

Doucette makes a name for himself in L.A.

SPORTS ON THE AIR

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It was one thing for the Clippers to move north and challenge the Lakers. The Clips, after all, brought some well-known L.A. faces to town — Bill Walton, Marques Johnson and Norm Nixon.

It was another altogether for a broadcaster named Eddie Doucette, generally unknown beyond Milwaukee and San Diego, to challenge the King of the Popcorn Machine, Chick Hearn.

Hearn is to the Lakers as Vin Scully is to the Dodgers, and Milwaukee and San Diego have never been confused with major metropolitan media markets. "Chick is the foundation of the franchise, and he deserves every accolade he's ever received," was the way one veteran broadcaster put it.

That broadcaster is Doucette. And the nicest thing one can say about the voice of the Clippers is that he's establishing himself in Los Angeles and is not being compared unfavorably to Hearn.

"There's really no battle or war," Doucette said. "And I didn't have any fear or apprehension about working the same city as Chick. I had confidence in my ability and 17 years' experience.

"I reminded myself that Dick Enberg faced the same situation when he was starting with the Angels and Scully was the established star with the Dodgers."

Enberg eventually won hosannas from local critics, some of whom preferred him to Scully, and he beat Scully to the networks and became the networks' big money.

Doucette is already established in the business, even if he's a new sound for Los Angeles sports fans. He was the voice of the Milwaukee Bucks for 16 years, spent two years as a broadcaster for the Padres, joined the Clippers last season in San Diego and has been the USA cable network's No. 1 voice for six years.

"Chick and I discussed the situation before the season began," said Doucette. "I'm aware of what I do and he's aware of the way he broadcasts a game. The bottom line was that it's a big city and there's room enough for two basketball announcers.

"It admittedly is a nice challenge, with the Lakers setting a high standard on the court and Chick setting the pace for all basketball broadcasters. I wanted to see what I could do. But I felt no fear. I already had some exposure in the market."

Doucette made his Los Angeles debut last year as the voice of the Dodgers on its ON television subscription telecasts. He's back for another on this year's pay-per-view cable package.

"The fact I had that year made things a lot easier," he said. "The Dodgers are a wonderful organization to work for and they made me feel totally comfortable coming to Los Angeles like I did. It made people receptive.

"In other situations, I didn't feel comfortable, mainly because I didn't know anybody. Here, I already know most of the people in

the business."

Doucette's delivery for both sports is solid and he has a natural excitement level. If Chick can be characterized as a motormouth with graphic play-by-play and an opinion for every play, then Doucette is a coach's broadcaster. He explains the game of basketball with authority and energy.

The insight goes back to his first days with the Milwaukee Bucks.

"The man who hired me told me, 'If you don't know how to educate Milwaukee about pro basketball, figure out a way to do it.' The NBA was new to Milwaukee and most of the people needed to learn the game," said Doucette.

"I try to lend as much excitement and detail to the game as I can. It isn't easy when the team isn't winning, but we've had our moments."

Doucette was happy, content and well-known in Milwaukee, and his USA schedule was growing each year. The decision to move to San Diego was family-oriented.

Son Brett, 12, suffers from leukemia. Doctors advised the family to move to a warm weather city. When the opportunity with the Padres came, Doucette didn't hesitate.

"I would have stayed in Milwaukee the rest of my life," he said. "But we were concerned about infections and the cold for Brett. He was approaching the fifth year of treatment, the key year as far as doctors are concerned, when the chance to move came. It was an easy decision."

Brett attends a school in Poway, north of San Diego, that is familiar with his medical history and provides him with special assistance.

When the Clippers headed north, the family (it includes wife Karen and 10-year-old Cory) decided to keep Brett in his school.

The result is a lot of freeway time for Doucette. "It hasn't been that tough," he said. "I spend a lot of time in L.A. anyway since I decided to get involved in the marketing end of the club."

Doucette makes sales calls and gets personally involved with game sponsors. "It's nice to be involved with a team beyond the game," he said, "and the commute isn't that tough."

RANDOM NOTES — Doucette is the man who dubbed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's favorite shot the "skyhook." "We had a good relationship," he said of his years with Kareem in Milwaukee. "He prepared so hard for games that he expected reporters to prepare for post-game interviews. I'd always talk about Oriental rugs, Arabian horses, politics or other things that interested him before getting into my meat-and-potatoes basketball questions," said Doucette.

According to Cablesports, a weekly

media publication, cable system response to the "Dodgervision" package has been slow...

For those who missed it last summer, ESPN will show 180 hours of Los Angeles' 1984 Olympics this summer. The cable network purchased the rights from the L.A. Olympic Organizing Committee. The telecasts will be redid and include voiceovers by ESPN commentators. There will be 16 prime-time specials, each with a theme...

Three Dodger specials are upcoming on KTTV-Channel 11: "Eye on the Future" tonight at 8, looking back at 1984 and narrated by Vin Scully; "The 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers," a 30th anniversary reunion special on the Boys of Summer, airing March 9 (9 p.m.), also narrated by Scully; and "How I Spent My Winter Vacation" on March 15 (8:30 p.m.), looking at the Dodgers' off-season activities. Ross Porter narrates...

Former NBC exec Rex Lardner has been named director of sports for Atlanta superstation WTBS. He'll rejoin executive producer Don Ellis, a former colleague of his at NBC. WTBS is waiting for an exclusive negotiation period between ABC and the College Football Association to lapse and is prepared to make a hefty bid for the CFA's national package...