into November and December.

### THE ACAST ADVANTAGE

This concept is ideal for **Branded Content**, allowing for deep narrative integration and maximum creative freedom. Alternatively, use **Extended Host Reads** to create a compelling, authentic mini-episode focused entirely on the guide. This is a seamless, commerce-driven activation for CPG, retail, home, and tech categories.

# READY TO PLAN YOUR SPORTS PODCASTING CAMPAIGN?



Connect with your Acast sales representative  
or start instantly on Acast's Ad Platform

[advertise.acast.com](http://advertise.acast.com)

Or get in touch with  
our sales team

[sales.us@acast.com](mailto:sales.us@acast.com)

**Acast**

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