

WAAF host keeps focus as rivals storm Hill

By JESSE NOYES

Greg Hill is feeling pretty good these days.

The host of the Hill-Man Morning Show on WAAF-FM (107.3) is enjoying the best numbers the program has garnered in its 17-year history. Currently Hill's show notches ratings among men that are near the top in the Boston market, bested only by the Dennis and Callahan show on sports talker WEEI-AM (850).

News that Entercom Communications, which owns both WAAF and WEEI, will shell out \$30 million to buy the WILD-FM (97.7) signal to boost WAAF's reach in Boston means Hill has a chance to capture even more listeners in the local market.

All of which sets the stage for a Boston rock/talk radio showdown. Hill, who has taken advantage of a void since Howard Stern departed for satellite radio, will have to battle with controversial jocks Opie and Anthony as they try to reconnect with Boston's male population on WBCN-FM (104.1).

"I think Opie and Anthony are going to make an impact in the marketplace," said Bruce Mittman, president of advertising firm Mittcomm and a local radio veteran who's worked with both Hill and Opie and Anthony. "It is going to be an interesting battle in Boston between Greg and Opie and Anthony."

Male listeners tuned into Hill after Stern left CBS Radio for Sirius Satellite Radio earlier this year, a move that took a bite out of WBCN's



STAFF PHOTO BY PATRICK WHITTEMORE

HILL TO CLIMB: WAAF morning host Greg Hill is second only to WEEI's Dennis and Callahan in local ratings among male listeners after the defection of Howard Stern to satellite radio. But Hill will soon compete with Opie and Anthony on WBCN.

ratings.

"I've been doing my show for a long time. I think it takes a while for people to accept you... and when Howard Stern went over to satellite, I think people were looking for an alternative," Hill said.

The Hill-Man Morning Show was the obvious choice for many former Stern fans

as his replacement in the Northeast, David Lee Roth, tanked.

Hill says he's not worried about competing with Opie and Anthony.

"I don't worry about anybody who's on any other station," Hill said. "(Dennis and Callahan) would be the only people that I would think about, and I fully intend to

beat them."

But Tom Taylor, editor of Inside Radio, said the competition will be fierce as The Opie & Anthony Show starts pushing WBCN's ratings with men up. "This is a slugfest and part of it comes down to local versus syndicated," he said.

And that's the card WAAF is going to play, since Hill

broadcasts locally while Opie and Anthony work out of New York.

Indeed, Hill's local connections with celebrities like Dennis Leary and Theo Epstein have paid off and could be the ticket to his staying on top.

"It should make for some interesting ratings watching," Mittman said.