

NYWEEKLY

THE VOICE BEHIND THE GAME

*From local
Georgia newsrooms
to the national
sports stage*

A CAREER ACROSS GENERATIONS

*NBA, MLB,
college sports
and beyond*

INSIDE THE NBA

*A trusted host
since 1990*

FAMILY, FAITH & RESILIENCE

*The values
that shape
his life*

MORE THAN A BROADCASTER

*Author,
mentor and
an enduring
presence in
sports media*

ERNIE JOHNSON JR.

**A CAREER BUILT ON CURIOSITY,
COMPOSURE AND CONNECTION**

Early radio days | Inside the NBA | MLB on TBS | Family & faith
Six-time Sports Emmy winner | Author of *Unscripted*

BY NYWEEKLY.CO.UK

PROFILE / THE MAN BEHIND THE MIC

Who Is Ernie Johnson Jr.? The Broadcaster Who Made Sports Feel Personal

For generations of American sports fans, Ernie Johnson Jr. has been more than the person introducing a game. His steady delivery, warmth and quick wit have helped turn studio coverage into part of the sporting event itself. Best known as the longtime host of Inside the NBA, Johnson built a career across basketball, baseball, football, golf and major international competitions.



FULL NAME	Ernest Thorwald Johnson Jr.
BORN	August 7, 1956
BIRTHPLACE	Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.
EDUCATION	University of Georgia; B.A. in journalism, 1978
OCCUPATION	Sportscaster, studio host, author
KNOWN FOR	Inside the NBA; MLB on TBS
SPOUSE	Cheryl Johnson (married 1982)
CHILDREN	Six

Born in Milwaukee and raised in the Atlanta area

Johnson was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 7, 1956. His father, Ernie Johnson Sr., pitched in Major League Baseball before becoming a respected broadcaster for the Atlanta Braves. After his father retired from playing in 1964, the family moved to the Atlanta area. Sports were therefore not just a television subject in the Johnson household: they were part of family life.

Johnson attended Marist School in Brookhaven, Georgia, graduating in 1974. He enrolled at the University of Georgia, where he studied journalism and played first base for the Bulldogs as a freshman. He graduated in 1978, summa cum laude, with a Bachelor of Arts degree. The mix of newsroom training, sports knowledge and a natural conversational style would become the foundation of his career.

EDITOR'S NOTE | This profile is an editorial biography based primarily on the Wikipedia biography linked on the final page. It is not affiliated with Johnson or his employers.

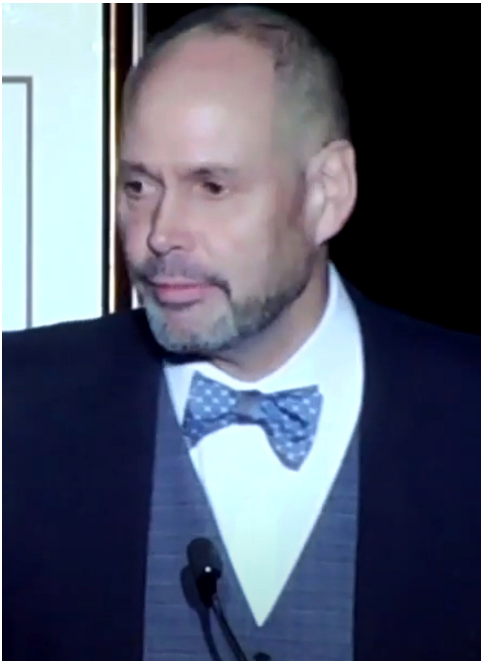
FROM LOCAL NEWS TO NATIONAL SPORTS

He learned the craft before becoming a familiar face

Johnson's route to national television was gradual, grounded in local journalism. While still at Georgia, he worked as news and sports director at WAGQ-FM in Athens from 1977 to 1978. After graduation, he joined WMAZ-TV in Macon as a news anchor, then reported for WSPA-TV in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He returned to Atlanta and joined WSB-TV, where he became a weekend sports anchor and reporter.

Those years mattered. Local television taught him how to explain events clearly, interview people under pressure and keep a live broadcast moving. In 1989, he joined Turner Sports, beginning the national chapter of his career.

His assignments quickly expanded. Johnson hosted studio coverage and called events across several sports, including professional basketball, college football, golf, tennis, soccer and the Olympics. His versatility meant he could shift from the rhythm of a baseball broadcast to the pace of a basketball studio show without losing his calm, accessible style.



A family connection to baseball

From 1993 to 1996, Johnson called Atlanta Braves games on SportSouth alongside his father. The pairing brought together two generations of broadcasters: Ernie Sr., who had played in the majors and later became a familiar Braves voice, and Ernie Jr., who was building his own reputation. The work was a professional milestone and a rare chance to share the broadcast booth with his father.

Johnson's career has never been confined to one league. His credits include TNT and TBS coverage of the NFL, PGA Championship and The Open Championship, Wimbledon, college football, the Winter Olympics and the Goodwill Games. He also became part of the presentation team for the NCAA men's basketball tournament through Turner and CBS.

CAREER TIMELINE

1977-78	News and sports director at WAGQ-FM while studying at Georgia.
1979-89	Local television roles in Macon, Spartanburg and Atlanta.
1989 onward	Joined Turner Sports and became a national sports host and play-by-play voice.
1993-96	Called Braves games with his father, Ernie Johnson Sr.

THE INSIDE THE NBA ERA

A studio host who became part of the show

Johnson is best known to many viewers as the host of Inside the NBA, the lively postgame show built around former NBA players and strong personalities. Alongside analysts including Charles Barkley, Kenny Smith and Shaquille O'Neal, he has helped create a format that combines tactical discussion, jokes, debate and spontaneous moments. His role is often to guide the conversation without flattening its energy.



A courtside moment with Taylor Swift

Johnson's work has taken him to major sporting events and brought him into contact with athletes, performers and fans from across popular culture. The supplied photograph shows him at a basketball event alongside Taylor Swift. It is a reminder that sports broadcasting now lives in a wider entertainment landscape, where a game can become a cultural moment beyond the scoreboard.

What makes his hosting distinctive?

Clarity: He can translate a complicated sequence into a simple explanation without talking down to the audience. Timing: He gives analysts room to be funny or passionate while keeping the programme moving. Empathy: His style makes room for the human side of sports, including disappointment, recovery and personal achievement. Range: His career across multiple sports has allowed him to speak to different audiences without relying on a single persona.

The programme's appeal rests on chemistry rather than polished scripts alone. Johnson has often served as the anchor who keeps the discussion coherent while allowing unscripted exchanges to unfold. That balance helped make the studio show a fixture for basketball fans and a recognisable part of the NBA viewing experience.

BEYOND BASKETBALL

A broadcaster with a wide sporting field



Johnson's broadcasting life extends beyond the NBA studio. He has served as a play-by-play announcer for Major League Baseball on TBS, including postseason coverage, and has presented coverage of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. His résumé also includes professional golf, NFL programming, college football, Wimbledon and Olympic events.

The photo above captures the studio environment associated with his long-running basketball work: a mix of analysis, conversation and live production. The appeal of a seasoned host is particularly clear in these settings, where information, timing and personality must fit into a tightly scheduled broadcast.

The baseball connection remained important throughout his career. Johnson grew up around the game through his father, and his work on Braves broadcasts with Ernie Sr. connected personal history with professional craft. Later, his MLB work on TBS gave him a national platform in a sport that had been part of his life since childhood.

Recognition and awards

Johnson has received multiple Sports Emmy Awards for his work as a studio host and has been recognised by sports media organisations for his contribution to broadcasting. He was named National Sportscaster of the Year by the National Sports Media Association in 2021 alongside Scott Van Pelt, and he was inducted into the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 2023. His honours reflect both longevity and the trust he has built with viewers.

In 2017, Johnson published *Unscripted: The Unpredictable Moments That Make Life Extraordinary*. The memoir draws on experiences from broadcasting and family life, presenting a more personal view of the values that have shaped his public career.

WHY HIS STYLE LASTS

In an industry often driven by loud opinions and instant reactions, Johnson's steady manner offers contrast. He is comfortable letting others take the spotlight, yet remains central to the programme's identity. That combination—confidence without constant self-promotion—has become a defining feature of his reputation.

LIFE BEYOND THE BROADCAST

Family, resilience and perspective



A career lived in the booth is only one part of Johnson's story. He married Cheryl Johnson in 1982. Cheryl is a licensed professional counselor, and together they have six children: two biological children and four adopted children. Their adopted son Michael, who lived with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, died in 2021 at age 33. Johnson has spoken publicly about family, faith and the perspective gained from difficult experiences.

Health challenges

Johnson was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 2003. He continued working for a period before beginning treatment in 2006, and returned to Inside the NBA later that year while still undergoing chemotherapy. In 2018, he announced that blood clots in both legs would prevent him from travelling by air for TBS's MLB postseason coverage. These episodes became part of a public story about perseverance, but they do not define the entirety of his life or work.

Faith and service

Raised Catholic, Johnson later identified as Protestant and has been involved with organisations including the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action and Samaritan's Feet. His public profile has often reflected an emphasis on humility, service and family alongside professional success.

At a glance: what readers should remember

Ernie Johnson Jr. built his reputation through years of local reporting, national sports coverage and an unusually enduring studio role. From working beside his father on Braves broadcasts to steering the conversations on Inside the NBA, he has connected technical knowledge with an approachable on-air presence. His career is a story of range, steadiness and a willingness to let the game—and the people around it—remain at the centre.

SOURCE

[Wikipedia — Ernie Johnson Jr.](#)

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