

From this “NFL Explained” video on the art of broadcasting the game of football, there were many impressive components of an NFL game broadcast that were highlighted, and each was astonishing to learn about. The early days of football on television from about the 1950s-1960s did not give its viewer a game experience anything like what the average viewer today has, and what’s in place today is mostly taken for granted by people because it’s just what’s expected. Over time, the NFL has made innovations with how they broadcast their games that have not only improved the visual quality of what’s being displayed, but while also making the game easier and more pleasurable to watch on television. Yellow first down-line graphics, instant replay, and scorebugs that showed score and game clock at all times didn’t all simultaneously exist for many years of the NFL’s existence, although these things are viewed as the most basic elements of a broadcast. Replay was first introduced, then scorebugs, and finally first down-lines which started to be used in 1998. Also around this time, cameras more frequently relied on high definition quality which had a lot more pixels than standard definition and a much higher aspect ratio. These are some of the most early and impactful advancements in broadcasting in the history of the NFL that gave way to much more innovations in the future.

Some features of an NFL broadcast that have been introduced from 2000 to present may not have been as necessary or as rudimentary as what’s been mentioned, but they’ve still drastically improved viewing experience. The skycam, which is used for every major game, started to be used in 2003 and is designed to bring fans closer to the action. It requires four total cables with one placed in each corner of a stadium and it’s operated by two people during games; one pilot who positions the camera and one operator who works on the pan/tilt/zoom/focus parts of it. This broadcast component would most likely be viewed as something unimaginable by people prior to the year 2000 but now everyone is completely used to it. Additionally, the “pylon

camera” that is used to get better shots in and around the endzones has drastically helped instant replay for officials while also giving fans another cool look at the action. The NFL started to use it in 2015 and for each of the four pylons on the field, there are three cameras placed in each one that are most useful for giving an in-tight look at whether a catch is made inbounds or not, along with determining if a player got across the goal line legally for a touchdown. It’s remarkable to think that wires and cameras are being placed so close to game action, and that they can be hidden in these pylons, therefore not affecting the game whatsoever.

Lastly, one of the more interesting topics covered in the video was the “enhanced” features of a broadcast that are amazing technological feats and continue to get better. First, there’s “Enhanced Augmented Reality” that has improved on-screen graphics tremendously and showcases the incredible things technology can do in today’s age. 3D graphics that can be placed anywhere, such as on the field or in the stands, that display all types of information are very useful for making one’s viewing experience better. Also, there’s enhanced audio which is something that focuses more on improving one’s viewing experience of the actual game, and John Madden was the big initiator for getting this to be used on NFL broadcasts. He believed that hearing the physicality of the game made it that much more enjoyable for people to watch, and although it was possible for TV viewers to enjoy this, it was difficult to figure out where microphones should be placed. Originally, a referee in the middle of the field wore one and it picked up sounds of blocking between the O-line and D-line while also catching the quarterback calling the plays. However, this would change and now microphones are placed on the players themselves through their shoulder pads, and there hasn’t been an issue with them getting damaged during games. In my opinion, I believe it’s the best part of a TV broadcast because it makes you feel more immersed in the action while making the game more exciting. Hearing

players get physical in the trenches, a quarterback changing the play or calling out the mic, and even hearing player celebrations after a touchdown are all fantastic features of an NFL broadcast.

In the video, everyone made it clear that things are only going up when it comes to innovating and improving a game's broadcast. In a decade or two, there will most likely be features used in every game that no one has even thought about before. Seeing the growth in the quality of NFL broadcasting is quite astonishing considering where they started and it's allowing people to enjoy the sport even more, which is great for the league and its future.