

Doucette eager to start 'Dodger Vision' chores

The hope for a miracle sent Eddie Doucette from Milwaukee to San Diego. A vision is bringing him from San Diego to Los Angeles.

A veteran of 17 seasons of professional basketball play-by-play broadcasting, Doucette recently was named to handle the broadcasting for the Dodgers' new 20-game "Dodger Vision" pay-television venture.

He'll start his assignment in a month, after completing one of the most challenging periods in his career — the final 10 games of the Los Angeles Clippers' schedule.

"I can't wait to get going," Doucette said of the new job, which begins with telecasts of April 25-27 games with the San Diego Padres at Dodger Stadium.

So far, the service is available to Riverside County residents only in the Elsinore area on King Video Cable and in the desert areas on CVTV.

As for the Clippers, Doucette said, "In any profession, it's one step at a time. And we've still got a little ways to go here."

The Clippers have the fourth-worst record in the NBA and have gone through three lengthy losing streaks.

"This has been one of my most challenging years ever," said Doucette. "I've really had to dig back and draw on my creative talents in order to make the games interesting, even when they haven't been.

"It hasn't been easy, but I've tried to stress being as positive as possible. In a negative world, I try to leave people with good thoughts, while still being able to point out what's been going on.

"This year has been a great test, a great lesson, a great drill — and it has made me a better broadcaster and, I hope, a better person."

Doucette spent 16 years as play-by-play man with the Milwaukee Bucks before moving to San Diego four years ago.

He is recognized as one of the nation's best broadcasters. He's another ace in a Los Angeles area announcing deck that includes Vin Scully, Dick Enberg, Chick Hearn and Bill King.

Despite a shaky start with a minimum-range radio station, Doucette has made a solid statement to the LA area with his work on Clippers' broadcasts. He also broadcast Dodgers' games on ON-TV last year.

"Vin Scully may be the classiest person in sports broadcast journalism," said Doucette of the veteran Dodgers' announcer, "and having the opportunity to be around him is one of

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highlights of my life — both professional and personal.

"Last year, when I did ON-TV games, Vin made me feel like a part of the Dodger family, like I had been there for years. He showed me what it meant to reach out a hand in friendship. I felt like a kid again, like the kid who grew up idolizing Ted Williams and then got to spend time around the batting cage with him.

"There is no one in baseball like Vin Scully, just like there is no one in basketball like Chick Hearn and no one in football like (Raiders announcer) Bill King."

Doucette is a thorough professional who is committed to his family and his job.

Ten years ago, his son (then 2½) was diagnosed as having leukemia.

Brett Doucette started undergoing treatments in Milwaukee, but after five years the family was advised to move to a warm-weather climate. At just about the same time, a job opened to do play-by-play for the San Diego Padres. Doucette was hired, the family moved — and Brett's condition underwent an almost overnight change.

Eddie Doucette said it was a miracle, "an act of God, and we give thanks to him for bringing us to the West Coast."

Brett, an active blue-eyed blond, is in good health, maintains an above-average academic schedule, and attends weekend Clippers' games at the Sports Arena.

"It's a bit of a commute (from Poway, in northern San Diego), but you do what you've got to do, and I believe the Lord led us here to do a miracle on our son," said Doucette.

"We may move closer (to Los Angeles). It just depends on how things fall together. I'm really excited, though, about Dodger Vision ... it can't miss."

The Dodgers, said Doucette, intend to make their pay-TV package the most attractive in the area (it is in competition with Box Seat, which will specialize in Forum events) by utilizing more production facilities than any of the three major networks.

"They're going to have nine cameras and five tape machines, and plan to work a very basic game into something very special," said Doucette.

"The Dodger creative and marketing people are probably the best in any professional sports organization, and they're going to be doing some unbelievable things.

"If the baseball coverage works well, the organization is thinking about doing football, basketball and other sports. I know that (Clippers General Manager) Carl Scheer is very interested in what the Dodgers are going to be doing."

The Dodgers say they are getting widespread response to "Dodger Vision," with 51 cities and 22 cable systems having signed up.

The Riverside County cable companies offering the package are King Video Cable (714-674-6917), which serves the Elsinore area, and CVTV (619-341-2888), which serves Palm Springs and Palm Desert. A Dodger spokesman said there has been no indicator that cable companies in the immediate Riverside area will provide the service.

Subscribers to the King Video system will get a preview showing tomorrow (10:15 a.m.) on their local channel 3, according to Jennifer McElmeel, marketing director. The entire 20 game package will cost between \$80 and \$85 she said. There also will be a 10-game package for "about" \$45.

On Monday, King Video Cable customers will start receiving a special box for their television sets, with "Dodger Vision" subscribers hooked in to the special program.

"Dodger Vision" will not affect or cut back the team's schedule of games on KTTV-Channel 11, NBC, ABC and the superstations from Chicago and Atlanta. About half of the Dodgers' games will be televised, not counting "Dodger Vision."

NOTES — Former San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Gene Washington will join KABC-Channel 7 in two weeks as the station's lead sports announcer. He'll replace Harold Greene, who had taken over for Ted Dawson on an interim basis. Greene moves back to the news desk.

KNBC-Channel 4 sports announcers Andy Lescano and Fred Roggin are in the process of negotiating new contracts. Sources say that one (or both) may be let go because of the station's sagging ratings ... Angels television announcer Bob Starr is resting in an Anaheim Hills home after four days in the hospital. Starr developed staph infection recently and was sent home from the team's training site in Mesa, Ariz. ... Thirty-seven Angels' baseball games will be carried on KTLA-Channel 5, debuting with March 30-31 exhibition games from Palm Springs against the San Francisco Giants and the Chicago Cubs. ... The Dodgers' game with Atlanta will be televised Sunday at 10:35 p.m. on KTTV-Channel 11. ... The semifinals and finals of college basketball's MIT tournament will be on USA Cab Wednesday (4 p.m. and 6:15 p.m.) and Friday (6 p.m.). UCLA will be participant, if it gets past Fresno State tomorrow night.