



ANCHORMAN: After *Good Morning America* and *Nightline*, Newman came home to do the national news—and salvage a flailing network

An anchor weighs in on the details

In five years, Kevin Newman has made *Global National* Canada's most-watched news show

BY NANCY MACDONALD • It's 2:30 p.m. Pacific time on the fifth anniversary of Sept. 11, and in an industrial corner of suburban Vancouver, Kevin Newman, in black from head to toe, is leading a live broadcast of *Global National*. From the control room, producers and technicians work methodically as the broadcast (at 5:30 ET) rolls. As items are about to hit the air, jihad gets capitalized, a soldier's rank is amended, the spelling of a widow's name corrected. The speed of the hurricane blowing through Bermuda (a fact Newman, himself, dug up) is checked. Twice. (Newman was right.) Mid-broadcast, producers decide they'll go ahead with another of Newman's suggestions: bagpipes—alone—will introduce a segment on a soldier's burial in Ottawa.

Amid the chaos, there's another anniversary underway. *Global National* debuted five years ago, after parent company CanWest Global Communications Corp. decided to pump a reported \$9.5 million into a Western-based national newscast headed by Newman. It's paid off. The flagship lends badly needed credibility to a network better known for its lineup of American programming. Despite a bare-bones budget (reportedly half that of *CTV News*, and about a third of CBC's *The National*), it has become—arguably, for ratings are a murky game—Canada's most-watched national news program, at least on weekdays. And that success has taken even Newman—plucked, five years ago, from the upper ranks of ABC—by surprise.

Newman, 47, grew up in Mississauga, Ont., the proverbial late-blooming nerd. In high school he had thick glasses and waistline, loved politics but didn't play hockey—and picked up his competitive drive a little later than most. News, he discovered at the Uni-

versity of Western Ontario, where he helped set up campus radio station CHRW in 1981, was his element. He's been chasing stories—ravidly, according to colleagues—ever since. "You're in a business with a lot of A-type personalities," recalls Paul Adams, a journalism professor at Carleton University, who worked with Newman in the 1980s at the CBC. "But Kevin"—Adams pauses, chuckling—"he wanted it real bad."

Global National launched on Labour Day Monday, 2001. ("We were like your kids," Newman laughs, "just trying to get attention: hey, we're here! We're here!") Eight days later, planes struck the World Trade Center in Manhattan. "I got a call, 6:15 B.C. time," Newman recalls. "Something had happened. As I'm leaving the house, my wife yells, 'A second one's hit.' Like everyone else, you just realize at that moment: it's not a coincidence. We'd been on the air five or six days, so we'd barely connected the wires. Now all of a sudden we're trying to figure out how to broadcast live." Newman coached his newborn team through 17 gruelling hours of airtime. "Somehow it all came together," Newman says. "All the lessons I'd learned at ABC, from watching Peter [Jennings], my own experiences about not getting ahead of the story."

Newman was already known for having poise under pressure. In 1994, he left CBC's

Midday for a job at ABC in New York; his big break at the U.S. network came on the day of Princess Diana's death. "It was a Labour Day weekend and all the news stars were out at the Hamptons, so they called me in to do duty until the big dogs came in," Newman says. The big dogs never arrived, and Newman stayed on the air. *TV Guide* called him a star. ABC brass moved him up.

It was a disaster. In May 1998, he and Lisa McRee were thrown together—shotgun-style, Newman says—to co-host *Good Morning America*, ABC's struggling morning show. They lasted eight months. It was a colossal—and widely publicized—failure. Viewers never warmed to the pair; deemed "stiff," Newman fared slightly better than McRee (now doing public television in L.A.), whom *USA Today* tagged as "icy." Newman emerged a little scarred. "It was hard," he admits. "I'm not really the life of the dinner party."

Still, he bounced back, moving to Ted Koppel's *Nightline* as a correspondent before taking the helm at *Global National*. He learned his trade by studying, then emulating mentors such as Jennings; at *Global* he leads by example. Before he gets to the studio at 9:30 a.m., he's read the papers, shot off story ideas by email, and tuned in to the daily conference call. As well as anchor, he's the executive editor, involved in every aspect of the show—down to the music that leads into the segments, and, some days, to checking the wind speed in Bermuda. M



STOP THE PRESSES...NO DOGS ON THE ATLANTIC

"A listing in Sunday Calendar said hot dogs would not be allowed at the Scandinavian Autumn Fest and Marknad on Sept. 17 at Vasa Park in Agoura. No canines will be allowed at the event."

—*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 13.

"A map on Page 7 of Sunday's Travel section incorrectly placed the Atlantic Ocean near San Francisco. The city is beside the Pacific Ocean."—*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 13.

NICK DIDLIICK

MACLEAN'S OCT. 2 '06

63