

# From the SPORTS DESK to Starring Role in Celebrity Journalism

KEVIN FRAZIER OF "ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT" EARNS THE PRESS CLUB'S LUMINARY AWARD FOR CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

BY JOHN GITTELSON

**K**evin Frazier's Apple Watch buzzes and two words pop up on his wrist screen: "Giselle Pregnant." He guesses—correctly—that Giselle Bündchen, the super model and ex-spouse of super quarterback Tom Brady, is expecting a child with "the jiu-jitsu guy," Joaquim Valente.

"This is my life," Frazier says, as if he still can't quite believe, after a decade hosting "Entertainment Tonight" and 10 previous years split between "ET" and "The Insider," that his bread and butter is celebrity journalism. "My Apple Watch buzzes and it's like, oh, something just happened."

Frazier also has a hard time believing that his work earned him this year's Los Angeles Press Club's Luminary Award for Career Achievement, an honor previously bestowed to, among others, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Ryan Seacrest and Chelsea Handler.

"I've done this a long time, but you're overwhelmed and almost a little embarrassed," he says. "There are a lot of people who've done amazing things and so it really humbles you."

Frazier, 60, grew up in Baltimore, the son of a basketball coach at Morgan State University, a historically Black institution. He expected to follow in his father's footsteps, even attending Morgan State.

Instead of coaching, Frazier became a news man, starting with a summer internship at the Pentagon, where a girlfriend introduced him to the in-house broadcast center. Frazier taught himself to run the editing and broadcast machinery.

He recalls an assignment to protect military secrets when he edited out the sound for a tape of U.S. fighter jets engaging with Libyan forces in 1987.

After college, he started as a local news reporter, specializing in sports, and worked his way up through TV stations in Charleston, South Carolina, Baltimore and Cincinnati. He wrote and rewrote copy. He worked with a cameraman who taught him how to tell stories visually. In short, he learned the fundamentals.

"Every day was a training day," he says. It still is. "If it were easy, everybody would do it."

If his career goes off track, if for some reason entertainment news doesn't work out, "if everything goes to hell," he says, "I can go back to Charleston."



Right: Frazier with his editing equipment.



Above: On the "ET" set.



From left: Covering a college basketball game, and walking and talking with Tiger Woods during a golf tournament.

He served as a play-by-play commentator for the University of Cincinnati basketball team, worked as sideline commentator for "NFL on Fox," followed by jobs at Prime Sports and ESPN, where he hosted "Sports Center" and National Basketball Association programming.

"Basketball is in my DNA," he says.

Frazier worked side by side with some of the TV industry's most illustrious sports broadcasters—Joe Buck, James Brown, Keith Olbermann—colleagues who kept him on edge with their encyclopedic knowledge and lightning commentary.

"It's wild to sit with someone whose brain goes that fast," he says of Olbermann.

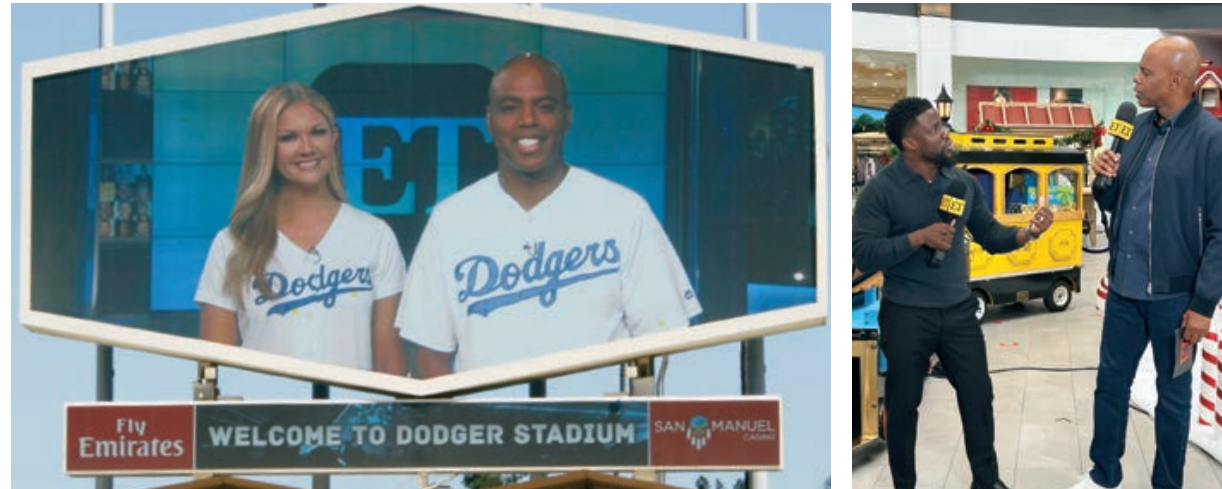
He calls Stephen A. Smith a dear friend as well as a champion among sports commentators, with a fierce drive to be at the top of the field, like the most competitive athlete.

"He has single-handedly willed himself to where he is today," Frazier says of Smith, who received a Los Angeles Press Club lifetime achievement award in June. "He's like Jordan and Kobe, a different DNA."

Frazier started watching entertainment shows while working at ESPN. It was a diversion from baseball, a sport he was assigned to cover during the NBA off-season that didn't capture his fancy.

One day, a producer from "ET," Linda Bell Blue,

Right: On the Jumbostron at Dodger Stadium; Kevin Hart vs Kevin Frazier?



Left to right: With wife, Yasmin Cader and sons Shane and Reece, in two different stages of life; Frazier with Ross Mathew, Drew Barrymore and Nischelle Turner on "The Drew Barrymore Show," predicting Oscar winners in February, 2024.



reached out and invited him to work as the show's first African American weekend anchor. They met in the Jean-Georges restaurant in the Trump International Hotel & Tower on Columbus Circle in New York.

Bell Blue asked how "that little sports show" did last night. He said it got 1 million viewers. She said "ET" had 9 million. As Frazier was leaving, he picked up his luggage for a trip to a game. Bell Blue said he wouldn't need to catch another cab if he worked for her.

"It was an incredible line," Frazier recalls. "It stuck with me forever."

He took the "ET" job. It changed his life. When he'd go to the airport, men used to come up and ask about "Sports Center." Now, it's women who introduce themselves. Instead of memorizing sports stats, he's developed an eye for identifying shoe and handbag brands.

"I went from the ultimate male space to the ultimate female space," he says.

But don't get any ideas—he's taken. His wife, Yasmin Cader, is a former public defender now

with the American Civil Liberties Union. She kept her maiden name.

"She's like, 'I'm not changing my name for you, my friend,'" Frazier says. They have two sons, Shane, 17, and Reece, 14. Frazier has a third son, Tony, 42, who was born when he was in high school.

After 20 years in entertainment journalism, Frazier has a library of memories. During an interview with Tom Cruise, a woman passed out and Cruise caught her and held her until medics arrived. Frazier was inside the funeral tent when Bobby Kristina Brown, the daughter of Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown, was lowered into her grave at age 22.

Kevin Hart really does yell all the time, Frazier says. Tom Hanks "always comes with such cool energy." Oprah, after an Obama event, told Frazier, "I cried my eyelashes off," he recalls. "It became the soundbite that went around the world."

Moments like those are why he loves being a journalist.

"I'm not the star," he says. "They are."

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